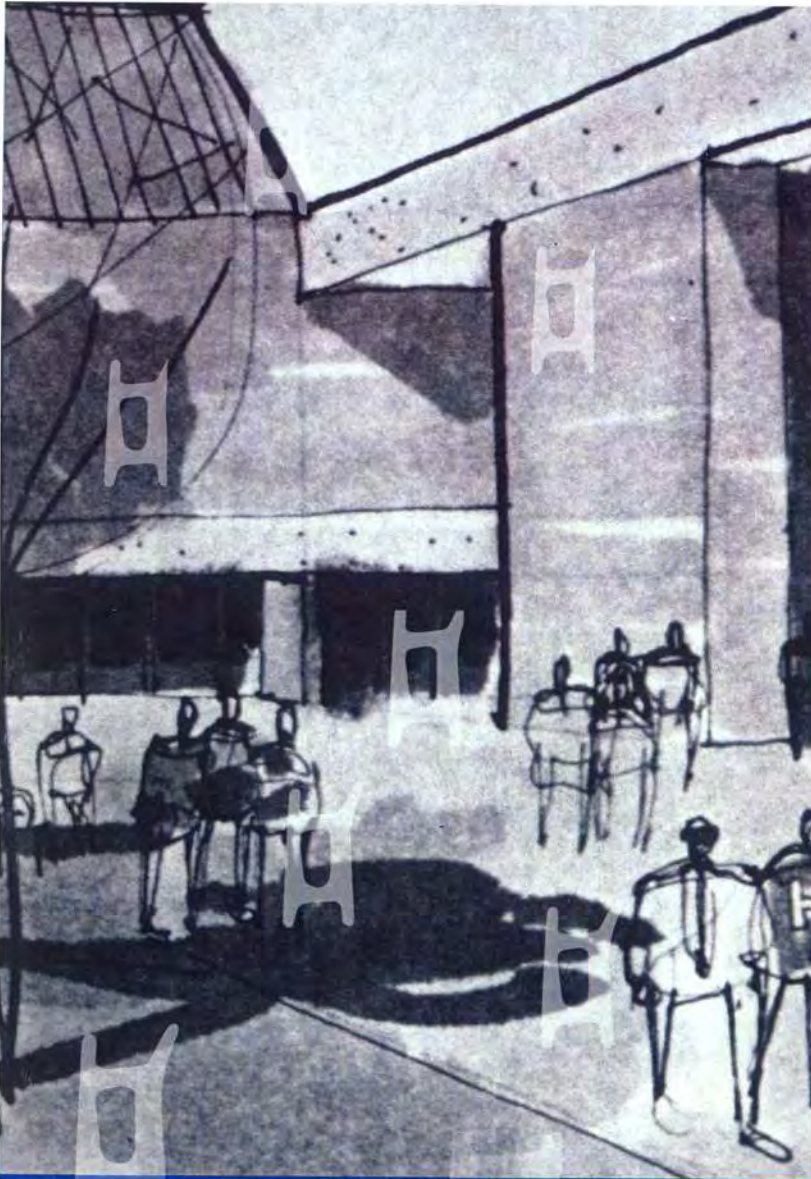




THE HARPER ANTHOLOGY

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

Volume XIX



Student Authors

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Jerrie Nolan

Emily Fuglestad

Lisa Bagladi

Katya Pettengill

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Cale Piepenburg

Jamie Herold

Will Bryerton

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Toly Karoll

Roger Caldwell

Chris Poulos

Elliott Kist

Johnna Calvillo

Louise Rizio

John "Jake" Kuhn

Julio Castillo

Sandra Siniscalchi

Ankita Lal

Sandy Li-Hui Chen

Todd Tosi

Marla Laurin

Christine Choi

Cyrus Vaziri

Ann Libner

Doug Citrano

Christine Welsh

Nik MacTavish

Alexander Cox

The Harper Anthology

Volume XIX

Foreword

This volume of The Harper Anthology continues the annual tradition begun nearly 20 years ago, by the Harper College English Department, of honoring Harper students' academic writing in a formal, faculty-judged publication. This year's collection covers a great deal of academic territory—along with papers from English and Literature, there are selections from Health Science, Music, Art, Humanities, and an assortment of other academic disciplines.

Of note in this collection are the many papers from Harper's Learning Communities courses, in which two professors link course content and team-teach their students. The papers from Learning Communities dedicated to a study of twentieth-century history and literature are especially compelling, as they demonstrate the depth of knowledge obtainable through understanding of contexts for particular writers and events. The papers on Rod Serling's Twilight Zone series (by Elliot Kist) and Eldridge Cleaver's writings on African-American social issues (by Chris Poulos) are excellent and enjoyable examples of this fine scholarship. Other strong examples of scholarship include Marla S. Laurin's paper for Legal and Ethical Issues in Health Care—a comprehensive exploration of issues surrounding "gender surgeries" for infants born intersexed—and Will Bryerton's examination of issues affecting the current and future situation in Iraq (written for a Feminist Philosophy course).

The covers—and contents—of this year's Anthology are a reminder of the rapid passage of time and the changing world, here and in every sphere imaginable. In this 40th anniversary year for Harper, it is interesting to speculate about the architects' ideas about the College and its students, as depicted in the actual renderings from 1965, reproduced on these covers. Surely, the students in suits and ties and formal dresses were discussing the Cold War and the Vietnam War in their classrooms, but they probably did not imagine that a short half-century later, Harper students could take courses examining these from a historical perspective, or that students would be writing about the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, China's capitalist economy, stem cell research, or U.S. involvement in a war in Iraq.

Good scholarship and writing can help not only to build understanding and advance ideas; these activities are steadying factors in the face of rapidly changing times and trends. The Harper College faculty, facilities, and students have changed, but the necessary tradition of scholarship—a central purpose of an academic institution—has remained a constant focus. We are proud to present evidence of this academic excellence, in this year's Harper Anthology.

—Kris Piepenburg, Chair, for The Harper Anthology committee: Charles Brown, Barbara Butler, Teresa Chung, Keith Jensen, Judy Kaplow, Josh Sunderbruch, Anthony Wisniewski

Submission Information

Deadlines

Submission deadline, 2008 issue:

Thursday, January 10, 2008

Submission deadline, 2009 issue:

Thursday, December 20, 2008

To Submit a Student's Manuscript:

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

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

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

Manuscript Evaluation and Publication

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

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Harper Students on Writing

Kristin Bernacki

For years, I have been told that writing is a process, and that to be a good writer, one needs to write and rewrite and rewrite and rewrite again. I always assumed that the great and experienced writers of our time probably did have to write their novels, stories, poems and/or plays thousands of times before they were just right. After all, their brilliant creations seem perfectly arranged, for each word has its place, profound meanings are flawlessly designed beneath the surface, the slightest but most important connections are made throughout the text, etc. But I never attributed this characteristic of good writing to myself. However, when I went to college and saw the writing habits of my classmates, I realized, for the first time, that I actually did treat my writing as a process. While it took me a week or two to compose a five- to six-page paper, my friends would effortlessly churn out page after page the night before it was due. They would often call me a perfectionist for slaving over my essays—wearing out the letters on my backspace key as I delete unnecessary information, pulling out the thesaurus to find that exact word to convey the appropriate connotation, and reading over every sentence making sure it said precisely what I was trying to say—and they would tell me that I spent more time thinking about what I was going to write than actually writing, and if I would only just sit down and do it, I could be finished in no time. This has yet to happen. Every time I sit down to write, I put all of myself into it. Putting precious thoughts into words and expressively reaching out to others takes a significant amount of time and effort. It is hard work that can never be finished.

Will Bryerton

“Democracy’s Deficit” was written during the Spring semester of 2006 for Feminist Philosophy, an honors class taught, quite masterfully I must add, by Dr. Barbara Solheim. It is worth mentioning that the report was written during the period in which the Bush administration’s plan and persuasive efforts for the war in Iraq were shifting from a “spread democracy” and “instill freedom” message to the more staunch and intransigent “stay the course” objective. As this objective is still an integral influence upon American foreign policy, as American citizens have become frustrated with the war’s violence and elongated duration, and as media attention is now primarily concentrated upon troop withdrawal and the formulation of an exit strategy, the concerns and suggestions raised in this report are hardly, at least right now (March of 2007), matters of widespread public awareness.

Despite such lack of attention, or perhaps because of it, I still believe that issues pertaining to gender status in the Middle East, in addition to the many cultural conditions of this embattled region, deserve further study and consideration. Though these issues are certainly multifaceted and at times downright confounding and seemingly not solvable, a little bit of effort toward becoming knowledgeable in a given subject

can go a long way. In my specific case, a little bit of effort, combined with some dependable sources and a general interest in the subject matter, can initiate an endeavor in which you find yourself wanting to do more than apply “a little bit of effort.” Instead, you want to say something, you want to say it sincerely, and you want it to be meaningful and constructive toward the topic of its focus. As I wrote this report, I wanted all of these things, and if my conscience and the feedback that I have received on the report serve me well, then perhaps, just maybe, I fulfilled those desires.

Alexander Cox

Writing is the lost art of the gentry and the new-found art of the everyday man. No longer is the writer part of the elite as our so-called “modernist” predecessors were. The information age is here indefinitely, and apparently it is humanity’s job to exploit it for all it is worth. Yet writing with the “postmodern” tagline can lack a fundamental ingredient which is crucial to the effective written word: communication. The philosophy of the author should never be a drive to “get published,” but, rather an author’s purpose should always be to connect and communicate with a reader. There is an intimacy within the author/reader relationship which transcends time, and therefore, confining our writing within the boxes of time periods and trendy styles is to make the written word a commodity of our progressive language. The essence of writing far exceeds such boundaries, yet I fear that we lose sight of this amid the magazine covers and the make-shift novels.

Penney Gainer

When I find myself in an emotional state, I usually find it difficult to verbally organize my thoughts. Writing is thus a tool I often use to understand my own true feelings. After reflection and interpretation through writing I am then prepared to face what has spawned such emotions in the first place. Effective writing, therefore, is not only a skill meant for scholars but a method that anyone can use to learn more about him or herself.

Anatoly Karoll

I believe writing is an ultimate gift that all of us possess. The way we conduct such an elaborate art of writing is up to us. Writing takes me on an unknown epic and mystical journey. When I construct a paper, it starts painting scenery. It is almost like magic. I let my mind go and let my mind go and discover new things and places. Our finest moment while writing is when our imagination is at work. We never realize how good we can sometimes be. I do not worry how my writing will turn out until the end, because if I constantly paused, I would screw up my train of thought. I do not write complex things, or overwrite something, because I think writing should be simple and satisfying to read. I think writing something sophisticated

shrouds your concentration and therefore lacks what you wanted the reader to understand. You can never master the art of writing, but you can always hone your skills. Words can mold and shape to whatever you want, that is what is so great about writing. Writing is our DNA woven into our bodies.

Elliott Kist

Writing gives me the opportunity to dive deeper into whatever subject I happen to be exploring. The Rod Serling eulogy essay is a perfect example of this. It is special to me because by looking at his life and views more closely, I discovered and came to appreciate what a complex genius he really was in his lifetime.

The beauty of writing is that with each paper, you can develop consistency in your writing style and then go on to reach new heights you hadn't thought possible. While the actual research/drafting stage may often seem tedious, this is the stage where a writer begins to see hours of diligent work finally starting to pay off.

I'd like to close by thanking Harper College English tutors Kate Hendrickson and Doris Howden for their helpful assistance in the writing process.

Marla S. Laurin

Writing may serve as a way to make sense of the chaotic, or it can give voice to something so suppressed that it would otherwise be too unbearable to speak. For me, good writing does more than infer the mother lode of immutable proclamations. Good writing stirs the soul and to do that, it should do more than just follow syntax and grammar rules. With its contents and consequences, writing should warm you like a midnight campfire in the summer or chill you to the bone like a winter hike on Mt. Hood.

Writing about something you care about is crucial to an effective outcome. While not all writings are required to relay some sense of visceral angst, the reader will find it hard to care about something the author does not. To affect the reader, an author's passion should be palpable in some way. An author must feel so connected to his or her piece that the dots of facts and thoughts seem to draw their own imaginary line to the natural conclusion.

I never feel that anything I do or write is free from flaws. Even though perfection is paradoxically subjective and impossible, I constantly wrestle with my gnawing need for it. While authors may strive for a sense of cohesion and closure, writing often just reflects the disorganized nature of life. Lest we be weary to tidy the unclean, we cannot always "fix" the issues we write about through fairytale endings. However, as writers and students of life, we can expose issues that need our rapt attention. By connecting the dots between our facts, thoughts and reality, we allow our readers to heave a collective sigh and resolve.

Katya Pettengill

One of the tenets of writing everybody seems to forget is perhaps one of the most important: Keep things simple. After all, the purpose of writing is to communicate, and if you can't communicate, then your writing has failed. Sure, those twelve-syllable words look nice on paper, but if you leave readers in the dust, then what's the point? The best writing teaches us without requiring a copy of Webster's in hand.

Ease readers into your work. Give them credit, but don't confuse them altogether. Big words should be treated like nice clothing—they work best when used in moderation. You don't wear a fur coat to the beach, right? The same goes for writing—don't say "peregrination" when you mean "travel."

Strive to communicate, to make a connection with your reader, so that when someone picks up your writing, he or she will say, "Ah! I get it—I understand what this person is telling me." You and your readers should always be on the same page. To do otherwise is to lose your audience.

Louise Rizio

Writing is a medium through which all voices are made the same, where one's message predominates over one's race or gender. In reading good writing, rather than seeing a woman's face, an African-American's face, an old face, or a young face, one simply sees words strung together on the page. It is through writing that one can hope to communicate without the fear of bias. It is easy for people to assume they cannot relate to those different than themselves. Yet with writing, we begin to understand. Contrary to spoken communication, writing is the level field where one is free to declare their feelings and ideas. I have always been grateful to teachers that dare to make their students think, by bringing such boundary-breaking reading material into the classroom. As a child, *Number the Stars* had a profound effect on my young view of the world. By being exposed to a Jewish girl's struggle to survive under Nazi occupation, I first realized that the world is a place that continually struggles to establish equality. As a college student, studying *Native Son* reminded me that that struggle is far from over. I continue to be awed by those that can convey an unforgettable message or challenge one's opinions with the delicate poignancy that is good writing.

What the Future May Bring

John Auchter

Course: Political Science 270 (Global Politics)

Instructor: Bobby Summers

Assignment:

*For one of the weekly response
paper assignments, students were to
address the topic of future superpowers.*

Individual nations have always vied to be the most dominant power in the world. Superpowers in early times, such as Rome and Greece, often had few peers and judged their power on their military might, as well as their economies. Later superpowers, such as England and Spain, determined their might by not only economics and military, but also by the number of colonies they had. During the Cold War, the two superpowers of America and the Soviet Union determined their power by the size of their nuclear arsenal. The current world superpower, America, currently faces no immediate rivals in terms of military and economic power. Still, there are those who stipulate that every empire eventually comes to an end. These people often wonder which nation will rise to occupy the title of superpower after America's decline. Asia is often the subject of speculations, with Japan, China, and India as the leading choices. Many of these predictions tie the decline of America's power with the rise of one of these nations. Calvin Coolidge, America's 30th president, had different ideas about the rise and decline of power: "Do not presume to build up the weak by bringing down the strong." This is the ultimate question then; can these emerging powers become true superpowers by eating the crumbs from America's table?

China, once a staunch communist nation, is slowly transforming itself into a capitalist nation. While China's government is still very authoritarian, it has learned that without the support of other communist nations, it must turn to the Western world. The demise of the Soviet Union created great problems for China as their previous benefactor became a democratic nation. China soon learned that it too would need to join the Western world and the largely capitalistic world market. This, however, has presented new challenges to the government of China. Issues such as terrorism and infectious disease provide new avenues for the government to be attacked (Deng & Moore, 2004, p. 117). In addition to this, the government has been forced to take steps in order to ensure that its economic growth remains constant and does not threaten the relations with its trading partners. Recent events, however, have proved that no economy should grow too fast, or inflation will begin to affect it. In 2006, the Chinese economy was growing by leaps and bounds, but in addition to this, the currency was also inflating at an extreme rate. This has caused Chinese businesses to discontinue refining oil inside of China. In addition to this, one of China's largest industries, textiles, may soon see its contracts leaving to find cheaper work in India. Like every industrialized nation that came before it, China must deal with its rising inflation and slowing economy. Unlike other industrialized nations, however, China must deal with these issues in a largely interdependent world.

Japan is the other potential superpower that people predict will come out of East Asia. Forced to maintain only defensive military power, Japan has poured its efforts into becoming an economic superpower. Following World War II, the rebuilding of the Japanese infrastructure and economy proceeded at a quick pace. The economic aid supplied by America provided the newly formed democracy a jumpstart over the other Asian countries devastated by the war. As a result of this, the Japanese economy was able to quickly rebuild. The formation of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) accomplished many things for the Japanese economy. It allowed the government to curb inflation while simultaneously increasing productivity

What the Future May Bring

by supporting Japanese companies and closing the Japanese market from most foreign companies. The MITI, therefore, was much different from the various governmental organizations in America as it not only supported the national companies, but also promoted monopolies. The main difference between the Japanese situation, and the current Chinese situation, is the fact that China requires America's business more than Japan did. Japan, now, is concerned about China's rising influence and is concerned that its influence over Asia may preempt that of Japan. Japan has flourished for many years because of its influence in political and economic matters throughout Asia. The change in power may signal a dramatic change for Japan if China were to become the most influential Asian power (Emmott, 2005, p. 12).

India, the world's largest democracy, is an economy that has taken a different route to economic stardom than China. Instead of relying on foreign investments, India instead has relied on its own homegrown economy and businesses (Huang & Khanna, 2003, p. 74). This method ensures that even if foreign investments were to be withdrawn, India's economy would not suffer. China is currently facing a similar crisis with its oil refining and textiles businesses. While this method of economic development may take much longer periods of time to see good results, it is almost without risk. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, America experienced an industrial revolution. Because foreign investment was low and local businesses were promoted, America was able to develop a much more stable economy. So too, if India follows a similar route taken by a former British territory, will it be able to develop a stable and powerful economy.

The question of rising and falling world powers often only takes into account countries. While this has been largely true throughout history, what about the rise of certain religions in current times? The Muslim faith has many adherents throughout the world. While these countries often have racial barriers, the Muslim faith often dictates that the government follows the teachings of the Qu'ran. Could it be possible that a new world power is not a country with traditional boundaries but a religion that exceeds those boundaries?

These questions may provide some form of insight into what may come next in the constantly shifting balance of power. The recent terrorist attacks on September 11th, as well as the ensuing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, have turned much of the Muslim world against America. As such, it is entirely possible that the coming world powers determine their power in a much different way than is commonly accepted today. It is then the responsibility of American policymakers to ensure that American ideals are preserved in a rapidly changing world.

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Evaluation: *John's discussion of these trends is informed and smooth.*

Justice?

Yonatan Axel

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Teresa Chung

Assignment:

Write a rhetorical analysis of Ed Koch's argument on the death penalty.

having a death penalty, and he answers death penalty opponents' potential arguments. Regardless of his logic, it is rare to see a politician try that hard. So in that respect, good job, Ed Koch. To persuade the reader, he uses appeals to both logic and emotion. But, his refusal to consider a world in which life sentences actually happen makes for a muddled version of an otherwise insightful inner conflict.

Ed Koch begins by trying to show why we need a death penalty in the first place. To do this, he uses several different stories to appeal to our emotions. He tells us of two different men who brutally killed two young girls. Any parent who reads this has to have a strong emotional response. Then he tells us that these men were executed, but that right before they were executed, they understood what they did. This is appealing to our desire to make someone understand what they did wrong. After this, Koch goes right into telling us that because they understood what they did wrong right before being executed, the death penalty affirms life. After all, it made these brutal killers understand what they did wrong. However, Koch gets very argumentatively muddled. Koch is basically saying that we need the death penalty because it makes people appreciate their own life as they are about to have it taken away, just like they did to their victims. He then tells us that if these people had understood the death penalty before they killed, maybe they wouldn't have done it. However, in another essay, David Bruck responds to Koch by further explaining one of Koch's example stories. In the one case Bruck wrote about, it was actually a drug, PCP, and not the fear of retribution that was affecting a killer's decision making. But in any sense, to believe that this is a reason to use the death penalty requires that we believe it is a good deterrent. In terms of reason for the death penalty, Koch lets the emotional side of a few stories do his work, instead of logic. But to be fair, the emotions of someone whose little girl has been murdered will never be felt by reading a paper, no matter how great the author is. So even though the overall logic of this argument probably goes toward revenge, there is a huge emotional gap between the reader and the person in the situation that must at least be understood, even though it can't be filled.

What is the purpose of government? Even though this question exists behind almost every political argument, it is very rarely asked in an overt way. Aristotle once said that the purpose of government is to ensure that people can live a good life, and this explanation is seen by many as our "reason" for having a government. But many times, we try to use government for different ends. One goal we try to use government to achieve is the reciprocation of people's actions, that is, inflicting on someone what that person inflicted on society, good or bad. While some see this as an action only to be taken as a means to the "good life" end, others see this as a goal in and of itself. One person struggling with these issues is Ed Koch, in his essay "Death and Justice." As a long-time public servant, Koch would probably agree that the goal of government is to provide people with the possibility of a good life. But, he believes that in order to do this, the government must equivocate the actions of those who have taken another's life away. Throughout Koch's argument, he tries to convince the reader that this reciprocation of action is necessary to provide society with a good life, but ultimately he treats it as a goal in and of itself. Koch argues the reason for

With his reasons for the death penalty laid out, Koch begins answering arguments that he has heard from the other side of this issue. He begins by answering the argument that the death penalty is barbaric. In reality, this argument has more reasons to it than just that the death penalty is barbaric because it causes physical pain; however, this is the only angle Koch uses to argue. He says that even death by injection could be and has been considered barbaric and that therefore people say they care about the act of killing, not the method. This is a good argument, but Koch never goes on to answer those who think the death penalty is barbaric inherently because of the killing. He simply says that's what they care about, more than the method. He then makes an analogy to curing cancer through chemotherapy or radiation. The analogy functions in that both acts are painful but necessary. This is only true if we accept that the death penalty is necessary, in which case there would be no argument in the first place. Also, the analogy only works if either the killer kills himself to cure the evil inside him or if we forcefully take cancer patients into radiation. Personal choice is, however, a big barrier that should not be overlooked in a comparison. This barrier also makes Koch's answer to the warrant behind not doing something if it is inherently barbaric completely worthless.

The next argument Ed Koch responds to is that the United States is the only major democracy that uses the death penalty. He answers back by saying that we are the only major democracy that has such a high murder rate, and that this high murder rate makes us use the death penalty. This is a legitimate argument. It does, however, show that using the death penalty as a deterrent does not work at all. His argument here essentially bites the foot of his introductory reason for having the death penalty. It shows that his example of Luis Vera, a man who killed a woman and who supposedly wouldn't have killed her if he had known that he would be executed is just one story, and not statistically representative of other classes. It also takes back his cancer analogy because the death penalty (or radiation) no longer cures anything. Lastly, it shows that the death penalty is not a means to the end of life for law-abiding people, but rather an end in and of itself.

Next, Ed Koch attacks the argument that an innocent person might be killed by mistake. He cites the work of Hugo Adam Bedau, who studied many death penalty cases over a long period of time (1892-1971). In reviewing the records of these cases, Bedau found that a mistake was not caught by the system even once! Of course, if the definition of a mistake is an error made by the system, there is no reason to believe that the system would catch it. Also, Bedau does not review the facts of any cases, but rather does the persuasive equivalent of double checking with the judges that the man they sent to death was actually guilty. Additionally, Bedau's work was done before the availability of DNA testing, so it has no relevance today. He then argues that even though the death penalty might kill an innocent person or two, the government must function even if the possibility of error exists. A more thoughtful response would include analysis of action's decision-making process as affected by the size of the stakes (which in this case are very high). Laws that govern medical error in health care facilities, for example, are much stricter than laws governing the possibilities of error in a restaurant. Even within that restaurant, laws governing errors in food temperature are the strictest because they involve bacteria. Even within the legal system, much more care is taken in death penalty cases than in any others. This is because the possibility of error becomes a much larger concern as the consequences of the error get more severe. Koch then goes on to tell us that many people convicted of murder go free and kill again. This is to argue against putting people in jail for murder as the sole resource; however, it is not responsive to the alternative of life in prison without parole.

The next argument Koch chooses to attack is that the death penalty cheapens the value of human life. To answer this, he goes back to say that the death penalty enriches the value we place on life by showing we care about the victim. Koch seems to forget that the victim is dead and that nothing we do afterwards changes that fact. He is also not responsive to the reason behind the argument. The reason given that the death penalty cheapens the value of a human life is that it shows that the right to life is conditional upon behavior and is therefore not inherent, not fundamental. By only

responding to the claim without mentioning the warrant, Koch avoids any chance of real debate on this particular argument.

Next, Koch goes to tackle the heavyweight issue. It's the heavyweight issue because courts have actually ruled against the death penalty based on this. The argument is that the death penalty is applied in a discriminatory manner. Koch answers not by attacking the claim or warrant, but by attacking the evidence. He says that this simply doesn't really exist anymore. Koch manages to ignore consistent data, as well as common sense concerning the economic factors tied in to getting good lawyers, as well as many other discrimination factors that simply can't be erased because we are judged by a jury of people.

After spending the least amount of time arguing against what is considered by courts to be the most relevant argument concerning the death penalty, Koch does on to address the concerns of those who feel that the Bible disallows killing no matter what. He answers by saying that in his interpretation of the Bible, killing is actually OK. People who take this argument seriously are probably very religious and probably well versed in the Bible and would probably be a little offended by this attempt at teaching them about the Bible. However, it should be mentioned that Koch does a nice job of citing many American heroes of the past who agreed with this stance on the issue. This is a good appeal to ethos, and it is well selected so that almost anyone reading this has someone whom they consider intelligent agreeing with Ed Koch.

Last, Ed Koch argues against the claim that the death penalty is state-sanctioned murder. He answers well by saying that there is a difference between things that the state does and things an individual does, and that we all give up power to the state. His example of taxation as opposed to extortion, or kidnapping as opposed to jail time, is well used. However, just because the state can do something does not mean it should, so the argument all ties back to what the purpose of government should be. Taxation is extortion used for the common good. Incarceration is kidnapping used to protect the common good. But is capital punishment really murder used for the common good?

The remainder of Ed Koch's piece involves what amounts to one big guilt trip. He practically tells us that if we don't support the death penalty, we support the killers of the past and the killers of the future. This rhetoric is one of the most common logical fallacies. It is a fallacy of false choice, and it's used all the time by many people addressing many issues. Ed Koch's argument certainly convinces me that we should have a police force, and that we should try to stop crimes before they happen, and that we should segregate those who have committed them from the rest of society forever. But when it comes down to taking their lives, Ed Koch's logic seems rather skimpy.

His most effective argument has little to do with logic and a lot to do with emotion, specifically with anger. It is on these grounds that I have no idea if he is right or wrong. I can write about whether or not I believe the death penalty is logically supported under what goals of government should be. I can also write about whether Ed Koch does a good job in persuading me, which he does on an emotional level, but not on a logical level. But writing about experience just doesn't work. I will hopefully never know what it's like to have someone I care about murdered. But who's to say I wouldn't want to kill the person who did this if it did happen? Can I say I am against the death penalty, but not against the potential of my personal revenge? Without experience, there is simply no way to know one's feelings about the issue. One can know thoughts, but not feelings, not until they come into reality.

Evaluation: *Yonatan offers an astute evaluation of the rhetorical strategies deployed in Koch's appeal for the death penalty, explaining the argument's emotional power and identifying significant logical lacunae.*

Ignazio Silone: One Story to Tell, One Message to Proclaim

Lisa Bagladi

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

Assignment:

*Write a seven- to ten-page research
paper on a work of literature.*

Ignazio Silone (1900-1978) was an Italian author whose works influenced thousands of people suffering from social and political injustice during the time of the Russian revolution and the battle between communist and fascist ideologies. The novel *Bread and Wine*, his defining story, directly paralleled his personal journey as he communicated his message of change, freedom, justice, and unity.

Ignazio Silone was born May 1, 1900, with the name Secondo Tranquilli, in the town of Pescina, in the Abruzzi region of Italy. His father died in 1911, and he then lost his mother, along with many family members, when hundreds of thousands suffered through the Avezzano earthquake in 1915 that shattered central Italy (Paynter 5-6). David Beecham writes, "An orphan at the age of 15, he was forced to grow up extremely fast" (1). The reality of unfortunate happenings in life was to Silone as though life is always working against people. His character Matalena expresses this in the novel by saying: "Poor people always live in fear. If you have a house, an earthquake happens. If you're healthy, illness comes. If you have a plot of land, a flood comes. There's envy in the air" (Silone 107). Silone's early life experiences forged the direction he chose. It compelled him to a mission that would influence action and change.

Silone developed and maintained his brave, noble, and mature intentions as a child. He expressed this through his main character in the novel, Pietro Spina, also disguised as Don Paolo. The novel describes an early sense of mission for Pietro Spina that was presented as having been planted early on in his life. This was introduced through Don Benedetto, Spina's teacher as a young boy. Don Benedetto tells the story of his young student, quoting him:

"Listen," he said, "this is Spina: 'But for the fact that it would be very boring to be exhibited on altars after one's death, to be prayed to and worshipped by a lot of unknown people, mostly ugly old women, I should like to be a saint. I don't want to live in accordance with circumstances, conventions and material expediency, but I want to live and struggle for what seems to me to be just and right without regard to the consequences.'" (20)

The character Spina wants to find the answers to improving the lives of all people, especially the poor and the unfortunate, and he feels compelled to be an agent of revolutionary change.

Silone's early education and religious formation was at the religious grammar school of Pescina. Later on, after the earthquake, he corresponded for several years with Don Luigi Orione, a Catholic priest with whom he had become very close (Paynter 6). (This person may have been represented by the character Don Benedetto.) Similar to the case with the character Spina, it is evident that Don Orione influenced Silone to rebel against injustices that followed the earthquake, as well as developing his desire for saint-like sacrifice. Silone wanted people to see him as an earnest and sincere person. It was best described in the novel when a young girl was looking to thank him for her miraculous healing. She approached Matalena, who was hosting him while he was in hiding, and said: "He saved me when I was on the point of death, and I want to thank him." "The Don Paolo who is staying here is not a doctor but a priest," said Matalena. "Perhaps he's neither a priest nor a doctor but a saint," said the girl. "I was at the point of death, he touched my hand and I was saved" (76).

For Silone, justice was a difficult path. He expressed this strongly both in his personal life and through his stories. He began to form protests with his peers to fight against religious and political practices that he viewed as unjust. An example of Silone's action against injustice happened while he was the only survivor in his family, along with his younger brother Romolo. Silone began to experience the deep struggle to survive as people tried to regain their lives after the earthquake. His eyes were opened to the corruption in government and the authorities that should have been trying to help people. David Pryce-Jones described scenes after the quake that he had experienced: "In its aftermath, he saw a relation stealing the wallet from the corpse of one of the victims. Once coming out of church, he had been present when a minor aristocrat set his dog on a seamstress. When she took this man to court, the magistrate found against her and made her pay costs" (1-2). Another dramatic and influential incident affected Silone when he was only eight years old, as related by Maria Nicolai

Paynter: "A local illiterate woman asked him to correspond with her son, an innocent man who was serving a life sentence" (6). These and many other experiences began his awakening to the truth and reality of life for him and his community.

According to Paynter, Silone sent three articles to the Socialist newspaper *Avanti!* to denounce the wrongdoings that were preventing reconstruction of the town (6). Soon, he joined the Socialist Youth Federation and was appointed secretary, editing its weekly paper *La Avanguardia* (Beecham 1). His writing career was born. He began to see the power of the written word, its effect on people, and their movement toward change.

The character Pietro Spina joined the socialist party and then moved on to join the communist party as he saw it as a way to take action against fascism and the demise of his community. His personal story was told through Don Paolo (Pietro Spina), as he described his journey in the novel:

He remembered his first joining a socialist group. He had left the Church, not because he doubted the correctness of its dogmas or the efficacy of the sacraments, but because it seemed to him to identify itself with a corrupt, petty, and cruel society that it should have combated. When he first became a socialist that had been his only motive. He was not yet a Marxist; that he became later after joining the socialist fold. He accepted Marxism "as a rule of the new community." In the meantime had that community not itself become a synagogue? "Alas for all enterprises the declared aim of which is the salvation of the world. They seem to be the surest traps leading to self destruction." Don Paolo decided that his return to Italy had been basically an attempt to escape that professionalism, to return to the ranks, to go back and find the clue to the complicated issue. (Silone 87-88)

For Silone, there was only one story to tell, and it reflected his personal journey and navigation through the years of the Russian revolution and the life of his people in Italy. In his introduction to the novel *Bread and Wine*, the author revealed his personal testament: "If it depended on me, I should gladly spend my life writing

and rewriting the same book: the single book that every writer has within him that is the image of his soul and of which his published works are only more or less rough fragments" (xv). His main character in his novels always mirrored Silone's strong sense of personal mission to affect change by sacrifice. In Judy Rawson's overview of his novels, she describes the character, Pietro Spina, in *Bread and Wine*, *And He Hid Himself*, and *The Seed Beneath the Snow* as all revelations of this mission (2). Silone stated: "Another thing that has grown in me in the course of years is an aversion to all forms of propaganda. The only commitment that deserves respect is that of a personal vocation" (Silone qtd. in Howe xvi). Critic Irving Howe describes Silone's "great subject" as: "The relationship of corruptible action to absolute principle; of worldly means to transcendent ends; of historical commitment to personal desire" (vi). This description is certainly a reflection of Silone himself as he remained committed to principle while maneuvering "the system" to bring about the results that he wanted.

For Silone, the ends definitely justified the means. This may have tarnished his image after his death, as his heroic status among social revolutionaries was compromised when, as stated in [Wikipedia](#), among other sources, "Two Italian historians, Dario Biocca and Mauro Canali, began finding documents in 1997 that suggest Silone may have been acting as an informant for the Fascist police from 1924 until he left for Switzerland in 1930" (1). Others speculate that because his brother Romolo was captured, tortured, and finally murdered by the fascists in 1931, he may have attempted to use covert means to save him. Nothing has been proven. David Pryce-Jones writes:

Silone deserves sympathy for helping his brother at a certain cost to himself. Biocca and Canali make no allowance for the totalitarian context, but strikingly and invariably place the ugliest possible interpretation on everything to do with Silone. Whatever its source, their animus is pointless. If beneath appearances, Silone was a real secret police informer, then that would be only a comment on the hateful demands totalitarianism makes on the individual—or to put it another way, some wounds to the human soul go deep, too deep to be under-

stood, let alone healable. Outwardly Silone lived his life as an anti-fascist and an anti-communist. The personal example stands. The writing speaks for itself. (6)

Ignazio Silone constantly questioned ideals, philosophies and ideologies and wasn't afraid to change his mind when he felt compelled to remain faithful to truth in the context of freedom. He understood how ideas form and become crystallized to a point that it may restrict freedom. In the novel, Spina has a conversation with Uliva, his friend and former cellmate in the communist prison. They are talking about the struggles that he is facing in his changing ideals. Uliva says to him,

"To propagate itself every new idea is crystallized into formulas; to maintain itself it entrusts itself to a carefully recruited body of interpreters, who may sometimes actually be appropriately paid but at all events are subject to a higher authority charged with resolving doubts and suppressing deviations. Thus every new idea invariably ends by becoming a fixed idea, immobile and out of date." (Silone 171)

Clearly for Silone, life cannot be lived without questioning it. Critic John Dickie writes about the character Spina, that his "journey of self-questioning is as much ethical and spiritual as political" (1).

Unity is an important and strong theme for Ignazio Silone. Harnessing the power of unity of a people is what saves them and gets them through all their difficulties. He celebrates this theme in his novel in which many scenes take place at a meal in which a central action of dipping bread into wine takes place. "He is forever dipping black bread into red wine to make his food of choice just as he struggles always to unite equal people in the life-giving struggle against Fascism" (Corbett 3). A scene near the end of the novel encapsulates the meaning of the title: "Bread is made of many grains of corn, so it means unity. Wine is made of many grapes, so it means unity too. Hence truth and fraternity are also things that go well together" (265).

The questioning mind of Ignazio Silone in his search for freedom, equality, and truth gives the reader of his novels an insight into his own struggle for answers. Critic Irving Howe writes: "Spina, and behind him

Silone, is obsessed with the problem, how can a decent person act in a terrible time? One answer, not the only or sufficient one, is that he must find a way to live, even if he cannot act, and perhaps with the hope that living well may come to be a mode of action" (ix). Silone is tormented with his past decisions, but is not afraid to change course and use his writings to try to influence the reader towards the truth. In the author's note on the novel, he writes:

General Graziani's inhuman treatment of Ethiopian soldiers and civilians, the euphoria of many Italians at the conquest of an empire, the passivity of most of the population and the impotence of the anti-fascists were news that filled me with a deep sense of shame. On top of that were my horror and disgust at having spent the years of my youth in the service of a revolutionary ideal that was turning out to be nothing but "red Fascism," as I then called it. As a result, my state of mind was more inclined to over-emphasis, sarcasm, and melodrama than to calm narration. (xv)

Silone best describes his complete philosophy of freedom, evident by his personal life choices, yet articulated through Pietro Spina:

"Freedom is not a thing you can receive as a gift," Pietro said. "One can be free even under a dictatorship on one simple condition, that is, if one struggles against it. A man who thinks with his own mind and remains uncorrupted is a free man. A man who struggles for what he believes to be right is a free man. You can live in the most democratic country in the world, and if you are lazy, callous, servile, you are not free, in spite of the absence of violence and coercion, you are a slave. Freedom is not a thing that must be begged from others. You must take it for yourself, whatever share you can." (33)

Silone thought with his own mind, struggled for what he believed to be right, and took freedom for himself. He clearly expressed his personal life journey through his characters in his novel, *Bread and Wine*, as if there really was only "one story to tell." He wanted to help in effecting change for the betterment of people's lives and illuminating paths for justice. His com-

mitment to freedom of thought while summoning a sense of unity among his people was important to him. He demonstrated this through his main theme and message in the novel. Questions about his modes of action with the continued investigation of his life clearly reveals the power and influence of his message through his stories—even after his death.

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Evaluation: *The author of this essay has taken a little-known novel and developed a compelling essay that blends passionate conviction with convincing argumentation.*

Rise of Nature

Kristin Bernacki

Course: Literature 105 (Poetry)

Instructor: Barbara Butler

Assignment:

Write a critical analysis of a poem.

The chapters that begin the Bible recount the creation of the Heavens and Earth and tell the story of the very first human beings, Adam and Eve, whose disobedience to God in the Garden of Eden brings about the ultimate fall of mankind. Upon eating the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, Adam and Eve submit themselves, along with generations of the future, to mortal lives and are expelled from Eden. Many God-fearing Christians look at this story of original sin and understand that because Eve succumbed to the serpent and was too weak to resist the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, immortality and purity of man was sacrificed forever. This accepted notion that no good came from her succulent bite of the juicy red fruit is exactly what Robert Frost's poem "Never Again Would Birds' Song Be the Same" tries to dispel. Written as an English sonnet, the poem shows a new and enlightening interpretation of the happenings at Eden within the first two quatrains, while the final six lines showcase the value of optimism in seemingly unfavorable circumstances.

The beginning octave of the poem introduces an alternate version of the familiar biblical story of Adam and Eve and the birds that occupied the Garden with them. In the first line, the speaker of the poem introduces a character with a determined and strong conviction in the story that is sure to follow: "He would declare and could himself believe" (1). Because the word "declare" not only signifies the character's confidence to affirm his beliefs, but also suggests the dire urgency to make these beliefs known, the intensity of his faith is demonstrated and thus immediately draws eager readers in to learn what it is that he has to say. He continues and remarks that in retelling the account of what happened inside Eden, the focus is generally on the first two humans and their shortcomings, and how the other inhabitants of the Garden and their stories are oftentimes forgotten. This poem features the birds and how their presence "in all the garden round" (2) allows them the special privilege of listening to the beautiful voice of Eve all day long as she imparts her talent upon them. The birds eventually learn to create their own unique echo to her melody, "an oversound, / Her tone of meaning but without the words" (4-5), that is far superior to Eve's harmonious song.

The acknowledged and delicate timbre of Eve's garden serenades makes a profound effect on the birds, and it is in the last three lines of the first octave that the beauty of her voice is emphasized: "Admittedly an eloquence so soft / Could only have had an influence on birds" (6-7). Being recognized for "an eloquence so soft" conveys an impression of powerful yet unassuming persuasion and, in essence, seduction. This idea yields that Eve's gift of song and especially appealing influence on birds are reminiscent of the mythological sirens, a notion that greatly challenges Christian ideology and traditional beliefs of Adam, Eve, and Eden. Her beautiful and enticing voice has qualities that can lure animals, much like a bird "call...carried aloft" (8). In addition, the specific act of calling out to the birds signifies her purpose and intent to do what she does for the birds, and this further exemplifies the strong influence her singing has on the birds and their songs.

The beginning of Frost's poem depicts a story using description and sensory imagery, most particularly auditory, while the ending, beginning at line 9, represents the speaker's insight to what Eve's song truly did, not only for the birds of Eden, but for all birds thereafter. He contends that, whether or not the story of Eve's lilting song and its powerful lure on the birds is altogether true, she must have had a lasting effect on them: "Be that as may be, she was in their song" (9). Fully realizing the influence of the first woman on the birds in her immediate presence, the speaker then implies that the crossing of Eve's voice with the birds' voices created a type of evolution that ultimately gives all birds from that time on the same musical endowment as those first birds in the Garden:

Moreover her voice upon their voices crossed
Had now persisted in the woods so long
That probably it never would be lost.
Never again would birds' song be the same.
(10-13)

Because Eve's beautiful voice was passed on and upwards to the birds, Eve, a woman created from the hands of God, and her song, could essentially live on forever and "[persist] in the woods so long" (11) through the continued existence of birds. It is for this reason, he goes on to say, that Eve came into Creation. She did not

come only to be partner to Adam or to eat the apple from the Tree of Knowledge and commit the original sin, she came to give her voice to the birds of eternity so that it would not be forgotten. There is undeniable optimism in these final lines of the poem, in which the speaker proposes an idea similar to that of finding the silver lining of a dark cloud. He encourages readers to consider the unforeseen good fortunes of an unintentional outcome and realize that although things do not always go the way they are planned, things happen for a reason. The original sin may be considered the fall of mankind, but this poem, with its optimistic spirit, exemplifies it instead as the rise of nature.

The belief that immortality was sacrificed for a taste of the forbidden fruit is a notion that Robert Frost's sonnet attempts to challenge. Presenting an alternate account of the widely held idea of what happened inside the Garden of Eden and offering revelation about the positive results of an otherwise undesirable situation, "Never Again Would Birds' Song Be the Same" gives a message of optimism to its readers; although human immortality has been sacrificed, the immortality of beautiful song will continue to live on.

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Evaluation: *Kristin presents an enlightening interpretation of Robert Frost's lovely sonnet.*

Democracy's Deficit: U.S. Involvement in the Middle East, Gender Equality in Muslim Nations, and the Factors Complicating Them Both

Will Bryerton

Course: Philosophy 190 (Feminist Philosophy)
Instructor: Barbara Solheim

Assignment:

Select a topic related to our general course subject matter, about which you wish to learn more. On this topic, you will make a class presentation and also write an 8- to 10-page paper. Be sure formally to incorporate the ideas of at least one of the philosophers we have studied.

Since most discussions relating to the war against terrorism and America's involvement in the Middle East typically pertain to geopolitical issues such as the effectiveness of preemptive actions and the correlation between democracy and freedom, the extensive nature and global significance of these topics can often force individuals to overlook the conditions and implications facing specific groups or individual citizens. During war and periods of social and national reformation, the changes that occur will certainly reflect the ambitions and objectives of those who were most influential throughout the period of reformation. These changes, however, can yield such immense modifications to a nation's cultural structure that those who held influence during the period of reformation could not ever predict

or account for them. Thus, as America continues to pursue its mission in Iraq while combating terrorism and calling for a new age of freedom throughout the Middle East, it is important to examine the effects of American foreign policy as it concerns all members and groups within the nations of the Middle East.

One of these groups, though historically marginalized and frequently disregarded, is the women of nations that are heavily rooted in Muslim law. As America's presence and reconstructive intentions are believed by many to constitute the greatest impetus toward equality in nations where women are lawfully subjected to violence and barred from education and self-supporting employment, there exists a hopeful notion that democracy, with its inherent demand for free elections and open access to government, will eventually eradicate such inequalities by allowing every citizen to participate in their respective nation's future. Yet, given the increasing influence of Islamic fundamentalism, the broad role of Muslim law within Iraq's most recent Constitution, and the ideological divisions among Muslim women, observers of American foreign policy must ponder whether democracy truly serves as the sole resolving institution for the long-oppressed women of Muslim nations.

Considering that all successful democracies entail cooperation, compromise, and the expression of dissent, the diversity, and in some instances, polarity, of opinion among Muslim women does not necessarily bode well for the prospect of any governing institution, whether democratic or authoritarian, adopting legislation that is sympathetic to calls for women's rights. Though healthy democracies tend to cherish and value both cultural and ideological diversity, many political analysts warn that diversity that prompts infighting or division among a particular faction or group in society only prevents the group from maximizing its authority within democratic processes. In Iraq, for instance, where conflict between the Shiites, the nation's largest cultural and religious group, and the Kurds and Sunnis has incited much of the violence that the U.S. military must now control, women not only differ in opinion with their counterparts in other ethnic or religious groups, but with other women of their own group as well.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the renowned French political theorist who advocates enhanced civic liberty by means of abandoning individual desires and claims to superiority, offers commentary relating to women's and minority liberty which is highly pertinent to the modern condition of the Middle East. In his 1762 publications *The Social Contract* and *Emile*, Rousseau suggests that women, like all other groups in society, must relinquish certain liberties in order to contribute to the general will of society, avoid oppression from other groups, and formulate a concise collection of interests that shall be recognized by the governing body (Jacobus 54-55). While many of Rousseau's recommendations regarding women's education, behavior, and natural dispositions are now somewhat antiquated and even sexist, the philosopher's explanation of disorganized interests and their consequential inconsistencies toward the general will is descriptive of democracy's potentially negligible effect upon Muslim women. The divisions among Muslim women that may yield this unconstructive democracy, in addition to the inexperience of the Middle East in managing democratic institutions, serve as evidence for observers of Middle Eastern politics who question if democracy is the next logical step for nations undergoing such discordant times. Thomas Carothers, a former lawyer for the State Department who now coordinates the Democracy and Rule of Law Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, reiterates this concern, remarking that when "a society has underlying conditions favorable to the emergence of democratic government, if you remove the authoritarian government by force you allow these underlying conditions to flourish. If you don't have these underlying conditions, it's hard to create them" (qtd in Katel 6).

Though members of Western societies may view the divisions among Muslim women as an impediment to women's rights and gender equality, it should be understood that these conflicts of opinion are rooted in Middle Eastern historical, religious, and cultural contexts which, through the eyes of many Muslim women, transcend any current debates over Iraqi reconstruction or the effectiveness of democracy. Sharia, however, the Arabic term for Islamic Law, has inspired disputes

which seem to connect the various historical and cultural issues through an expansive and complex debate with serious implications for the future of the Middle East. Established in the seventh century, after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, by Islamic scholars, sharia was issued to offer moral and legal guidance to Muslims that was based upon the Koran (Coleman). In the eleventh century, Muslim scholars of the Sunni branch became frustrated over questions of the validity of independent reasoning within sharia and eventually devised different bodies of sharia, some of which allowed for a greater degree of independent reasoning than others. Since the Koran contains only about eighty verses relating to modern legal issues and the role of women in society (Coleman), the Muslim text is similar to the U.S. Constitution, the Bible, or any other document of societal or legal importance which must be continuously studied and reevaluated to determine its proper application to modern conditions. Perhaps as a result of this resemblance, many Western observers have framed the debate over sharia through classifications and labels that are regularly present throughout Western discourse. While distinctions such as "Islamic feminism," "progressive Muslims," and "traditionalists" may help Westerners understand certain situations or controversies in the Middle East, they do not necessarily account for the differences in culture and religious tolerance that exist between Western and Muslim societies. Muslim women in America, for instance, express difficulty in adapting to a secular culture and the rights to free speech and equal opportunities of employment (Robertson A3). Muslim women in nations under Islamic law, on the other hand, often experience anxiety due to the need to meet the domestic and familial standards set forth by sharia so that their husbands can devote their attention to their jobs and the hardships of attempting to support a family in a struggling and unstable economy. Among the many lessons that can be taken from this dissimilarity is the imperative nature of religion in the politics of the Middle East. Whereas Western societies sometimes disregard religious authorities to bring about reform, Muslim societies embrace them and entrust these authorities to carry out appropriate measures.

In view of Islam's and sharia's pervasive qualities throughout the Middle East, the broad role of Islamic law within Iraq's new Constitution could be expected by anyone with an interest in the reconstruction of this nation. While the prevalence of religious influence in the Constitution may not come as a surprise, it is still a concern for those who would prefer that Iraq, as well as all other Middle Eastern Nations, adopt policies that would grant additional rights to women and protect those which had existed before the inception of the new Constitution. Before the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, Iraqis lived under a personal-status law that was enacted by a secular regime and that articulated the rights of women (Abdul-Zahra). This law, supported and authorized by former Prime Minister Abdul Karim Qassim in 1959, provided Iraqi women with some of the most progressive legal rights in the Middle East as it prohibited arbitrary divorce, established eighteen as the age for marriage, and imposed severe restriction on the practice of polygamy (Coleman). Proponents of a strict interpretation of Islamic law, many of whom did not support the 1959 law to begin with, moved quickly to annul the law after the overthrow of Hussein. In December of 2003, nine months after Hussein's removal, Shiite leaders passed a resolution which granted sharia legal authority over matters involving marriage, family, and divorce, thus effectively rescinding all women's rights under the personal-status law (Coleman).

Currently, as the Iraqi Constitution establishes a sturdy alliance between Islam and the civil status of Iraq's citizens (Abdul-Zahra), observers of Iraqi redevelopment must wait and see if democracy will enable the nation to reclaim and expand the rights afforded to women in 1959. Though the final version of the newly formed Constitution does not appear to undermine women's rights to the extent that some political analysts had expected, a specific provision within the Constitution's second article has provoked considerable debate regarding the future of women who live under both Muslim law and democratic rule. Provision A of the second article provides that "no law which contradicts the established rulings of Islam may be established" (Coleman). While Article 14 later declares

that "Iraqis are equal before the law without discrimination because of sex" (qtd in Coleman), the possibility for conflict between these two provisions, combined with the diversity and interpretational ambiguity of sharia, could prove troublesome for Iraq's democracy and protection of women and minorities. Granted, constitutional scholars have long credited ambiguity and subjectivism for the enduring relevance and authority of the United States Constitution. Yet, in a society which must perpetually contend with violent uprisings, politically obstructive disputes among religious factions, and a history of regime replacement and ever-changing legal rights, an ambiguous constitution that does not present a clear definition of rights and minority protections may only yield further discord and, perhaps even worse, frustration with democratic government altogether. Michael Mandelbaum, professor of American foreign policy at Johns Hopkins University, affirms that "the great enemy of democracy is disorder" (qtd in Katel 8). If resolutions toward ending Iraq's instability do not come quickly, Iraqis of all sexes, religions, and ethnic backgrounds may wish to conclude the experiment in democracy and institute "a government that is strong enough to suppress the violence" (Katel 8). Ironically, however, some political analysts argue that the best way to assuage frustrations with democracy and protect women's rights is not to consider new forms of government, but rather to improve the existing democracy. Laith Kubba, a senior program officer at the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington, D.C., believes that current tensions in Iraq warrant democratic government and a system of checks and balances to "ensure that no single community would run away with all of the power" if tensions become intensified and political change is imminent (Katel 6).

Another obstacle toward democracy bringing gender equality to the Middle East, and one which is certainly a factor behind the diverse opinions of Muslim women and the role of Islam in the Iraqi Constitution, is the growing influence of Islamic fundamentalism throughout the region. Islamic fundamentalism, as a political movement, is agreed upon by most scholars to be rooted in a variety of historical conditions, including

corrupt and unresponsive governments that have been supported by Western powers with secular political traditions, Muslim opposition to the West's alliance with Israel, and the end of the Cold War, which was largely responsible for the breakup of many leftist political parties throughout the Middle East. For the citizens of Middle Eastern nations who are sympathetic to fundamentalist ideology, however, Islamic fundamentalism is not typically regarded as a source of political empowerment or triumph over Western influence, but rather as a source of spiritual and moral purification which, if recognized by others, is capable of engendering a new, altruistic social conscience (Tucker 20). While fundamentalist groups in various nations tend to hold differing positions on matters of economic regulation and judicial authority, there is seemingly no opposition or disagreement pertaining to the traditional role of women in Muslim culture (Tucker 20-21). This unanimity, in addition to Islamic fundamentalism's historic preference for strong, centralized governments with few checks or balances, creates what the 2002 Arab Human Development Report has deemed a "freedom deficit" that will inhibit Middle Eastern democracy as well as the expansion of women's rights (Jost 38). This report, composed by the United Nations Development Program and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, concludes that "traditional Arab culture and values are often at odds with those of the globalizing world" and cites "high rates of illiteracy and low rates of economic development" along with "little popular participation" in government and "limited freedom of expression" as factors that contribute to the freedom deficit and the growth of fundamentalism (Jost 38).

Thus, with respect to the debate regarding democracy and its propensity toward improved opportunities for Muslim women, the growth of fundamentalist ideology and the recent empowerment of fundamentalist political regimes proffers a question which is pivotal to the future of all American endeavors in the Middle East: If the acknowledgement or expansion of women's rights is hardly an interest among Muslim citizens, can it be logically expected that democracy will repudiate public opinion and generate progressive reform within Muslim nations? Even Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the afore cited

political theorist who champions civic liberty and minority protections against the power of the majority, recognizes that modern societies are driven by public demand and popular interest, not necessarily the cause of social justice. In "The Origin of Civil Society," which is Book I of *The Social Contract*, Rousseau describes the relationship between individuals and the formulation of the general will, observing, "Each of us contributes to the group his person and the powers which he wields as a person under the supreme direction of the general will, and we receive into the body politic each individual as forming an indivisible part of the whole" (Jacobus 66). The general will of a democratic political body, therefore, irrespective of the body's religious affiliations, will ultimately reflect the interests of those which submit certain natural liberties to be governed by the body. Unless the subject of gender equality can be infused into the public sphere, Middle Eastern democracy will likely foster the same threats and inequalities that inspired American intervention in the first place.

As the U.S. has sought to improve its own security by attempting to instate democratic institutions in the Middle East, it has become clear to political observers that the subject of gender equality in the Middle East is just as subjective and diverse as it is divisive. Throughout the region, across national borders and in the hearts and minds of Muslim men and women of various cultural and ideological backgrounds, the seriousness of issues involving gender roles and social status is understood and expected to serve as a vital element in the region's uncertain future. Yet, despite the globally acknowledged severity of this dilemma, factors such as poverty, the possible occurrence of terrorist acts, imbalanced economies, illiteracy, and the Middle East's inexperience with democracy tend to dilute the sense of exigency relating to matters of gender equality (Jost 1). Even when scholars or political figures attempt to address these matters, it is difficult for these individuals to determine the long-term significance and effects of such aforementioned conditions as the ideological divisions among Muslim women, the important role of Islamic law within Iraq's new Constitution, and the growing influence of Muslim fundamentalism.

Democracy's Deficit: U.S. Involvement in the Middle East, Gender Equality in Muslim Nations, and the Factors Complicating Them Both

Amid all of these uncertainties, however, those who favor improved opportunities for women in the Middle East can look toward two features of Middle Eastern politics that appear highly unlikely to change. First, successful democracy entails a certain degree of social stability. Americans can attest to this through their own national history, and the potential outbreak of civil war in Iraq further demonstrates that effective, responsive democracies must be accompanied by a general sense of trust and welfare among the citizenry. Second, Islam is more than a political mobilization tool or an ideological disposition; it is a spiritual and cultural foundation that is profoundly embedded in the many individuals and nations of the Middle East. Since successful democracy is, to a large extent, dependent upon social stability, Islam must be seen as a force capable of restoring order and stability so that democratic institutions can prosper and reforms toward gender equality can eventually be introduced. While fundamentalist regimes and social factions may stand beyond reasonable negotiation, the disparity between the personal status of men and women in many Muslim nations is rather blatant, and the international awareness of this disparity is too great for issues of gender equality to be entirely ignored by democratic governments. If U.S. officials continue to insist that the spreading of democracy is the best method of fighting extremism, poverty, violence, and inequality, the conditions, beliefs, and individuals that influence the Middle East right now must naturally be projected to influence the region's future, especially under a democratic government. Islam, as perhaps the lone unifying force in the region, is certainly subject to conflicting interpretations and the instigation of further conflict, but it is also the most amenable source of the peace and stability that are necessary so that democratic reforms in gender roles and social status can ensue.

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Evaluation: *Will's examination of the tensions between an externally imposed democracy in Iraq and gender equality is excellent. His writing demonstrates both his careful research and very thoughtful analysis of the issue.*

“This is Just to Say”

Just Says What it Means

Dani Bugay

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Barbara Butler

Assignment:

Write an analysis of a poem.

Typically, poems are not as they first appear. Flowery words, abstractions, and analogies are techniques used in poetry that make it a joy to read yet a challenge to access. Oftentimes, someone will scan a poem once over, recognize the depth behind the words, and realize right away that the poem will need to be considered analytically in order to discover the true meaning behind the verse. Yet, in the case of William Carlos Williams' poem, "This is Just to Say," the simplistic poem does not have any hidden secondary meaning. Williams uses imagery, diction, and structure in order to convey his uncomplicated yet sublime ideas about temptation, forgiveness, honesty, and human nature.

In this poem, the imagery is really solely of one thing: plums. The speaker says in the poem's first piece of a sentence only, "I have eaten/the plums/that were in/the ice box" (1-4). This is an open statement that gives the reader a mental picture of plums stored in a refrigerator. The reader also sees the speaker opening the refrigerator, finding the plums, and deciding whether to eat them or not in consideration of the next few lines; they also might just picture him eating them

right away, without hesitation. This imagery emphasizes the temptation the speaker feels. Then, the reader acknowledges his wrongdoing in eating these plums as he continues "and which/you were probably/saving/for breakfast" (5-8). This is not a direct image, but it causes the reader to picture people acting in reaction to the fruit being missing. Finally, the poem finishes up with a sample of gustatory imagery as the speaker asks, "Forgive me/they were delicious/so sweet/and so cold" (9-12). The main character here is asking for forgiveness, but also going on to describe the fruit he knows he shouldn't have eaten. This imagery is firstly honest. The speaker does not hesitate to share his true feelings about the situation. He is truly sorry, but it is a complicated type of apology because he really does enjoy the fruit to the point that he still wants to share the joy the plums brought him with the person he took them from.

While the imagery helps reinforce the temptation the speaker experiences, the diction sets the tone for the piece and adds its own meaning. The first four lines of the poem "I have eaten/the plums/that were in/the ice-box" is a proclamation, or a confession (1-4). The words here are precise and uncalculating. The character does not use any unnecessarily euphemistic language, and he uses the most direct way to communicate his error. This confession is also correct grammatically, in that he takes the responsibility for his mistake, by claiming "I have eaten/the plums" as opposed to deflecting blame by rearranging the verb and the subject. The second set of lines is the speaker's recognition of wrong-doing. He does not yet apologize, yet it is where he identifies why he is apologizing. Without this middle piece of the poem, the speaker would not be apologizing for the specific wrong he has committed. Here, he recognizes that the plums are something that "you were probably/saving/for breakfast" (6-8). Once again, his word choice is not deceiving in any way. This establishes to the reader that the speaker is not lying. He is telling straightforward information to purposefully give an accurate account. While these first nine lines are very simple and direct, the last four lines have a more complicated feel. Here, the speaker is apologizing, but also retelling the little crime he has committed. He says to the other character about the plums,

“This is Just to Say” Just Says What it Means

“Forgive me/they were delicious/so sweet/ and so cold” as though perhaps he felt he could not stop himself (9-12). It is the wording of this verse that is so interesting. He asks for forgiveness but also has an inclination to tell exactly how the fruit tasted. There is a possibility that the reason he mentions the deliciousness of the fruit is an explanation for his transgression. Yet it also feels as though the main character takes such pleasure from the fruit that he feels the need to share the joy he felt from eating them. In this way, it is a little like the speaker is giving back a little of what he ate. The speaker also uses alliteration at the end of the piece, which emphasizes its purposeful position as a poem. It can be said that the speaker eats the plums of his loved one, but in return, the loved one receives a poem that reveals the honesty and humanness of her counterpart.

Finally, the structure of the poem helps express the tone of honesty and poetic necessity. The structure of the poem is free verse which helps give the poem its blatantly honest feeling. If the poem were fitted into a more structured style, much of its directness would be lost. The way it is composed also helps express the poetry of the event. The same lines of this poem could be scribbled on a napkin on the kitchen table in a prose-like note, but it would deemphasize the poetic nature of the apology. The poem uses this poetic structure on such a brief and unsubstantial matter because it celebrates humanity and poetry. Even though the poem feels like a note stuck to the side of the refrigerator, it is no less a poem. This apology and delight in wrongdoing is simply transcribed for someone else to experience again and again for the beauty in it. Because it is a poem and not a note, it emphasizes this beauty in everyday life and in particular the beauty found in temptation, honesty, and human nature.

In conclusion, the poem “This is Just to Say” actually has quite a bit to say. It might not be rich in metaphor or figurative language, but it is a fresh little poem that portrays meaning that is no less eloquent than poems that are much longer and more difficult to access. Although it is simplistic in nature, it is surprising to know that the poem says everything necessary to make it pleasing to the ear and mind. This poem does not outright represent a cause or specific opinion, but

rather presents an everyday event in a new light. This poem’s honesty and direct approach is rather a subtle acknowledgment of the realities of being human. Without temptation, honesty, and forgiveness, humans would not be humans. And it is this acknowledgment that makes this poem truly sublime: it accepts the fact that humans are imperfect, but embraces the beauty with which they execute this universal imperfection.

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Evaluation: “*This is Just to Say*” that Dani has composed an insightful analysis of William Carlos Williams’ poem.

Goodman Brown's Journey to Evil

Roger Caldwell

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Richard Middleton-Kaplan

Assignment:

*Write a seven- to ten-page research paper
on a work of literature.*

The story of "Young Goodman Brown" is a symbolic representation of the internal struggle that the main character, Brown, faces when he attempts to perform an evil deed. The walk through the woods is symbolic of Brown's journey into his own heart and mind, with the devil representing his dark side and his wife, Faith, representing the light. Paul J. Hurley aptly describes the story, saying "'Young Goodman Brown' is a subtle work of fiction concerned with revealing a distorted mind...the pervasive sense of evil in the story is not separate from or outside its protagonist; it is in and of him" (411).

Most who have analyzed "Young Goodman Brown" fall into two camps: either the story really happens or some portion of the story is a dream. Reginald Cook states a common belief among those who believe that part of the story is a dream: "The reader does not fail to see that as Brown goes from the village to the forest he passes from a conscious world to a subconscious one" (259). Others say that the dividing line between dream and reality is more blurred: "The dream ends convincingly, but there is no satisfactory point for it to begin"

(Robinson 249). My contention is that the entire story is not real, nor is it a dream, but it is a symbolic representation that begins with the first word and ends with the last. The forest may symbolize the deeper recesses of Brown's mind, but every setting in the story is symbolic of some part of his mental landscape.

In his preparations to leave on his journey, Goodman Brown is confronted by Faith, who pleads with him not to go. She implies that she too may be drawn into evil if he goes, saying "A lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts, that she's afraid of herself, sometimes" (Hawthorne 56). If one views Faith as the light side of Goodman Brown's psyche, or his conscience, this scene before Brown leaves on his journey is when his conscience is strongest. It is the only time that Faith speaks to him, making the case that he should stay home and not commit the evil deed he intends to commit. He tears himself away from Faith, telling himself that "...after this one night, I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to Heaven" (56). This is the classic justification of the criminal—"Just one more big score and I'll get out of this line of work forever." It rarely works out that way.

For the rest of the story, Brown's conscience (Faith) is no longer a solid presence, but an ethereal image or passing thought. It is not coincidence that this is when Brown's travelling companion appears, representing his darker side. Almost all who read this story see this travelling companion as the devil, but I accept that only inasmuch as the companion is the proverbial devil on Brown's shoulder, the internal voice that tries to lure Brown onto the path of evil. Consider this description of the traditional devil: "Students of 'Young Goodman Brown' agree in general that its main materials are drawn from Cotton Mather's *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, published the year following the Salem witchcraft trials, in which Mather describes the devil's appearing as a 'small black man'" (Robinson 248). This does not appear to match the description of the devil given in the text, "...Apparently in the same rank of life as Goodman Brown, and bearing a considerable resemblance to him..." (57). Unless Brown is a small black man, which is possible but not terribly likely, the companion described in the story is more likely to be Brown's personal devil, rather than the more common

perception of the devil. It should be noted that at various points in the story it is indicated that Brown's companion bears an even more striking resemblance to an elder relative of Brown, but that is an understandable personification since Brown's ancestors (like Hawthorne's) appear to be both sinners and authority figures Brown would be likely to obey. In Hawthorne's case, his ancestors were clearly a source of guilt for him. "William Hawthorne, earliest of the line in America, pronounced sentences on the Quakers; his son John was a magistrate conspicuous in the witch trials of 1692" (Turner 59). While "Young Goodman Brown" is not necessarily based on Hawthorne himself (although it could be), Hawthorne's history surely must have at least influenced the creation of Goodman Brown and his personal devil.

Brown seems immediately to be reluctant to walk beside this man, perhaps still hearing the echoes of his conscience, but his companion encourages him to go further on, saying "Let us walk on, nevertheless, reasoning as we go, and if I convince thee not, thou shalt turn back" (58). James U. Fogle sums up what the companion does for the next part of the story very well: "Then commences a skillful and relentless attack on all the values which Goodman Brown has lived by" (28). Brown's companion details his dealings with both Brown's ancestors and the various respectable New Englanders, a claim perhaps even more believable if we view him as the dark side of each person, rather than as the one central devil. It is not hard at all to imagine that "the deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me" (58), if the "me" in that sentence refers to the darker side of their own nature.

Brown shows surprising resolve on his walk through the forest, even without the direct presence of his conscience. Brown is pulled along reluctantly through the forest and considers turning back on several occasions. Every time he seems ready to go back home to Faith (his conscience), however, he sees another person he respects doing something evil. He sees Goody Cloyse as a witch and sees Deacon Gookin and the minister on their way to a witch meeting. Still he seems ready to turn back until he gets the impression that Faith is also in the woods, on her way to the witch meeting. There are several possible explanations for these appearances,

but I will address the two that I consider to be most likely. The first possibility is that in the real world, these are people who either intentionally or accidentally encourage Brown to commit his evil deed. For example, if Brown's evil deed were to steal money from the collection plate, perhaps the deacon and the minister left the plate with Goody Cloyse, who in turn asked Brown to keep an eye on it, and his conscience (Faith) deserted him. Another possibility is that these apparitions are just tricks being played on Brown by his dark side, trying to convince him to stay on the evil path. Hurley explains why these four visions would be chosen: "They [Faith, Goody Cloyse, the minister and Deacon Gookin] are the four people in Salem village to whom he is morally responsible" (417). While a side effect of using the images of these four people as tools to lead Brown astray is that he could lose faith in them (both the real people and the images), I do not believe that is the intent of his dark side. It would be much more beneficial to his personal devil if Brown were to trust these images implicitly and let them lead him to commit his evil act.

Goodman Brown, when confronted with his loss of Faith (by finding one of her ribbons in the woods), begins a mad run through the forest. While some would say that this is where Brown turns wholly to evil, I tend to agree more with a statement by Walter J. Paulits: "What impels him is more frenzy than rational, unimpassioned choice, and it is a standard moral dictum that passion alleviates the gravity of moral fault" (580). The classic symbol for the person facing a moral decision is the angel on one shoulder and the devil on the other. What happens when the angel disappears, or worse, appears to jump on the other shoulder with the devil? The person is drawn in the direction the devil is pulling. It is not so much a choice as a matter of spiritual physics. He is frenzied, he is running, and the only one to steer him or weight him in one direction or the other is his devil. This is what leads him to the clearing and the witch meeting.

In the clearing, Brown believes that he sees most of the respected and revered figures from his town and others reveling and cavorting and taking part in an evil ceremony. Perhaps the most significant of those was

seen when he was brought forth as a convert. The narrator states, "He could have well nigh sworn, that the shape of his own dead father beckoned him to advance, looking downward from a smoke wreath, while a woman, with dim features of despair, threw out her hand to warn him back" (64). This is the darkness within him at its strongest, conjuring images of everyone he would possibly trust to urge him on. Although the narrator wonders if the image of a woman is Brown's mother, I wonder if perhaps it is Faith, his last smoky remnants of a conscience trying to stop him before he is too far gone. The ceremony continues, complete with a veiled woman revealed to be Faith as his fellow convert. Is it really Faith? It does not have to be. It could just as easily be just another illusion created by his evil companion, his personal devil. If it were really Faith, wouldn't she have said something to Brown, either warning him away or asking him to join her?

The climax of this scene is Brown's rejection of evil, crying out to the image of Faith, "Look up to Heaven and resist the Wicked One!" (66). That is when the entire scene vanishes and he finds himself in a calm forest. This symbolizes his triumph over his darker nature and return to serenity. His dark side, having been defeated, loses its power to uphold the illusion, and all those things created by it fade away to reveal only the tranquil forest of Brown's mind. Even Brown's devil himself is nowhere to be found—in fact, as far as we know, he never returns. Perhaps this is the moment when he decides not to commit the evil act he is pondering. But then the story goes on, with Brown returning to his town and his Faith (with the ribbon back in her hair—proof that the ribbon-less Faith at the ceremony was a false image?), only to spurn them. The story goes right to the end of Brown's life, stating that, "...his dying hour was gloom" (67). Reginald Cook offers one theory, saying that the ending would appear to be, "...a case of psychic masochism in which Brown's compulsion is in reality the expression of the desire for self-punishment" (261). I think not. Paulits comes closer, saying, "The terrible thing about Brown is that his customary spirit is that of the 'hanging judge,' but never with assurance; he vacillates and in his vacillation suffers" (583). I believe it is lack of

assurance that dominates the ending, but I believe the ending actually continues to work as a symbol, not a return to Brown's real life. Brown's spurning of all those around him in this story symbolizes his lack of assurance in what his own personal angel and devil are telling him, and his ultimate decision to not trust either of his inner voices, light or dark, and to instead make his choices intellectually. Ironically, this could mean that Brown decides not to commit this one evil deed, but as a side effect, faces a lifetime of such choices with no conscience to guide him. Of course, the symbolic lifetime in this story does not necessarily coincide with Brown's real lifetime. It is equally likely that he will relive this same struggle with the same or similar cast of characters the next time he contemplates an evil act.

The one logical question that must be asked, based upon my interpretation of this story, is "What evil act is Brown contemplating?" There are those who would suggest that the sin must be sexual in nature, due to the sexual symbolism in the story, including a serpent/walking stick (phallic symbol, perhaps), a journey which could be described as the penetration of a dark forest (metaphor for intercourse?), and a wild orgy-like celebration and ceremony at the end of the journey. I tend to agree with Harry M. Campbell that interpretations like these, "...oversimplify Hawthorne by making him narrowly Freudian (or pre-Freudian)" (264). One might also think that the sin must be against the church, what with the appearance of so many religious figures. There is some validity to that, since the easiest way to convince someone to sin against the church is to show him that the deacon and the minister have committed similar sins. In the end, though, I suggest that it doesn't really matter. A person with a good conscience can agonize for hours over something so trivial as whether or not to tell a cashier that they were given too much change, while someone with no concept of right and wrong can kill someone and not lose a wink of sleep about it. I suggest that Goodman Brown may truly be a "Good man," and his heroic internal struggle against his personal devil in the dark woods could be over just about anything.

There is no doubt that Young Goodman Brown makes a remarkable journey and comes face to face with evil in some form. The evil he faces may be in his own heart

and mind. Hawthorne describes this tale in the grandest terms, with a dangerous journey through a dark and evil woods, with a dark companion. He sets the tale in Salem, not long after the witch trials. Why would Hawthorne choose to tell a tale of internal struggle with all these images and situations in such an ominous setting? Consider Cook's statement about Hawthorne: "He [Hawthorne] evokes the depth of the Puritan mind which expresses itself, not only in witches' waxen images pricked with thorns, but in the nocturnal coven and in the black man's book in which are inscribed names in blood from cut fingers" (261). This is the world in which Hawthorne is comfortable. This is the world in which Hawthorne is interested. This is the world that Hawthorne can make interesting for a reader. As Harry Levin says in his book *The Power of Blackness*: "Hawthorne's deep feeling for place was closely linked with his time consciousness; no American region was so rich as his in history, and no other writer so possessed as he by the sense of the past" (50). I should make the distinction, however, that I do not presume that Goodman Brown himself (as the person having the symbolic inner struggle) necessarily lives in the same time and place that the story is set. For that matter, Goodman Brown could be anyone, perhaps one of Hawthorne's contemporaries or maybe even Hawthorne himself. Perhaps Goodman Brown is actually meant to be "Everyman" Brown, and the story is meant to be symbolic of every person's internal struggle with conscience, not just one particular case.

In "Young Goodman Brown," Hawthorne clearly provides a symbolic representation of what is going on in Brown's mind while he contemplates performing an act of evil or sin. The representation has all the players: conscience, played by Faith; the dark or evil side of Brown, played by his companion; and Brown's intellect, represented by himself. Brown's departure from Faith and walk through the woods symbolizes his own journey into the dark influence of his evil side, and his ultimate refusal of that evil leads him to himself, trusting only his intellect and none of the other good or bad influences in his mind.

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Evaluation: *The author of this essay finds something original to say about this shopworn story. He develops a unique, personal, consistent interpretation that enhances our understanding of the tale.*

Maria's Story

Johnna Calvillo

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

Instructors: Kurt Hemmer and Greg Herriges

Assignment:

*Students were to choose a rock
and roll song and write an analysis of the lyrics,
examining its major theme.*

Many hard rock groups are seen by those unfamiliar with the genre as being more about screaming, mosh pits, and playing as loud as possible than about the music or the message. At times, rock's raw, wild energy is vital to the performance. However, beyond the music's violent and confrontational nature, there can be very moving, intelligent meanings in the lyrics. Rage Against the Machine, with lyricist Zack de la Rocha, is an excellent example of an educated, motivated group of people who strive for purpose behind their music, and to influence their audience with their lyrics. Their goal as a band is to inspire their fans to take action and to stand up for what they believe in. This kind of purpose behind the music, even in the face of such a drastically different genre, can be compared to the intent of Bob Marley and the Wailers. They told tales of longing for freedom of oppression, and of the power that uniting the human spirit can bring. Interestingly, an even greater similarity exists between the two: a majority of each band's lyrics address political issues, especially racial oppression. The lyrics to de la Rocha's song "Maria" depict the story of a desperate woman, forced to cross the Mexican-American border illegally, with hopes of starting anew, only to find herself a slave in "the land of the free." This song is a poignant example of de la Rocha's ability to use powerful imagery, double meanings, and complex rhyme schemes to portray a situation he felt people should be aware of and fight against.

The song begins, "The sun ablaze as Maria's foot / touches the surface of sand / on northern land / as human contraband" (1-4). Zack purposefully addresses the subject of the composition, immediately giving "Maria" an identity and creating a more intimate connection between the listener and the subject. Maria represents most directly the Mexican immigrants who have crossed the border into the United States illegally, to become workers in the fields and factories of this country ("northern land" is a reference to "el norte," a phrase used by many in Mexico to define the US). However, she stands as a symbol for all the immigrants who have come to the United States, beginning in the early 1800s, and including some of those still entering our country up until this very day.

In the next two lines, Zack writes, "Some rico from Jalisco / passed her name to the boss" (5-6). Jalisco is a state on the western coast of Mexico, and "rico" means a rich person in Spanish. Poor people living in Mexico and wishing to come to America, hoping to raise money for their family, are sometimes sold to owners of sweatshops, factories, and other businesses by wealthy figures in Mexico, who often are major drug dealers as well. Unfortunately, this is all done illegally, and it puts the workers in the situation of having no rights and no power to defend themselves against the unfair wages and treatment from their new owners.

As Maria "clutches her cross ... and she prays and suffocates / upon the memories of home," (8, 15-16) we imagine the overwhelming fear and apprehensiveness she must have gone through upon her transportation to the new foreign world. She has left all she has known behind, and the only thing she has to tie her to her "memories of home" is her cross, a symbol of not only her character (a well-meaning, good-hearted young woman who loved her family), but also of her dedication to her faith, common to many immigrants who come to this country looking to start a new future. This peaceful imagery of Maria and her home is complemented in the chorus: "These are her mountains and skies as she radiates" (21). Here, Zack concretizes the idea of how much she loved her country and her home, even if she was living in poverty. However, he immediately contrasts this vision of beauty and peace:

Of Yanqui guns for blood debts on the loans
Of smoldering fields, rape, rubble and bones
Of graves hidden trapped up in visions of war
Of nothing, no one, nobody, no more
These are her mountains and skies and she radiates
And through history's rivers of blood she regenerates
And like the sun disappears only to reappear
She's eternally here
Her time is near
Never conquered but here. (17-26)

In this barrage of conflicting and confusing imagery, Maria "radiates" in the scene of "rivers of blood," "smoldering fields," "war," and "rape." Zack uses these phrases to fill our minds with images of torment and suffering in the history of Mexico; he also hints at the

darker side of the human psyche. These terms force us to think about all the pain and mistreatment her people have been put through in the past. "Yanqui" simply translates to Yankee in English. The seventeenth through the twentieth stanza could be a reference to the Mexican-American war. This supports the concept of all the lives lost not only to their war, but any war, some of whom become nameless graves.

When Zack writes that Maria is "eternally here," he reminds us that although the circumstances may have changed slightly, forced slave labor of illegal immigrants still goes on today, behind closed doors and deep secrets. He writes, "Her time is near / Never conquered but here" (25-26). This symbolizes that he feels it is time we put an end to the horrible conditions illegal immigrants are forced into, yet the issue, being so convoluted, is a difficult task for governments to tackle and has therefore been progressing slowly. That is why these immigrants, nearly powerless to fight for proper treatment, can never "conquer" the battle they constantly fight.

The next verse begins the second half of Maria's story, moving on to describe her experience upon arriving to her new home: "And now she got a quota / The needle and thread crucifixion / Sold and shipped across the new line / of Mason Dixon" (28-31). The reference to "the needle and thread crucifixion" foreshadows Maria's death at the end of the song, and also that many workers ironically die working only to make enough money to live. He writes that she has been "sold and shipped," a careful choice of words used to suggest the idea of Maria being more like cattle than a human. This imagery is supported by an earlier reference of her crossing the border: "Like cattle she'll cross" (12). When he writes that she had crossed the Mason Dixon line, this refers to the Civil War Era, when the Mason Dixon line (already formed by two major land owners between Pennsylvania and Maryland) was adopted by our country to separate the north from the south, which still supported slavery. Zack presents the idea that even though she is in the land of the free, as declared officially by our government, she is still a slave.

Zack goes on to describe the laborious days Maria suffers as she works under a foreman who "with a whisper... whips her" (40-41) and tells her, "My job is to kill

you if you forget to take your pill" (44). This line can be interpreted at least two ways. In the past, many female workers were forced to take birth control pills so that they were unable to ever take maternity leave. Another interpretation, however, could be that "the pill" is a metaphor for Maria's new way of life. The foreman forces the slave mentality upon her, and if she ever steps out of line, the consequences could be life threatening.

In the last few lines of the song, Zack writes of Maria's horrible fate, foreshadowed in the earlier lines of this verse:

Her arm jerks
The sisters gather 'round her and scream
As if in a dream
Eyes on the crimson stream
Numb as her wrists spit shots of blood to the floor
I am nothing, no one, nobody, no more. (44-49)

Although the imagery of what exactly happened to Maria (whether she commits suicide to escape the slave life, or whether it is all an accident) is unclear, it is clear that she loses her life on the factory floor, and because of this, her family will probably never know what happened to her, and no proper funeral or ceremony will be given for her. Thus, as of that moment, Maria is "nothing, no one, nobody, no more."

Zack de la Rocha presents a very distressing and powerful story of Maria to us. By telling her story, even though she is a fictional character, he gives a personality and an identity to the millions of illegal immigrants who have lived to her same end. He brings to life this horrific, yet ongoing situation in the tragic story of Maria. Through his poetry, he makes an effort to bring to an end the turn-the-other-cheek attitude of some of the people living in our country, so that those who follow him will fight not only to change the way our country works, but the way they see the world they live in, and what they are willing to do to change it.

Evaluation: *Johnna chose a fantastic song to analyze, which is often half the battle, and she did a superb job of looking at both the overt political message of the song and the subtle aspects that make this song poetic.*

Bartolommeo di Giovanni's Vanishing Point

Julio Castillo

Course: Art 131 (History of Art II)

Instructor: Stephany Rimland

Assignment:

The Art History Research Paper requires students to examine a work of art from the Art Institute of Chicago and develop an original thesis based on a formal and contextual investigation of the object. A careful visual analysis of the work becomes the point of departure for related research and writing.

Florence, in the 15th century, during the time of the Early Renaissance, took on a whole new technique of painting. These artists were starting to paint in a technique called linear perspective. Artlex.com defines perspective as the technique artists use to project an illusion of the three-dimensional world onto a two-dimensional surface. The painting by Bartolommeo Di Giovanni, called *Scenes from the Life of Saint John the Baptist*, is a great example of this method. The way Bartolommeo Di Giovanni used perspective was completely different than what was normally done during this period. What is so interesting is his location of the vanishing point. Why would it be located so far left from center? There are actually several possibilities that could explain why Bartolommeo di Giovanni decided to place his vanishing point so distant from the center of the piece.

To better understand this painting, we first need to look at the painting itself. The Art Institute of Chicago states that *Scenes from the Life of Saint John the Baptist* was probably part of a decorative wainscoting in a Florentine bedroom. A wainscoting is a group of paintings lined up on a wall, in the form of paneling, for decoration. The materials used for this work of art are tempera and panel. The painting shows a great deal of color, with a lot of pinks, greens, and yellows. John the Baptist is represented in green and pink cloths. According to the description at the Art Institute of Chicago, Bartolommeo Di Giovanni typically used bright colors and painted barrel-shaped people in his paintings. The description also explains that the painting describes the early life of John the Baptist: the Visitation, the birth of the Baptist, the naming of John by his father, the Baptist taking leave from his parents, the return of the Holy Family in Egypt, and their encounter in the desert with the young Baptist. What is also noticeable is the great use of perspective. The perspective is most visible with the building, which is slightly to the right of center, and with the tile on the ground.

If viewers were to follow the lines of the building and the tile, they would meet up with the vanishing point. In this painting the vanishing point is in between the man with his donkey and the building, placing it to the left from center. The placement of the vanishing

point is unusual because, at this time, artists positioned the vanishing point at the center of the piece, so that “a viewer was to stand at a prescribed distance from a work, dead center. From this fixed vantage point everything in a picture appeared to recede into the distance” (Stokstad 583). In other words, the vanishing point was used as the observer’s point of vision, where everything around that point becomes distorted and angled, as in real life. At that time, the viewer was supposed to be positioned dead center of the piece, which resulted in the vanishing point being located at the dead center of the piece of artwork. However, in Giovanni’s painting, the vanishing point is located closer to the top left scene of the painting, almost tucked away.

The painting doesn’t separate each event; they are all together in the same setting, as if it were happening at the same time. “Artists at the time used sequential or continuous narrative, a representation in one composition field of the sequence of a story spread out in one time” (Turner 107). In other words, the artists used their paintings as a narrative of a story. In doing so, they used the same setting in all scenes, so that they appeared as if they were occurring at the same time. Because the vanishing point is oddly positioned off centered, but more specifically in the scene of Saint John as a child, the question is brought up as to why this was done. One explanation could simply be that the vanishing point is indicating the start of Saint John’s life, signifying the beginning of the narrative, and telling the observer where the tale begins, as if the artist is literally pointing to the spectators where to start looking at the tale.

The painting by Masaccio called *Tribute Money* is similar, as it is also a painting that describes a narrative done in perspective. The painting describes the incident of when Peter is being taxed by a Jewish tax collector and Jesus instructs him to go to the sea, get a fish, and extract a coin from its mouth to pay the tax collector. All the lines in the painting lead up right on Jesus’ head, which (in the painting as well as the story) is the first scene of the narrative when Peter first gets confronted by the tax collector. This painting indicates the beginning of the story, just as Giovanni’s painting does. They both have all the lines drawing the audience’s attention

to the start of the story. They both use perspective to draw viewers’ eyes to the scene that starts the narrative.

Some other Early Renaissance painters used the vanishing point to draw attention to the most important part or the “emotional heart of the painting” (Turner 107). For example, if there was a painting of Jesus, usually, the vanishing point would be placed on Jesus’ head to draw the viewers’ attention to him, giving Jesus importance. The reason why the vanishing point draws the viewers’ attention to that specific person (or scene) is that all the lines point to that specific person like arrows, and viewers’ eyes naturally go to the vanishing point. In Giovanni’s painting, all the lines draw the viewers’ attention to the scene of St. John as a child; having the vanishing point at that location makes the scene the most important one in the painting. This specific scene may be so significant because it represents the genuine beginning of Saint John’s life. The only odd thing about this is the fact that the scene is very small, and distant, almost insignificant. Because of the sizes of the figures and how close they appear to the audience, the other scenes in the painting seem to be a lot more important than the scene of Saint John as a child. But this could also correlate with what was stated before: the fact that it is the beginning of the story, in which the beginning is the most important scene in the painting. So, the position of the vanishing point could be a combination of pointing out where the beginning is, and giving the scene significance.

What is also noticeable about Giovanni’s painting is that a man with his donkey is engaged with the vanishing point. That man is literally looking at where the vanishing point is. Bartolommeo Di Giovanni may have done this to further indicate the important scene. Some painters during that period used people in their paintings to point out the vanishing point and the important scene. For example, Domenico’s painting *Saint Lucy Altarpiece* has one of the Baptists pointing to the Madonna and Child. Domenico’s painting is also done in perspective, and the vanishing point is located in the center where the Madonna and Child are located, indicating the important person in the painting. Just as in Giovanni’s painting, a person is used to indicate the significant individual in the painting.

Another explanation of why Giovanni placed his vanishing point so far off center could possibly be because of where the painting itself was located. In notes written in 1492, Leonardo da Vinci formulated a vigorous criticism of the traditional way of painting:

There is a general practice among painters of chapel walls that is open to serious criticism. They make a composition with buildings and landscapes on one plane, and then higher up, another composition in which they change the point of view, and so on. On one and the same wall one finds four view points . . . you must place the foreground in relation to the eye of the spectator. Then arrange figures and buildings in regular diminution over the hills and plains so as to unfold the whole story. (Chastel 224)

In other words, what Leonardo da Vinci wanted was to have the vanishing points placed based on where the viewer is supposed to be, and in doing so, the perspective of all the paintings will relate to one another.

Because di Giovanni's painting was probably part of a wainscoting, the fact that a vanishing point was located based on where the audience is supposed to be could result in the vanishing point ending up so far to the left from center. Let's say that this specific painting, by Bartolommeo di Giovanni, was really far to the left from the viewer; in order for the painting's perspective to relate to the viewer, the vanishing point would have to be farther to the left in order for the painting to seem relative to the audience.

Young aspiring artists, during the time of the Early Renaissance, were usually trained by apprenticeship. "In practicing their drawing, the apprentices would spend a good deal of time copying drawings that belonged to the workshop so that the young artists would learn to work in the 'house style'" (Mee 88). Since this is how artists at the time learned to hone their craft, and had to learn the "house style," then Bartolommeo di Giovanni would have had to study under a master. Another possibility for the unique use of the vanishing point could be that its position was part of the "house style" of painting. Giovanni could have learned this distinctive form of painting from his master teachings. His master could have used the same style of painting that Giovanni picked up.

There are many different reasons why Bartolommeo di Giovanni painted this picture using the vanishing point differently than any other painter in his time. A reason could be that Giovanni simply used the vanishing point to indicate the beginning of a story he was depicting as a painting. Another possibility could also be that he used it to draw the viewers to the scene of Saint John as a child, making that specific scene important. The vanishing point could also be located where it is because it was part of a wainscoting, and the vanishing point needed to relate with the audience and the rest of the paintings. The final possibility that was discussed in this paper is that the placement of the vanishing point could have been part of a style that was taught to Giovanni as an apprentice by his master. Because of how things were during the Early Renaissance, these are all plausible possibilities.

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- Stokstad, Marilyn. *Art History Volume II*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2005.
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Evaluation: *Mr. Castillo's visual analysis of the painting was extremely thorough and insightful. His thesis was original and engendered a contextual exploration of modes of viewing during the Italian Early Renaissance.*

Racial Prejudice in *Othello*

Sandy Li-hui Chen

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

Instructors: Andrew Wilson and Barbara Solheim

Assignment:

Students were to compose a literary analysis of one of the works of literature read for the course, exploring a theme that would later lend itself to discussion in an expanded paper incorporating various philosophers' perspectives.

About one year ago, in my sociology class, I watched a film dealing with racism. The film was about an elementary school teacher, twenty years ago, who had a two-day experiment on racism for the first-grade students in her class. The purpose of the experiment was to teach these children how to treat other people equally, without racial prejudice. On the first day of the experiment, the teacher distinguished two groups of her students according to the colors of their eyes: blue and brown. At the beginning of the first day, the teacher told all the students that she had just discovered in a research report that people who had blue eyes were smarter and more outstanding than ones who had brown eyes. Therefore, she allowed the blue-eyed students to sit on the chairs during class time, have a big piece of cake for

dessert, and have a two-hour playtime on that day. The brown-eyed students had to stand in the back of the classroom during class time, had nothing for dessert, and were required to do their homework in the classroom while the blue-eyed students went to play. Observing the reaction of those blue-eyed and brown-eyed students on the first day, I could see in the film that the blue-eyed students were becoming proud of themselves because of the excellent characteristics of their eye color and started looking down on the brown-eyed students. On the other hand, the brown-eyed ones felt depressed and shameful about their eye color; some of them were even angry at the unfair rule only because their eye color was brown.

However, in the beginning of the next day of the experiment, the teacher apologized to the students because of her mistake. She announced that the research report on the previous day was wrong and corrected it to say that people who had brown eyes were smarter and more outstanding than ones who had blue eyes. Therefore, the teacher allowed the brown-eyed students to have the same rights that the blue-eyed students had had on the previous day. Also, the blue-eyed students had to follow the rules that the brown-eyed students had followed on the previous day. The feelings of the students changed from the previous day. The brown-eyed students found their confidence, were proud of the great characteristics of their eye color, and looked down on the blue-eyed students, too. The blue-eyed students lost their previous confidence and were upset because of their eye color. Clearly, this experiment demonstrated the destructive effects of racism. These destructive effects are also evident in Shakespeare's *Othello*, in which racism is an important theme that Shakespeare expresses to his readers. Actually, I don't think that the reason which causes Othello, who is a black man, to become a murderer is stupidity or gullibility; in my opinion, he is just viewed as an outsider in the white people's world of Venice, and this feeling of alienation leads him to lose his self-confidence and self-identity, just like the children with the "wrong" eye color. Consequentially, it also causes him to kill his wife, Desdemona, and even to end his life by himself at the end of this play.

In *Othello*, the romantic union of Othello, who is black and his wife, Desdemona, who is white, is destroyed because most Venetian people think the relationship is wrong. One critic explains, "Shakespeare's Othello is a military general and a hero. Desdemona was spellbound by Othello's tales and stories of adventures. But in Shakespeare's day, the notion of a black man of high rank in a European army, married to a white Woman with high social standing, may have seemed outrageous" (Twyman). In the play, Desdemona's father states, "Damned as thou art, thou hast enchanted her. / For I'll refer me to all things of sense / If she in chains of magic were not bound, / Whether a maid so tender, fair, and happy, / So opposite to marriage that she shunned / The wealthy curled darlings of our nation, / Would ever have, to incur a general mock, / Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom" (Shakespeare 1.2.408-420). Brabantio, Desdemona's father, thinks that it is impossible for Desdemona to fall in love with a black man because he wonders why a lot of excellent white men in Venice were not able to win his daughter's love; how come the black man can do it? He believes that Othello must have used "black magic" to entice Desdemona to marry him, and he also calls Othello a "sooty bosom" ruthlessly. Brabantio views Othello as a foul and dirty no good black. He makes racist comments about Othello to his face, and other Venetians also refer to Othello in racist terms, calling him a "lascivious Moor" (1.1.202) and a "wheeling stranger" (1.1.218-219). Brabantio and the Venetian senators are more than willing to accept Othello's strength and military knowledge. Nevertheless, when Othello is internalized into their society by his marriage to Desdemona, his presence becomes disruptive.

In addition, Iago tries to make Othello doubt Desdemona's faithful love for him because of Othello's race. Iago states, "As— to be bold with you— / Not to affect many proposed matches / Of her own clime, complexion, and degree, / Whereto we see in all things nature tends— / Foh! One may smell in such a will most rank, / Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural" (3.3.478-487). Iago always intentionally reminds Othello again and again that Othello is a black (an outsider) in order to harm Othello's self-confidence. Iago

even indicates that this kind of interracial marriage is unnatural and disproportional. Furthermore, the sentence, "Not to affect many proposed matches / Of her own clime, complexion, and degree, / Whereto we see in all things nature tends," hints that Desdemona will deeply regret her choice to marry not a white Venetian man but instead a dark-skinned Moor because Othello cannot fit any standards of the society: nationality, race, social status, etc.

Iago is the most racist character in the play. He has racial prejudice against Othello right from the start. Between the conversation of Roderigo and Iago in the beginning of Act I, Iago is complaining about Othello's choice of his lieutenant: "Three great ones of the city, / In personal suit to make me his Lieutenant, / Off-capped to him. And, by the faith of man, / I know my price, I am worth no worse a place. / But he, as loving his own pride and purposes, / Evades them, with a bombast circumstance / Horribly stuffed with epithets of war...He, in good time, must his Lieutenant be, / And I— God bless the mark!— his Moorship's Ancient" (1.1.11-49). Iago uses the word "mark" to refer to Othello, which indicates Othello's race and also means the decision Othello makes is a mistake. In addition, Iago doesn't say anything racist directly to Othello's face, but he has a lot to say against Othello behind his back. One of his racist comments is when he is telling Brabantio about the incident of Othello and Desdemona: "Even now, now, very now, an old black ram / Is tugging your white ewe... / Or else the Devil will make a grandsire of you" (1.1.137-143); "you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse, you'll have your nephews neigh to you, you'll have coursers for cousins, and jennets for germans" (1.1.176-181); "your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs" (1.1.184-185); etc. Iago uses "old black ram" and "Barbary horse" to describe Othello as animal or beast, to try and turn Brabantio against Othello. As we can see, Brabantio is also convinced of the "fact" very soon after Iago tells him that Othello has "stolen" his daughter. Clearly, this reveals how racist Brabantio already was, and how ready Brabantio already was to believe the worst about a black man before Iago actually discusses the black

man, Othello, with him. Indeed, Brabantio has prejudice against blacks even though he knows that Othello is an excellent soldier in Venice.

In fact, there are some causes for Iago and Roderigo's hatred of Othello and reasons they adopt such a racist attitude. Iago is jealous of Othello for many reasons: Othello has a higher ranking in the army, and he has a good marriage with Desdemona, which Iago does not have himself with Emilia. On the other hand, Roderigo, who calls Othello behind his back "thick-lips" (1.1.100), hates Othello because he is jealous of Othello, as Roderigo also loves Desdemona but cannot have her. Both Iago and Roderigo think that the black man, Othello, should not own such good things equally or even much more than white people like them in this society. Further, they believe Othello doesn't even have the right to own anything that he owns. The fame, pride, happiness, and marriage with a white woman should never belong to a black man, because Othello is an outsider in the society.

So, do Iago's efforts finally influence Othello in some ways? The answer is absolutely yes. We can see that at the beginning of the play, Othello enjoys his great successes and is very proud of himself: "I fetch my life and being / From men of royal siege, and my demerits / May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune / As this that I have reached" (1.2.330-336). Everything seems to be going his way. Desdemona has chosen him over all of her other Venetian suitors because he wins the love of Desdemona with his brave stories of battle. Even when the celebration of the couple's marriage is interrupted by the brawling of Cassio and Montano, Othello still appears confident and self-controlled. However, Othello's confidence starts to slip as Iago begins to work on Othello's psyche, intimating that Desdemona and Cassio are having an affair, and indicating that Desdemona's unfaithfulness to Othello is caused by Othello's race. At first, Othello denies that the attractiveness of his wife's grace, charm, and beauty for other men could make him jealous. He says "Nor from mine own weak merits will I draw / The smallest fear or doubt of her revolt, / For she had eyes, and chose me" (3.3.406-409). But Iago's "medicine" soon

begins to work and affect Othello, who starts to question if Desdemona could continue to love him: "Haply, for I am black / And have not those soft parts of conversation / That chamberers have, or for I am declined / Into the vale of years— yet that's not much— / She's gone, I am abused, and my relief / Must be to loathe her" (Shakespeare 3.3.536-545).

Othello begins to think Desdemona's betrayal of him is inevitable given his skin color, greater age, and lack of courtly charm. The words "Haply, for I am black" show absolutely that Othello suspects the main cause of Desdemona's betrayal is his different race. When Othello is beginning to sink into Iago's lie about Desdemona's unfaithfulness, he says to Iago that "Her name, that was as fresh / As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black / As mine own face" (3.3.747-752). Othello compares Desdemona's untruthfulness with his black face in a negative way, which means that he loses his self-confidence because he realizes that his black race equals filth and impurity. At the scene of Othello killing Desdemona, Othello says to himself next to the sleeping Desdemona, "I'll not shed her blood, / Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow" (5.2.236-238). Here, Othello sees whiteness as beauty and blackness as ugliness, so he tries not to "dirty" Desdemona's white skin or scar it. We can figure out that it is really possible that Othello's racial doubts and insecurities are the root cause of Desdemona's death, and, further, Othello's death.

At the end of the play, Othello commits suicide to indicate his shame at his dishonor in front of the white public. This is the last statement he says before his suicide:

Soft you, a word or two before you go.
I have done the state some service, and they know't.
No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am, nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought,
Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand,
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,

Racial Prejudice in Othello

Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinable gum. Set you down this,
And say besides that in Aleppo once,
 where a malignant and a turbanded Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog
And smote him, thus. (5.2.792-816)

He is trying to prove to those white audiences that he is an honorable person and has made many contributions to the white society. However, the main reason that causes him to make the unforgivable mistake of murdering his wife is that the racial prejudice in the white society in which he lives blinds him, so that he loses his self-definition and the ability of making right decisions: "Of one that loved not wisely but too well; / Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought, / Perplexed in the extreme". Also, "Turk" and "Venetian" are metaphors of Othello and Desdemona.

As we can see, a racist culture prohibits psychological health in this poor black man, Othello. "The circumcised dog" is another metaphor of Othello's supposedly degraded self. The lost part of the body can never re-grow any more, which expresses that Othello's physical characteristics—his race—cannot be changed since the time he was born. Thus, it is extremely difficult to change the whites' racism against blacks, even though Othello is trying to do everything possible to fit himself in to the white society. Cultural values are internalized into consciousness, creating a fundamental disjuncture between Othello's consciousness and his body. In his consciousness, Othello is trying to adjust his original black value to let the white society accept his black race.

While Iago is persuading Othello to force Othello to sink into the trap that he plans, Iago always keeps reminding Othello of his different race, which causes Othello to believe that it must be the major factor in Desdemona's disloyalty. In addition, the Venetian people, such as Iago, Brabantio, and Roderigo, do not hold a great hope for this interracial marriage. All of them have racial prejudice toward the black man, Othello. Even if Othello is trying hard to think of himself as a universal subject and hopes to have equal participation in the white society, for those Venetian people, Othello

is still an outsider in the society and never has any chances to fix it. Under the condition of this kind of psychological oppression, finally, Othello accepts this association and despises himself; he believes that his blackness causes him to be impure and inferior.

Some may argue that the reason for Othello's tragedy is not racial prejudice in Venetian society, but Othello's use of military rules to apply to everything. However, much evidence controverts this opinion. There is no reason for Brabantio to disapprove of Desdemona's union with Othello—apart from his race. Othello is born of a noble background, holds a lucrative and prestigious position as a general of the army, and has made great contributions to the nation. Therefore, if it were not for Othello's blackness, Brabantio would never revolt against the union of Othello and Desdemona. In addition, in the beginning of the play, Othello is confident in his family background, his military position, and himself. However, he undergoes a dramatic change, starting from the time when Othello fears his position as a black man, which causes Desdemona to abandon her love for him. Of course, this change is caused by the significantly influential character, Iago, who exploits the idea of racial difference to cause Othello to lose his self-confidence and to degrade his self-value. In short, as we know, the oppression of racial prejudice is the most major factor leading Othello to give up himself.

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Evaluation: *Sandy's examination of how Othello is best by the deep imprints of racial prejudice is thorough and convincing.*

Any Thoughts?

Christine Choi

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment:

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

“David Mamet is nothing if not provocative” (Bechtel 1). This is indeed true of David Mamet’s play, *Oleanna*, in which a myriad of social and cultural issues are brought to question. In what initially appears to be a play about sexual harassment, the male and female character clash on almost every level. As the play progresses and as audience loyalty to one character solidifies, they are quickly jerked into loyalty for the other. John, the “pedantic” and elitist professor who speaks in language very few would understand, has many faults and quickly becomes the offender in the first act. Carol, the shy and struggling student who has trouble understanding college-level vocabulary, becomes the victim, or so we think, until the second and third acts unfold. On the way, Mamet slyly infuses a multitude of themes and questions that deem the play more complex than initially thought. What are the consequences of poor communication and poor instruction? How is language used to differentiate between the classes? Is higher education useful? Can two people have a different experience in response to the same occurrence? Are speech and action the same? In the end, Mamet refuses to point fingers in any direction and leaves his audience to decide for themselves *their* own meaning of *Oleanna*.

Oleanna is a thought-provoking story that has often split audience reaction down the middle. The story takes place at a university in the office of John, a 40-year-old-ish professor who is about to gain tenure. He is trying to leave his office while Carol, a student who is failing, comes to talk to him about her grade and her struggle at

understanding the class. Before and during their exchange, John’s office is bombarded with phone calls, seemingly about his purchase of a new home. As the conversation progresses in Act One, both John and Carol are frustrated by their inability to communicate with the other, as well as the other’s inability to understand them. Recognizing Carol’s hardship and need for another method of learning, John offers Carol an ‘A’ if she will come back to meet with him a few more times. In between, John attempts to explain class concepts, reveals his own struggles as a student and, in the process, adopts a more personal rapport with Carol. According to Mamet, the characters discuss things “that could be viewed as either completely innocent or not” (qtd. in Bernardinelli 1). In a surprise twist, acts two and three deal with Carol’s accusations of sexual harassment by John, and his attempts to reason with her. Carol also reveals her association with “the Group” and a new-found ability to speak and understand on a higher level. On her and the Group’s behalf, Carol offers an exchange to John: a retraction for his approval of a list of books to be banned on campus. In the end, a desperate John resorts to violence and beats Carol.

In act one, we see almost immediately the characters’ difficulties in communicating with one another. Much of this is due to John’s inability to finish sentences in a thoughtful manner. We see this in his greeting of Carol, “Let’s take the mysticism out of it, shall we? Carol? Don’t you think? I’ll tell you: when you have some ‘thing.’ Which must be broached. (Pause) Don’t you think...?” (701). Perhaps a simple ‘Carol, let’s discuss your grade.’ would have sufficed in beginning their conversation. In further trying to address Carol’s failing grade, John rambles and fails to get to the point. We see this when he says, “I know how...believe me. I know how...potentially *humiliating* these...I have no desire to...I have no desire other than to help you. But: I won’t even say ‘but.’ I’ll say that as I go back over the...” (702). John does not finish his thoughts or sentences and confuses Carol in the process. How ironic that the teacher who is failing a student, while using an example of her inability to express her thoughts on paper, is also one who cannot express himself. John reads an excerpt from Carol’s paper and, again, fails to describe the particular problems it possesses: “I think that the ideas con-

Any Thoughts?

tained in this work express the author's feelings in a way that he intended, based on his results.' What can that mean? Do you see? What..." (703). John asks Carol if she sees the problem of the particular piece but offers neither insight nor solution on how to improve it. In addition, he does not give her a chance to respond. These are just a few illustrations of the problem John faces: his inability to effectively communicate his thoughts in a clear and concise manner and his failure to secure understanding from his student. Unfortunately for him, both traits are basic and fundamental to the role of a teacher. According to Richard Badenhausen, "John's ultimate failure—to gain tenure, to help Carol, and to understand himself—has its roots in his confused understanding of what it means to teach" (3).

Further complicating and weakening John's ability to teach is his insistence on using vocabulary that most anyone would find confusing. Critics have said that this is another level (other than his role as her professor) at which John asserts his power over Carol. He uses words that she does not understand. We see an example of this almost immediately in the First Act as John greets Carol, "You paid me the compliment, or the 'obeisance'—all right—of coming in here..." (701). A simple 'hello, thank you for coming' would have done the trick. According to Badenhausen, "Instead of helping students learn, this vocabulary ends up reinforcing hierarchies, for it flaunts—instead of bridging—the distance between the authoritative teacher and less-experienced student" (7). Whether it is because he possesses an elitist attitude, whether it is subconscious from being in the academic environment, or whether it truly is his way of conversing, it is certain that in dealing with Carol, it confuses rather than clarifies.

However incompetent John may have been as an instructor, education is normally a two-way street. Carol has a role in her own failure as a student. We see hints as to the type of student Carol has been, one that looks for clear answers to clear questions, without much active thinking on her part. Her notebook is a fine example of her reliance on this type of learning. Carol consults her notebook when asking about a concept from John's book. When asked to repeat an example discussed in class without her notebook, Carol stutters and is unable

to answer. Carol's experience has been that of simply reading and regurgitating the information, which may have worked for her in the past, but does not seem to be working for her in John's class. Instead of recognizing her need to change this habit, Carol blames the school and John for her failure: "...and I read your book. And they said, 'Fine, go in that class.' Because you talked about responsibility to the young. I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS AND I'M FAILING..." (705). Carol was placed into a class which may have been at too high a level for her, but ultimately, it was her responsibility to admit this and seek help. In addition, it is hinted that Carol is one of the few who is having trouble in John's class in the quote, "...And everybody's talking about 'this' all the time. And 'concepts,' and 'precepts'..." (705). Everyone else appears to adequately understand the material. Further, it appears that she is having trouble with her other classes as well when she explains to John, "...and I walk around. From morning 'til night: with this one thought in my head. I'm *stupid*" (704). It cannot be that John's class is the sole source of Carol's poor self-image. However, despite whatever fault Carol possesses for her poor performance in school, by the end of act one, the roles of each character have taken shape and sympathies have been handed out.

Infused within John and Carol's conversation in Act One is a question posed by Mamet: what is the value of higher education? John's class deals with the theory of education. While explaining the concepts to Carol, John reveals his disdain for the system in which higher education is taught. He refers to it as nothing more than "hazing" and "a sick game," where teachers test their students just to prove they have not done the required task (710). John goes on to explain that people unwittingly equate higher education with a right. They are so set in obtaining this "thing," believing they have a right to it, that they fail to question whether they gain anything out of it. Interestingly, "Oleanna" was a folk story about a man named Ole and his wife named Anna. The two sold worthless land to buyers, conning them out of their life savings. The con became known as the "Oleanna Swindle." According to Bernardinelli, "higher education may be today's 'Oleanna Swindle'" (1). Through John, Mamet poses the question, "Is higher education useful?"

Bernardinelli echoes Mamet's question when he asks, "Is it more important to go through the expected routines—taking notes, reading texts, and passing exams—than it is to have one's intellect stimulated and one's interests awakened?" (1). John can easily say that it is not. In contrast, for Carol who struggles to obtain it, its usefulness is not even a question.

Despite the conflicts between the two characters, Mamet's audience is shocked to find in act two that Carol has brought charges of sexual harassment against John. We also find a new version of Carol: one that is authoritative, quick, demanding, and powerful. And while the audience tries to recount what John could possibly have done to deserve such punishment, Carol lists his offenses as, "He told me he had problems with his wife; and that he wanted to take off the artificial stricture of Teacher and Student. He put his arm around me..." (717) and "He told me that if I would stay alone with him in his office, he would change my grade to an A" (717). While all these things did in fact happen, quite clearly they were taken out of context. Later in act three, when John states his actions were "devoid of sexual content," Carol responds back, "I say it was not. I SAY IT WAS NOT...IT'S NOT FOR YOU TO SAY" (725). In this way, Mamet looks at the tricky two-sided coin of subjective interpretation. Mamet questions how one can really determine truth when two unique individuals have two unique views of the same experience. According to Badenhausen, "the drama investigates how language and gesture signify differently for all involved in the performance" (2). Perhaps John's intentions were not sexual in nature, but he conceivably could have created an environment of oppression through small gestures and comments which could, in turn, have been perceived as harassment. One such example is his telling of the anecdote of the "the rich copulating less frequently than the poor. But when they do, they take more of their clothes off" (711). According to Stevan Ryan, Carol may have asked herself, "how could she have possibly succeeded in such a hostile, chauvinistic environment with such a monstrous mentor?" (4). Perhaps Carol really believed this to be sexual in nature and John to be the reason for her failure. Or perhaps Carol simply misunderstood John's anecdote, however inappropriate in content it may

have been. When put into context, John was merely trying to emphasize the importance of not always taking someone else's words as complete truth. He goes on to state that it was something someone told him that meant nothing and was not, in fact, true at all. John was making a point that had almost no connection with sex, but which could have been interpreted the wrong way. Whatever the case may have been, act two forces the audience to retrace what happened in act one and reconsider who the victim really is.

Significantly, Mamet himself states that "the play's central interaction is not about sexual harassment. It's about power" (qtd. in Ryan 3). Whereas John held the power in act one, much of the conversation in acts two and three revolve around the fact that he has lost it. The tables have turned, and it is now Carol who holds the power. Her complaint to the tenure committee has put John's home and position at the campus in danger and has bestowed much power in her favor. As John tries to reason with her to resolve the issue, Carol responds with what is essentially her message for the rest of the play, "I don't care what you feel. Do you see? DO YOU SEE? You can't *do* that anymore. You. Do. Not. Have. The. Power..." (717). So quickly Carol and John have switched places and from what John once derived his power, language, Carol now does. As Roger Bechtel stated, "'I have been injured' becomes an almost talismanic phrase, one only need to invoke it to make it true, whether it is true or not" (12). By the mere statement, "I have been injured," Carol has completely flipped John's world upside down. Through Carol's rise to power, Mamet presents the idea that words can be turned into reality. As Stanley Fish states, "all speech is action because all speech is consequential" (qtd. in Bechtel 12). In Carol's "revenge," David Mamet presents the idea that language can be used as a form of power.

While some might believe that Mamet is a misogynist who purposely created a monster out of Carol, others believe John had a large role in the outcome of his own demise. Daniel Mufson suggests that the working title of *Oleanna* should have been "The Bitch Set Him Up" (qtd. in Bechtel 2), while Christine McLeod states "the consensus is that the play has constructed Carol in

such one-sided negative terms that no genuine debate about the merits of her position is necessary or even possible" (qtd. in Goggans 2). They believe that from the beginning, as evidenced in her notebook entries from before the office visit, Carol began the semester pretending to be a poor, weak, and needy student. Her sole mission was to entrap John as leverage for the Group's own agenda: the banning of certain books. Badenhausen says this is not so. He states, "Critics would do well to investigate John's professional and personal role, for it is his misreading of various texts—Carol, the situation, and even himself—that helps prepare his student to be exploited by the 'Group' and ultimately brings his downfall." (5). Without taking act one into account, the audience has little reason to believe Carol is other than an operative. However, if one does take it into account, the characters are remade "rather radically" (Badenhausen 7). Perhaps if act one was a set-up, it was Carol who was set up. Badenhausen points out that John's inadequacy as a teacher has denied Carol her right to learn in his class. This also may have had some overall effect on her confidence to do well in other classes. Instead of a premeditated mission against John, Carol was the victim all along and her transformation, and subsequent adoption by the Group, occurred in reaction to John's faulty teaching. Eva Resnikova states a third option, that "perhaps Mamet thought he was presenting his characters as equals by making them both thoroughly unsympathetic..." (2). Both have their faults and neither tip the scale over the other. None of these theories, however, align exactly with Mamet's tragedy as revealed in his interview with Charlie Rose. Mamet explains that most melodramas have clear-cut lines on the identity of the protagonist and the antagonist. The audience reacts by choosing the protagonist and goes home happy. In contrast, tragedies tell the audience to choose a side and whichever one is chosen, the audience will be wrong. And really, the audience never had a choice to begin with because they are all just human (Mamet 17). Mamet explains that the "choice" in a tragedy is difficult because all and none are protagonist and antagonist. In not defining these roles, Mamet infuses a little bit of reality into the story, because in reality, shades of

gray far outnumber white and black. In his refusal to give his audience a clear answer, they "leave shaken and perhaps better for the experience" (Mamet 17).

When asked what he wanted to say in *Oleanna*, Mamet simply replied, "I didn't want to say anything...I wanted to write a play" (Mamet 2). While unconventional, it has proven genius. From a play built on just two characters, without a clearly defined agenda or a resolution, Mamet's audience responds with anger, passion, opinion, and thought. And without purposely leading his audience to a particular thought, he *has* led them to think.

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Evaluation: Ms. Choi's analysis of this play involves especially effective use of secondary research and the author's own comments on his work. This is a compact, well-written, and clear-sighted analysis of the problems dealt with in this controversial play.

For Moose

Doug Citrano

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

Write a personal narrative.

As I ran into school on a brisk, November morning just as the bell rang for class, I began the usual day of school; I passed the typical hall monitor, who laughed and waved. I smiled politely back as I began my journey to my locker in the Applied Technology department located in the corner of the school. I was on my way to my first class of the day, which was Building Construction. Building Construction was a two period class that allowed students to take a bus to a work site and build a house from scratch, with the help of our teacher and various trade workers. Our teacher was Mr. Thomas Mussell, or as his students and friends called him, "Moose." He was always happy, ready to work, and full of life. He wore a very rugged and stocky look, which gave him the appearance and personality of a moose. It was as though nothing could ever hurt this guy. As I walked up to my locker, I noticed my fellow classmates were all coming back to put their work belts, boots, and jackets back into their lockers. I asked my good friend Adam, "What's going on, man? Are we not going out to the site?" Adam replied, "No, I guess Moose didn't show up today. I think we are going to have to sit in the autos room and watch a movie." This was the procedure we followed when our teacher was unable to come to class. No one can just substitute for a man like Moose, for two reasons: (1) no other teacher could control 15 to 20 boys away from school; and (2)

no other teacher was qualified to build a house or work with tools. I remember feeling hostility toward Mr. Mussell, because I was eager to work that day.

The other students and I joked about Moose not showing up because he was up late with one of his five young children. Mr. Mussell's teacher assistant, Doug, guided us into the autos room and stood there looking more under the weather than usual. We all were wondering what was going on, because Doug was rarely in a bad mood. While we were sitting on the most uncomfortable stools, smelling the strong stench of oil and listening to a substitute they brought in to control us babble on about nothing, the dean of students and all the administrators came into the room and told us to listen up. Kids were starting to look uneasy, as if someone did something bad at the site, and we were about to get into a mess. The head of administration told us that we would be going up to a small auditorium room on the top floor for further instructions. Puzzled and nervous, we all hesitantly followed. Whenever the head of administration is involved, the situation has got to be serious. My fellow Building Construction students and I sat and waited in the cold, empty auditorium while the other Building Construction students joined us. Students were now being pulled out of their academic classes to be involved in this; something was going down.

All of a sudden, principal of Schaumburg High School, Dr. Cross, walked into the room, and to this day, I remember the puffiness in her eyes and cheeks as if she had just been crying. All of us looked at her, at a complete loss and in a daze. Her exact words went a little something like this: "I'm glad all of you are here for this and thank you for your patience. Sadly, I have some very important news to tell you. On his way to school early this morning, Mr. Mussell fell asleep at the steering wheel and was in a fatal car accident. Mr. Mussell did not make it; he lost his life in the tragedy." Her eyes almost instantly became watery as she could not speak another word. My eyes opened as wide as they possibly could, my jaw dropped, and a million thoughts ran through my head. And then I looked over at my best friend in the class, who was already in tears. How could this happen? Why did this happen? How could someone as strong, as tough, as loving, as devoted, lose his life in

such a horrible way? A room full of 60 teenage boys was at a complete loss for words at the news that they lost the “father” of their particular niche of the school.

Moose was not like any other teacher; he connected with his students and actually bonded with them. Building Construction was not just a school-funded program to help kids that are not so good in academics work with their hands and accomplish great things; we were also a family. We were a family that just lost our father. Moose brought with him kind of an illusion that he was invincible and strong as a moose. After the news settled in, the school’s guidance counselors took us downstairs, and we sat in the principal’s conference room and just stared blankly. It felt as if no one had the right thing to say at a time like this. Even the most sturdy-looking kids were brought to tears. Teachers and students alike were affected by the loss. Students who had never seen, spoken a word to, or knew of him were feeling the grief that day. The day November 10th, 2005, would be etched in my high school memory forever.

We would be staying down in this big conference room the rest of the day. At the peak of the dead silence, my friend Adam and I started to tell our favorite moments that we shared with Moose. I recalled a time I shared with Moose, where in the dead of winter he was driving his big red work truck with the windows all the way open and country music blasting, and he had his arms out the window, while he was singing along. See, this was one of Moose’s greatest qualities; he never cared what anyone thought of him. If he liked country music and wanted to blast it in the winter with the windows open, he was going to do it. My friend Adam shared a story about Moose’s fascination and love for Taco Bell’s Bean Burritos. The students would tell everyone when they would find a crumpled up wrapper in the house we were building. Everyone laughed and joined in with the story telling. Moose also had an extensive vocabulary of words that he made his own. He would call a speed square a “swanny” after a brand name, Swanson. When something was built very well, he said it was “juicy.” Whenever one of his five kids were brought up, he called them the “Mooselets.” My personal favorite was “Cheri’s pissed!” Cheri was our bus driver and had been Moose’s friend for years. The

students would joke and say, “Moose, you better watch out: Cheri’s pissed!” Cheri always took care of us and loved Moose so much.

I never had a relationship with a teacher as I did with Mr. Mussell. Building Construction, in all honesty, was the sole purpose of me getting out of bed in the morning. It was a chance to get away from school, be with my friends, and interact with Moose, and still learn an amazing trade. Shortly after starting my first year with Moose as a junior, I decided I wanted to make construction management my career goal. I told him that he motivated me to want to work hard and make something of myself. I always had a love for making things out of wood. To get into the Building Construction program, students had to complete a year of Woods Workshop. I passed my first year with ease and got recommended from my woodshop teacher to join the class. Moose seemed very impressed when I told him about my decision, and he had pushed me a little harder ever since. My plans were to attend Harper College and work as his teacher’s assistant. That would be the most amazing experience: to be able to work side by side with my favorite teacher and pursue my career. Sadly, however, my plans never came true. Luckily, I overcame the pain of losing my teacher and friend. Some students weren’t as fortunate and are still at a loss. Building Construction was the safe haven for many students who felt they did not fit in with academics. Thomas L. Mussell, a loving father, a wonderful teacher, a loyal friend, and a Cub Scout master to Pack 412, died at age 38. He left behind one son, four daughters, one unborn daughter, his wife, and many students who appreciated him.

Evaluation: There is something simple and honest about this essay, which concerns the kind of teacher who doesn't mind tending to the "shop kids" or future mechanics. I think Doug, in his own way, loved this teacher. In some ways, it's a paper about education's unsung heroes, as melodramatic as that sounds. Overall, it is an effective and meaningful narrative tribute to this student's teacher.

An Analysis of Li-Young Lee's "Eating Together"

Alex Cox

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

As preparation for English 102, students are asked to write an analysis of a short work of literature, pursuing a single thesis, paying some attention to a symbol or two, and connecting the work of literature to the actual, hands-on world.

I am a part of a family—a generational line of descendants and adversaries—who have spent their days continuing the story in which I now find myself. No family can claim to be perfect, although so many attempt, in vain, to develop such a family. The movies of the past always seemed to portray an ideal for the average American family, though nowadays, the family is seriously degraded by the media to resemble something so superficial and meaningless that we as a culture have become disillusioned and disassociated from the values used to define the American family. Although I must admit to a certain level of disassociation between my family and me at times in the past, the one place I can think of where all reconciliation hastens in an attempt to draw us closer together is the dinner table. Honestly, one of the most important aspects of family participation within our family comes at mealtime, particularly dinner time. My family is avid about making a conscious effort to have at the very least three major meals together per week. More often than not, many of my comrades find this notion a bit foreign. Listening as my friend expounds on his family's emotional distance, I am compelled to wonder at the current state of the family within America and how it is a reflection of our culture. These observations are a bit frightening, at times, and are moreso in light of the poem "Eating Together," by Indonesian-born author Li-Young Lee, whose Chinese family origins go hand in hand with his poetry (poets.org). In this intricately welded mesh of this twelve-line poem, there is a sense of family that once again reflects a culture and a people and points ever so subtly to the meaning of death and its connection to those of the past.

The beginning of a poem is often, in my experience, the portion of the poem in which the most important aspects of symbolism are first established. In "Eating Together," Lee uses particular care to first establish the different foods which are to be used in the coming meal: "In the steamer is the trout / seasoned with slivers of ginger, / two sprigs of green onion, and sesame oil. / We shall eat it with rice for lunch" (430). Here, there is a definite detail which seems to intentionally describe the complexity yet inherent simplicity to this meal. Lee uses very subtle alliteration in the first three lines to give the meal a melodic nature. The words "steamer," "seasoned," "sliv-

ers," "sprigs," and "sesame" all contribute to the sauntering feel of the meal's atmosphere. The foods themselves, combined with this word usage, are very important. Notice that the trout is colored with rather meager seasonings, yet it is to be served with rice, a staple food of the Chinese society. The trout itself seems to be symbolic of two distinct aspects of family life in this instance: celebration and tradition, or perhaps the celebration of tradition. Particularly, later in the poem, when Lee references the important role of the head of the trout, there is this nobility and importance to the fish that is endowed upon it through its central placement at the beginning of the poem. And, while the seasonings are meager, implying a humbler life style with provision enough for the day-to-day, the staple food of rice provides the foundation for the meal as a whole. Going along with this notion of family, the rice, in my mind, sets up already this idea of ancestry, the foundation upon which the family of the Chinese culture is so steadfastly built.

Complementing this seemingly rich and simplistic setting, combined with the casual nature of the meal referenced in the word "lunch," there is almost a peace which surrounds this family in the shrouded silence of complacency. I firmly believe that the literal proximity of the words "brothers," "sister," and "mother" is purposefully meant to indicate an intimacy within family particularly in that moment. As the mother prepares to "taste the sweetest meat of the head," there is a reverence that encompasses the entire scene. All eyes are then centered on the mother: "holding it between her fingers / deftly, the way my father did / weeks ago...." Obviously, this points to some sort of ritual held in very high regard in this household. Indeed, it seems as if the head of the fish is reserved for the head of the family. In this case, the mother seems to have been placed in this position by an incident referenced right after this portion. Examining the word "deftly," one sees the significance of the word's meaning both towards the mother's character and that of the father. Note that the word appears at the beginning of the fourth line giving it a somewhat prominent position within the poem. The word also references the smooth and skilful manner in which the mother is holding this symbolic part of the trout. Although this could directly reference the literal way in which she holds the fish, more

importantly, it seems to reference the way in which she assumed her allotted position as head of the household: with grace and ease, almost as if the father's departure were of little concern to her and even to her children.

Yet, the sequence of words that follows seems to reveal, somewhat, a sense of loss for them as if to suggest that they are not indifferent to his absence, rather that they are finding a simple and subtle peace within that moment of silent reminiscence. What a powerful moment of familiarity for a family that may otherwise seem crumbled and aged. The weariness that might otherwise engulf them is replaced by a calm sense of comfort through the passage of time and timeless tradition. This is not to overly exemplify the notion of tradition, nor is it an attempt to overly trivialize the matter. Quite readily, it is a means to provide a visual into a single and defining moment within the home, in which ritual and tradition take a back seat to memory and nuance. But I digress. If only to complete the portrait, Lee uses one more pinnacle painting of poetic prose to give the reader a glimpse into what I consider to be the heart of the story that he is telling so "deftly."

In the final portion of the poem, the focus shifts from the mother figure to the father as Lee tells of what became of him those "weeks ago." In Lee's own poetic way, it is quite plainly indicated that father did in fact pass on from this life: "Then he lay down / to sleep like a snow-covered road / winding through pines older than him, / without any travelers, and lonely for no one." This is how he ends the poem: with this metaphorical image of the serene passage of life from this world into the next. The father is compared to the image of a "snow-covered road" and upon further contemplation of that image, we notice the striking similarities between that of an untouched path and the passage of time with respect to the fragility of life. And yet, the vitality of a path's direction and destination give the father a sense of quiet purpose, even in death. Courage along this lonely road is given in the company of ancient pines, which seem to represent a long line of ancestry and heritage firmly "rooted" in the grounds of tradition; these "pines" seem to be the reason why the father is "lonely for no one." And yet, there is another meaning that can be derived from this invariably essential metaphor, for it can be counter-inferred that indeed the snow-covered path represents an uncertainty and a lack of

clear definition both for his journey onward and that of the family left behind. The stark white color of the snow contrasts the warm environment of the home atmosphere previously presented. Thus, these two aspects can be considered in two different lights, depending upon the original thoughts of the reader. This gives the poem that eclectically beautiful tinge that allows it to remain within either a positive or a somewhat vague, almost negative light. A spiritual sense of rediscovery that surrounds the family engaged in the ritualistic lunch also enshrouds the soul of the now-deceased father.

In the end, this is a brief yet descriptive tale of a sobering celebration of history and the family ties that bind each individual, giving them a place to belong. There is something to be said about a person's need to belong somewhere. Too often I fear, in today's society, we put aside the difficulties and trials within our family and embrace the false security of outside sources that lead us down a path of perpetual search for our own worth in the mediocre pleasures of our "culture." I believe that we were meant to embrace family, not necessarily setting aside tradition altogether, but understanding how tradition has affected our stories. "Eating Together" is a beautiful poem of memory and hope that inspires the truth of family importance and, even more importantly, the hope that draws a family together amid the winters of life. What a flame to rekindle within the home: the flame of hope. Steadfast in the hearts of the family, it burns, warming the family and sheltering them from the cold.

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[Poets.org](http://poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/291). 3 Dec. 2006 <<http://poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/291>>.

Evaluation: *Mr. Cox is a remarkable young writer, and his analysis of Lee's poem is as wonderful as the poem itself.*

A Soldier's Pacifism

Andrew deLutio

Course: Literature 105 (Poetry)

Instructor: Barbara Butler

Assignment:

Write an essay analyzing a poem.

Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est" is perhaps the definitive anti-war poem. Steeped in emotion, with a narrative style characteristic of a man inspired by his own thirst for life while trapped in violent combat, he brings the true nature of war to his audience in the hope that his message will ring clear. With the wisdom and honesty of one tortured by the realities of violent conflict, Wilfred Owen conveys his pacifistic message through his skilled use of imagery, simile, and irony, in a poem meant to argue against the very thing that would ultimately claim his life.

From the opening lines of his poem, Owen wastes little time in utilizing imagery in order to ensure the reader's attention: Bent double, like old beggars under sacks, / Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge. This descriptive simile is but one example of Owen's appreciation for imagery and his skill in utilizing it in order to create a vivid mental image for the reader. Prior knowledge of "old beggars" and "coughing hags" gives a reader the sensory data needed to appreciate the actual image of a tired soldier making his way through thick mud. Owen continues his magnificent use of imagery and simile with the line, "His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin..." Used as a description of his comrade's lifeless face, this simile provides the reader with a horrific image conjured from Owen's use of such terms as "hanging" and "devil." The "hanging face" of a dead man is descriptive enough to conjure up numerous images of corpses and the like from within the reader's subconscious. However, it is from the simile "like a devil's, sick of sin," where the imagery is fully appreciated and the effect truly takes root. To compare a dead man's face to a "devil's, sick of sin" is to compare the horror of death in combat to that of a devil, tired of the horrors that characterize the eternity of hell. A man's death in combat is his eternal retreat from the hell that is war.

Owen encapsulates his anti-war message through his skilled use of irony on more than one occasion throughout his poem. One of the best examples of this is his ironic use of the quote, "Dulce et decorum est / Pro patria mori." As soon as one translates this quote, the ironic effect begins to take hold. While those who wage war may find that, "it is sweet and becoming to die for one's country," Owen, (an experienced soldier), argues the opposite. His description

of the inevitable horrors of combat juxtapose with this patriotic quote. Lines 24-28 of Owen's poem send a clear message to the reader as to what his intentions were in writing this piece:

If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling...
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old lie: *Dulce et decorum est*
Pro patria mori.

Obviously angered by the exploitation of his country's enthusiastic youth, one can sense Owen's feelings of desperation and betrayal at the fact that his experience of war has only led to death and sorrow, accomplishing nothing but destruction. Betrayed and exploited by the war-waging leaders who sent him and other "children ardent for some desperate glory" off to die, Owen emphasizes his disdain for war with this skilled use of irony.

While the title of Owen's poem would be considered an "intentional" piece of irony, it is the "unintentional" irony of his death that truly brings his poem to life. Written during World War I, Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est" was an anti-war anthem written from the heart of a young soldier confronted by the realities of death. Owen's own death at the hands of the German foe was, perhaps, the ultimate ironic twist. Having written in defense of peace, mocking the patriotic lie that justifies war, Owen's death in combat was his final plea for sanity. Having written against war, his own death was obvious proof that war is neither patriotic nor glorious, but rather, indiscriminate and brutal, having no regard for friend or foe, pacifist or aggressor.

With his skillful use of imagery, simile, and irony, Wilfred Owen conveys a pacifistic message just as relevant now as it was a century ago. With our country possessed by an insatiable thirst for war, one can only hope that those who hold the keys to peace will one day heed the words of such men as Wilfred Owen and come to terms with "The old lie: *Dulce et decorum est / Pro patria mori.*"

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Evaluation: Andrew writes a remarkable analysis of what is arguably the most powerful anti-war poem ever written.

The Character of an Animal

Emily Fuglestad

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

Write a literary research paper on one of the works of literature read during the semester.

When the name Adolph Hitler comes to mind, it is commonly associated with the Jews and concentration or death camps. Hitler was indeed a cruel man who punished the different, and those he simply harbored anger and hatred toward, without them ever affecting him. He not only punished the Jews, but also anyone who protested, gypsies, and the mentally handicapped. Hitler considered them not worthy of life, not worthy of dignity, not worthy of the rights endowed upon humans, and not worthy of living with the rest of Germany, the master race. The modern culture looks upon these acts with disgust and horror. Who could discriminate to this severe level, we ask ourselves?

Many critics of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* claim that the youngest son of the Compson family, thirty-three-year-old, mentally retarded Benjamin, or

Benjy, is no different than an animal. They claim his lack of intelligence makes him an idiotic child whose lack of verbal communication categorizes him as an animal. He never speaks, and therefore as Lawrence Bowling says, "He has only an animal's understanding of what is spoken in his presence" (51). Faulkner, the author, also puts it harshly saying, "He was an animal" (qtd. in Meriwether and Millgate 246). In reducing Benjy to an animal simply because of his mental limitations, the critics are exhibiting the same extremity that we saw in Hitler, whose outrageous severity we so readily and rightfully shun. The truth of their claims is also questionable when we examine the book and delve into the true character of Benjamin Compson.

One of the biggest factors that points to Benjy being no more than an animal is the fact that he never utters a single word, not only in the duration of the book, but also in his life. This lack of communication seems to be an "animal" characteristic. What cannot be forgotten, though, is that talking is by no means the only path of communication. Benjy clearly employs his five senses to observe and also to respond to the people around him. Smell, which affects him profoundly, is quite possibly the sense that Benjy utilizes the most. He constantly makes observations such as, "Caddy smelled like trees in the rain" (12), and then later, "Caddy smelled like leaves" (5). These smells of nature equal comfort to Benjy. Fredrick Hoffman concludes that, "Caddy when she is 'right' to Benjy 'smells like trees;' when she doesn't smell like trees, something has gone wrong; and Benjy sets up a howl of protests" (53). When Caddy douses herself with perfume to please her fellow beau, Benjy is upset. He is not satisfied until Caddy relents and allows him to push her into the bathroom, where she can wash away the offensive smell. This is not merely just an effort of Benjy to please his sense of smell. Caddy plays a mother figure in his life. Benjy is at some level disturbed by Caddy's promiscuous behavior, and him pushing her to the bathroom is him trying to blindly grasp for the old Caddy who smelled like trees.

This is also not an instance of one-way communication. Caddy is consistently upset after her raunchy rendezvous. In one incident, Benjy's prodding and pushing affect her so much that she leaves her beau altogether.

Benjy narrates it saying, "Caddy and I ran. We ran up the kitchen steps, onto the porch, and Caddy knelt down in the dark and held me. I could hear her and feel her chest. 'I won't.' she said. 'I wont anymore, ever. Benjy. Benjy.' Then she was crying..." (31). Caddy unmistakably cares for Benjy on a level that is far above what she would feel for an animal. On the fateful night that she loses her virginity, she can't even make eye contact with Benjy. For the first time, she won't submit to Benjy's pushing and purge herself of her travesty. This instance alone shows that Benjy's lack of *verbal* communication does not make him an animal. If silence qualified him as an animal, why would Caddy be ashamed to meet his inquiring gaze? If we assume that he really is just an animal, then Caddy looks rather foolish being afraid of meeting an animalistic boy's gaze, just as we would logically assume she was strange if she was afraid to meet the family pet's gaze.

Caddy is not the only one who is affected by Benjy. Benjy constantly cries, or moans, when he feels disturbed or upset by something. It is important to note that he is not upset by things animals might be distraught over, such as being left outside or not having food. Benjy is upset by situations that would upset any human being. When his dysfunctional and uninvolved mother jealously notices that Benjy views Caddy more as a mother than herself, Mrs. Compson attempts to hug Benjy and show affection. Sensing the false quality of her actions, Benjy becomes upset, and Caddy comforts him.

Another arrow opponents point to in underlining Benjy's presumed animalistic nature is the fact that he has a skewed sense of time. Cleanth Brooks says that, "[Benjy] is obviously a victim in the sense in which an animal is....[Benjy] has not much more sense of time than an animal has, and therefore he possesses not much more freedom than an animal does" (326, 329) However, in reality Benjy has a remarkable sense of time, considering his mental limitations. He dislikes and is upset immensely by change. At one point in the book, Benjy is castrated after he runs up to a young girl whom he mistook for Caddy. We see a point in the book in which Benjy narrates, "I got undressed and I looked at myself, and I began to cry" (47). Clearly his castration is a major, and unwanted, change. It is one that is very upsetting to Benjy because he remembers how his body used to be,

and look, and he is upset by what he sees – or rather, the absence of what he used to see. Another significant fact that points to his sense of time is his sister Caddy. Despite the fact that Caddy has been absent from Benjy's life for around seventeen years, Benjy waits at the gate, remembering how she used to walk down the lane and through the gate to him. At one point in *The Sound and the Fury*, a field of the Compsons, which is sold to send Quentin to Harvard, is turned into a golf course. This field has a fence surrounding it, which Benjy frequents. Whenever a golfer calls to his caddie within Benjy's hearing, Benjy becomes upset and anxious. Once a "[M]an said 'caddie' up the hill..." (11), while Benjy is playing near the fence. Benjy begins to moan, and Luster, one of the black servants who watches Benjy, tells him to "Hush up" (11). Benjy has no way to know the caddie the golfers call is not his own Caddy, whom he loves and misses. What the critics forget is that we cannot expect, nor measure, how Benjy captures and relays time in the same way that we expect or measure an average person's time-sense. In condemning Benjy simply because he relays time in snatches, and clips, we not only condemn anyone who is not completely "normal," but we forget the most important thing about Benjy's sense of time: he has one! Who can possibly deem how a person should remember events? Isn't it enough that he simply remembers, and remembers with his own accuracy? Even having a sense of time is a remarkable difference between him and the average golden retriever.

Benjy exhibits some of the most caring emotions and actions of everyone, and he does so throughout the whole book. When Caddy is excommunicated from the prestigious Compson family, Benjy is the only one who truly misses Caddy for less selfish reasons than the rest of the family has. Unlike his brothers, who simply want Caddy for money and incest, Benjy misses the relationship they had. It is important to note that Benjy's brothers have what he is "lacking." They have the intelligence and wit, but neither of them fare very well. In fact, one might say they fare far worse. Although his older brother, Quentin, is an intelligent Harvard student, he is depressed, and he eventually kills himself. Jason becomes malevolent and cruel, never enjoying himself except perhaps when he is ruining a family member's life. On the contrary, Benjy

waits at the gate for Caddy, not understanding that she's not coming back, but always hoping that she will be the little girl bounding around the corner after a day of school. At one point in the book, someone left the gate, which bars Benjy from the rest of the world, unlocked, and Benjy spots a few school girls walking home. When he rushes out to meet them, thinking one of them is Caddy, he is immediately stopped by the neighbors, who use their fists rather than helping hands. Instead of recognizing that Benjy is purely demonstrating his nostalgic missing of Caddy, the neighbors simply categorize Benjy as a problem rather than a person. Sadly, Benjy's neighbors, and also his critics, never bother to look deeper into his character to truly see him.

As humans we tend to shy away and even recoil when characteristics of animals are placed upon ourselves. If someone were to say, "Wow, you really eat like a pig," or "Your body reminds me of a hippo," or even, "You have the mental capacity of a slow goldfish," naturally we take offense. For in reality it is almost impossible that we would eat the same amount as a pig, or have the large body of the hippo, because we are not those animals. We can also conclude, then, that if we would describe an animal with human characteristics, it wouldn't make it a human. After all, if someone were to remark that their neighbor had a very smart pet turtle, it does not in fact mean that we will start asking the turtle for help on algebraic equations, or we will start a fund to send the turtle to college. The critics would like us to believe that Benjy is no more than an animal. However, they would also like us to believe that Quentin Compson is a regular, albeit overly depressed, human being. But when we look at the characteristics of Quentin in relation to Benjy, we find too many similarities to just pass it off as a coincidence. Yes, they do have striking differences; the biggest of course would be their mental capabilities. Despite their mental accomplishments, they are both fixated on one person: Caddy. Caddy dominates both the minds of her brothers. Benjy goes through life with almost every little experience triggering a memory he had with Caddy. He misses her and is oddly obsessed with Caddy's sexuality. The same is true with Quentin. His entire section, and possibly his life, is consumed with incestuous desires for his sister. Thoughts of his sister are the food that feed him

mentally. Thoughts of Caddy sustain, consume, and drive both Benjy and Quentin. André Bleikasten illustrates this well, saying that "[L]ike his retarded brother's, Quentin's love for Caddy is jealous, exclusive, excessive; like his, it can only be described in terms of lack and loss" (91). They are also alike in their observations of nature. Benjy constantly remarks about the smell of nature, and Quentin's section is brimming with phrases and observations like, "There was a bird somewhere in the woods, beyond the broken and infrequent slanting of sunlight" (86). It cannot be a mere coincidence that both Benjy and Quentin have this observation, if not love, of nature.

Moreover, Benjy and Quentin are forgotten children. Mrs. Compson is frequently heard to say and imply that Jason, not Quentin, Caddy, or Benjy, is her favorite child, and that he (Jason) is not like all the rest. The lack of parenting in *The Sound and the Fury* is alarming if not appalling, but it is especially noticeable in regard to Quentin and Benjy, a kind of trumpet of doom for both of them. We can assume that if Benjy had full mental capabilities he would be a Quentin, Jr. He feels the same things; it is just played out in a different mannerism. Why would Faulkner take such time to paint these parallel portraits of a supposedly idiotic "animal" boy and a depressed Harvard student? It cannot be a mere coincidence. If Benjy is to be considered an animal, then we must conclude that Quentin is, also. The reverse is also true. In order to assume that Quentin should *not* be passed by as an unimportant character, we must also assume that Benjy, too, cannot be left in the dust. Even looking at the bare structure of the novel, we can see the two sections coinciding – one after another. Bleikasten says that "If Benjy's monologue serves as a prologue to the whole novel, it is obviously with the section immediately following it that it has its closest affinities" (90). The near proximity of the two brothers' sections is yet another piece of evidence pointing to their similarities.

William Faulkner called Benjy an animal. It is important, however, to note that he did not say this in some footnote of the book. It was an offhanded sort of comment that was spoken well after the novel was actually published. He made Benjy the moral compass of the story, which shows that Faulkner does not simply regard Benjy as an animal. The true character is ultimately

reflected in the actual book. Because Benjy is the moral compass, we can ultimately judge and measure each character of the story by how they relate and treat Benjy. One critic put it in simple terms, saying, "Benjy appears from the outset as a key-figure and even more so in retrospect. He is only a mirror, but mirrors do not lie" (Bleikasten 88). Jason, his brother, treats Benjy cruelly and with malice. It is Jason who orders the unnecessary castration. We can see that this demeanor of malice is also what he exhibits to the rest of the world. He's a bitter man who finds joy in being cruel. On the other extreme, Benjy's sister Caddy acts as a mother to him. She cares for him and truly loves him – handicap and all. Benjy relies on this. "Benjy's dependence on Caddy is evident when she squats in the water before him to soothe and hush his fears" (Stonum 45). Despite Caddy's promiscuous behavior, she is still the one who tries hardest to help, benefit, and connect others, despite consistent setbacks. Once, when Benjy is quite young, his father comes in the room and picks Benjy up. Benjy makes the observation that "He smelled like rain" (41). Then his father proceeds to say, "'Well Benjy...Have you been a good boy today'" (41). Benjy describes people with terms of nature when he feels comforted. While we cannot dismiss many of the other faults of Mr. Compson, we do see in this interaction with Benjy that he is not just another selfish Mrs. Compson, and that he actually has affection and love for Benjy. Without fail, how people treat Benjy reveals their inner nature. If Benjy truly is just an animal character, why would Faulkner not only waste an entire fourth of the book on him but also appoint Benjy the position of being a moral compass? Are animals even capable of that hefty job?

The only time we witness Benjy completely calm with no threat of becoming upset is near the end of the book, when he attends Easter mass with Dilsey. "In the midst of the voices and the hands Ben sat, rapt in his sweet blue gaze" (185). At church, where the message is acceptance from God despite physical limitations, or race, or intelligence, Benjy is calm. It is here, amidst the message of peace, that Benjy is content. In view of this, we are left to ask ourselves one question: Would an animal boy who supposedly has no right to be referred to as a human being be so affected by a message that tells him he is

accepted as he is? Granted, Benjy cannot understand all the words, and grasp the meaning of them while taking notes, but he is able to sense the spirit of peace and equality that is present and active without the use of words. It is very clear that the peaceful atmosphere is one of the few times we actually see Benjy in a calm manner. In his very turbulent home, it is not uncommon to see Benjy crying or wailing when the Compsons are going through yet another troublesome time. Benjy witnesses a brief squabble between the then younger Caddy and Quentin which ends with Caddy announcing, "'I dont care...I'll run away...I'll run away and never come back'" (12). Benjy "began to cry" (12) and is not calmed until Caddy squats in the water to reassure Benjy that she is "'not going to run away'" (12). The night that Caddy loses her virginity, all it takes Benjy is one look at her to sense something is wrong. Benjy remembers that "Her eyes flew at me, and away. I began to cry. It went loud and I got up...and I saw her eyes and I cried louder and pulled at her dress" (44). Benjy is understandably even more upset when he sees that "Her eyes ran" (44). But again, in church, with Dilsey by his side, Reverend Shegog in front of him, and a congregation of African Americans—who like Benjy know what it's like to feel the heart-break of oppression and inequality, and who also (like Benjy) drink in and soak up the message that they have worth in the eyes of God—Benjy is tranquil.

It is easy, though, to just brush Benjy's actions off, and misinterpret them, simply because he cannot defend himself and no one cares anyway. In a letter to his editor, Faulkner hurriedly explains some happenings in the book and mentions that "He [Benjy] tries to rape a young girl and is castrated" (Faulkner, "To Ben..." 220). If we only look at the text, we can see that Benjy is trying to just communicate to them. He is simply trying to reconnect with Caddy, or someone he thinks is Caddy. Warwick Wadlington also echoes this sentiment saying that "To be immersed into Benjy's perspective, which reduces everything to an unqualified opposition (Caddy and not-Caddy), is our proper introduction to the Compson experience of life" (Wadlington 362). If anything, Benjy's section expands, not reduces, the Compson life. He provides us with the unbiased information to wade through the rest of the book.

The Character of an Animal

What qualities divide the “animals” of the human race from the so-called “normal” humans? Is it the report card they receive at school, the salary from work, or perhaps their IQ? Is a less intelligent person less capable of loving and caring deeply for his or her fellow man? Has the present-day society changed from singing to the tune of everyone human having worth, to the painfully dissonant tune of doling out worth to only those who can reach a socially sanctioned mental capacity? Benjy is not an animal simply because he exists, in human form, on this earth. His mental limitations may limit him on the aspect of speaking, but they certainly do not limit his ability to relate and love those around him. If we reduce Benjy, and, consequently, anyone mentally handicapped, we are really just exhibiting watered-down Hitleresque traits in this present age. If we condemn Benjy, we send the message that he’s somehow not worthy to be on the same plane as the average human in any circumstance. In the last sentences of *The Sound and the Fury*, we are shown the picture of Benjy sitting in a wagon as “The broken flower drooped back over Ben’s fist and his eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and façade flowed smoothly once more from left to right...” (199). To believe that Benjy is no better than an animal would be to look into Benjy’s blue eyes and look no further. But we cannot, and must not, allow ourselves to simply look at the surface. We must dig deeper into Benjy’s character until we are convinced of the depth that is there, and not join the line of critics who reduce Benjy to simply an animal, with no worth, and nothing of merit to contribute to the world.

Evaluation: *If the purpose in English 102 is to coax the student to read a primary text, and to read some literary criticism of that text, and to form his/her own opinion of these things, and then to synthesize all of this in an organized, literate essay featuring an independent mind, then this is an “A” paper. The Hitler example that begins the essay is a little dramatic, but who isn’t dramatic at seventeen? This is an excellent response to the charge of English 102.*

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The Morality of Embryonic Selection

Penney Gainer

Course: Philosophy 115 (Ethics)

Instructor: Barbara Solheim

Assignment:

Students were to research and compose argumentative essays as part of a debate project during the semester.

Finding the morality in the long-disputed subject of stem cell research has been a complicated controversy since its introduction to society. Thus, even more concerns can be expected to arise when human embryos are selected for genetic factors that match those of an existing sibling. The match, in this case, is made so that the sibling who is fatally ill can utilize stem cells of the umbilical cord blood of the newborn. This is known as the "savior sibling" controversy. It is a subject of much disagreement but with promising implications for sick children and their families. In this case, embryonic selection is used in an effort to save another innocent life, related to the newborn, and overall, to secure the well-being of the family as a whole.

Preimplantation genetic diagnosis, in vitro fertilization, and fetal stem cell transplantation are three separate technologies. When used together, however, they can have a profound effect on a child suffering from any of the numerous diseases this procedure has been found to fight.

In conducting the procedure, several embryos are created in the laboratory using the extracted eggs from the mother and the sperm cells from the father. These embryos are allowed to develop for 72 hours, approximately the time at which the embryo is comprised of eight to ten cells. At this stage, one cell is removed from each developing embryo in order to find those matching the immune system genes of the ill child, called the human leukocyte antigen, or HLA. The matching embryos are then implanted into the mother's womb via in vitro fertilization in an effort to establish a pregnancy. If one of the embryos does indeed implant into her uterus, the pregnancy is like any other. The only difference from this time forward, is the transfusion of the placental and umbilical cord blood into the sick sibling after the birth of the "savior sibling." This is done in an effort for the sick child's body to utilize the rich quantity of stem cells found in this blood. The science is simple, but the acceptance of the process by all groups proves otherwise (Laufer et al 168-171).

The reason for embryonic selection in this case, and the single most important reason it should be kept legal, is its ability to overwhelmingly help and more importantly, even cure a young child plagued with such dis-

eases as the following: the many types of leukemias, Fanconi anemia, myelomonocytic syndrome, Hodgkins lymphoma, multiple myeloma, and neuroblastoma (Kahn, Wagner, and Wolf 329). In diseases such as these, it has been proven that stem cells derived from a related sibling are the best treatment, and it is incomparable to bone marrow transplants donated from unrelated and even related donors. The success rate of this procedure is evident. Survival after receiving stem cell donation from an unrelated donor is a sheer 18% to 33%, which does not come close to the 75% to 100% of recipients surviving after donation from a sibling (Kahn, Wagner, and Wolf 328).

Since this is the best treatment for many sick children, as reflected in these numbers, it is unethical in itself to deny a parent the choice to use such technology, which has been safely used in several successful cases, when they are searching for a treatment for their child. This is especially true because there are no health hazards to the baby or mother associated with the procedure. The only thing the doctors are interested in taking from the newborn is the blood of the umbilical cord and placenta *after* a normal pregnancy and the birth. Just like the dead no longer have any use for their organs, a newborn baby is no longer in need of the blood of the placenta and umbilical cord. Embryo selection for choosing an HLA donor has been used successfully already in numerous cases. For instance, Adam Nash was selected as an embryo after it was found that the embryo's cells were an HLA match to those of his fatally ill sister, Molly. Molly was sick with Fanconi anemia, but after the transfusion of her new brother's umbilical cord blood, she has recovered. Both Molly and Adam today live normal and healthy lives, and their parents could not be happier with their decision (Steinbock 544-545).

Before preimplantation genetic diagnosis, women still found a way to use similar technology. Instead of confirming a matching embryo, a couple in such a situation would simply conceive a child naturally and check the HLA matching status by performing amniocentesis (Kahn, Wagner, and Wolf 328). If the fetus was not a match, the couple simply aborted in order to try again as soon as possible. Such a match on the first try would be extremely lucky since the probability of this is a meager

one in four, or 25% percent (Kahn, Wagner, and Wolf 328). This could end in several abortions and quite possibly still no matching fetus.

Amniocentesis is usually done within the second trimester ("Amniocentesis"). Certainly, ending a pregnancy in the second trimester is completely different than simply not using a two day old embryo that has never been implanted, and is much more emotionally difficult for the couple. A fetus of the second trimester has developed organs and organ systems, a heartbeat that pumps six gallons of blood per day, and at this stage, the fetus has also learned to breathe ("Fetal Development"). This is compared to the three-day-old embryo that cannot feel, lacks developed organs, and lacks an identity (Kuhse and Singer 33). The bottom line in any crisis that threatens the life of a parent's child is that those parents will gladly do anything to save their son or daughter. Such an act cannot be despised. Instead of making many people's last option illegal, the law should aid such parents to seek help for their child in the most dignified way possible.

There are two possible results after this process has been completed. The positive end result of embryonic selection for an HLA donor is the ill child is successfully treated and another child is added to the family. The other result, a failed attempt, is of course possible as well. If in the sad case the child dies after the parents tried embryonic selection, the parents would never find themselves questioning whether they did everything possible to help their child. Thus, using embryonic selection for a matching donor, whether the end result is the one that is so desperately hoped for or not, is done in the best interest of the family as a whole. The intent of the procedure is done in the best interest of the ill child, but it is also in the best interest of the "savior sibling" because it is better and healthier for that child to grow up in a happy, healthy, intact family (Laufer et al 194). Thus, in a successful case of embryonic selection and stem cell transplantation, the family is happier because all the members are healthy and no longer suffering. In the event the procedure is not successful, the child will be a baby when it fails, and when he or she is old enough to understand, time will have diluted the sadness and tensions of the crisis (Laufer 194). It is also,

in this case, the parents' responsibility, as it always is, to provide a loving and nurturing atmosphere to bring up a happy child that feels like he or she belongs to the family and is loved. A parent wanting to do whatever it takes to help their child reflects a loving and nurturing parent, fit to handle a new baby. Norman Fost, an ethicist from the University of Wisconsin, says it best about embryonic selection for HLA matches when he states, "Of all the reasons people have babies, this would seem to be a wonderful reason. Most reasons are either mindless sex or selfish reasons [such as to provide a playmate for their first child or to have the "perfect" number of boys and girls in the family]" (qtd in Tanner 2).

Many groups strongly oppose embryonic selection because of the excess of embryos that are left over from the procedure. People that choose pro-life believe that the embryo is a distinct individual and is equal to a walking and talking human being. Thus, discarding the extra embryos is the same as homicide. However, according to Helga Kuhse of Monash University and Peter Singer of Princeton University, there are major flaws in this reasoning. Whether or not the discarding of these extra embryos is equal to homicide poses the age-old question of when life begins.

The first basis on why some say discarding extra embryos is wrong is the belief that each one is a distinct individual human. This is based on genetic and numerical permanence between the zygote and the adult (Kuhse and Singer 27). In other words, one zygote, from the time of conception, will yield one baby with the same genetic code. At the stage that these extra embryos are after embryonic selection, about day three, its cells are totipotent. Totipotency is the ability of each cell of the embryo to separate and become a different embryo. This is evident when one cell is fertilized at conception but separates during the first week of gestation to create identical twins. Where there was one distinct identity, now there are two. But what happened to the first? The genetic code of the two new embryos is the same as the zygote that they came from, but numerically, they do not match. Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer also point out in their argument that if the first zygote was a distinct individual and through the twinning process two new individuals are created, then how is it that no remains are

left from the first identity? The cells of the embryo lose their totipotency by week two. This is when the cells are committed to that one embryo for the rest of the pregnancy and cannot split to form another. Therefore, it is not accurate to state that at conception a distinct individual has been created. It *is* accurate, on the other hand, to place such an identity around day fourteen (Kuhse and Singer 27-29).

Embryos at this stage lack the special qualities that set human beings apart from all other species of the world. These qualities include the ability of human beings to rationalize, exercise free will, plan and look forward to their futures, form relationships, and so on. It is based on these qualities that it is marked immoral to kill a human being as opposed to a cow, a tree, or a head of lettuce. When one states that "every human being has a right to a life," they are referring to those creatures that possess these unique qualities over all creatures that lack them. An early embryo, however, lacks such qualities; it cannot think, make decisions, exercise free will, form relationships, etc. It is not until the second trimester, in fact, that organs and organ systems are developed. Thus, messages cannot be sent to the brain at all about the embryo's environment or experiences. The quality that sets humans apart from others is their advanced mental capabilities, something that the embryo lacks due to the stage of development (Kuhse and Singer 29-33).

The not yet developed central nervous system of the early embryo also means that the embryo is of a non-sentient status, meaning it cannot feel pleasure or pain. According to Bonnie Steinbock, this nonsentience does not allow the fetus to possess any interests of its own. In other words, a sentient being has interests of its own because it is in its interest to avoid pain and remain comfortable, and the opposite for nonsentient beings. If something lacks sentience and therefore interests, it also lacks moral status, meaning we need not consider them (Steinbock 472). Bonnie Steinbock carefully argues this as she states that nonsentience does not make it acceptable to unnecessarily destroy such beings. She states, however, that in making a decision on the fate of a non-sentient thing, it cannot be based on its interests because of its lack thereof (Steinbock 473). It is very similar to

The Morality of Embryonic Selection

the acceptance of “pulling the plug” on a person who has become brain dead from an accident but remains alive through life support machinery. It is accepted because we know that his or her life is nothing without conscious awareness. This is due to consciousness and mental capabilities that enable us to live a fulfilling life as we know it. “It is not biological life that matters, but rather conscious existence” (Steinbock 473).

These counterarguments, I believe, undermine the presented argument against embryonic selection for the creation of a savior sibling. The embryo, even though it is not equal to that of a human being, is a symbol of human life and thus should be used in a responsible and respectful manner. When human lives are preserved in the wake of embryonic use, they are then being used respectfully. But the line should be drawn when selecting embryos, and therefore creating extra, for such things as desirable traits, cosmetic testing, school experiments, or jewelry. Research or procedures that are known to save lives or improve quality of life, I believe, should be accepted. Without it, unnecessary lives and hope will be lost. Responsible advances in technology have provided human beings with the opportunity to live longer, healthier, and valuable lives. Improvement cannot be made, however, if the negative possibilities are allowed to hold it back.

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Evaluation: *Penney's essay is very carefully argued and well written. She clearly defines her subject matter and actively engages with arguments opposed to her own.*

Descent of a Mad Man: A Freudian Psychoanalysis of Montresor in “A Cask of Amontillado”

Jamie Herold

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

Assignment:

Write a literary research paper.

In 1846, ten years before Sigmund Freud was even born, Edgar Allan Poe wrote “The Cask of Amontillado,” a story that proves that Poe had a deep understanding of the human psyche. “Poe directs our attention away from the merely sensational and toward the psychological” (Reynolds 103). By using Freudian psychoanalysis, we can delve into the inner mind of the story’s main character, Montresor, to decode what is happening. Freud’s psychological theories can be used to explain that Montresor and Fortunato represent two similar men, two aspects of the same man, or Poe and a father figure.

Before actually interpreting the psychology of Montresor, it is necessary to understand the two characters and most importantly, their similarities. Both men have names that refer to wealth. Fortunato refers to for-

tune, meaning luck or wealth. Montresor comes from the Italian word “mitessor,” and “Tessoro” means treasure. Therefore, Montresor means “my treasure.” Both men are also Italian noblemen, coming from long family lines, and consider themselves connoisseurs of fine wine. At the carnival, both men appear wearing masks. Fortunato wears the appropriate attire of a jester’s outfit, while Montresor wears a black silk mask, a smile, and an aura of friendship. When the two meet they greet each other excessively (Sweet 331). Fortunato greets Montresor with “excessive warmth,” apparently due to his drinking. In return, Montresor is so pleased to see his future victim that he thinks he “should never have done wringing his hand” (Poe qtd. in Sweet 331).

Montresor exclaims that “in painting and gemmary, Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack, but in the matter of old wines he was sincere” (Poe 180). Indeed, Fortunato, although apparently skilled in his knowledge of wines, is not even clever enough to determine the motive behind his walk through the catacombs. One must even wonder about his wine connoisseurship, because it would be impossible, at Fortunato’s state of intoxication, to do a wine testing. Therefore, it is obvious that he goes into the catacombs, not as a wine tester, but as a drunken fool. This foolishness is symbolized by his fool’s costume. Montresor, on the other hand, apparently clever enough to come up with a scheme, could be considered a quack himself. In the beginning paragraphs, Montresor boasts that “I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself and bought largely whenever I could” (180). However, none of the wines that emerge in the story are Italian. Amontillado is a Spanish wine, while De Grave and Medoc are French. Considering that Poe took such careful wording into play throughout his story, it seems unlikely that these are just coincidence, and that Poe meant to show Montresor’s lack of knowledge in wine (Sweet 331).

In the catacombs, their actions once again allude to their sameness. Both men carry a torch through the catacombs and indulge in the wine surrounding them, in order to ward off the dampness. As they continue this indulgence, both become inebriated by the alcohol (331). Fortunato’s eyes are “two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication” (Poe qtd. in Sweet 331). And a

short time later, Montresor admits that his "own fancy grew warm with the Medoc" (331).

Their similarities are not just seen in their actions, but also in their conversations. Throughout the story, the two men continuously repeat key words that the other has just spoken. When their discussion first begins, Montresor says, "But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado" and in return Fortunato replies "Amontillado? A Pipe?" and then later repeats "Amontillado" three times (331). Later, Montresor says, "I am on my way to Luchesi...He will tell me-" to which Fortunato replies, "Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry" (331). Montresor continues, saying, "I perceive you have an engagement," and Fortunato says "I have no engagement" (331). Once in the catacombs, however, Fortunato speaks first and Montresor repeats as in this example: "'Nitre?' he asked at length. 'Nitre,' I replied." (331). At the end of the story, Montresor repeats Fortunato's "let us be gone" and "for the love of God" (331). These similarities are necessary in understanding the Freudian analysis of the relationship between Montresor and Fortunato.

If we are to suggest that Montresor and Fortunato are two similar but different people, then it can be argued that Montresor sees something in Fortunato that reminds him of what he dislikes in himself. By focusing on Fortunato, he does not have to focus on his own issues.

In this case, Freud's theories of aggression, levels of consciousness, and ego defense mechanisms can explain his behavior. "Freud viewed aggression as a universal, unconscious human instinct that must be controlled by the internal restraints of the superego and the external restraints of culture, society, and morality" (Hockenbury and Hockenbury 476). Therefore, Montresor embodies the deep desires that every person has. In Montresor, these aggressive thoughts are allowed to be put into action. "Poe's shadow figures, his negative or destructive masculine creations, are for the most part pathological beings who project their hostility, rage, hatred, and murderous instincts in the most rational and highly objective way" (Knapp 4).

Freud suggests that there are three structures to everyone's personality: the id, ego and superego. The id is the most primitive part of our personality, which is "com-

pletely immune to logic, values, morality, danger, and the demands of the external world" and only strives to "increase pleasure, reduce tension, and avoid pain" (Hockenbury and Hockenbury 457). The superego is the polar opposite of the id, concerned only with what is right and socially acceptable. The ego must balance these two aspects, listening to the unconscious desires of the id and the control of the superego (458).

In the case of Montresor, his id has taken control, and the superego and even the ego are chained up, unable to intervene. He has lost all rational sense of right and wrong and is driven solely on his urge to remove that which he dislikes: Fortunato. This move from the moralistic to the impulsive is often said to be represented in the descent to the catacombs: "Descents sometimes imply a need to regress to primeval levels, to archaic substrata, to vegetative spheres where life is experienced in its most basic way and differentiation has not yet come into being" (Knapp 179).

This descent from carnival to house to catacombs represents the levels of consciousness that Montresor has to pass through in order to commit his act of revenge. To Poe, Montresor's house is a representation of Montresor's mind (Sweet 332). The outside carnival could be said to be the conscious mind. Since this is the area dominated by the ego and superego, it is filled with society's rules, which cannot justify the killing of another person for some injuries that remain unnamed. Unable to get what he desires on this level, Montresor delves deeper into the mind and into the preconscious, which is represented by Montresor's house. The servants, which he sneakily gets rid of, could represent the last remaining morals and whisperings of the superego. Then as the two make their way down the staircase and into the catacombs, they enter the unconscious mind, ruled by the id. Here, Montresor is allowed to take out his murderous plot of revenge without any hindrances of morals or ethics.

According to Freud, the ego, fearing that it will be overtaken by the id, establishes certain defense mechanisms to stay in control. These mechanisms, except for one that will later be discussed, have not served to restrain the id in Montresor but rather have enhanced it. These defense mechanisms include denial, projection, rationalization, and regression.

The first defense mechanism, denial, takes effect when someone is unwilling to acknowledge information that could cause anxiety. Perhaps, Montresor continuously suggesting a return to the carnival is not just to lure Fortunato but also so that Montresor can deny that he forced Fortunato to his grave. In this way, by walling up Fortunato, Montresor can also claim that he did not actually kill Fortunato. To Montresor, Fortunato led himself to his own death. Later on, after finishing the masonry work, Montresor admits that his "heart grew sick" but dismisses it as a result of the catacombs' dampness (Poe 184).

Projection is when a person places uncomfortable feeling onto another person. Sweet suggests that "Montresor unconsciously projects himself into Fortunato" and that "the parallels serve to exhibit the unconscious psychological process of transference and hence to elucidate Montresor's motivation" (Sweet 331). Through scapegoating, Montresor denies all responsibility of his own faults. In the catacombs, Montresor says, "you are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was" (Poe 181). Apparently, Montresor blames Fortunato's insults for this decline in social status and happiness.

Rationalization is "justifying one's actions or feelings with socially acceptable explanations rather than consciously acknowledging one's true motives or desires" (Hockenbury and Hockenbury 460). Here Montresor uses his family motto, "Nemo me impune lacessit" ("No one attacks me without paying dearly"), to defend his actions (Poe 182). This way, he is not just ruthlessly killing, but following his family's beliefs.

Regression takes effect when a person returns to a more childlike or animalistic stage. With this theory, the descent represents Montresor's regression to a more animalistic stage, where conscience matters less. "Poe's tales take place both within and without the rational objective world" (Knapp 3). Montresor is able to descend to the animalistic aspect of the mind that can justify killing and then ascend back into normal function. This is a rare case among Poe's characters, for most are never able to reemerge from the regressed state (Davidson 202).

A fifth defense mechanism is repression. This mechanism, however, begins the theory that Fortunato is a part of Montresor that he wishes to have no longer exist. If

indeed Montresor and Fortunato are the same person, it makes sense that Poe has drawn so many parallels between the two in his writing. However, the differences in the men account for the aspects that are going to be repressed.

According to Freud, repression is "the unconscious exclusion of anxiety-provoking thoughts, feelings, and memories from conscious awareness" (Hockenbury and Hockenbury 459). "In Montresor's unconscious mind, he is not murdering Fortunato, but burying/repressing that dilettantish side of himself he can no longer endure, that side symbolized by Fortunato" (Sweet 332). In this case, the journey into the catacombs represents the effort to bury the irrational troubles of the conscious mind in the unconscious mind. By repressing Fortunato into the deep recesses of the human mind, Montresor tries to remove him from his everyday thoughts. This, however, will prove to be unsuccessful.

The idea that Montresor and Fortunato are two aspects of the same man is not so far fetched. The two are similar enough that we can envision them as the same person, but still have very different personalities. Fortunato "is from the start befuddled by both vanity and inebriation; acts on sudden impulse; assumes good will where Montresor is malice incarnate; and suffers as the passive, total victim of his adversary's malign cunning" (Hoffman 220). Montresor, on the other hand, is calm and collected and never sways from his intent. He has planned every aspect of his revenge.

Montresor states, "*At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitely settled" (Poe 180). Montresor has waited for the best time to perform his revenge: during the carnival when his actions would be least noticed. Using reverse psychology, Montresor clears the house of servants, stating, "I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned" (181).

Montresor continues his mastery of reverse psychology to lure Fortunato deeper into his grasp. Always adding on a comment about Luchesi or the Amontillado, Montresor triggers Fortunato's lust for the liquor and pride. "It is the victim who does all the pushing, while the

murderer repeatedly gives reasons why the journey into the cellar should be called off" (Reynolds 104). Montresor lures Fortunato in by his desires while never actually having to ask him, let alone force him, into the catacombs and ultimately into the grave (104).

The immurement of Fortunato is really symbolic of Montresor burying those characteristics deep in his unconscious. "As a Catholic Montresor knows that suicide (the potential murder of Fortunato) is a mortal sin; thus, his unconscious dictates that if suicide is impossible, then only repression (the premature burial) is possible" (Sweet 332). Since this burial is actually taking place in the mind, it is dreamlike. According to Saliba, in dreams, the irrational mind has control and the ego can only watch as the dream unfolds. The premature burial is symbolic of this because the victim is conscious of what is happening (82).

A third interpretation of Poe's work is made by Marie Bonaparte, a friend and student of Sigmund Freud. The similarities between Montresor and Fortunato make sense in this theory because, although they are not the same person, they are indeed from the same family. In the forward of her book, Freud writes "thanks to her interpretative effort, we now realize how many of the characteristics of Poe's works were conditioned by his personality, and can see how that personality derived from intense emotional fixations and painful infantile experiences" (Freud xi).

In this interpretation, we must pay attention to Poe's life. "Poe's mother was a minor actress named Elizabeth Arnold married to a sometime actor and alcoholic, David Poe" (Thompson 1). After his mother died and his father abandoned him at the age of two, he was unofficially adopted by his foster parents, John and Frances Allan. Although taking care of Poe's well-being, John Allan is often described as being a "tyrannical and unloving foster father" (1). During the next years, Poe went to school, was kicked out, went into the military, and had numerous love infatuations. One particular love interest was for the "fragile and consumptive poetess, Frances Osgood" (Bonaparte 505). Also during this time, Poe had confrontations with two other writers, named English and Griswold. A fist fight once broke out between Thomas Dunn English and

Poe. "Mrs. Osgood, alarmed by all this, broke with Poe and fled to Providence, which left a clear field to Griswold, who also yearned for her hand" (Bonaparte 506). According to Bonaparte, these events are evident in Poe's writing of "The Cask of Amontillado."

Hoffman sums up Bonaparte's theory by writing, "she [Bonaparte] finds the wine cellar-the long, dark, dank tunnel of human remains-to be an obvious, indeed an importunate, symbol of the maternal womb and the entrance thither, and Montresor, leading Fortunato ever deeper to effect his execution, is committing the murder of his father-figure in the act of possessing the mother's body" (Hoffman 219). Bonaparte finds mother images throughout the story. The dark and damp tunnel represents the birth canal. It being cluttered with the family's bones is reminiscent of the womb and the life that comes out of it. The wine "is equated with the intoxicating delights of sole possession of the milk and breasts of the mother, an excellent symbol of their Oedipal revelry" (Bonaparte 506). According to Bonaparte, even the mother's legs are represented by the two "colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs," the pillars around the recess where Fortunato will be walled up (Poe 183). This niche is the final symbol of the father being walled up in the mother's womb.

Hoffman adds onto this theory by examining the costume of Fortunato. The jester's cap is representational of a penis, and "the Fool is man's lustful nature made absurd and comical" (Hoffman 220). This phallic symbol represents the father-figure which, in Poe's case, could be any of the aforementioned men. Furthermore,

It little matters that Fortunato also reveals certain brother-features as, for instance, his age, which seems fairly near his rival's, or superficially evokes Griswold and English, both hated "brothers" of the pen; or that he also embodies Henry Poe, his alcoholic, consumptive brother, who coughed like Fortunato in this tale. All this may be merely the better to let Montresor exact a hideous and safe vengeance on these brother-figures who, condensed in Fortunato, represent diminished fathers. (Bonaparte 506-7)

No matter which theory is chosen, Freud's theories of psychoanalysis can help us explain the inner workings of Montresor's mind. Davidson argues that Montresor "has the power of moving downward from his mind or intellectual being and into his brute or physical self and then of returning again to his intellectual being with his total selfhood unimpaired" (Davidson 201). However, Poe suggests that Montresor was not successful in his revenge, whether it was toward another person, a part of himself, or a father figure. After struggling over the weight of the last stone, which could be interpreted as the weight of conscience, he talks with Fortunato one last time before Fortunato goes silent. It is after this silence that Montresor says "my heart grew sick; it was the dampness of the catacombs that made it so" (Poe 184). This sickness can be understood as guilt and remorse because he has killed someone, frustration because Fortunato has died (or gone mad) before he understands Montresor's true intentions, anger because Fortunato died without being tortured enough, or because he no longer has Fortunato to blame and must face his own faults for the first time. Whichever interpretation is correct, Montresor still remembers this event in vivid detail fifty years later, suggesting that he did not truly accomplish what he meant to do. As Sweet suggests, "rather than severing the psychic bond between the two men, however, the act has the ironic effect of reinforcing the link" (Sweet 331).

According to Poe, things stored in the unconscious can still affect our lives. Therefore, Montresor accomplished little. Like Montresor's coat of arms, Montresor and Fortunato are intertwined in a never-ending circle, now walled up together forever.

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Evaluation: *Jamie does an outstanding job synthesizing character research with analysis. Her deft understanding of Freudian psychoanalysis in the context of two troubling characters is first-rate.*

Freedom Needs Protection

Margarita Hristeva

Course: ESL 074 (ESL Writing 5)

Instructor: Lynn Altfeld

Assignment:

An option for the compare/contrast essay was for students to compare the situation in their country before and after an important historical or political event.

Which do you think is better – living in a democracy or under a totalitarian regime? Even though the answer seems obvious, there are still a lot of people who do not fully understand the difference. Others, especially the ones that have never experienced dictatorship, are not even aware how bad a totalitarian government is. In my native country Bulgaria, we rejected the communist regime about 15 years ago, and I can already see that we have gotten so accustomed to the achievements of freedom that we often fail to fully appreciate them. However, in order to preserve them, we need to constantly remind ourselves of the great advantages of democracy over dictatorship.

Although freedom of speech is something my countrymen now take for granted, they need to remember the times they could only dream about it. Before we overthrew communism in Bulgaria, we did not have the right to speak our mind. If you were critical of the governing party, you would end up in jail, your family members would be oppressed, and your children would be denied higher education. Also, book publishing was very restricted. Only books that were considered non-harmful to the governing party could be printed. Unlike communism, in a democracy, people are entitled to their own

opinion, and their freedom of speech is guaranteed by the constitution. You can be critical of anyone in the country regardless of his or her political background or social position. You are free to express your own thoughts on controversial issues such as the war in Iraq, stem cell research, or abortion without fear of prosecution. When people can be openly critical, politicians are more alert and more accountable. Also, in a democratic society, any kind of writing can be put on the market. This way, everyone has unlimited access to books, magazines, and other educational or reference materials in order to follow the latest trends in various areas and enrich their knowledge.

Besides freedom of speech, another important benefit of a free society is the stronger economy. During the communist years in Bulgaria, the entire economy was state-owned. There was no private sector, no entrepreneurial spirit. Consequently, there was no competitiveness, and the products and services sold were of very poor quality. Consumers had no choice, so whether they liked it or not, they simply had to buy whatever was available. For example, there was only one kind of cheese; bananas were sold only once a year (around the Christmas holidays), and people needed to first register on a list and wait for several years before they could buy a car. Very often, you would enter a store only to find it was almost empty. We lived with the constant stress of not knowing whether we could get the things we needed the next day. After this so-called “planned economy” failed, things got better. Step by step, the emerging private sector started to grow stronger and stronger. Free to use their imagination, thoughtfulness, and creativity, businesspeople came up with products and services that got better and better. Indeed, in order to be competitive on the market, they had to constantly make improvements and innovations. The variety of products and services grew, and their quality improved so much that in certain areas like agriculture and wine-growing, Bulgarian companies became competitive in some western European markets.

Among the positive changes democracy brought to my country, the most valuable one is the better educational system. I grew up in those communist schools, and I remember how dull and unattractive they were. Totalitarian regimes do not like colors, nor humor. The

system's ultimate goal is to inspire fear and terror so that everybody becomes and remains unconditionally obedient. Thus, our teachers were always very serious, and the school rules were extremely restrictive. In my high school, girls were allowed to wear only brown socks. Students were told what to say and exactly how to say it. You could not use your imagination or have an opinion that was different from your teacher's. Even in art classes, we were not able to freely express our creativity. For example, if we were to draw a bear, we were supposed to draw it brown or black. Nobody would even let you think of a different color. If you accidentally did, the teacher would make fun of you, and your work would get an "F." After the regime fell, schools were brought back to normal. Now, they are more attractive, colorful, and clean. There are strict rules regarding discipline, but otherwise, students are encouraged to be as creative as they can be. In our free schools, the teachers will tell you that bears are usually brown or black, but they will never punish you if you want to draw yours green! Unlike during communism, teachers are more relaxed and want their students to be independent thinkers, not slaves of an ideology. Children that grow up in such an environment are more likely to become inventors, researchers, and pioneers in different areas of life when they grow up. In addition, they will most certainly be more tolerant simply because they are being taught to respect other people's ideas and beliefs instead of denying their right to exist.

Only 15 years have passed since we got rid of communism in my country, yet it seems to me that people have started to forget its worst aspects. Some say it is human nature to forget the negative in life because our brains need protection against painful memories. However, if we do not constantly remind ourselves of the greatest achievements of democracy, it will become extremely difficult to protect ourselves against the constant attempts of totalitarianism to start controlling our lives again.

Evaluation: *This is an excellent essay on life in Bulgaria before and after a democratic government was established there. Margarita's writing is informative, thoughtful, and convincing.*

Inflicting Pain

Toly Karoll

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Greg Herriges

Assignment:

Write a three-page narrative essay about an event in your life that is central to who you are now.

I did not know that a building could inflict pain. A place like that should be for criminals, not for children. That building can and will take away everything that a child wished and hope to be. That place, sadly to say, was my nightmare and my home. The run-down city of Moscow in the early 90's was not as glamorous, rich, or elegant as it once was. People do not want to believe that buildings like that once existed and still exist today. The building that I lived in for eight years could drive a person to unimaginable pain or even death.

The rough sandpaper-brick building towered over me as if it were about to gobble me up. There were pea-size holes embedded in the brick wall. In the front of the building, withering flowers and dry yellowed grass spread over the yard. Brown, naked tree branches swung back and forth like swings. The stagnant puddle of brown water gave off a unique, unforgettable smell of rotting leaves. The tree bark was scaly and rough; if you ran your naked fingers on it, it would cut them. Gray-blue clouds hovered over the reddish-orange building as if they were spying on me. The air became heavier and heavier as I stood outside this petrified edifice. It did not matter where I ran, the monster appeared to be pulling me in. The shadow cast upon the perimeter of the building like a bed sheet eclipsed all light in its path. I could hear the brutal wind hitting the building as though a severe war were in the midst of destroying the building.

The inside looked more horrifying than the outside. Wooden doors lined one side of the hallway where some

kids stayed. On the other side of the dull, musty hallway were the cells. These cells looked like jail cells. The weird part of all this was I had done nothing unscrupulous. A scary man dragged me to one of the eight rooms, to my cell. The man untangled his copper keys to open the cell bar. As the cell door opened, he plunged me inside, and slammed the door shut behind him. His acrimonious words billowed around me.

The dirty, disgusting place was approximately six feet across by eight feet wide. There was no toilet, no chair, no nothing. I would rather sleep outside than in here. The walls were made of grayish cement, with nothing on them. In this cement room, I could not have any accessories. The four-foot long bed was smaller than I was. It was so uncomfortable to sleep on that I slept on the cold ground. I had no pillows or blankets. Rats with sharp teeth and the size of small dogs gnawed their way in and out of holes. The rats frightened me out of my skin. In addition, spiders and bugs crawled all over my cell. There was no way I could sleep, knowing that bugs, insects, and rodents surrounded me. A small, dim light bulb hung in the middle of the room. The cement floor was cold and had cracks and holes in it. Water dripped from the rusty pipes overhead, making a plunking noise on my cell floor. The mold on the floor discolored it.

Living in a place like this took my childhood away. The building isolated me from the world, while others belonged to the world. It took away the light of opportunity and happiness, and offered me only darkness and suffering. My heart, dignity, hope, faith and everything else shattered into tiny pieces of glass. The structure made me question the purpose of living. Most children have parents and family who nurture them; this place gave a sense of abandonment. While other children have hope of being somebody, I grew up hoping to be somewhere else. An orphanage is not a place for children.

Evaluation: Toly's writing here is vivid and poignant, revealing to the reader an intense and shocking occurrence. He is able to elicit pity and understanding from the reader, and perhaps transcendence and growth for himself.

“Traveling Through Another Dimension”: Submitted for Your Approval by Carol Serling

Elliot Kist

Courses: History 212 (Recent American History)
and Literature 115 (Fiction)

Instructors: Tom DePalma and Catherine Restovich

Assignment:

*Write a creative paper regarding any topic
from the 1960s in America.*

June 28, 1976

We are here to remember my late husband of many years, Rod Serling. Rod was a small-town boy with a New York state of mind. He grew up in the small town of Binghamton, New York, a homey place that was Rod's bedrock throughout his teen years – a high point in his life. Here he felt most comfortable, developing his booming voice and a larger-than-life personality, addressing his need for attention and his perceived inferiority over his lack of height. These insecurities eventually became advantages for him in his career. Through his art and his passion, this man of short stature became a big man who caught the attention of the world. His memorable deep voice and charismatic presence made him the star of *The Twilight Zone* series. Ultimately, Rod's legacy will be one of paradox, because no one truly understood “television's last angry man” (Sander 130), and neither did he.

Although he proudly served his country during WWII, he never wanted to forget, or let others forget, the harsh reality of war. After serving with the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment – escaping death twice, and seeing his friends perish – Rod was psychologically battered, but not beaten. The experience shaped him tremendously and stuck with him. Although haunted by his war memories, he proudly wore a bracelet with the parachute and wings insignia (52) on his left wrist until his death a year ago. This is just one example of my husband's many paradoxes.

Rod eventually became a prophet who envisioned the devastating effects of nuclear war. The use of the atom bomb on Japan convinced him to become an anti-nuclear activist (Sander 50). The gruesome vision of nuclear war was a theme he often visited in *The Twilight Zone*. Episodes such as “Third From the Sun,” broadcast in 1960, about two years prior to the Cuban Missile Crisis, depicted tensions Americans felt at the height of the Cold War, and foreshadowed humanity's greatest fear: annihilation. Through Rod's presumably mundane images, the audience is introduced to a seemingly normal family from Earth who flee the planet via spaceship in a desperate attempt to escape nuclear holocaust. Only at the end do we learn that the inhabitants are aliens

seeking Earth in order to escape their own nuclear threat, not knowing that this is actually what my husband foresaw as the “eve of the beginning.”

After the war, following a brief stay in his hometown, Rod attended Antioch College in 1946, a small liberal arts college that was in the process of undergoing a “renaissance of higher level thinking” (53). This experience was precisely what the doctor ordered for Rod’s rebellious personality. Class attendance was not mandatory, and each student had his own area of study. You could say Antioch was a “radical” campus (53) where Rod embraced “an education that allowed him to wander and roam at will,” or so said his friend, the liberal actor Theodore Bikel (qtd in Sander 63).

Rod was often a rebel and never shied away from conflict. The fact that he married me in 1948 – even though his mother wanted him to marry a Jewish girl, and my father was anti-Semitic – is proof (60). And I have to say, with regret, that I loved my “man child” husband (60), but made life not very easy for him. Forgive me Rod; I wanted too much control over your emotional life (60), was too prominent a figure, and perhaps my domineering ways may have made you feel trapped in quicksand.

But the alienation and challenge Rod felt only enhanced his rebellious ways. My husband finally hit it big on the national scene with a morality play concerning the plight of the common man. The 1955 teleplay “Patterns” takes a closer look at the unfairness of the business world and stems from the political struggles Rod experienced early in his career while working for WLW, a Cincinnati radio station (103). There were many factors leading to my husband’s new-found fame. One of the most important was his great sense of timing (102). “His subject hit an especially sensitive nerve: when some were beginning to have doubts about the character and ethics of the faceless, all powerful ‘organizational marvels’ (in Serling’s phrase) who now made America tick, Serling’s play asked the crucial questions on everyone’s mind. What made *them* tick? And what were the men who worked for *them* like?” (Sander 102) There is no doubt “Patterns” was ahead of its time, especially when it was considered taboo to

bring up such controversial issues. But Rod was just getting warmed up.

Four years later, as a TV dramatist, Rod got his big chance to speak about society’s controversies in the show that would make him a TV icon: *The Twilight Zone*. He believed he could use TV effectively to express his views freely. He once commented to a *Newsweek* reviewer, “You’re looking at people close up, physically and psychologically, and there aren’t as many taboos” (114). Unfortunately, conflict reared its head again, and Rod shared his commitment to his message when sponsors began to fight with him over content rights. In 1960, Peter Allport, vice president of the Association of National Advertisers, accused my husband of steering advertisers away from “any control over program content and restricting their activity” (Sander 139). In Allport’s view, advertisers should not only contribute financially but also have a hand in the program theme. Rod’s satirical response was, “If the sponsor chooses the play as a kind of piggy back on which he wants to use his commercial, then he has to respect the form he has chosen.” (139). The conflict between Rod and his advertisers showed his character; to keep his message “pure,” he was willing to risk his advertisers’ backing.

Yes, “Rod felt that drama should be an assertion of social conscience” (154). He was a TV pioneer who realized the medium’s limitations, yet he was able to use it efficiently to suit his talents. As he dealt with issues that were considered forbidden, I remember one time he confided, “You know you can put these words into the mouth of a Martian and get away with it” (*The Twilight Zone 2*). At the same time, he could make the show appear “dumbed down” to please producers. Rod realized very quickly that he could utilize the many “fantastic elements of science fiction to address the issues that plagued America without setting off alarm bells under the caps of cautious network executives” (2). It is truly remarkable to look back and see the amount of awareness he raised with the use of so few resources compared to today’s standards.

My husband strongly denied he used *The Twilight Zone* to broadcast the injustices of society, but I disagree. In an interview with *TV Guide*’s Reginald

Rose in 1961, after being asked about his purpose, Rod declared it would probably be “conflict rather than morality... Too often when I’ve gone after moral themes with both hands – such as prejudice, which I abhor more than anything in the world – what I’ve wrought is not entertainment but pamphleteering... I usually shy away from themes of good and evil” (qtd in Sander 180). Here is yet another one of Rod’s contradictions. He did not see himself as fighting injustice or addressing good and evil in his work, but he clearly intended for *The Twilight Zone* to be a microscope on society.

Another issue my husband tackled was politics, namely the issue of how much control the government should have over the individual. Peter Wolfe, an English professor at the University of Missouri, thinks that “politics, though important, matters less than people in *The Twilight Zone* – as should be the case in a just government” (28). The episode “The Obsolete Man” examines this ongoing controversy beautifully. Romney Wordsworth is a librarian who has become useless since books were outlawed; therefore, there is no need for libraries and librarians. His rights have wrongfully been taken away by the state. Names become a crucial theme as well. Wordsworth’s main critic, the Chancellor, has no name, and yet the uniform he always wears further reduces his humanity (Wolfe 73). This helpless “loss of self comes from the functionalism that rules the state: rather than standing freely, individuals exist to serve their country, enacting a loveless creed that dwarfs human purpose” (73). The Chancellor becomes useless as well, according to his colleagues, as evidenced by their violent reaction to the cowardice he displays when locked in a room with Wordsworth with a bomb about to go off. The irony is that the Chancellor went in the room in the first place to flaunt his power over the individual. The last bit of irony is in the Chancellor’s last words to Wordsworth, “for God’s sake,” before being swallowed up by his angry colleagues, finally showing faith in an atheist society. He betrayed his own moral code in an effort to save his life (74). This episode shows that people will do anything for power, no matter the consequences.

My husband also dealt with an alien motif. In a way, he saw the human race as alien as himself. The episode

that best symbolizes this theme is “The Invaders,” one which centers around an old woman who takes unnecessary action against little aliens who land on her house, and she presumes them to be dangerous. At first it would appear that way as they “shoot her and then slash both her leg and her hand with a knife they had filched from her” (Wolfe 48). Bruised and frustrated, she destroys the UFO with no remorse, killing the inhabitants inside. She does not realize the terrible mistake she has made until it is too late. The camera pans around the broken ship, and the woman and the television audience fully realize the devastation; the ship is marked U.S. Air Force. The irony hits home: we are all aliens. The old woman viewed her visitors as trespassing into her home, and the tiny earthlings saw her as a savage alien destroying their ship, and ultimately, their lives. I think what Rod was trying to point out here is that the human race is guilty of prejudice, racism, and oppression. This episode speaks volumes about the inequalities that plagued America at that time in the 1960s. Sometimes we treat our own as if they were from another planet!

Even my strong Rod felt somewhat of an alien. In a world of generally tall people, he felt uncomfortable being short. In an unforgiving world, it is human nature to have self-doubt; I don’t fault him for that. As much as I loved my husband, there is no denying he lived a stressful life. It all came back full circle to one dilemma: small town or big city? This clearly was an issue he wrestled with back in the 50’s, “Between late 1951 and 1954, I lived in Ohio [commuting back and forth to New York]. This was expensive and time consuming, but was a concession to my own peculiar hesitancy about all things big, massive, imposing” (qtd in Sander 88-89). Big time New York City tantalized him, and yet he never could completely let go of that small-town boy inside of him. Just three years later, in December of 1957, Rod and I and our two daughters packed up and moved to Malibu, California (129). Most writers fled New York for Hollywood at the time. My husband felt guilty about leaving New York, but he realized that this is where he could make money, and he enjoyed the grand lifestyle. Perhaps this inner struggle comes from the belief that humans need challenges to feel self-

worth, according to Peter Wolfe (42). In “A Stop at Willoughby,” Gart Williams dreams of living in a small town (much like Rod’s Binghamton) but finds himself caught in a vortex, trapped in a “push, push, push business” (59) and with a tough, status-minded wife. The only respite Williams has is conjuring up Willoughby, a place in his mind that offers the opportunity for a “man to slow down to a walk and live his life full measure” (59). This is the only way he felt he could leave the harsh corporate world behind. The play’s ending is shocking. After debating whether or not to “begin” a new life in his dreamland, Williams makes his decision: he suddenly jumps off the train to his death. His dream had become reality. His all too human need to escape the pressures of his life drove him to the abyss. Through Williams, Rod showcased his own inner struggle. I’m not saying this struggle caused the demise of my husband; it was just something he always carried with him.

In spite of the stress and inner turmoil, Rod kept doing what he loved best: *The Twilight Zone*. Unfortunately, the highlight of his career may be responsible for his downfall. Rod wrote over 90 of the show’s 156 episodes over five seasons (Sander 147), and they took their toll. In 1963, the third season, producer Buck Houghton claimed, “I was tired and he was tired. But he wanted *The Twilight Zone* to go on in any form it could” (qtd in Sander 183). It could be argued that Rod suffered the injustice of “Patterns” – he depended on the show, and the medium of television, so much that he was unable to ever fully recover from it. He was consumed by the very medium he helped to create. His beloved show was ultimately canceled in January of 1964. Even though the show faded into the distance, its many lessons to mankind remain true today.

In closing, I would like to take the time to praise my husband for who he really was. Rod truly was a pioneer in television. He effectively used the medium of television to creatively address his concerns about society. During his “angry man” years in the late 1950’s, his major concern with television was censorship, and this became the driving force behind *The Twilight Zone* (162). His ideas to infiltrate social consciousness were able to thrive in an era where networks and programs

aimed to produce “dumbed down” shows. He dealt with the big, controversial issues: the threat of nuclear war, plight of the common man, politics, and aliens, both extraterrestrials and the human race itself. In spite of many paradoxes, pressures, and successes, my husband was able to leave his mark on the world. The heart attack which killed his body on June 28, 1975, served to strengthen his influence on humanity: he was a fighter. Not only has the phrase “the twilight zone” entered the English language, Marc Scott Zicree, author of the best-seller *Twilight Zone Companion*, believes it has much more than entertainment value: “Serling invited the viewer into a universe of wonder, magic, and delight. It is this sense of wonder, along with Serling’s deep human concerns, that make his show timeless and universal” (qtd in Sander 222).

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Evaluation: *Elliot’s mastery of Rod Serling’s career as a writer and filmmaker is impressive. His paper, though, provides much more than that. Elliot artfully weaves the politics, drama, and unique social history that characterized the 60s into this creative piece.*

The Box

John "Jake" Kuhn

Course: Humanities 105

(Great Ideas in World Civilizations)

Instructor: Judy Kaplow

Assignment:

After having read and discussed some of the writings of a variety of voices and view points on the issue, students were to produce an original and personal work in response to the question: How should society be organized? Their work was to be original, but also demonstrate that they had read and thought about the readings and class discussion in a complex way.

I felt very odd as I was waking up. My vision was blurry, but I could tell that there were at least four other people in the room with me. One of them noticed me waking up and alerted the others. I was lying on the floor. This caused me to feel some outrage, but I wasn't given a chance to express it.

"Hey, do you have any idea what's going on here?" the man who approached me asked. I took a good look at him before I answered. There was really nothing extraordinary about him. I figured he was pretty much an everyman; very typical and average. He was elderly with white hair and had no real emotion on his face.

"How would I know what is going on?" I asked. The mere thought that anyone would assume I had anything to do with this situation was preposterous. Although this gentleman hadn't said my name at all, I assumed he must have known who I was.

"We all woke up in this room," a much younger man said, approaching us. "My brother and I were the first."

He looked around the room with a confused look on his face. "None of us have ever seen a place like this before."

Another man who looked around the same age as the one who had just spoke stepped forward. He resembled the speaker, and I figured it must have been the brother that he had mentioned. The two of them looked almost like they could be twins, but there were some differences in their appearances. They were in their early twenties. They dressed like people I would have expected to see at night clubs, partying and having a good time. Their hair was blonde and was accompanied by blue eyes. The left eyebrows of both boys were pierced. I would never have been seen with the type of people these children were.

"All that we found on the table over there --" the brother that I assumed was younger pointed over to a table, which along with five chairs was the sole piece of furniture in the room -- "were five envelopes and a pistol. There are five bullets in the gun. The envelopes were addressed to us, but with a picture of each of us on them, and not our names."

The boy handed me what I assumed was the letter assigned to me. I grabbed it from him and looked closely at it. A chill went down my spine. Getting a photo of me was not really hard to do, as I was a generally well known individual. However, I was unconscious in this particular picture. It had to have been taken by whoever brought me to the strange room.

What a room it was. It was not the sort of place I would ever be caught dead inside. As I mentioned early, there was a table accompanied by five chairs. Other than that, there was no furniture at all. The walls were completely white. On one side, there was a large and seemingly solid door. I figured it was locked. Other than those few things, there was nothing remarkable about the large room.

Ripping the envelope open, I looked inside at the small letter within. It was not addressed to me, so I assumed it was the same as everyone else's. It read:

I have placed the five of you in this room. I want to conduct a little experiment. There are several ways for you to get out of this. However, only one way is simple. The others

are almost impossible to figure out. The only obvious way would be for one of you to die. How you decide who will die is not a concern of mine at all, but you must do it quickly. The room is air tight and no oxygen will be added to it. If you don't decide who will die, then all of you will.

Not surprisingly, there was no signature on the letter.

"Kill one of us and the others are set free?" I asked as I put the letter down. "Well I seriously doubt any one of us is going to agree to die."

"I think you're right," the older man said. He wrung his hands and went over to the table. "I suppose we'll have to sit here and come up with one of the other ways."

Finally, I pulled myself up off the floor. I took a quick look at the one person who had not talked yet. She only looked back at me with no expression. Then, I followed the older man over to the table.

"If we don't know how much air is in here, and all of us might die anyway, why should we waste time trying to figure another way out of here?" I asked. "It's not much to ask for one person to give themselves up for the others to live." Saying this, I had no intention of it being me, of course.

As the gentleman sat down, I noticed that his letter was sitting in front of him. It appeared that he was also unconscious when the photo was taken. The other letters were all sitting down on the table as well. I sat in the only space that did not have an envelope in front of it.

"We're all going to die before long," the first of the two brothers said. "We have no idea how much air is in this room and how long we've been here. Wouldn't it make sense for one of us to just give themselves up for the others?"

"It does make sense," the second brother added. "We have no real idea how else to get out of this place. One to die so the others would live would make the most sense."

I displayed no feelings about what was being said. I had my own ideas, of course, but did not feel it was the right time to present them. Instead, I again looked over at the last person who had not talked yet. It was a woman – I dared not call her a lady – who was proba-

bly a generation or two away from trailer trash. Her clothes were obviously hand me downs, and they didn't fit. She did not belong in them. Her hair was long and disheveled. She kept to the side of the room the whole time up to that point.

"And who might you be, ma'am?" I asked, feigning politeness. The woman was nowhere near my station, but I was determined to be the one most likely to live through this experience.

"My name is Salemo," she stated. It was an odd name that I had never heard before, spoken in an accent I did not recognize. "I do not know any of you or why I am here."

She seemed very uninteresting to me. Anyhow, we took those few moments to introduce ourselves to each other. The older man gave his name as Edmund Fairplay. The two brothers were indeed twins. The older was Tom and the younger was John. I, in turn, gave them my own name; or the name I at least wanted them all to believe was mine. They had all already said that they did not know who I was and I felt it was wise to keep it that way.

The brothers and the lady joined us all at the table. As they did, I took a good look at the envelopes that were laying in front of them. Tom and John both were unconscious in theirs also. I didn't think much about it, but Salemo's picture showed her wide awake.

"None of us want to die," I said. "Still, we all must agree that it might eventually come to that. Right?"

The men all nodded their heads. Salemo did not make any movement at all save for a blink. I assumed she was agreeing, but really didn't care if she did or not. Edmund seemed rather reluctant in his agreement, which gave me a slight concern. I called him on this because I assumed he just did not want to die (as I also thought was Salemo's reason for not really responding).

"We may all agree that one of us has to die," Edmund said, "but not a one of us has any obligation to be that person. Each one of us wants to live. I have lived a longer life than all the others in here, but that does not mean I am ready to go. Every one of us that is agreeing that one has to die is doing it because we believe it will not be us that end up dead. If we thought it would truly be ourselves that died, we wouldn't agree."

He was right, but all that he was saying was the sort of information that any of us already knew. I let him continue, though.

"None of us has any obligation to help each other, nor are we entitled to each other's help," he went on. "You could overpower me now, kill me and save each one of yourselves in the process. If we all agree that one of us must die, perhaps we need to figure a fair way to determine it. It must be voluntary, though. No one in the room should have to take part in whatever we do against their will. Everyone must agree to put it to a vote or something of that nature. If we will ourselves to the vote, it would be us giving authority to the vote so that we can survive. I personally would rather try and figure one of the other ways out."

"A vote sounds like a good idea," Tom put in his two cents. "The one that the majority of us think should die should be the one who does." He completely ignored Edmund's thoughts that we should figure out one of the other ways.

John – to no surprise – readily agreed.

Edmund shook his head. "I was just saying 'vote' as an example," he said. "You two are twin brothers and we know that you both would not vote the other to die. That puts the rest of us at a disadvantage. You would both want to vote because it is unlikely that you would lose. That would be equally unfair as me saying we should kill the youngest."

Salemo nodded her head, I assumed, in agreement. I also felt that voting would be the wrong way of handling this grim situation. If we voted on someone dying, the brothers would more than likely put one of us three on the chopping block.

"Then what should we do?" John asked. He was clearly upset that the voting idea was bashed.

"We have to decide on a method that put us all at even odds," Edmund replied. "We can't know which one of us will survive or die until after all is said and done." He paused. "Perhaps something like drawing straws would work because it would put us all on the same level."

"Voting would have made the most sense," Tom mumbled under his breath.

I was about to say something in response, but to my

surprise, John spoke up against his brother. "We'd be voting over life and death," he said. "Would it be fair, having only experienced life – and the degree to which each or us has even lived it is rather debatable – and none of us can say we have experienced death before. Is it really fair that we could vote for such an experience? Who would be qualified to do such a thing?"

"Why, you would be, brother," Tom replied with a bit of a smile on his face. "You once drowned and were brought back when you were a child. You know what it is like to be dead."

"Yes, and therefore I would be the most qualified person to choose who should live and die," John said, proudly. "I am the only one who knows what both life and death are like." The obviousness of his suggestion was not lost on any of us. This was a boy who was somewhat afraid of having someone else make any kind of decision because he felt he would be the one to suffer for it. He was simply protecting his own interests over ours.

Other than myself and Salemo, everyone else started talking about what should happen. I kept my eyes on her, though. She never joined in and just kept watching what everyone else was doing. There was a bit of a sad look on her face.

I thought about how I must have come to the strange room. I had been hiking at some point. I am not sure when it was, because I didn't know how long I had been in the room. I often hiked when my life was quiet, which was not often. I would occasionally ride horses, climb mountains, or camp out in the woods alone for many days. I had tons of servants who felt I should not ever leave the estate on my own without some sort of protection. I generally thought that was crazy. I was the person – if such a person existed at all – who was always prepared and could defend himself. I was strong, yet after falling asleep in my tent one night, I awoke to find myself in this odd predicament.

Looking back at the table, I once again noticed Salemo not taking part in the talks. She was watching things very closely. Edmund, Tom, and John were now arguing with one another. They had risen from their seats so it was only Salemo and myself sitting there. Edmund's thoughts seemed lost on the twins, who

seemed mostly worried about their own self-preservation. I couldn't say I faulted them. I am mostly always worried about mine as well. However, the arguing was becoming more like bickering as each moment passed.

"Bad luck has brought you to this place of misfortune," I thought to myself. "But you have the virtue to overtake this bad luck."

Looking up, I saw Salemo looking at me. I looked back down and noticed the envelope lying in front of her. Again, I noticed that there was a picture of her fully awake in it. I decided to ask her why she was not really taking part in all of this debating that was going on.

"Whatever will happen, will happen," she said. "I can not control it."

"Perhaps you have a better idea as to what to do than these morons," I said.

"I will not interfere," she said. "The more we try to control what is going on, the more it breaks down. Look at those three. They all have what they think are the best ideas, but there is no agreement. There will not be any agreement. These three think they know the answers, and that is why they can not be guided towards another."

I furrowed my brow before I finally put two and two together. It annoyed me that I hadn't really thought of it before. The letter that I had received mentioned something about conducting an experiment. Plus, Salemo was the only one who had a picture that was in a state of consciousness. I suddenly realized what we had to do to get out of the room. Salemo was not interfering because she was the one who had put all of this together. As soon as I told the others, she would be killed and we would be able to get outside.

"You did this, didn't you?" I said to her as I furrowed my brow. "You set this whole thing up."

Salemo looked at me. "You don't really believe that, do you?" she asked.

"I know it and I also know I can convince the others that it is true," I said. "And then you will die, and we will all get out of here."

I reached for the gun. "If anyone is going to die, it's going to be you," I said. "Guys, sit down!"

All three of the guys stopped arguing and then looked over at me. My voice was raised and as usual, it commanded authority. The three men sat down.

"We've all been played for fools here," I said. I explained to them the things that I noticed. It seemed plausible to them that it was indeed something that Salemo had set up. However, none of them agreed with me that I should shoot her. They still felt that we should all agree upon a way of deciding who should die.

"It's nice that you think so," I said. Then, without hesitation or warning, I picked up the gun and shot Salemo right in the heart.

She didn't move. There was absolutely no wound on her shirt or anything. In fact, she did not even flinch when I shot. All she did was sit there and watch me.

"What the hell?" I asked and looked down at the gun. "Did you put blanks in this gun?"

From the arms of the chair, two manacles came out and went around my wrists. Two identical ones came out from the legs around my ankles. They secured me in place in the chair. The moment they did, the door opened up and light shone into the room.

"What the hell is going on?" I asked.

"You were given a choice," Edmund said. "It was a choice you have always had to make, but never cared to make, my dear Prince Henry. And yes, we all know who you are."

"This test was really only about you," Tom put in with a smile.

"It was to see if you are capable of making a fair choice in an unfair situation," John said. "You were given a terrible decision to make, but rather than listen to the other people involved in the decision, you simply made the choice that was the easiest and most beneficial to your beliefs."

Edmund added, "In fact, we gave you several alternatives as to how you could go about doing things differently and more fairly. However, you chose to ignore all of that, and you went down the path that was the least fair. You had no real reason to believe Salemo was behind this, and she wasn't. We three were. She was in fact the only other outsider besides you in the room. She was told there were blanks in the gun, and we got a picture of her conscious to make you suspect her."

"But you tried to kill her because you were tired of us trying to find another way out," Tom said. "You did what we thought you would do. You figured you would

kill her and we would all be happy because although someone had to die, in the end the rest of us would have gotten out alive.”

“So instead,” John said, “you are the one who suffers. You will never leave this room.”

With that, every one of them got up and walked out of the door. I kept yelling for them to get back. In fact, I was ordering them to do so. But they didn’t listen. The door to the room was closed and the light-switched off.

I have been here since. What will become of me, I do not know.

Author’s Explanation of “The Box”

Leaders often do objectionable things and claim that they are doing them for the benefit of their people. However, even when presented with valid alternatives, they continue to do only what they want. This shows that the leaders who follow an “ends justify the means” philosophy are essentially doing what they can to increase their power rather than help the people.

My story is inspired by the presidency of George W. Bush. In my eyes, he is Prince Henry. He says his ideas such as the Patriot Act and the Iraq invasion are done to protect America. The Patriot Act, though originally popular, has lost a large percentage of that popularity. The same is true of the Iraq wars. However, he has yet to show any conclusive proof that agendas such as these are protecting America in any way. He consistently does these things which the many in America (as well as many other countries) disapprove of. In my view, he is not doing these things because it protects America, but because it increases his power.

“The Box” is also an allegory. The story has a group of people trying to decide how to get out of a room. They are told that if they don’t find a way out, they all will die. There are ways to get out of the room, but the only one they are told about is for one person in the room to die. While many in the room do not like this idea, it does not bother the narrator in the least. He concocts an idea that not even he believes, even when other ideas are being discussed, and tries to kill an innocent person to satisfy his agenda. This backfires on him when he finds out that he failed the test and is now sentenced to spend the rest of his life in the room.

Trying to find a way out of the room is a symbol for running a government. It in no way implies that any of the people’s ideas represented in the story would advocate murder. Edmund, Tom and John have their own ideas, which are

always talked about and never put into practice. Salemo chooses not to interfere with what is going. Prince Henry is rather egotistical (represented by one paragraph where each sentence begins with “I”) and only wants to get out of the room.

The characters in the story represent different readings we studied. The concept of the story itself, one person suffers so the other may live, is derived from “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas.” It is not the same situation, though. My story has two parts inspired by this other story. First, in order for the majority of people to live in the room, one person must die. Then, and I think fittingly, in order for the people of the country ruled by Prince Henry to be happy, he must be locked alone in the room to suffer.

Prince Henry is the Machiavellian character. He will do whatever it takes, no matter how unscrupulous, to achieve what he perceives to be order. There is also reference to keeping himself prepared during times of peace. When the other characters start bickering, he feels if he takes charge and resolves the conflict, he will be viewed as a strong leader. He thinks that the others will be happy that the situation is solved, regardless of the cost.

Edmund Fairplay is based on John Rawls. His name is a play on the “Justice as Fairness” concept. He does not want the group to choose someone to die. He would rather they find another way to get them out of the room. However, he does say that if it comes to someone dying, the method to choose the one who dies would have to be one that no one will have an advantage in. This is a take on the “veil of ignorance.” Once a way to pick the one to die has been chosen, no one will know how likely they are to be the one chosen.

Tom and John are my Bentham and Mill characters. They feel that it should be the best that the greatest number of people is made happy. This is why they are for the idea of the vote. Again, I don’t assume either Bentham or Mills would advocate someone dying; this is just to go along with the theme of the story. John is Mill and he believes that no one should be qualified to vote unless they have experienced both life and death. I felt that the real Mill was mostly trying to protect his own interests by having this idea which is represented by how he does this to keep only him and his brother safe from dying. It’s easy enough to assume he would not vote for himself or his brother.

Salemo is based on Lao-tzu. Her name is “Omelas” backwards to mislead the reader to think she might really be the villain. She doesn’t interfere much at all because she believes the more you try to control a situation, the more it can break

The Box

down. She sees that the situation is as it is, regardless of what she does. This refers to Lao-Tzu's idea that the world is as it is and can not be improved.

At the end of the story, when Prince Henry makes the decision to kill Salemo, he shows that he cares more about his power and authority than he really does the welfare of the people. If the other characters in the story represent his people, he is willing to sacrifice them to achieve his means. His decision may save the other people, but it is a short-sighted and selfish one. He tries to sacrifice someone he knows is innocent just to save himself.

The ending of the story shows that Prince Henry is now trapped in the room. This is more to show my opinion that the end does not justify the means and that people who live by such a philosophy will ultimately have their situations backfire.

Evaluation: Jake used the form of allegory as a creative and effective means to complete the assignment. He examines the viewpoints of such figures as John Rawls, Machiavelli, Lao Tzu, Bentham, and Mill, etc. through the words of his story's characters, and then lets the story's plot "work out" his own view. It's efficient and engaging writing that illuminates various ideas about how society should be organized.

Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis": Biographical Roots

Ankita Lal

Course: Literature 115 (Fiction)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

Write an essay on one or more of the pieces we've read for class, discussing various aspects of the work, such as conflict, character, point of view, etc.

Franz Kafka, a legendary Jewish writer who is considered "an icon of dark existentialist and absurdist literature" ("Franz Kafka," NNDB), was born on July 3, 1883, in Prague, Czechoslovakia to Hermann and Julie Kafka ("Franz Kafka," [Little Blue Light](#)). Of his many well-known short stories, "The Metamorphosis" is "regarded as a cornerstone in the foundation of modern literature" (Nowak and Ruch). In this story, Kafka explores the theme of exploitation of human relations through the character of Gregor Samsa, who spends all his life trying to provide care, comfort, and status for his so-called loving and caring family. They initially accept his services very gratefully and treat him well, but later rebuke, chastise, deplore, and ultimately reject him after his unusual transformation, since he is then no longer able to support them financially. A biographical criticism of this piece of literature, which essentially involves looking at a work and analyzing how "a person's life influences his or her work," when coupled with a literary analysis of character, conflict, and symbol, offers an in-depth understanding of the text (Crook).

Since childhood, Kafka had a very submissive, weak, and pessimistic personality (Nowak and Ruch). He was very apprehensive and anxious about the things he did. For instance, whenever Kafka had an exam at school, he used to feel that he would fail, and he always convinced

himself he was not a good student, though his grades said otherwise (Nowak and Ruch). Moreover, Kafka was very paranoid about his health, as he felt that he might become sick anytime. It is found that Kafka "took many of his vacations as 'rest cures' at sanatoriums, regardless of whether or not he needed any specific treatment" (Nowak and Ruch). Thus, Kafka was always fearful of the unknown. He seemed to believe that there are things that could be outside one's control. This fear can be seen in "The Metamorphosis," when one day Gregor Samsa wakes up in the morning and finds himself transformed into a bug with human features replaced by a "domelike brown belly divided into stiff arched segments," a stiff back, and "numerous thin legs" (785). Even when Gregor tries to get out of his bed, he has a hard time doing so (786). After his efforts to get out of the bed repeatedly fail, he sighs and "watch[es] his little legs struggling against each other more wildly than ever" (788). Thus, Gregor finds himself in a similarly helpless situation, in which he has no control over his present bodily movements or recent strange transformation.

To make a living, Kafka worked at the "Assicurazioni Generali, an aggressive Italian insurance Company" (Nowak and Ruch). However, he was very dissatisfied with his job due to its harsh and unpleasant working conditions; "With its meager salary, soul crushing regulations, and thankless overtime, it was probably the worst possible place for Kafka to work" (Nowak and Ruch). Thus, after a year of terrible experience, Kafka switched his job and started working at the Worker's Accident Insurance Institute, though he still didn't like his new job (Nowak and Ruch). This parallel can be seen in "The Metamorphosis," where Gregor is a "commercial traveler" and has to travel all day to show his cloth samples to the customers (786). When he comes back from his tedious and tiring job, Gregor spends the rest of his time checking the railway timetable and preparing himself for the next day's trip (786). He does not even have any close friends to share his feelings, as he is constantly on the move for his work. Moreover, his boss is very unfriendly and rude, as he condescendingly looks down on his workers by "sitting on high at a desk and talking down to employees" (786). Also, the chief clerk does not trust his staff and thinks that "all employees in a body [are] nothing but scoundrels," and he literally accuses Gregor of

stealing cash (791). Thus, Gregor shares a similar distressing and stressful experience at his job, which unfortunately he cannot quit to become a "small clerk" (799) because he has to pay his parents' debt (786).

Ever since Kafka was a child he had a very bitter, unhealthy, and dominating relation with his father, Hermann Kafka, which kept on worsening as he reached his adulthood (Nowak and Ruch). Although Franz Kafka respected his father and was in awe of him, Hermann always mocked, ridiculed, and criticized his son for whatever he did ("Franz Kafka's Letter"). For instance, in the "Letter to His Father," Franz "attempted to explain their strained relationship and his emotional peculiarities" ("Franz Kafka," *NNDB*). On many occasions Hermann Kafka reproached, taunted, and humiliated his son by saying, "'Can't you do it in such-and-such a way? That's too hard for you, I suppose. You haven't the time, of course?'" or "'Of course, that's too much to expect of our worthy son'" ("Franz Kafka's Letter"). Also, Kafka's father expected his son to abide by all the rules and regulations that were imposed on him, but did not follow them himself ("Franz Kafka's Letter"). Moreover, Franz Kafka was threatened and verbally abused by his father who told him once, "'I'll tear you apart like a fish'" ("Franz Kafka's Letter"). Once when Hermann lost his temper, he started chasing Franz around the table in an attempt to grab him, which left a very terrible impact on his psyche ("Franz Kafka's Letter"). Hence, "Hermann Kafka was a domestic tyrant, who directed his anger towards his son" ("Franz Kafka"). Hermann also used to show himself as intellectually superior to Franz, for which Franz admired his father in some respects, but he felt inconfident, inferior, and overshadowed in his presence. Hence, Franz had mixed feelings of both veneration and rejection for his father.

The same father versus son conflict can be seen in "The Metamorphosis" after Gregor changes into a bug. For example, when Gregor comes out of his room for the first time to reveal his unexplainable appearance, his father finds him very repulsive and revolting and therefore "Knot[s] his fist with a fierce expression on his face as if he mean[s] to knock Gregor back into his room" (793). Moreover, he heartlessly and mercilessly drives Gregor back to his room by using a stick and "hissing

and crying 'Shoo!' like a savage," which severely distresses Gregor and makes him "quite lose his head" (795). Even though Gregor's father sees that his transformed son is too broad to enter his half-open bedroom door, he still does not open the door as he has "merely a fixed idea of driving Gregor back into his room as quickly as possible" (795). Due to this irresponsible action, Gregor "thrust himself . . . into the doorway," and subsequently,

One side of his body rose up, he was tilted at an angle in the doorway, his flank was quite bruised, horrid blotches stained the white floor, soon he was stuck fast and, left to himself, could not have moved at all, his legs on one side fluttered trembling in the air, those on the other were crushed painfully to the floor – when from behind his father gave him a strong push which was literally a deliverance and he flew far into the room, bleeding freely. (795)

Moreover, Gregor's father does not even care about his son's future, happiness, or comfort, and thus has made him his slave to pay the debt on the pretext of being helpless and weak following a bankrupt business. His father reveals his callous intentions when he announces to his family that even after bankruptcy he has enough money to support them for almost two years (800). Surprisingly, this news is never disclosed to Gregor, who instantly crushes his desire, dream, and aspiration to become a "little clerk," and instead starts working as a "commercial traveler" to "forget as soon as possible the catastrophe that . . . [has] overwhelmed the business and thrown them all into a state of complete despair" (799). Hence, like a faithful and a dutiful son, Gregor starts supporting his family by working assiduously overnight and in no time, he is "able to meet the expenses of the whole household" and thus relieve the stress and tension of his family (799). However, his selfish parents do nothing themselves to lessen the financial burden on their son; on the contrary, they get used to seeing Gregor slogging as a mule. Hence, they exploit their son to satisfy their needs.

Towards the end of the story, Gregor's father physically assaults him on the excuse of intentional misbehavior towards his mother and sister by bombarding him with apples (806). However, as Gregor tries to escape from being pelted by apples, one of them strikes

him and gets embedded in his back, thereby leaving poor Gregor in excruciating and piercing pain (806). This incident does unprecedented damage and impairs Gregor beyond revitalization, as the apple starts rotting and brings an ultimate downfall in Gregor's health (806). Finally, one day when Gregor is no longer able to carry the burden, stress, pain, and torture that his affectionate father has inflicted on him, he helplessly succumbs to death (815). Thus, one can find many similarities between Hermann Kafka and Gregor's father's spiteful, cruel, and malicious attitude towards his son and therefore conclude that Franz Kafka's writing was basically a reflection of his father's attitude towards him. To reinforce this statement, Kafka asserts in the "Letter to His Father" that "'My writing was all about you; all I did there, after all, was to bemoan what I could not bemoan upon your breast. It was an intentionally long-drawn-out leave-taking from you'" ("Franz Kafka," [books and writers](#))

Not only did Franz Kafka suffer a turbulent relationship with his father, he also had a similar unfortunate and distant (but somewhat less hostile relationship) with his mother, Julie Kafka. Kafka's mother always acted as a mediator between Hermann and Franz; thus, when Franz Kafka had to bear the wrath of his father, his mother used to soothe him, thereby making him feel calm and comfortable ("Franz Kafka's Letter"). Kafka complains in the "Letter to His Father" that "Mother merely shielded me from you [Hermann] in secret, secretly gave me something, or allowed me to do something" ("Franz Kafka's Letter"). However, Julie Kafka later surrendered her post as an appeaser between the father and son struggle and "often took his [Franz] father's side over his," which made Franz Kafka feel even more dejected and despondent (Nowak and Ruch). This attitude of Julie was mainly because she loved her husband a lot and "was too devoted and loyal to ... have been for long an independent spiritual force in the child's struggle" ("Franz Kafka's Letter"). Thus, Julie's nature eventually led to the deterioration of her relationship with her son.

One can see a corresponding loving (and ultimately, a broken) bond between Gregor and his mother, Anna Samsa, who is a patient of asthma (800). When Gregor's mother sees him for the first time in his transformation, she gets a shock and falls "on the floor

among her outspread skirts" (793). She finds Gregor's looks so sickening that she is not able to overcome the initial shock and starts screaming and falls "into the arms of his father" (794). She further goes on to "open a window, despite the cold weather, and lean[s] far out of it with her face in her hand" in an attempt to get fresh air (795). Hence, his mother too detests him. After a considerable time passes, Anna Samsa realizes that Gregor is her son and expresses her desire to meet him (801). However, when the other family members restrain her from meeting Gregor she cries, "'Do let me in to Gregor, he is my unfortunate son! Can't you understand that I must go to him?'" (801-802), and finally she gets to meet her son. As Gregor's mother enters his room, she starts removing the furniture from Gregor's room, as Gregor's sister suggests (804). However, when she sees Gregor, she is not able to bear his still nauseating sight and like a drama queen cries, "'Oh God, oh God!'" and falls "with outspread arms over the sofa as if giving up, and ... [does] not move" (804). This episode causes more hatred in the family against Gregor, as they feel he is deliberately trying to act like a nuisance and cause them additional discomfort and distress.

The only respite Kafka had from his father's and mother's hostile and stormy nature was his lovely youngest of the three sisters: Ottilie, nicknamed Ottla ("Franz Kafka," [NNDB](#)). Kafka used to write plays for his sister ("Franz Kafka," [NNDB](#)). Kafka also used to read "Plato to his sister Ottla while she tried vainly to teach him to sing" (Bender). Kafka also used to write letters to his sister, and when he was in need of something, he used to ask her as he was probably afraid to do so from his parents. One source states, "In the letters to his favorite sister, Ottla, he is certainly more open about his economic plight than he is in the letters to his parents; for instance, he urges Ottla to get his father and mother to send him money that they had promised him (Harman). Moreover, Ottla was a very caring and compassionate sister who took care of Franz when he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. After he was diagnosed, "He obtained three weeks' sick leave and moved in with his sister Ottla in Zurau, a country town about sixty miles northwest of Prague" (Nowak and Ruch). As one can see, the only friendly and caring relation that Kafka had was with his sister.

This connection between Kafka and his sister can be seen through the characters of Gregor and his sister, Grete, who is the only well-developed character in "The Metamorphosis." Initially, when Gregor is human, he shares a very loving, caring, and nurturing relationship with his sister. For example, Gregor is always thinking about sending his sister to the conservatory so that she can learn to play the violin, and he himself admits that "With his sister alone he had remained intimate"(799). Moreover, Grete writes letters to her brother when he is away from home (796). After Gregor's transformation, Grete is the only person who takes care and pride in helping her brother. For example, she brings Gregor his favorite drink, which is milk but later she finds out that he has lost the taste for it. She really tries to help him:

To find out what he liked she brought him a whole selection of food, all set out on an old newspaper. There were old, half-decayed vegetables, bones from last night supper covered with a white sauce that had thickened; some raisins and almonds; a piece of cheese ... a dry roll of bread, a buttered roll, and a roll both buttered and salted. (Kafka 797)

She also tries to make him feel comfortable by always knocking on the door before entering, and bolting it completely after leaving (797). She understands her brother's discomfort with any changes that are made, and she counteracts them by instantly reverting back to his preferred state. For instance, when Grete observes that the armchair stands by the window, after tidying the room, she starts placing it back to its original position (800). Thus, she acts like a perfect understanding sister any brother would be proud to have.

However, even Grete's attitude slowly starts changing from being caring, to becoming ignorant of, and repulsed by, her brother, as she eventually finds it very burdensome to look after him. In Kafka's biography, there is no evidence of a strained relationship between his sister and himself. However, the transformation of Grete into a cold-hearted person could be indicative of Kafka's "neurotic" feelings and fears of intimacy with any "nice girl" ("Biography"). Though, there is no suggestion that Kafka had any latent incestuous feelings for Ottilia, his absolute fear of intimacy led him to divorce Gregor from the only female with whom he

shared an "intimate" bond (799). For instance, Grete gets increasingly unconcerned and careless about feeding her brother:

His sister no longer took thought to bring him what might especially please him ... she ... hurriedly pushed into his room with her foot any food that was available, and ... cleared it out ... with one sweep of the broom, heedless of whether it had been merely tasted, or – as most frequently happened – left untouched. (808)

Also, when Grete leaves Gregor's room, she does not even care to bolt the door like she used to do before (801).

In addition to that, Grete completely disregards her brother's needs. Gregor's sister starts removing the furniture of his room, on the assumption that "Gregor needed a lot of space to crawl about in," and her actions greatly agonize Gregor (803). In the end, to lambaste and excoriate Gregor, Grete selfishly announces that "we must get rid of it [Gregor]. We've tried to look after it and to put up with it as far as is humanly possible, and I don't think anyone could reproach us in the slightest" (813). This episode causes severe anguish, humiliation, and ignominy to Gregor, who then decides to give up his life for the sake of his selfish family.

To underscore the theme of exploitation of human relationships, Kafka has used various symbols. In the beginning of the story, the presence of raindrops symbolizes Gregor's distress and anguish at his loss of individuality, liberty, hopes, and aspirations, which causes him to lead a hopeless way of life and just worry about his work, so that he can pay off his parents' debt. Due to this, he hardly has any time for his recreational activities (786). Thus, Gregor is spiritually held prisoner by his parents. Also, the picture of a lady in Gregor's room may allude to his desire for a social and sexual life, which seems nearly impossible in his present state of life. Another important symbol is the bug, which seems to his family like a parasite and a bloodsucker, though ironically, they have been the ones scrounging and feeding on Gregor. Moreover, the hospital that is present across Charlotte Street is very significant. Before Gregor was transformed into a bug, he could see the hospital very clearly; however, after his metamorphosis, its view starts diminishing, and consequently, at this point, his health starts deteriorating (800). This

suggests that the hospital is in some way exerting a salubrious effect on Gregor Samsa's health, which declines until he dies. At the end of the story, the advent of spring is quite symbolic; even though Gregor has died, he is still liberated, and freed from the oppression and chagrin of his family, and ironically, due to his devotion toward his family, he has brought happiness to his selfish, self-centered, and self-absorbed family by committing suicide (815).

Kafka reveals his psyche through the character of Gregor. In the story, Gregor suffers from "irregular meals" and lack of proper sleep (786). The former could suggest the difficulty that Kafka might have faced in life, as he was a vegetarian (Nowak and Ruch). The latter could be indicative of Kafka's "sleepless nights, devoted to writing or consumed by insomnia" (Nowak and Ruch). Moreover, it is mentioned that when Gregor changes into a bug, he prefers the armchair close to the window, so that he can lean "against the windowpanes ... in some recollection of the sense of freedom...[provided by] looking out of the window" (Kafka 800). This similarity can be seen in Kafka, who "enjoyed fresh air nearly to the point of recklessness, leaving his windows open for the entire year and refusing to wear heavy clothing in the winter" (Nowak and Ruch). Interestingly, there is also a connection between the rooms of Gregor Samsa and Franz Kafka. According to a source, "Samsa's bedroom, like Kafka's, could be entered only through the rooms of other family members, an architectural deficiency typical of Prague housing of that era and one which precluded privacy" (Bender). Lastly, Charlotte Street, on which Gregor lives, is also in Prague, where Kafka lived. Hence, all these clues indicate Kafka's attempt to identify with Gregor. In the words of Nowak and Ruch, "Kafka took elements from his life, compacted them, and cast them into a prose style that is now recognized across the world" ("Kafka Biography").

As one can see, the application of biographical criticism to a work of literature facilitates a greater and thorough understanding of the text and provides the reader an insight to the author's way of life, circumstances, and conditions that are woven into his or her stories. Moreover, in Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis," the presence of a strong conflict, various symbols, and well-developed character has strengthened the theme of

exploitation, by showing the constant mistreatment and oppression of Gregor by his various self-centered family members, and the consequent progressive deterioration of health that ultimately tears him apart.

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Evaluation: *I usually gently steer my students away from essays that lean toward "biographical criticism," but Ms. Lal proves why I shouldn't be so intrusive. This essay is clear, organized, and responsibly researched, even though research was not required for the assignment, and the link between "The Metamorphosis" and Kafka's life is convincingly established.*

Ethical, Legal, and Medical Aspects of Impolitic Medical Management of Intersex Surgery for Gender Assignment of Minors

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Course: Health Science Care 213
(Legal and Ethical Issues in Health Care)
Instructor: Victoria L. McGill

Assignment:

*Students were assigned to prepare a
research-based written and oral presentation.
Students could explore ethical, medical, legal,
and/or medicolegal concepts of an issue of interest.*

Historically, patient care for people born intersexed was not a common topic for legal or public discourse. Until recently, the term “intersex” was not even in circulation. In medical journals and other media we would more commonly find the terms, “hermaphrodite,” “true-hermaphrodite,” or “pseudo-hermaphrodite.” For the sake of a full and fair conversation, I will take the liberty to define some terms throughout this report only as they pertain to this subject matter to avoid the discussion from becoming strictly sociological. Intersex describes a range of conditions in which a person is born with mixed or “ambiguous” sexual anatomy. The articles I explored attempt to argue for a new understanding of this condition. Adults who have been adversely affected by medicine’s answer to what was seen as a “problem” are now stepping forward to reveal perhaps inadvertent violations to autonomy, privacy, informed consent, and beneficence, and multifarious flaws in earlier standards of care.

The traditional medical standard of care for intersex has called for “normal” gender identity to be “assigned”

through genital plastic surgery in infancy or childhood and reinforced by controlling the amount of information given to parents and patients. Many patients over the years have been subjected to multiple surgeries without either they or their parents fully understanding what was being done. Over the past decade, new medical evidence and advances in healthcare ethics have led to calls for a new approach. The Intersex Society of North America (ISNA) argues that intersexuality is a problem of trauma, secrecy, and stigma—not of gender. The ISNA also argues that early surgery is unnecessary and harmful; that withholding information from parents and patients is unethical and destructive; and that professional mental health services for parents and patients are essential elements of good care. It is these arguments and others that serve as the premise for this paper.

Most “gender assignment” surgeries that are performed on infants and young children who are born with functional but atypical genitalia are largely cosmetic in nature. Enforcing gender norms, many of these surgeries serve as ways to define men and women by their ability to penetrate or be penetrated. Current studies are showing that most surgeries on the intersexed are neither medically necessary nor emergent in nature. Children receiving these procedures generally endure multiple surgeries—three on the average and in some cases, up to twenty. The goal of these surgeries to “normalize” or “disambiguate” their genitalia was achieved largely for psychosocial reasons—to make others (e.g., parents, doctors) more comfortable.

Identification of problems with current medical practices related to intersex has been increasing, as public discourse continues. Historically, these surgeries were accomplished through what some would say was “fictional” legal informed consent, because full disclosure was rarely if ever made and no exceptions to the rule were identified. Many would also argue that exceptions of non-disclosure were too, not met. The reasons for such practices are manifold and operate on the most egregious of mainstream and medical community assumptions—assumptions that have been proven wrong for way too long. Only most recently has the legitimacy of such practices been called into question. Many medical ethicists, patients, activists, and allies are pushing for a new standard of care (e.g. intersex-specific standard of care), that is more advanced both scientifically and ethically.

In this paper, medical, legal, and ethical issues surrounding this previously suppressed subject matter will be explored by identifying the arguments that reveal the extensive harm and other violations caused by such gender-assigning surgeries. I will also discuss how these medico-legal and ethical issues have influenced medical, legal and public policy discourse. Current statutes, informed consent policies, and standards of care in place will also be considered as they now all beg for renovations specific to the ethical and legal medical treatment of those born with intersex conditions. The journal articles on this topic speak in consideration of two tenets of medical practice: "Relieve pain and suffering"; and "First, do no harm."

As information is revealed, we might ponder ethical issues full of the following questions:

- Is it ethical to operate on the genitals of intersex children before they are old enough to participate in the decisions regarding their gender?
- Does the role of nature or nurture matter in gender-identity?
- How does society enforce a binary gender system?
- Is gender bipolar or a spectrum of masculinity and femininity?
- What types of emotional support is available for intersex individuals and their families?

In the United States, legislation criminalizes female genital cutting (FGC) and forced sterilization. Westerners will often associate this practice with barbaric African cultural customs. The irony is that while FGC is clearly prohibited, "intersex cuttings" are fairly "routine" procedures. Here is an interesting way to delineate one problematic assumption underlying the intersex surgery dilemma: Medicine and culture assumes FGC "causes" a problem on a perfectly normal body, whereas intersex cutting "corrects" a problem on an abnormal body. FGC is viewed as painful, harmful, and dangerous, but historically, the effects of intersex cutting right here in the United States, have either been played down or downright suppressed.

The problem or issue in question, as I understand it, is the following: The surgical and medical management of intersexed infants and children has followed what is rightly perceived as an unethical (but not yet illegal), tra-

ditional medical standard of care. Instead of a patient-centered standard of care, the traditional medical standard has, and at a surprisingly moderate level, continues to be, a concealment-centered standard of care. Under this medical standard, true informed consent has been questionable as full-disclosure requirements have never really been appropriately met, and as very few exceptions to the informed consent standard were found to be largely inapplicable. The articles I've researched all in some way are arguing for medical and legal patient-centered enhancements to the current standards in place. These articles also reflect arguments for a full-blown review of the ethics involved, which ultimately help to form standard of care and informed consent. In order for professionals in the medical community to better respond to the unique medical, ethical, and legal needs specific to the intersexed, this archaic standard of care must be revamped.

In Christine Gorman and Wendy Cole's article titled "Between the Sexes," they stated,

For years doctors believed the best treatment for an obviously intersexual newborn was a swift one. The reproductive system and genitalia were surgically refashioned to conform to one sex or the other....The goal was to minimize the amount of time the child spent with a nonstandard body in the hope that he or she would find it easier to develop a conventional sense of gender....In recent years, however, the need for swift and irreversible intervention has been called into question. Adult intersexuals are stepping out of the shadows to talk about their experiences, including the harmful effects they attribute to extensive childhood surgery. Some complain that they were assigned the wrong sex at birth. Others are more upset about the secrecy and shame their condition often elicited from their family... (par. 9-10).

Intersex specialist and pediatric urologist, Justine Marut Schober says "[N]o one has ever found or cited a single case to support the long-term physical and psychological success of this surgery (qtd. in Coventry par. 29). This respected surgeon in a male-dominated field was making her way by performing numerous clitoroplasties, but at some point 30 years ago, she began to question the wisdom of "changing a child's *healthy* genitals." As time went on, she learned that England was performing these

surgeries more often than she was in London. Her discomfort with these practices never left her, and in fact left her seeking other women who have been subjected to this kind of procedure as children. I found her revelations very telling. Schober spoke with Activist and Intersex Society of North America Founder, Cheryl Chase, and learned something truly horrible: Gender assigning surgeries on babies and children, as it turns out, violates the respect for their autonomy. As post-surgery adults, the surgery left them feeling *deprived of choice* because they were too young to make that choice and there were no legal controls or protections in place. Schober said, "I looked at the literature and there was nothing that told me if this surgery helped or hurt. That's when I stopped" (qtd in Coventry par. 28).

National activist and advocacy organization, Intersex Initiative, says the term "intersex" is also known as DSD or Disorder of Sex Differentiation. They identify intersex as a reference for a "series of medical conditions in which a child's genetic sex (chromosomes) and phenotypic sex (genital appearance) do not match, or are somehow different from the 'standard' male or female" ("Intersex" par. 2). Developmental biologists say "intersex" is when their "biology, chromosomes, and reproductive tissue are not conforming to the standard demarcations we have come to expect between the male and female sexes." In other words, their reproductive or sexual anatomy doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of the binary gender code called female or male. Put in an even more simplistic way, their insides don't match their outsides.

Intersexuality occurs more often than we think. Current estimates suggest that roughly 1 in every 4,000 babies is born with both male and female traits (Neergaard par 5). Earlier estimates suggested that 1 in every 2000 babies (0.2% to 2% of live births) are born with some kind of intersex condition, or some anomaly of biological sex differentiation (Coventry par. 12). Statisticians and clinicians estimate that five intersex surgeries are performed each day in the United States. U.S. Census reports in March 2006 estimated the U.S. Population to be 298,396,902 ("Population Clocks," U.S. Census Bureau). From this estimate, this would mean that there are roughly 149,198,451 people in the United States who are born intersex. Statistics in March 2006 illustrate a world population of 6,506,322,998

("Population Clocks," U.S. Census Bureau). From these estimates, this would mean that roughly 32,531,614.99 people in the world are born intersexed. The truth we are now learning is that these people are undergoing forced, irreversible, physically harmful, and psychologically harmful gender-assigning surgeries simply for the sake of social conformance and social comfort. Our comfort at their expense comes at a high price. This fact and the anecdotal evidence that follows is not new news; it is old, previously suppressed, and previously non-researched information.

Not too long ago, this traditional medical standard of care called for "normal" gender identity to be expeditiously assigned through genital plastic surgery in infancy or childhood. It also called for the reinforcement of that assignment by controlling the amount of information given to parents and patients. As a cruel result, many patients are and have been subjected to multiple, irreversible surgeries on their genitalia without ever having agreed to those surgeries themselves, ultimately causing permanent damage to the sexual sensitivity of tissue (ending any chance of full sexual satisfaction), terrible scarring, excruciating pain, infertility, problems with sexual functioning (reduced or total lack of sensation, etc), and feelings of shame, depression, insecurity, and uncertainty about their gender identity.

The child's sense of gender as it matures may also not be the one that has been surgically created. Current research suggests that appearance of genitals is not the determining factor in making a person identify with one gender or another—despite previous thinking of psychologists such as John Money that curing the genital anomaly would cure the condition. The latest studies suggest that acceptance and social factors are more important than the appearance of genitalia in dealing with intersexuality. ISNA Board Member, Thea Hillman says "Doctors have found a medical solution to what is essentially a social problem.... The problem has to do with differences and people's fear of differences" (qtd. in Gorman and Cole par. 13). As a result of such social mores, psychologically damaging secrecy has long shrouded intersex issues. In fact, many gender-assigned adults say they were never even told about their surgery as an infant. This suppression operated on the theory that the less they know, the less harm caused. But unfortunately, studies are now showing that the converse is

actually more true. It is now being recognized that retaining the ability to feel sexual satisfaction and learning to cope with the unusual appearance of one's genitalia can be a more fulfilling life choice. Only in recent years have we grown more accustomed to admitting that sometimes, these complicated surgeries are often unsuccessful. For instance, an "improved" vagina may still be too short for any real sexual activity to take place or the genitalia may still look ill defined or deeply scarred. These results and others are actually too common. Poor or unsuccessful surgery can often cause worse psychological problems than existed beforehand. This all becomes further complicated when the birth certificate must be signed. "Intersexual" or "hermaphrodite" is not one of the options available on a birth certificate. This puts even more pressure on legally sanctioned decision-makers and their child's doctor to make some sort of distinction. This is where the medical, ethical, and legal aspects of gender-assignment surgery on the young come in. As it relates to the assignment of gender in those with intersex conditions, the articles examine the nature of informed consent, traditional and current standards of care, legal issues, and the breach in bioethical principals of respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and integrity of the health professional.

Informed Consent is the "process of providing adequate information for a patient in an understandable fashion to enable the patient to make a knowledgeable decision about whether to accept or refuse a proposed treatment" (Aiken 57-73). True informed consent disclosure requires the medical professional responsible for the procedure, typically the specialist, surgeon or physician, to provide the nature and purpose of the proposed treatment or treatments; the material risks and consequences of that proposed treatment or treatments; alternatives to that treatment or treatments; and any consequences if treatment or treatments are refused. Surprisingly, the medical management of these surgeries has lacked, perhaps inadvertently, the disclosure of material risks and consequences and the completely viable alternatives to those surgeries because doctors never really knew what they were. Furthermore, the information I studied revealed that very few "Exceptions to the Duty to Disclose" could be found.

Nurse, and Juris Doctorate Mary Powers Antoine once said that the

...individual's fundamental right to control what happens to his or her body cannot be taken away except in exceptional circumstances. This right includes the right to decide whether to accept or reject proposed medical treatment. The physician has both a legal and ethical obligation to obtain the patient's consent, or the consent of the patient's legal representative, before performing any kind of significant medical treatment. (qtd in Aiken 57-73)

Exceptions to the Informed Consent rules may be applied in only three particular cases. The first exception to the informed consent rule is seen in cases where the procedure is very minor with minimal side effects—and it's quite obvious that these cases are hardly minor. Therefore, this exception would not apply. The second exception occurs in cases where a perceived medical emergency is present—if the treatment, surgery or procedure is considered life-saving, the patient is unconscious, the physician believes that the procedure should be undertaken immediately, and if there is insufficient time to fully inform the patient or to obtain consent from a person authorized to act on behalf of the patient. If the emergency exception to disclosure requirements are met, then no forms have to be signed and the consent is considered *implied*.

What is important to note is that there are very few cases where intersex surgeries are life-saving. For example, I learned that about 1 in 10,000 to 18,000 children are born with a condition called congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH) ("Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia," par 1). This condition is one of the very few that can be seen as a medical emergency requiring emergent-like medical intervention. However, it is important to note that the emergent medical intervention it requires is metabolic therapy, not genderreassignment through genital-mutilating surgery. (CAH and other disorders will be discussed further later on in this report.) Most surgeries on the intersex involve patients too young to speak for themselves. Consequently, it is their families, or more specifically, the infant or child's parents, that wind up making the life-altering decisions about their child's

bodies on their child's behalf, simply because they are uncomfortable with the ambiguity. Because most parents are available to speak on their child's behalf (i.e., when they are born), the doctor should not be relying on the emergency treatment exception rule anyway.

The third and final exception to informed consent and the duty to disclose involves a counterintuitive exception affecting self-determination called the "Therapeutic Exception." The Therapeutic Exception basically says it is O.K. to withhold information if the physician thinks that some kind of harm could occur as a result of its release. Many argued that parents were so emotionally distraught over the "ambiguity" that suppression of knowledge was warranted. In fact, the American Pediatric Association in earlier years once strongly encouraged this suppression. As a result, medical professionals either misrepresented risks and consequences or suppressed whatever it was that they knew.

Then, there is the question of whether parents (or legal guardians) have the right to make gender-reassigning surgery decisions on behalf of their child. Technically and legally speaking, they do. Parents (or legal guardians) making those decisions would be referred to as "Surrogate Decision-Makers." Because parents or legal guardians are usually present when a child is born, there is little need to involve the nearest relatives or courts for these decisions. But legal and effective informed consent also requires that the decision-making individual have decision-making capacity. I will (for the sake of conversation) discuss why parents have this capacity. Patients under the age of 18 are considered incompetent, or unable to make decisions on their behalf. Therefore, "competent" parents or "competent" close relatives in the absence of parents most often make the medical decisions on behalf of these young children. Most surgeries on the intersex involve babies and young children. So naturally, those children lack the ability to say, "Hey! Please don't touch my genitals! It's my fundamental right to decide if I want to keep them and I shouldn't be forced to decide that now!" I say this tongue in cheek of course, but I'm being ironic because it underscores the absurdity often involved.

The vacillating argument contends that it's impossible for a parent to be truly competent or give "true" informed consent because no one, not even a parent, will ever know what gender the child will want to choose

later on in life. Furthermore, it would be difficult to make the right decision without all the information they need to make it. If they are simply assuaging their guilt, shame or discomfort by consenting, this does not mean they are acting in their child's best interest. Arguments say parents consent mainly for social reasons, so their child will fit more placidly into society, not because they think the surgery will help their sex life or make them feel more like one gender or another. Arguments say these instances smack of acting in the *parent's* best interest and thus could not be an expression of true competence. Due to the circumstances circumscribing this issue, no evidence of the patient's true desires exists. Later on in my report, I will discuss how the surrogate decision maker's capacity can be affected, why that hasn't provoked court proceedings to decide in those cases of diminished capacity, and how a parent's legal right to decide in intersex cases may change in the future, as it has presently for one country.

These arguments dovetail with the argument about how differently we all define gender. In the past, intersex disorders were classified into three groups: 1) male pseudohermaphrodite, which includes XY females (chromosomally female) with complete androgen-insensitivity syndrome; 2) female pseudohermaphrodite, which includes virilized women such as those with congenital adrenal hyperplasia; and 3) "true" hermaphrodites. The term hermaphrodite, however, is a misnomer because it is a physiologic impossibility. The term hermaphrodite implies that a person is both fully male and fully female. Some intersex might have testicular tissue and ovarian tissue, but neither is fully functional. While medical personnel may use it to refer to people with intersex conditions, the term is considered misleading and stigmatizing by many. The ISNA suggests this is due to metaphorical marriage to "outdated nomenclature that uses gonadal anatomy as the basis of sex classification" ("Is a Person Who Is Intersex a Hermaphrodite" par. 2). This is the reason why ISNA is pushing for a change in the nomenclature and taxonomy (classification system) for intersex. The ISNA defines intersex as a term that is used for a variety of conditions where the person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. Other physical features determine the sex of an individual karyotype, like the gonads and secondary sexual characteristics

appearing at puberty. They say it is “scientifically specious and clinically problematic” (par 2). In other words, it is this faulty usage, among other things, that can foster panic, confusion and injury for all parties involved. To have a truly meaningful discussion on this topic, we would be fair to establish this important technicality.

If you looked in a dictionary, you might find sex and gender synonymously associated. The question of what defines our sex, or our gender is hotly debated. Do our chromosomes make us “male” or “female?” Or are the genitalia the giveaway? What if it was about what others raised us to be? What if it was just simply a matter of how we think of ourselves? While methods of medical management of the intersex are under construction, (no pun intended), there is still a long way to go for changing the medical model. I particularly like the way Alice Dreger couched her perception of medicine’s attempt to “erase the ambiguity” through what is implied as a dubious effort, to “normalize” the intersex. Dreger says in “Ambiguous Sex” —or Ambivalent Medicine?” that one of the first responses to the birth of a child of ambiguous sex by clinicians and parents is the search for ways they can “disambiguate” the situation (par 1). In other words, there is a medical priority placed on what is an ill-perceived “medical problem.” That “medical problem” they feel they need to “fix” involves birth defects where the outer genitals do not have the *typical* appearance of either sex. So the first impulse or tendency is to find the ways to make the ambiguous genitalia more typical—essentially, to assign the newborn a gender. One of those ways, they posit, might be to surgically modify (which again, is largely cosmetic in nature) the child’s genitalia so that they might conform believably to that sex identity. Another way to medically intervene is to give the child hormones so that the gender decided upon will be reinforced by what does not occur naturally. In the evaluation and management of the “abnormal” gonad, it is said by many professionals that even if the child is genetically male, it is technically easier to treat (and therefore raise) the child as female; hence, the crass cliché, “it’s easier to make a hole than a pole.”

Let’s face it. Genitalia make it easy for doctors to classify an infant as male or female. If the process that causes this fetal tissue to become “male” or “female” is disrupted, ambiguous genitalia can develop. Ambiguous

genitalia, in and of itself, are usually not life-threatening. Doctors impress upon decision-makers, however, that it is this ambiguity that will create social problems for the child and the family. So, decisions are largely made on what has become a socially constructed problem—or the “medicalization” of the intersex condition. The extent of the ambiguity varies. In rare instances, the physical appearance may be fully developed as the opposite of the genetic sex. But more common instances involve ambiguous genitalia in females and ambiguous genitalia in males. This is how doctors decide how atypical a gonad is.

Cases of ambiguous genitalia in females (babies with two X chromosomes [XX]) are largely determined by:

- Enlarged clitoris has the appearance of a small penis.
- The urethral opening can be anywhere along, above, or below the surface of the clitoris.
- The labia may be fused, resembling a scrotum.
- The infant may be thought to be male, with undescended testicles.
- Sometimes a lump of tissue is felt within the fused labia, which can make it seem like a scrotum with testicles.

Cases of ambiguous genitalia in males (babies born with one X chromosome and one Y chromosome [XY]) are largely determined by:

- A small penis (less than 2 to 3 centimeters or 0.8 to 1.2 inches) resembles an enlarged clitoris. The clitoris of a newborn female is normally somewhat enlarged at birth.
- The urethral opening may be anywhere along, above, or below the penis; it can be placed as low as on the peritoneum, further making the infant appear to be female.
- There may be a small scrotum with any degree of separation, resembling labia.
- Undescended testicles commonly accompany ambiguous genitalia.

For the sake of a full and fair conversation, I should identify some specific known causes. For typical genital development, the gender “message” must be communicated from the sex chromosomes to the gonads. The gonads must then manufacture appropriate hormones,

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and the genital tissues and structures have to respond to these hormones. Any deviations along the way can cause ambiguous genitalia. A few of the approximately 30 genetic and hormonal conditions that can give rise to intersexuality are listed in Table 1, which is based on information gathered from many websites and sources listed in the works cited page.

There is great consternation about the traditional medical model of the standard of care for intersex conditions. The standard of care revolves around making an early diagnosis—preferably within the first few days of the infant’s life. Those in support of this standard of care say early diagnosis is important because of the potential social and psychological effects of these conditions. I

was hard pressed to find something that said early diagnosis was crucial because of the physical or physiological danger it puts them in! This standard of care is problematic because it can (and it has) put undue pressure on decision-makers to make early decisions. This leaves little time for gathering sufficient knowledge to make that decision and for weighing the options they rightfully deserve to have. Medical interventions such as these, many of which are pernicious, irreversible, and numerous in nature, make the doctors and parents more comfortable but leave the patients too young to make their own decisions powerless. In our society, we have an urge to simplify social interactions through sex categories. Nature, however, doesn’t decide where one category

Table 1. Genetic and Hormonal Conditions Causing Intersexuality

Mixed Gonadal Dysgenesis (MGD)	An intersex condition in which there appears to be some male structures such as the gonad and testis, as well as the uterus, vagina, and fallopian tubes.
Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS)	A genetic condition characterized by the fetal tissue’s insensitivities to male hormones. Newborns may have some of the female reproductive organs but also have testicles.
Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH)	An inherited condition that affects hormone production, ultimately resulting in a cortisol hormone deficiency and an excessive supply of the male hormone, androgen. A child with CAH lacks particular enzymes. Thus, female genitals are masculinized. The most common form causes a genetic female to appear male. Many states test for this potentially life-threatening condition during newborn screening exams. Medical intervention involves metabolic treatment—lifetime hormone therapy replacement for cortisol— not necessarily gender reassignment.
Chromosomal Abnormalities	Klinefelter’s syndrome (XXY) and Turner’s syndrome (XO). In different cells of the body, a baby may have a mixture of both chromosomes XX and XY; in this case, the chromosomes would be called, “mosaic” chromosomes. Other abnormalities involve specific genes on the Y chromosome that may be inactive or one of the X chromosomes may have a tiny Y segment attached to it.
Maternal Factors	Ingestion of certain medications—particularly androgenic steroids, can cause hypergonadism and thus adrenal virilism (adrenogenital syndrome). This may make a genetic female look more male. Or, the pregnant mother may have had an androgen-secreting tumor while pregnant, and the excess of male hormone affected her baby’s genital development. In other cases, the placenta may have lacked a particular enzyme that failed to deactivate male hormones from the baby; as a result, both mother and baby were masculinized by the excess of these hormones.
Lack of production of specific hormones	Can cause the embryo to develop with a female body type regardless of genetic sex.
Lack of testosterone cellular receptors	Even if the body makes the hormones needed to develop into a physical male, the body is unable to respond to those hormones, and therefore, a female body type is the result, even if the genetic sex is male.
5-Alpha Reductase Deficiency	Child born with testes internally and a vagina and labia externally but a small penis capable of ejaculation instead of a clitoris. This condition is usually not clear at birth, however. Normally raised as girls, they tend to masculinize at puberty and often assume a male identity.
Persistent Mullerian Duct Syndrome	The child, despite having male chromosomes, has a uterus and fallopian tubes because the Y chromosome fails to produce Mullerian inhibiting factor.
Swyer Syndrome	The result of damaged testis-determining factor on the Y chromosome.
Cloacal exstrophy	During human embryogenesis, malformation of the cloaca in the division to form a rectum, bladder, and genitalia causes exstrophy (the eversion of a hollow organ at birth). In these cases, an area of the intestine is interposed between two separate areas of the bladder. Variations on this theme occur in cloacal exstrophy, resulting in grave anatomic disarray. Cloacal exstrophy can affect boys or girls. Boys with cloacal exstrophy have cryptorchidism (failure of descent of the testes into the scrotum) and very severe epispadias (with the urine opening above the phallus). Adequate reconstruction of the male genitalia is difficult, if not impossible. Medicinenet.com states, “Gender reassignment has therefore sometimes been attempted, making boys with cloacal exstrophy into apparent girls. In psychological and emotional terms, the results have been controversial.” The condition is rare (1 in 250,000 births).

ends and another begins. The anomalies are identified by doctors not nature. The ISNA says it succinctly:

Humans decide whether a person with XXY chromosome or XY chromosome and androgen insensitivity will count as intersex... [But] what counts as "intersex" should vary substantially. Some think you have to have ambiguous genitalia to count as intersex, even if your inside is mostly of one sex and your outside is mostly of another. Some think your brain has to be exposed to an unusual mix of hormones prenatally to count as intersex—so that even if you're born with atypical genitalia, you're not intersex unless your brain experienced atypical development. And some think you have to have both ovarian and testicular tissue to count as intersex ("What Is Intersex?" par. 6-7).

Many of the people who are discussing these issues are arguing that these surgeries are largely not medically necessary. Instead, arguments posit the surgeries of past and present to be largely cosmetic, non-emergent, mentally and physically injurious, and experimental in nature. In fact, federal law prohibits the performance of any sort of experimental treatment for the purposes of research without the express written consent of the patient or the patient's surrogate decision-maker. The consent form that is used in these circumstances is supposed to comply with all of the disclosure requirements set forth in federal law. The research I've conducted and the articles I've read show that parents consented to the surgery because they either thought they had to, or because they felt pressured or rushed to make a decision—a decision that lacked viable options or options that misrepresented risk. Clinical and anecdotal evidence of past surgeries will suggest that the only treatment options parents were aware of involved surgery and hormone therapy. It never dawned on anyone that maybe surgery wasn't the best answer to this social problem, or that more harm could be caused than good. In the past, parental counseling or counseling for the child was never really offered under the traditional standards of care. Activists like Cheryl Chase and other health care providers are calling for a new protocol. They argue for people to raise their children with the atypical genitals in a gender most appropriate to their bodies; then, they ask that people provide counseling for

them and their families, and that they allow for these decisions to be made by the very person it would affect and "at an age when they, not their anxious parents or well-meaning doctors, can give informed and educated consent" (Coventry par. 30).

A huge issue fogging the medical mirrors concerns the fact that many intersexed individuals have not identified in adulthood with the gender that was assigned to them in infancy. This does not surprise some legal communities such as the American Bar Association, because many assignments were largely made on the basis of genitalia size in accordance to norms. That misjudgment erroneously precluded professionals from considering other possibilities. Furthermore, these standards of care did not take healthy genitalia tissue into consideration. Most times, these tissues were not diseased; in fact, they are often very healthy tissue that functioned properly—until it was removed. The American Bar Association says that when such gender assignment is reinforced by irreversible cosmetic surgery, the probability and the consequences of making an incorrect gender assignment are significantly increased. An executive summary of resolutions they recommend stands in support of the principle that "any surgical alteration of intersexed infants must be based upon the best interests of the intersexed children and requires the heightened informed consent of the minor's parents" ("Be It Resolved" par. 1). In recent years, there has been cause for pause and calls to research the old and new clinical data so that steps can be taken to improve the current standard of care, specifically for those with intersex conditions. This is why many advocates for the intersexed are teaming up with ethicists and professionals from the medical and legal communities. Reasons why this push will not prevent all these surgeries from happening are discussed later in this report.

The articles I researched for this project encompass the medical, legal, and ethical aspects of this subject matter. Medical and ethical aspects have been discussed at great length earlier on in this paper. With respect to legal aspects, many advocates are considering a civil liability approach to intersex surgery. Most legal experts say that doctors cannot be held legally liable for performing cosmetic genital surgeries on intersex children. However, advocates suspect it will become more risky for doctors to continue performing these surgeries as more standards

of practice are challenged. Medical liability may never be called into question, however. Medical liability is when an individual's responsibility for his or her professional conduct fails to meet a standard of care or when that medical professional fails to perform a duty that ultimately results in harm to a client. The rub is that medical communities regulate themselves when it comes to the medical standard. This is the guiding principal of medical liability. Therefore, individual physicians will not be held liable for causing damages as long as they are following the standard of care accepted by other physicians in their specialty—even if that standard of care is *outdated*. The latter makes the otherwise good principal problematic. Medical professionals might then be more motivated to stay with the medically accepted standard and as a consequence, avoid important alternatives even when questions are being raised to challenge it. If some certain guidelines say these surgeries are the accepted medical standard of care, then intersex individuals would never be able to bring suit successfully against their doctors for performing these largely unwanted surgeries.

However, even in this context, a physician could still be held liable for failing to abide by the informed consent standard. This water gets muddy when considering two competing ways a physician can meet informed consent. Statutes for informed consent may vary. In the "physician-oriented" informed consent standard, the informed consent obligation is viewed from the perspective of the physician: What do they think is important enough to tell the patient. This physician's actions would then be judged against the actions of his peers; hence, a physician must disclose what others in the same field and in similar circumstances would. More and more states are viewing the perspective from the patient now. In the "patient-oriented" informed consent standard, the physician must disclose what an individual would need to hear in order for that patient to make a fully informed decision or intelligent choice of proposed treatment. Intersex Initiative, along with many other legal advocates, supports a legislative strategy that would strengthen the rules of informed consent. They suggest holding physicians accountable for hiding the information that many of us believe is important when it comes to these intersex cosmetic surgeries and the vaguely defined unofficial standards that enable them to happen with greater ease and less legal sanction. Many advocates and legal

strategists say this can be done through passage of laws to create an official, clear, and concise informed consent statute (Greenberg par 16). This would render current unofficial consent standards less powerful in decision-making activities.

So, besides a constitutionally sound model of enhanced informed consent standards that will ensure and protect patients' and legal decision-makers' rights for true and full disclosure, there is also a call for limiting the parental authority for consent. Some say that statutorily limiting parents' authority to consent, as in cases where surgeries are medically unnecessary and cosmetic in nature, would help restrict the surgeries taking place. While all accounts acknowledge and respect a parent's right and responsibility to make medical decisions on behalf of their minor children, they do not have what some call *carte blanche* to do as they please for easing their own comfort at the child's expense. Therefore, legislation that restricts this parental authority could help parents make responsible decisions by consenting to surgeries *only when it is in the child's best interest*. The only country that has adopted this principal is the Constitutional Court (higher courts) of Columbia. In 1999, Columbia's high court issued legal rulings that basically say children are not the property of their parents and that the parents acting on their behalf should not and will not have the unrestricted freedom to make irreversible and potentially hazardous choices (for the sake of social comfort and acceptance) that could produce irreversible and potentially perilous consequences for the child (Martin par. 73-74). Columbia's decisions were apparently based on the Constitution of Columbia, as well as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child—something advocates say that the U.S. has refused to ratify. They also based their decision on information provided by intersex activists and allies from the ISNA and International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC). Here in the United States, however, this may be a hard sell for legislators. In the United States, there is very little support for children's rights.

Some very important issues relating to intersex are raised at the bodieslikeours.org website. At this website, in an *American Journal of Law and Medicine* article, it is stated that "most doctors who agree with genital operations for intersexed children claim the surgery is necessary to protect their mental health. However, no studies

have been done that support the question of whether or not genital reconstruction and hormones actually protect the mental health of the patient any better than counseling and education” (Haas 65). There, they also discuss features of congressional findings on the practice of female genital mutilation in the United States. On the topic of this practice, Congress found that culturally sanctioned genital mutilation issues *are directly applicable to intersexed children*. The practice of genital mutilation was found by U.S. Congress to be a violation of both federal and state constitutional and statutory laws (Haas 64-65).

In 1996, President Bill Clinton signed into law the Criminalization of Female Genital Mutilation Act. Five states have also individually criminalized female genital mutilation. This act makes circumcision (the cutting away of the skin [prepuce] covering the clitoris or its complete removal), excision, and infibulations (closing the vagina partially by stitching it or closing it with a clasp) on a person who has not attained the age of 18 years, a crime if it’s nonessential surgery, meaning that unless the operation is “necessary” to the health of the person on whom it is performed, those actions are punishable by law. Additionally, this law states that no legal considerations will be given for the personal feelings of the female involved in surgical matters and no legal considerations will be given for special beliefs, rituals, or customs of the part of that person or any other person (Haas 64). Bodieslikeours.org also touches upon a very interesting point of possible injustice. The aforementioned Act or statute indicates that only applies to female children. If this is the case, then the statute may violate equal protection.

American court systems defer to the medical community’s definition of what constitutes a “medical necessity.” So, if the medical community’s definition of medically necessary treatment is somehow faulty, then this could have a bystander effect throughout other communities, and one very injurious and traumatic ripple effect in particular can break down the system of standards again. The act never intended to ban intersex surgeries. If in the highly unlikely case, it did, it would legally force the government to imprison handfuls of physicians who are just following the medical standard of care—and for obvious reasons (and maybe not so obvious reasons), that is very unlikely to happen.

Obviously, these issues do not affect all citizens equally. They do, however, impact a select group of diverse individuals. It has been suggested by several allies for the intersex that as we consider the legality of genital reconstructive surgery, the United States ought to consider international standards for the treatment of children. The paragon of standards by which we could judge the level of international consensus on children’s rights is the Convention on the Rights of a Child. It turns out that the United States was one of two United Nations member countries that did not sign this. Because we were only one of the two who didn’t sign on, it makes me wonder which groups were behind that decision. The Convention on the Rights of a Child recognizes the rights of children independent of their parents by allowing them to veto parents’ decisions on issues of health, education, and religious upbringing (“Covention on the Rights of a Child”). Allies say the Convention specifically states that a child should have input into all the decisions that would affect him or her. In cases of gender assignment surgeries on children that are traumatic and irreversible, particular care should be taken to involve that child in the decision that will affect his or her body and the rest of his or her life. For all the freedom we have here in America, I can’t imagine why this did not have more support. Another international agreement that was considered to be relevant to the treatment of people who were born with an intersex condition is an agreement called the Nuremberg Code. Until this time, I never considered the connection it could have with these issues. Signed by the United States after World War II, the Nuremberg Code prohibits countries from conducting experimental medical treatments on patients without their express (not implied) consent. Bodieslikeours.org points out that genital reconstruction surgery has only been in practice during the last thirty years and that no studies have been done to prove the procedure’s effectiveness. Therefore, critics could argue that gender assigning surgeries are experimental! If that turned out to be the case—that it was indeed experimental surgery—then many can argue successfully that the level of consent required should be higher.

A 2001 Yale Law & Policy Review article excerpt at the ISNA website makes the cases against intersex surgery succinctly:

Surgeons who perform genetic normalizing surgery, whether on an emergency basis or at the behest of the intersexed infant's parents, should be aware that, because genital-normalizing surgery is not necessary nor proven beneficial for the infant with clitoromegaly [enlarged clitoris] or micropenis [very small penis] the required elements of legal informed consent are likely to have not been met. In light of the questionable scientific basis behind its use, the lack of follow-up data on its benefits, and the overwhelming evidence of its negative physical and psychological results for many intersexuals, a moratorium should be declared on the use of defenseless infants as the experimental subjects of genital-normalizing surgery. (Ford par. 57)

This subject matter has been controversial for specific groups of healthcare providers such as developmental biologists, neonatologists, geneticists, endocrinologists, pediatric urologists, surgeons, physicians, psychiatrists, and social workers. Other groups affected by the controversy involve research and pseudo-research scientists, the international community, healthcare organizations such as the American Medical Association, American Bar Association, American Association of Pediatrics, Harvard Civil Rights—Civil Liberties Law Review, Intersex Society of North America, Intersex information and peer support groups, Human Rights Commission, the United States government, and the governments of other countries—more specifically the higher courts of Columbia. There is also evidence of this controversy in the news, albeit scant in nature. This subject matter is most definitely under investigation and subject to new legislation. As medical, ethical, and legal issues came into question, the American Academy of Pediatrics began to reconsider its policy of endorsing early surgery for intersexuals. Dr. Ian Aaronson, professor of urology and pediatrics at the Medical University of South Carolina, helped write the American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines. It is reported that he is now “coordinating what he hopes will be the largest ever follow-up study of intersexuals to see what effects—good or bad—surgery has had on their emotional, psychological and sexual well being (Gorman and Cole par. 12). Also, the San Francisco Human Rights Commission has released the long-awaited, “A Human Rights Investigation in the

Medical ‘Normalization’ of Intersex People.” Issued on May 3, 2005, the report caps years of work and is the result of a public hearing held on May 27, 2004. At that public hearing, many people with intersex testified, as did their family members along with medical professionals and ethicists (Chase, “Intersex Declared,” par. 5).

Issues pertaining to intersex can be resolved satisfactorily in multifactorial ways. Intersexuality is not a disease, but it can have just as devastating an effect where prejudice and ignorance force individuals to suffer shame or confusion. The call for a new and improved standard of care specific to intersex conditions arrives at a time when there is better communication, better education, and advances in scientific knowledge that induce better lives. Ongoing research into genetics and the roles of surgery and hormone replacement factor heavily in our understanding. Doctors and other health professionals are better informed. We now allow and legally sanction full access to medical reports. We know now that long-term support is crucial in patient outcomes. Over the past decade, new medical evidence and advances in healthcare ethics have led to calls for a new approach. The ISNA argues that intersexuality is a problem of trauma, secrecy, and stigma, not of gender; that early surgery is unnecessary and often harmful; that withholding information from parents and patients is unethical and destructive; and that professional mental health services for parents and patients are essential elements of good care.

Guidelines for a new standard of care specific to the intersexed are in order. Medical professionals are currently researching outcomes of previous surgeries so that a better standard of care can be followed and full-disclosure requirements can be truly met. To date, no one has been able to find a single shred of clinical or anecdotal evidence suggesting that these patients were pleased with the outcome of their surgeries—surgeries that occurred without their consent and as a direct result from decisions others have made on their behalf without full disclosure. Conversely, anecdotal evidence suggests that those who were lucky enough to escape the gender-reassigning surgeries as babies and small children lead very normal lives and are quite happy with their ‘ambiguous’ genitalia (Chase, “Genital Surgery,” Appendix D, par. 1-14). Strengthening civil

liability laws regarding informed consent, patient's rights, and children's autonomy can serve to restrict unnecessary surgical reassignment of gender. In fact, legal advocates and activists propose what some may say is a utopian legal informed consent standard. The intent is to ensure true and full disclosure. The paragon for an informed consent standard would require medical professionals to

- Fully disclose and explain the diagnosis
- Distinguish between biomedical issues and social/psychological issues
- Distinguish between medical necessary surgeries and *cosmetic* surgeries (cosmetic meaning 'socially-necessitated' surgeries)
- Distinguish between gender assignment and surgical assignment; meaning that if legal decision-makers opt for no surgery, that gender can still be assigned without it by simply raising your children as a boy or girl.
- Acknowledge that intersex cosmetic surgery is controversial; experts argue from both sides
- Acknowledge that we do not have sufficient information to know if intersex cosmetic surgery is actually helping or hurting the child in the long term
- Acknowledge that there is a movement by adult intersexed people against cosmetic surgery
- Make social and psychological alternatives to surgery
- Refer patients and their families to counselors or psychologists who are knowledgeable about intersex
- Refer patients and their families to support groups, other parents who have children with similar conditions, and/or adults with similar conditions

For some, efforts to criminalize intersex surgeries would be futile as long as the standard medical practice remains accepted. Legislation is often pulled by the political power of the medical lobby. Chances for restricting these surgeries are better through the enhancement of civil liability laws.

Author's Comment

I chose to research this subject for a number of reasons. My personal opinions of the articles are manifold. From the knowledge I obtained, I learned how sometimes, even inadvertently, problems can be socially constructed and pseudo-solved by those who have created it, causing a great deal of harm and trauma. I chose this subject because I was horrified when I heard the personal stories of adult patients who have tremendously suffered as a result of the injuries sustained and the utter injustice created unnecessarily by those who should be seeking to assuage it. I also thought the subject matter was broad enough to cover some of the most important but often elusive concepts from our class text. The consequences of misstep ripple throughout society. We can choose to ignore those ebbs or we can choose to focus on the flows. Mostly though, the secret, amateur activist in me was moved, and I couldn't resist researching this ad nauseum. I thought about all the people who have silently and secretly suffered simply because certain mechanisms were not in place to protect them. Now they are silent no more and I am listening. The history of how intersex has been managed is riddled with irony and perhaps even an inadvertent lack of humanity. When I am asked if this will assist me in my future career or if it will enable a better understanding of my future role in healthcare, all I can say is, "How could it not?" To be a successful (allied or otherwise) healthcare professional is to have that uncommon sense of integrity and compassion, particularly when others do not. Most importantly for me and all other medical professionals, is that we respect and give thoughtful consideration to the two most fundamental tenets of medical practice: "First, do no harm," and second, "relieve pain and suffering." The issues shrouding the people who were born intersex smack of violations of these most sacred ethical principals. I was saddened to learn how sorely lacking our medical community was in anecdotal evidence and long-term qualitative and quantitative studies of patient outcomes. Now ethical, legal, and medical communities are learning from this breakdown in communication. What I found interesting was that to date, there is very little evidence that suggests we have implemented stronger standards for care and informed consent. I never knew it took that

long to change policy. These issues illustrate concepts we can apply to other medical issues. We all get to see the domino effect of even one misstep. As a physician's office-based medical assistant, it is quite possible I may never encounter these issues, but the categorical and binary barriers have been removed from my lexicon and perception patterns. That latter fact, in and of itself, is quite applicable. As a medical assistant, I will encounter a diverse patient population. Patients come in all shapes and sizes, and bias related to those variances interferes with good communication and patients' rights for respect and justice. It is important to understand the multifarious issues that affect patients. Greater understanding enables better communication and thus better quality of care.

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Evaluation: Marla prepared this written presentation (and delivered an oral presentation) after extensive research into this "underground" subject. The presentation was extremely educational, and the concepts of informed consent legalities and patient advocacy, as well as social issues related to social norms, were well explored.

Soil: Earth's Veneer For Life

Ann Libner

Course: Plant Science Technology 110 (Soil Science)

Instructor: Chet Ryndak

Assignment:

Students were to compose a year-end project report relevant to a soil science.

Why is planet Earth the only planet in the galaxy that seems capable of sustaining life? What makes Earth so different, so special that it can sustain life when the other planets seem incapable? In layman's terms, the answer is: dirt. To the enlightened, it is not dirt; it is soil. Soil sets the Earth apart from the other planets. Soil is the life-sustaining and life-giving force of the planet. How did Earth get so lucky? What forces were in play that created soil? Does modern man appreciate soil enough, or will we squander this unique substance? What forces, natural and man-made, are at work to rob the planet of its soil? This paper will attempt to answer these questions.

The Earth began billions of years ago as a huge ball of swirling gases and dust. As the Earth grew larger, new materials piled up on the outside and squeezed the materials inside. Energy from all this activity was released as heat. Eventually, most of the iron in the earth melted and collected at the core. This released more heat. The temperature at the core became hot—perhaps

more than 9,000°F. Lighter materials rose to the outside of the earth and cooled, forming a thin crust.

Earth's crust at this point was like that of the other planets. It was barren on the surface. But the hot, molten center of the planet would not be contained beneath the thin crust. Fissures continuously opened and vented the interior gases. The vents allowed nitrogen, carbon dioxide and water vapor to come streaming up out of the molten interior. There were constant volcanic eruptions as well, which spewed out lava as well as sulfuric gases and water vapor. Water remained as vapor in an atmosphere that was composed mainly of carbon dioxide, formaldehyde, sulfur, neon, and cyanide. The Earth remained in this condition for approximately half a billion years. Then, the planet slowly began to cool. As the planet cooled, the water vapor in the atmosphere condensed into rain. It is estimated that rain fell continuously for over 12,000 years. The rains fell on the hardened surface of the planet. The pounding of the constant rain and the subsequent runoff created fissures and found its way down into weak spots of the surface. The rainfall eroded away the exposed rock and mineral elements, the runoff collected and carried the rock and mineral elements with it, and the accumulated rains collected. The first seas were collection pools of solvents, dissolved pools of minerals. Because the temperature on the planet at this point was so hot, the liquid water quickly evaporated back into the atmosphere. As the water vapor evaporated, the minerals were precipitated out, and tons of mineral salts were deposited in the crevasses of the Earth's surface. This process continued until the Archean era.

The Archean era was from 3.0 to 2.5 billion years ago. This is the period in which the continents formed and the planet began to take shape. Approximately 70% of the continental landmasses date from this period. The genesis of the continents is the continental shields that formed at this time, which are broad expanses of crystalline rocks in the cores of the continents. These rocks are the oldest rocks on the continents. The continental shields are igneous or metamorphic rock. During this period, igneous rocks dominated the surface of the Earth.

Great changes happened to the planet during the Archean era. The Earth cooled, and as the temperature

dropped, water vapor in the air began to condense and pool in vast quantities. Carbon and sulfur dioxide from the atmosphere dissolved into the stable bodies of water from the atmosphere. This allowed nitrogen to build up in the atmosphere. Clay particles developed an envelope around themselves that regulated the flow of salts in and out of the particles, making themselves the first particles on Earth to "live." It is theorized that iron sulfides or magnesium compounds were most likely what these "living organisms" ingested. These organisms thrived in an anaerobic environment composed of methane, carbon dioxide, and hydrogen. These organisms were "heterotrophs" in that they made their food from the materials in the Earth's atmosphere and crust such as the hydrogen, sulfur, and carbon dioxide. A group of these heterotrophs bear the name of the era. They are Archaea, which are bacteria-like organisms that can still be found on earth today in highly saline, acidic, or alkaline water. They live in high temperatures, usually above 100°C, like geysers, hot springs, and volcanic vents. They also live in the digestive systems of ruminant animals and humans. They thrived in habitats too hostile for other living creatures.

The waste product from the Archaea was sulfur, which over a billion years built up in the oceans along with the iron from the weathering of the igneous rocks on the Earth's surface. These buildups gradually oxygenated the oceans' waters. Heterotrophs continued to feed on simple organic compounds. As food for the early heterotrophs began to become depleted, autotrophs appeared. Autotrophs made their own food by using sunlight. Oxygen was produced as a waste product of their feeding. Fortunately for the heterotrophs, the autotrophs converted much more light energy than they needed. The energy and the oxygen stabilized and maintained the soil community. Blue-green algae is a first cousin to the first autotrophic organisms. The first autotrophs are called stromatolites. They would form large mats that would glow. According to William Bryant Logan, "Life did not crawl out of the sea onto land; it oozed from the sea into the land, the organic acids of its excretions joining with the carbonic acid of the rainfall to create the first soft mantle of soil on the Earth" (12). The colonies of algae mats comprised of cyanobacteria, fungi, and molds joined

together to form crusts that held and collected the runoff from eroding exposed igneous and metamorphic rocks. The runoff and the decay of the dead organisms was the embryonic beginning of the Earth's soil.

The soil-forming process had begun. Once the crusts formed by the algae mats stabilized the surface, weathering may have played the largest role early on in the formation of the soil. There were chemical, biological and physical forms of weathering. But, as the soil got thicker, the variety of life in the soil continued to thrive and expand. From the early microfauna developed the nematodes, arthropods, and earthworms, and eventually mammals. The autotrophs that developed into the blue-green algae and fungi continued to develop as lichen and mosses, then into ferns and finally into gymnosperms and angiosperms, the plants that inhabit the planet today. The cycle of producers, consumers, and decomposers was set into motion with the soil-forming factors of parent material, climate, life, topography, and time: lots and lots of time.

It can take from one hundred to a thousand years to make one inch of soil. The weathering of the rocks, the breaking down of the organic matter, and climate are all contributing factors to the building of soil. The Earth is approximately 4.5 billion years old. In that time, it has produced the soil that we have today. Soil is our greatest natural resource. It is what sustains life. Without soil, we could not feed ourselves. Man made his appearance approximately 3 million years ago and was primarily a hunter/gatherer. Man was, and still is, a consumer. Early man took from the land what he could. The first evidence of man farming dates back to about 8,000 years ago. The early crops sown by man were wheat and barley. In the 8,000 years since man began farming, he has studied, classified, and quantified the Earth's soil.

In Russia, around 1880, V.V. Dokuchaev implemented a system to classify soils. Dokuchaev determined that soils were natural bodies created by soil-forming factors. In the United States in the early 1900s, soils were grouped based on the soil-forming factors that created them. By the 1960s, the USDA introduced the current classification system based on soil taxonomy. Soil taxonomy is based on the properties of the soil as they can be observed in the field or the laboratory. The soil orders are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Soils of the United States

Soil Order	%	Description	Use	Horizon profile
Entisols	7.9	Youngest order, lack horizon development, Rocky Mountain area	Range, cropland, forest, wetlands	A-C
Inceptisols	18.2	Slightly more developed than entisols, Pacific northwest on volcanic ash	Cropland, forest, range	A-Bw-C
Andisols	<1	Form in volcanic deposits	Cropland, forest	A-Bw-C
Aridisols	11.5	Desert soils, little profile development, Southwest	Range, irrigated farming	A-Bt-Ck or Ckm, Cy, Cz
Vertisols	1.0	High amounts of shrink/swell clay central and western US, portions of Blackland prairie of Texas	Cropland, range	A-AC-C
Mollisols	24.6	Highly fertile grassland soil, high organic level; basis of wheat belt agriculture	Cropland, range	A1-A2-A3-Bw-C
Alfisols	13.4	Similar to mollisols but more organic material, deciduous forest	Cropland, forest, range	O-A-E-Bt-C
Spodosols	5.1	Generally under coniferous forest; leached but have organic horizon	Forest	A-E—Bs-C
Udisols	12.1	Highly leached, high clay concentration in B horizon, moist areas of southeast US	Forest, Cropland	A-E-Bt-C
Oxisols	—	Highly weathered tropical soils, lowest fertility	Cropland, forest, shifting agriculture	A-N (or Bv)-C
Histosols	0.5	Hydric, peaty soils, wetlands	Wetland, forest, cropland	O1-O2-O3-C

In the upper Midwest, the soil orders are histosols, alfisols and mollisols. The soil in the upper Midwest is primarily the result of the glaciers of the Pleistocene age about 15,000 years ago. The glaciers descended from the north, grinding the rock material as they moved. The primary rock material of the region was and still is the dolomitic limestone that is the bedrock of the region. Then, they retreated as the climate warmed. With the warmer climate, the former ice masses sheeted off tons of rock "flour," the ground up and digested rock material collected as they had ascended. This material left behind was primarily silt, and it had a high calcium content obtained from the rich dolomitic limestone. The silt flew from the trailing edge of the glaciers to leave thick deposits of fine black soils. As it dried, it scattered throughout the Midwest.

The Midwest has some of the richest agricultural land in the world. Many consider the Midwest to be "Bread Basket of the World," and Illinois sits in the middle of the bounty left by the glaciers. Approximately 18,000 years ago, Illinois was almost completely covered by glaciers. After the glaciers melted, the land was

covered at first with tundra-type vegetation, then in succession, spruce forests. As the climate became warmer and drier, between 14,000 and 10,000 years ago, hardwood forests with ash, oak, elm, maple, birch, and hickory trees replaced the spruce forest. About 8,300 years ago, the climate became substantially warmer and drier, and within the relatively short time of 500 to 800 years, most of the forests in Illinois died out, and prairies spread over the landscape.

For the last 1,000 years, the climate has become cooler and wetter, which made conditions more favorable to trees. Savannas that are typically characterized by a grassy prairie-type ground cover underneath an open tree canopy were common in northeastern Illinois. Patches of rich forests completely surrounded by prairie were scattered across the state.

Prairies developed and were maintained by the fluctuation in the climate, grazing of large mammals, and fire. Illinois prairies were subjected to extreme ranges of temperatures. There were hot summers and cold winters, and great fluctuations of temperatures within growing seasons. Rainfall varied from year to year and with-

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in the growing seasons. The prairie region was also subject to droughts. Usually, there was a prolonged dry period during the summer months, and there were major droughts lasting for several years that occur every 30 years or so.

Before any settlements, the eastern boundary of the prairie was in a state of flux. During periods of drought, trees died, and prairie plants took over previously forested regions. When rainfall was abundant, the trees and forest were able to reestablish themselves. All of this activity is the primary reason Illinois has a thick, fertile layer of topsoil. The growth and subsequent death and decay of thick fibrous grass roots built up a thick fertile layer of topsoil.

One indication of the richness and the health of Illinois soil is the abundance of life in the soil. According to Illinois Department of Natural Resources estimates, there are

an average of 148,000 worms per acre within the [farm] fields (up to 292,000 worms per acre in one field) and almost four times as many, an average of 589,000 worms per acre, in the grassy border areas. In one of the grassy border areas, [we] estimated an abundance of 1.54 million worms per acre. The difference

between in-field and grassy border populations was even greater when we considered the living weight of the earthworms: an average of 78 pounds per acre within fields, with a maximum of 179 pounds per acre, and almost 30 times that weight—an average of 2,263 pounds per acre and a maximum of 5,909 pounds per acre—in the grassy borders. Thus, topsoil-dwelling earthworms were not only less abundant within fields than in borders but they were also smaller. In contrast to the difference between fields and grassy borders, [we] were unable to detect a difference in the number or weight of topsoil-dwelling earthworms among the fields with different management practices. (Zaborski par 5)

The primary soil series for Illinois is the Drummer soil series. It is considered the state soil of Illinois because it occurs on more than 1.5 million acres in the state and is the most productive soil in the state. Drummer soil formed under the prairie vegetation. It is very deep, poorly drained soil that was formed in 40 to 60 inches of loess or other silty material and in the underlying stratified, loamy glacial drift. Drummer is a silty clay loam; the best soil for agriculture. Drummer's soil profile is described in Table 2.

Table 2. Profile of Drummer Soil

Horizon	Depth inches	Description
Ap	0 to 7	Black silty clay loam; dark gray dry; weak fine granular structure; firm; many fine roots; moderately acid; clear smooth boundary
A	7 to 14	Black silty clay loam; dark gray dry; moderate fine subangular blocky structure parting to weak fine granular; firm; many fine and medium roots; slightly acid; clear smooth boundary (combined thickness of the A horizons is 10 to 22 inches.)
BA	14 to 19	Very dark gray silty clay loam; gray dry; moderate fine and medium subangular blocky structure; firm; many fine and medium roots; few fine faint very dark grayish brown masses of iron and manganese accumulation in the matrix; slightly acid; gradual smooth boundary (0-8 inches thick)
Bg	19 to 25	Dark gray silty clay loam; moderate fine prismatic structure parting to moderate fine angular blocky; firm; many fine roots; common fine distinct and prominent yellowish brown masses of iron accumulation in the matrix; many worm holes; neutral; gradual smooth boundary
Btg1	25 to 32	Grayish brown silty clay loam; weak fine and medium prismatic structure parting to moderate fine angular blocky; firm; many fine roots; common distinct dark gray clay films on faces of peds; many medium distinct yellowish brown masses of iron and manganese accumulation in the matrix; neutral; gradual wavy boundary
Btg2	32 to 41	Gray silty clay loam; weak medium prismatic structure parting to weak medium angular blocky; firm; few fine roots; few distinct dark gray clay films on faces of peds; many medium prominent yellowish brown masses of iron and manganese accumulation in the matrix; neutral; clear wavy boundary (combined thickness of the Bg horizon and Btg horizons is 20 to 47 inches)
2Btg3	41 to 47	Gray loam; weak coarse subangular blocky structure; friable; few fine roots; few distinct dark gray clay films on faces of peds; common medium prominent yellowish brown masses of iron accumulation in the matrix; 4 percent fine gravel; neutral; abrupt wavy boundary (4 to 10 inches thick)
2Cg	47 to 60	Dark gray stratified loam and sandy loam; massive; friable; many medium prominent olive brown masses of iron and manganese accumulation in the matrix; many medium distinct gray iron depletions in the matrix; slightly alkaline

Illinois' other outstanding soil series include Chalmers, Chetomba, Dolbee, Dunham, Elpaso, Elvira, Garwin, Hartsburg, Madelia, Mascoutah, Maxcreek, Maxfield, Ossian, Patton, Pella, Rushmore, Sable, and Wascousta, to name a few. All have a dark, rich A horizon although the depths and the exact compositions of the soils vary. The glaciers deposited these soils, and wind and the weather took over from there aided by an abundance of microfauna and flora.

Not just Illinois, but currently the United States in general has very suitable soil for agriculture. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recognizes eight land capability classes to classify the suitability of soil for various uses. They are broken down into classes, with Class I having the least restrictions on the land's uses and Class VIII having the most. They have determined the land use for every square inch of the country. The U.S. has 31 million acres (20% of the land) of Class I soil, which has few limitations, and 285 million acres (21% of the land) of Class II soil, which has mild limitations. Two hundred eighty-one million acres (20% of the land) is Class III soil, but Class III soils have various issues that need to be addressed. Another 193 million acres (14% of the soil) is Class IV, which is marginal for cultivated crops, but it can support hay growth, and it is good for range or pasture land. The U.S. also has 33 million acres (2% of the land) that is Class V, and 261 million acres (or 19%) that is Class VI, which also can be range or pasture land. In total, the U.S. has 597 million acres (53% of the land) that is suitable for cultivated crops, and another 489 million acres (35% of the land) that is suitable for pasture and range land. Only 305 million acres (22% of the land) in the U.S. is unsuitable for any kind of agricultural usage ("Land Capability Class By State," USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service).

Even though the U.S. has an abundance of acreage that can produce food in the form of crops or animals, this land is in danger. We are wasting and mismanaging our most precious natural resource. The greatest loss of prime agricultural land in the U.S. is due to development. The rate of rural land lost to development in the 1990s was about 2.2 million acres per year. At this rate, the U.S. will have lost an additional 110 million acres of

rural countryside by 2050. The loss of land will equal the combined areas of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Virginia. It is estimated that since 1970 the U.S. has lost farmland at a rate of 2 acres per minute to development. In the 15 years for which there is NRCS data available (1982 to 1997), approximately 39,000 square miles (or 25 million acres) of rural land was lost to urbanization.

The other great danger that is contributing to the loss of our topsoil is erosion. Although erosion is a natural process and one that has in the past contributed to the build-up of good soils, modern farm practices have accelerated erosion to crisis levels. Since the mid-1800s, farm practices have not been mindful of soil conservation. In the early days of the U.S., farmers would farm out the land and then move west once the soil was depleted of nutrients and no longer yielding substantial crops. The mindset was that there was plenty of good land out there.

It is estimated that approximately two billion tons of soil is washed or blown off farmland in this country each year. This is equivalent to losing two million acres of productive farmland. Farmers across the country are reporting a thinning of their topsoil layer. Suffice it to say that soil erosion and soil conservation issues tied to agriculture are topics in and of themselves worth volumes. The bottom line is that farming is a business. Although tied to the land, the farmer is first and foremost a businessman looking to make the most money he can out of his land. It is very shortsighted. It may take a crisis the magnitude of the Dust Bowl of the 1930s to change the farming habits of the last sixty years.

But the Earth is a soil-producing machine, isn't it? And, with global warming, the range of farmland can be extending farther north, can't it? The short answer is no. Of the five soil forming factors, the one that is not on our side to replenish an adequate supply of soil is time. We cannot replace the rich, dark topsoils of the Midwest. A millennia of dense, sinuous roots have lived and died in the loessed glacial silts that are high in calcium and deposited in a thick layer. The horizons of young soils are thin and weak. The young soils lack the structure. There is not the abundance of microfauna that thrive in

the Midwest soils adding to the richness and porosity of the soils.

Good soil is important to our survival. Soil plays a vital role in the cycles that are required for life on this planet. As the first soil-forming organisms played a vital role in creating the atmosphere we enjoy today, the oxygen of the atmosphere is almost completely the product of the photosynthetic activity of green plants. Plants produce 1/2000 of the whole atmospheric oxygen each year. The oxygen cycle would be altered drastically without plants. If all photosynthesis were to cease, the Earth's atmosphere would be devoid of all but trace amounts of oxygen within 5000 years. The oxygen cycle would no longer exist. It goes without saying that without soil there would not be plants. The interplay of soil with the oxygen, nitrogen, carbon, and water cycles is worthy of dissertations and could not adequately be covered in a paper of this limited scope. It must be sufficient to say that soil is vital to our very existence.

If we neglect our stewardship of the soil for much longer, we will exhaust the natural resource that is Earth as we know it today. Dirt is a vital element in our survival. Our food supply and the food supply down the food chain will perish from the planet without it. Every form of life on Earth depends on the soil. Our soil is a living, breathing skin that covers an otherwise barren rock surface. It gives life and it sustains life. If we neglect and deplete our soil, all that may be left on Earth may be the primordial organisms that started the whole process.

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Evaluation: *This is a well-written and thoroughly interesting perspective on soil, describing its geologic history and ecology and its importance to our life.*

Loyalty

Nik MacTavish

Course: Literature 115 (Fiction)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

Write an essay on one or more of the short stories we've read this semester.

How many people do you know who are so loyal to a particular person they would freely give their lives for them? Probably not many. How many of those would do so even if the person in whom they place their trust happens to be the most selfish, mean, abusive person you can imagine? Probably even fewer. In fact, even if you admire the strength of their devotion, you'd probably think anyone like that to be pretty foolish for so profoundly misplacing their adoration.

Gregor Samsa of Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" is one such person. He showcases this brand of selfless loyalty to his family and particularly his father, a loyalty so absolute that even as his family abandons him, he prefers to let himself die rather than be a burden to them.

To the eyes of an American reader, this kind of loyalty seems not only unwise, but perhaps even alien. Though our culture praises loyalty, it warns just as carefully against loyalty to the wrong sources. We even have a saying for it: "Who's more foolish, the fool or the fool who follows him?" "The Metamorphosis," on the other hand, gives a glimpse into a microcosm where loyalty is given regardless of merit, and in the process shows us the folly of such blind loyalty and asks why loyalty should be held in such high regard in the first place. And though Kafka shows an unflattering portrayal of a man slain by his misplaced loyalty, in the

process he shows that unmerited loyalty may not be inherently wrong.

Loyalty granted on bases other than merit is not a new concept, and is even more prevalent than you may realize; on some level, nearly all social systems need some form of loyalty or honor to hold them together. Even our own country's highest order, the proceedings of the government, is maintained through little more than loyalty: even as politicians object to certain governmental regulations and traditions, even vehemently, they are still committed to following them out of sheer principle. Nobody simply ignores what seems on the surface like a foolish rule or law, which they follow to the letter even as they lobby to change it. And, time and again, the rules to which they adhere have managed to surprise them with some nuggets of hidden wisdom that seem as if they were planted centuries in advance by the fathers of our nation.

But such appears not the case for the father of Gregor. It's not hard to see that Kafka intended to portray the relationship between Gregor and his father as an abusive or poor one at best. To take a cynical viewpoint, it appears as if Gregor's father thinks of him as nothing more than a tool for personal gain, and of his loyalty as the handle by which to use him. At the start of the story we learn he (the father) has run up significant debt and is having Gregor work to pay it off. While his son is out traveling the country working so diligently to support the family, his father lives in the lap of luxury: he gets up when he pleases, is served by cooks and maids, and spends hours eating breakfast and reading the papers. The family is in deep debt, yet they manage to live like kings on the back of this one worker without doing any work themselves.

On top of exploiting him, Gregor's father appears to have no affection for his son. The most contact they seem to have is when exchanging the fruits of Gregor's labor: "The money was gratefully accepted and gladly given, but there was no special uprush of warm feeling" (798). Once Gregor transforms and thus can no longer serve as a useful tool, his father completely abandons him. While the mother and sister at least weep for Gregor, the father never once seems to care for him, instead spending his time worrying about the family's

(or more cynically his own) financial situation. He is just short of openly malevolent towards the transformed Gregor, enacting violence against him at the slightest provocation and giving him the wounds that no doubt contributed to his death. He never once tries to communicate with Gregor to see whether or not he's really his son, nor goes out looking for the "real" Gregor if he believes he isn't. It's almost as if he didn't care whether or not the creature was his son and was just looking for an excuse to dispose of him now that Gregor could no longer serve him.

Someone so callous (perhaps even vicious) as this man is hardly deserving of anyone's respect, much less a loyalty so absolute as Gregor's. Yet Gregor never once questions him. The crowning symbol of this unquestioning loyalty is the scene where Gregor learns of the money his father has kept secret, money which could've been used to lessen his time of indentured servitude. Learning of it evokes no shock, no doubt, no feeling of betrayal from Gregor; his only opinion is that "doubtless it was better the way his father had arranged it" (800). He is so completely blind to his being manipulated that he manipulates himself into continuing to believe the lie long after it has served its usefulness.

But is that cynical viewpoint the truth? We have no idea how this current family model resulted from the families Gregor's parents grew up in, nor what Gregor's future would have been and how he'd have raised his own children were it not for his transformation. All we have are snapshots of Gregor's home life without a greater society or familial historical context to place them in.

Though we can't dive into Gregor's surroundings nor the history of his father, we can examine the archetype of their family model. Surprising though Gregor's family loyalty may be to us, it's not an unrealistic example: in fact, much the same is the norm in many Eastern societies, wherein the child is expected to obey the parent to the letter and without question. Rather than awarding loyalty on the basis of perceived wisdom, in these societies it's typical to award loyalty based solely on seniority. While the flaws of such a setup seem obvious to us, the hidden wisdom of this

arrangement lies in a catch-22 that might slip by a Western observer: for us to decide who is wise enough to deserve our loyalty, that presumes we have wisdom enough ourselves to recognize it when we see it.

The great tragedy of wisdom is that it can only be recognized in hindsight. Mythology and literature are fraught with stories of sages' warnings going unheeded, causing much later tragedy to befall those who would not listen, and only too late do they learn the folly of their misjudgment. Those who need most to be led by the wise almost by definition do not recognize wisdom when they see it.

These societies have grown around this recognition that one's own perceptions of wisdom are inherently unreliable, and so instead loyalty is given to those who possess objectively quantifiable qualities that give them a higher probability of having wisdom. The most key quality that contributes to the attainment of wisdom is experience; experience is accumulated with age; thus, loyalty is granted to those with seniority, and so is born the archetype of the wise elder recognized the world over.

But Gregor's father hardly seems to fit this archetype. Indeed, he seems wholly unwise: when we first meet him, life is exactly the way he wanted and engineered it to be... yet he is miserable. In living this way, he has become so decrepit he struggles to so much as get out of bed. But after Gregor is taken from him and he's forced to stand on his own two feet, life picks up for him and the family. Not only does he become healthier, but he becomes happier. While Gregor metamorphoses into a lower being, he metamorphoses into a higher one as if to balance it out, and at the completion of this metamorphosis (moving out of the opulent house maintained on Gregor's slave labor rather than his own honest work), he realizes how much happier he is now, perhaps without realizing he is happier because his judgment of a lazy life as ideal was wrong.

But is he really as unwise as he first seems? We have evidence, such as his lack of self-knowledge and the author's own vote of no-confidence against him, but Kafka may have unknowingly given him hidden wisdom. Is there some chance that the father could in fact be wiser than he appears?

Even though the father has become decrepit and miserable from his inactivity, such is the folly of luxury that all too many have fallen into, far too many that they all should be labeled fools. At the time the family is bucking up to start working now that their worker is no longer a viable source of income, Gregor notes that "These five years [were] the first years of leisure in [his father's] laborious though unsuccessful life" (800). After a long work life, for the past five years it was his time to rest, and he just didn't recognize that it was time to go back to work if he wanted to be healthy and happy again. It's said that the hardest person to know is your own self; most of us don't know for sure what truly makes us happy. Not knowing it doesn't show a fundamental lack of wisdom; at best it only implicates that a person hasn't achieved his or her highest plateau. And who could fault someone for not having done that?

When his father's having hidden money away is revealed to Gregor, his only reaction is approval. "Behind the door Gregor nodded his head eagerly, rejoiced at this evidence of unexpected thrift and foresight" (800). Though Gregor is hardly an unbiased source, the wisdom of this miserliness is readily apparent, as the family manages to survive the loss of its breadmaker and even thrive thereafter. Ultimately, keeping the money from Gregor, even though it could have shortened his time of indentured servitude, does seem to have been the best choice.

Even if the father is in fact wise, one might ask, how does that excuse his cruelty (or at best indifference) to poor Gregor? Because we don't know about the father's history it's hard to say, but there is the chance that this sort of behavior is simply what's expected in the family. In families that rely on undying loyalty of child to parent, there is often a "pay it forward" system in place: each generation's luxury is built on the hard labor of the next. Though Gregor's father clearly uses him, what if, in his mind and everyone else's, he's earned the right to? He's been a hard worker all his life. Perhaps this is simply the typical lifestyle of a Samsa: work hard and support the elder while young, then relax when you're an elder yourself and be taken care of by your own young. Perhaps even the total disregard for his son is just another step in the process; perhaps

Gregor's father was treated like this by his own father at this age and is now paying it forward to the next generation, who can expect to pay it forward to the next, and so on. Though it offends our sensibilities, that doesn't make it wrong; it's simply a different way of life that may yet have undiscovered wisdoms.

Though unmerited loyalty has undeniable downsides, as Kafka communicates so deftly with his unflattering portrayal of Gregor's father, it has nonetheless proven useful to mankind time and time again throughout our long and storied history. Loyalty and honor are adaptive traits that have evolved in the human race as a social tool to glue together social systems that otherwise might collapse, as every system requires some degree of self-policing. Loyalty has held armies together, conquered vast lands, and united people of varying colors and creeds under a single flag, or even under a single family name. Even if it sometimes fails, it's useful, it's good, and it's here to stay.

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Evaluation: *Year after year, I teach Kafka's "The Metamorphosis," picking on Gregor's lazy and unnaturally selfish father all the while. In this paper, Nik makes a strangely convincing and nicely styled case for the latter's self-centered approach to rearing a child.*

Prelude

Op.28, No. 15

Composed by Frederic Chopin

Joel Nadal

Course: Music 120 (Introduction to Music Literature)
Instructor: Barbara Bowker

Assignment:

Write a five- to 10-page paper about a composer covered in class. At least half the paper should be in-depth coverage of a single composition, including when and why it was written, and a chronology of what happens during the piece.

“Prelude” is a term that is used to describe an action, or in this case, a piece of music that will introduce or simply go before something else. What exactly Frederic Chopin was trying to suggest by calling a collection of his creations *Preludes* is unknown. J. S. Bach used the term to describe a piece of music that would be played to introduce a fugue, and although Chopin loved Bach very much, I don’t believe that he used this heading in the same fashion. Chopin’s *Preludes* were stand-alone works. Although some of Chopin’s *Preludes* could work as introductory pieces to be set before a piece of music in the same key, this was not ever suggested by Chopin. Chopin’s *Preludes* are preludes to emotion. This is the heart, blood, and soul of the Romantic era. This music is an invitation to introspection and intoxication of one’s own emotional state. As Franz Liszt wrote in 1841,

“Chopin’s *Preludes* are compositions of an order entirely apart. They are not only, as the title might make one think, pieces destined to be played in the guise of introductions to other pieces; they are poetic preludes, analogous to those of a great contemporary poet, who cradles the soul in golden dreams, and elevates it to the regions of the ideal.” (qtd in “Preludes,” Chopinmusic.com par. 3)

Chopin’s *Preludes* can evoke emotions ranging from playful and raging bliss to the darkest kind of solitude, fear, and personal hell. The Prelude, Op. 28, No. 15 embraces this entire spectrum of emotional affairs. It has been surnamed the “Raindrop” prelude because of its constant rhythmic tapping above and below the melody. This constant in the piece is generally thought of as mimicking the gentle pulsing of water that drops from the roof to the sill of a window, or in Chopin’s case, from the top of an ancient Carthusian monastery to its cold stone floor.

The piece known as the “Raindrop” prelude begins like a beautiful sunny day, in the major key. The melody sounds like it is describing a carefree summer walk about a beautiful tropical island. The island is Mallorca, Spain to be precise. It is a small island off of the eastern coast of Spain and south of France, where Chopin journeyed to in order to finish some of his work and also remedy an illness that had plagued him his whole life. The trip instead, proved to be a test of Chopin’s strength as an enduring artist as well as his will to live.

The Composer’s Early Life

Chopin’s life was characterized by physical infirmity, intense emotions, and heartbreak, all of which contributed to his work. He was born in 1810 in Poland to a French father and a Polish mother, and from the beginning, he suffered from chronic bouts with an unknown disease. He was physically weak and always looked very pale unless he was having a terrible coughing fit, in which case his face would turn bright red. One of his sisters died at the age of fourteen from “consumption” (now thought to be tuberculosis). Frederic may have fought this same disease from birth longer than most people of his time, and long enough to develop his talent and solidify his musical gifts. It’s almost as if he came to this world “strictly on business.”

Chopin was said to have been a sensitive and poetic

child, and there are stories of his propensity towards music at a very early age. He was said to cry at the beauty and fragility of the music that his mother and one of his sisters would play together, most likely Polish dances. He also liked to experiment on the piano. His first instructor, Adelbert Zywny, introduced him to the works of Bach and Mozart, which he adored. As his abilities as a pianist grew, so did his powers of improvisation, and he was soon taught to compose. Prior to his writing of his own compositions, his teacher would sketch his ideas out for him based on these improvisations. One of the improvisations, a Polonaise, was supposedly published by the time he was seven years old.

At the Warsaw Conservatoire with his famous instructor Josef Elsner, at the age of 16, Chopin developed a further love of Bach and Mozart. A suspicion of Beethoven's greatness was most likely also received at this point, or perhaps from his first instructor. Another thing he received while at the conservatoire was an infatuation with a girl named Konstancja Gladkowska, one of the best singers of her time. Chopin was no match for the Cavalry officers of the local military post with their dashing cut uniforms and the "ready to fight to the death to defend her honor" attitude. Chopin soon subsided and admired her from a distance. This was one of many bouts with heartbreak. Along with a broken heart, he finished at the conservatoire and from then on always carried with him and studied Bach's 48 preludes and fugues and later urged his students to do the same.

After leaving Warsaw for Vienna, accompanied by his boyhood friend Titus, Chopin encountered a public insensitivity to his music and performance style, as he was told that he should not try to be a soloist because he lacked the flare and reputation to compete against so many good pianists. During this period in Vienna, he was also affected by national instability in Poland, in the face of Russian aggression. In letters to friends, he began to divulge the intense melancholic attitude that would plague his ethos periodically throughout his life. He expressed doubts about his successes as a musician, and he also feared Russian reprisals against his homeland and family. His good friend Titus left Vienna to fight once he heard that the Russians had declared the Warsaw uprising against Russia an "odious crime" and had sent an army to crush the "usurpers of power" (Orga 46-47). On Christmas day, Chopin wrote a long letter to

a friend asking questions about the health of his beloved Konstancja, cursing himself for staying and not fighting alongside his fellow Poles. He also wrote of time that he spent in a dark corner of an empty cathedral:

"When I entered there was no one there. Not to hear mass, but just to look at the huge building at that hour. I got into the darkest corner at the foot of the Gothic back of the sanctuary, would break into my lethargy. A coffin behind me, a coffin under me-only a coffin above me was lacking...I have never felt my loneliness so clearly." (qtd in Orga 48)

A few paragraphs later he would write: "Shall I come back to Poland? Shall I stay here? Shall I put an end to myself? Advise me what to do" (qtd in Orga 48).

During this time in his life, he was still able to create. It was at this point that he created his very well known Grande Valse Brillante Op. 18. Although it exuded the type of dance that the Viennese public loved so well, it has a very impersonal feeling that may show that Chopin cared little for what he wrote at that time. When all of his emotions around the failure of his visit to Vienna simmered, Chopin moved on to Paris.

En route to Paris, during a somewhat prolonged stay in Munich, Chopin gave a concert, which turned out to be the first success that he had seen since leaving Warsaw, but his jubilation would be short lived. A week later, he learned that Warsaw had fallen under the might of the Russians on the seventh and eighth of September. In his fair homeland, riots broke out, and cholera became rampant. Six months later, Poland became part of the Russian empire, not to see independence again until the present century. This news left Chopin devastated, and in his notebook he frantically wrote of his demeanor; these writings reflect Chopin's extreme bouts with the terror in his soul. He writes:

"The suburbs are destroyed, burned. [My friends] probably dead in the trenches. Moscow rules the world! O God, do you exist? You're there and you don't avenge it My poor Father! The dear old man may be starving, my mother not able to buy bread? Perhaps my sisters have succumbed to the ferocity of Muscovite soldiery let loose? Poor suffering Mother, have you borne a daughter to see a Russian violate her very bones? Has

even Emilia's grave been respected? Trampled, thousands of other corpses are over the grave. What has happened to Konstacja? Poor girl, perhaps in some Russian's hands—strangling her, killing, murdering! Sometimes I can only groan, and suffer, and pour out my despair at the piano! — The bed I go to—perhaps corpses have lain in it, lain long—yet today that does not sicken me. Is a corpse any worse than I? A corpse knows nothing of Father, of Mother, of Sisters, of Titus; a corpse has no beloved, its tongue can hold no conversation with those who surround it—a corpse is as colorless as I, as cold as I am cold to everything now—So much grief over the dead and so much delight! A vile corpse and a decent one—virtues and vice are all one, they are sisters when they are corpses. Evidently, then, death is the best act of man. And what is the worst? Birth: it is direct opposition to the best thing. I am right to be angry that I came into the world Father! Mother! Where are you? Corpses? —oh wait—wait—But tears—they have not flowed for so long—oh so long, so long I could not weep—how glad—how wretched—glad and wretched —if I am wretched, I can't be glad—and yet it is sweet—This is a strange state—but that is so with a corpse; it's well and not well with it at the same moment. It must feel like I felt when I left off weeping. It was like a momentary death of feeling; for a moment I died in my heart; no, my heart died in me for a moment. Ah, why not for always! Perhaps it would be more endurable then. Alone! Alone! There are no words for my Misery; how can I bear this feeling." (qtd in Orga 52-54)

It was around this time that the inner turmoil of this composer most certainly made its way to the page, in another of his famous pieces: the 'Revolutionary' etude Op.10, No.12 in C minor.

In Paris, Chopin met his true peers: artists, writers, critics, playwrights, fellow composers, and the general social elite. Among them were Franz Liszt, Berlioz, a cellist named Franchomme, and a piano-maker named Pleyel. It was at Pleyel's soirees where Chopin really got to impress his audience and peers alike. Despite this success, Chopin found it impossible to maintain

a career as a concert pianist and have to compete with the "klaviertiger" of the day. He found such elements completely distasteful and did not allow sheer showmanship to influence his style of playing. He stayed afloat in this bustling artistic city by finding wealthy patrons to give lessons to. He was also able to live off of his earnings from the publishing of his music, but this was hardly substantial enough to maintain the "high society" lifestyle that Chopin had adopted. Along with his new high society friends, Chopin fell upon a family that he used to know, the Wodzinskas, who had fled Poland. Of this family, Chopin had a particular affection for the daughter Maria. This, however, would prove to be yet another heartbreak. As the winter came, so did more illness. Maria's parents suggested against falling in love with such an ill man, and they eventually parted ways. Chopin bundled his letters to and from her with a ribbon and wrote on the outside in Polish, "my miseries." Not to be without Romantic infatuation, a new woman, the novelist George Sand, soon entered his life.

The Genesis of the "Raindrop" Prelude

Chopin's relationship with George Sand had a profound and direct influence on Chopin's composition of the "Raindrop" prelude. Sand had met Chopin at a soiree thrown by Franz Liszt back while Maria Wodzinka and Chopin were still dating. Supposedly, Chopin was repulsed at first. Chopin later offered her invitations to soirees of his own, and they began a friendship. Although seen as complete moral opposites, they were somehow attracted to each other and became a "couple" for several years. Whether they were ever intimate is unknown. George, whose real name was Aurore Dupin and had to change her name to a man's in order to get published as a writer, had been previously married and had two children, Maurice and Solange. George was known for her countless affairs as well as her revolt against established order. She was a playwright and novelist. While together, Chopin had someone to confide in and tell his deepest secrets to. The writer soon fell for Chopin and dropped her current affairs, which made for terrible gossip as well as impending duels with these former lovers while still in Paris. This fact along with the fact that her son was suffering rheumatism was a good reason to leave for a while. They decided to leave for the promising eastern

coast of the island of Mallorca, Spain, known as Palma, in the late autumn of 1838. This little adventure started out as a great relief for Chopin, George, and her children. They sent for a proper piano to be sent to the little island. Chopin wrote to his editor/friend,

"I am in Palma, among palms, cedars, cacti, olives, pomegranates, etc. A sky like turquoise, a sea like lapis lazuli, mountains like emerald, air like heaven. Sun all day, and hot; everyone in summer clothing; in short a glorious life. Go to Pleyel; the piano has not come. You will soon receive some preludes. I shall probably lodge in a wonderful monastery, the most beautiful situation in the world. Ah, my dear, I am coming alive a little. I am near to what is most beautiful. I am better." (qtd in Orga 94)

Like most good times in Chopin's life, the beauty did not last. The couple soon moved to a small plain white house known as "villa son vent" (House of the Wind), which was primitively furnished. Chopin was of course accompanied by his book of Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues. November there was as nice as summer in Paris. It seemed like a cure for Chopin's ills. One day as they went for a walk along the rugged natural coast down to a lonely seashore, a terrible storm suddenly blew in. The sudden gushes of wind and water struck so badly that Chopin's lungs were weakened. All those years of suspect health were now coming to full fruition. He now acquired acute bronchitis and until the end of his life, never fully recovered from the terrible bout with this storm. To make matters worse were the poor living conditions at the House of Wind. Once the weather deteriorated, the winter set in. The villa actually got flooded worse than it had ever been. The only thing that would keep the meager accommodations warm was a charcoal stove, which most likely gave off powerful fumes but was the only protection against the elements. In December, he wrote to Fontana again and although he was extremely ill, he recognized some humor in his situation. He wrote:

"I have been sick as a dog these last two weeks; I caught a cold despite 18 degrees of heat and three of the famous doctors on the island. One sniffed at what I spat up, the second tapped at where I spat from, the third poked about and listened to how I spat it. One

said that I was dying, the second said that I was going to die and the third said I was dead." (qtd in Eisler 59)

It was at this point that they realized how unwelcome they were as visitors. As news spread of Chopin's illness, the owner of the building demanded extra payment for the costly disinfection of the house. Unwanted and in desperate need of accommodations, they went a couple miles to an abandoned Carthusian monastery in a little village called Valdemosa. This was to be the site where Chopin finished his set of Preludes, Op. 28. In poor health, in a drafty monastery, unwanted by the locals and with only an out-of-tune upright piano, a set of Bach's *Preludes* and an unfinished set of his own, Chopin worked. George took on the role of caretaker and food provider and also made sure that his piano would arrive down a path that Chopin described as "dug by streams and repaired by avalanches" (qtd in Eisler 62). The belligerence and stout attitude that George Sand was known for would aid her in these tasks.

There is a unique story about the conditions in which the famous "Raindrop" Prelude was written. The story goes that one day George and her children decided to go for a walk while Chopin was left alone composing. While they were away, a terrible storm had begun attacking the coast. Needless to say, George and her young ones were caught up in this terrible downpour. It was at this time while composing his 15th prelude that Chopin was said to have one of his outbursts of infuriated depression.

Musical Analysis of the "Raindrop" Prelude

The following musical analysis was performed with the 1999-issued recording of the piece, performed by Gary Graffman, and available on the CD *The Essential Chopin*, Sony Legacy, 1999. A reading of this analysis would be best accompanied by listening to the recording beforehand, simultaneously, and afterward.

The "Raindrop" prelude begins with the theme in the right hand and light accompaniment in the left hand. Immediately, the repeated notes in the left hand begin, but they aren't standing out as obvious repeated notes; however, the A-flat does repeat among the rest of the harmonies in the baseline. The piece is in common time. The first phrase is roughly four measures long and in a major key. It reminds me of the children's walk with their moth-

er along the enchanted terrain of the deserted shoreline. It is simple and playful, but ornamented with unforced lilting elaborations in the melody, and I imagine these young children being extra careful of their footing on such unsteady and rocky terrain. The first of these elaborations in the melody can be heard at :15. The first theme is then repeated, after which the second theme makes its way at :32 with its first introduction into a minor mode at :41. This brief brush of minor makes me think of the storm clouds looming in the distance, almost acting as a warning of the impending doom. The second theme in major is then repeated at :51, along with a quicker entrance into its minor response at :56. There is an extra interlude at 1:11 that takes us back to the original theme at 1:16. This is perhaps to say that the warning is ignored, and the care-free walk continues, with the lilting elaboration in the melody sounding again at 1:31.

The first theme repeats again, but this time the melody moves toward a resolution that gets drawn out at 1:43. You hear the melody sing the pitch 'c' up three half steps to an e-flat, but its resolution down to d-flat is delayed by the repeated a-flat in the bass, holding off the resolution for three and a half beats. Finally, at 1:49 we get our resolved d-flat, but it doesn't come in the melody and it doesn't come in the form of a d-flat but rather a c-sharp in the bass! We have just modulated to the key of c# minor, which is further established by the first three notes in the bass ascending as the diatonic minor scale, each sounding on the down beat. We now also hear the new repeated note g-sharp tapping at an eighth-note rhythm in the right hand, on and in between the down beats, above the melody that is in the bass. In the left hand, first the c-sharp then the d-sharp and finally the e solidifies the essence of the new key before descending back downward and then back up again, finally resting on the dominant g-sharp in the fourth measure of the new key at 2:00. This new section we will call the third theme is like the impending storm finally taking shape, looming overhead and covering all the light with its darkness. The melody in the bass is drawn out further until it finds its rest again at g-sharp and its fifth d-sharp sounding together at 2:14. You can hear now another g-sharp an octave above the one that was resounding before. This time, both g-sharps are sounding together at eighth-notes, increasing the texture of the piece and the weight

of the "impending storm."

The third theme is repeated again, this time with a higher octave partner in the right hand, which serves to even further add to the texture of the piece. The newer octave above the melody in the bass can be heard beginning at 2:19. The piece has remained relatively quiet up to this point, but now it starts to crescendo. The third theme finds its resting place at g-sharp once again, but this time is preceded by a very low g-sharp grace note, an octave below at 2:27. I see this as the cloud breaking, with a second of calm before the storm rushes in. The storm strikes at 2:31, with very low e octaves in the bass, and yet another new resounding eighth-note tapping, now in octaves on b above the g-sharp in the right hand where it was before. The feeling of this fourth theme is the most violent. With disjunct and now fortissimo octaves booming back and forth from e to b and back in the left hand, it sounds at first like a heroic return to major, but with the g-sharp retained in the middle voice, it is more of a bittersweet feeling that the b octaves are not the dominant of a new E major key but rather an inverted g-sharp minor chord, still just the dominant of the c# minor key. I see this treacherous section as the battle against the storm and possibly Chopin's fears taking over his mind. You can almost depict the waves crashing against George Sand and her children, battering them against the rocks without mercy. This frightening fourth theme lasts until 2:46, when the looming third theme is reintroduced and the dynamics return also to their quiet aggression. The third theme repeats with its long minor key phrases set to each beat and rests for four beats at a time. This can be seen perhaps as an opportunity for George and her children to escape the storm of the fourth theme while wounded, as it subsides temporarily.

But sure enough, it comes raging back again, brought with another crescendo beginning at the sound of the low g-sharp grace note at 3:24. The waves come crashing again at 3:27. The pounding continues until a new theme arrives at 3:42. We are back to a *piano* dynamic but with the same half-note rhythm of the crashing chords. This fifth theme is very sad and introspective. I depict the scene as the storm calms itself again, only to have either washed away the bodies laid to waste or seeing the carnage spread across the shore line. This fifth theme seems to ask itself, "What has just happened?" The "dripping" eighth notes drop from their highest point b back down

to g-sharp and actually wander up and down a bit for the first time at 3:53 as if shaking their heads in disbelief. The rest of this fifth theme is shaken with grief. The g-sharp quarter notes fall to a lower octave at 3:57 while the thematic chords ring out in solemn quarter notes. The repeating g-sharps jump back up another octave again at 4:11. They jump down again, this time to c-sharp for a measure, at 4:22, on their way down to the lower g-sharp that they reach at 4:26. The saddened fifth theme restates itself a few times, and then there is a light-hearted turn-around at 4:40 that takes us back to the carefree theme one, in a major key by 4:42 as if nothing ever happened, but of course we are forever changed. This caressing lullaby of a theme is complete with its a-flat eighth notes and "cautious stepping" elaboration at 4:58, and the first theme is repeated again. Perhaps everyone did make it out unscathed. We are after all back to our original key of D-flat Major. And, at 5:09, there is a coda of sorts that is brought in by one very high b-flat, the highest note of the piece, which is struck as our a-flat eighth notes take a break for two measures. They return at 5:22, as the coda takes its time with one last closing theme before laying us down to rest on a D-flat major chord with an *f* in the top voice at 5:45.

George Sand wrote in her *Story of My Life* that when they did return from their stormy walk, they found Chopin playing what she suspected to be this prelude "in a kind of frozen despair, playing his wonderful prelude and weeping." At the sight of them, he leapt up as from a waking nightmare in which he had seen their violent deaths. "I knew you were dead," he told them, as if he thought he were greeting ghosts (Eisler 62).

The End of Chopin's Life

Chopin went on in life for about 10 more years, constantly battling his disease, which we now suspect to be tuberculosis. In his last years, he did write many more everlasting gems of the musical realm, though none seem to be quite as infamous and synonymous with the elaborate story telling of Chopin's life. A few years before his death, George and Chopin parted ways after a series of arguments. They saw each other only once in passing a year after their last argument. The story goes that little was said in passing. Although they had suffered emotional wounds from each other, Chopin kept a lock of her hair with him until he passed away on

October 17th, 1849. It's been said that George was never told about Chopin's final days in bed, succumbing to consumption. She never made it to his bed side to say good-bye, and she was supposedly never told of his funeral and therefore didn't attend. Whatever the reason, it was one last heartbreak before his last day. This was the guiding light of the Romantic movement in music and art: artistry and creation at all costs in order to turn a life of despair into a life redeemed by art.

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Evaluation: *In addition to communicating Joel's significant technical knowledge of music, his paper strongly and effectively reveals both his own, and Chopin's, deep passion for music.*

My Precious Wooden Box

Jerrie Nolan

Courses: English 101 (Composition)
and Reading 099 (Reading)

Instructors: Barbara Butler and Chris Poziemski

Assignment:

Write a descriptive essay about something from your childhood that remains important to you today.

My mother died when I was only three years old. So, I guess I can say that I didn't get to know my mother at all. If I did, I have no recollection of her. I long for a small memory of her, but I come up empty every time I try. It's not my mother herself that I miss, it's more the memories that I don't have: the passed-on advice about boys and sex that she wasn't around to give me; the self-esteem that I needed to help me become a woman. This is why I have so much love for the Bible and the wooden box it came in, which were given to my grandmother at my mother's funeral. My grandmother passed the Bible on to me when I was about thirteen, along with some other mementos that belonged to my mother. This felt like the only link I had to feel some sort of closeness to my mother, and I wanted to keep it as a special heirloom. It gave me a sense of security that I so desperately needed.

The Bible was located inside a brown box, just a little larger than the Bible itself. The box was cedar, with a light brown color with deep swirls of a darker shade of brown going through it. The dark brown swirls that surrounded the entire case reminded me that this was not just shelter for the Bible; it held a lost part of my life—a part of my life that I knew I had no idea about, but somehow there was a connection that made it feel so familiar, as if I had finally found a long lost friend. I knew this was something I had to hold dear to me. Although made of wood, this box was as smooth as silky sheets that lie on a bed. It was about twelve inches long, eight inches wide, and three inches thick. The words "The Holy Bible" were

written boldly on it and underlined twice in black. There was a brass latch on the right side of the box, which was used to lock and unlock it. It also had two brass hinges on the left side of the outer box that allowed it to open and close. As the box opens, a soft aroma lingers and makes its way up to my nose. It is an aroma that has left a smile in my mind every time I come across it. It has become an acquired smell that I have come to love.

Underneath the zip lock bags lies a white Bible with gold letters inscribed on it. All the pages are extremely thin, white with gold trimming around the edges, and the scriptures are written in black ink. Between these fragile but powerful pages is where I began to keep some of my most proud accomplishments. Every award I received in high school, every report card that I made the honor role on, and every corsage I got at a school dance was kept folded between those pages. Keeping everything within this Bible was of great importance to me. It was as if I was trying to share my life with my mother and at the same time find out more about hers, as well. It was as if two lives intertwined to become one.

I have had this wooden box and Bible for almost fifteen years now, and it has not left my possession. It is still something that I cherish, but I don't keep those items in it anymore. I keep it on one of my tables in my living room to bless my house. It will always be a memory of the mother that I never had and the mother that I came to love. I plan on passing it down to my son in a few more years and explain the significance of it. This box came into my family's life at the end of my mother's life and instead of dwelling on her death, I embrace her new life with Jesus. It is through this, that I have been able to have a part of her with me at all times. My precious wooden box has helped me acknowledge my mother and her life.

Evaluation: *In Jerrie's descriptive essay about her "precious wooden box," she explores her heritage and learns to cope with her mother's early death.*

Mutually Exclusive

Katya Pettengill

Course: Philosophy 115 (Ethics)

Instructor: Tony Hammer

Assignment:

The assignment was to write a paper that analyzes a concept in ethics.

Religion and morality have been under human scrutiny for centuries, if not millennia. Faiths have often clashed throughout history, leaving bloody crusades in their wake. Each side champions the obvious superiority of its own beliefs, often preaching from apparently higher moral ground than that of opponents. Modern religions often cite themselves as bastions of morality, pillars of light in an otherwise darkened world. Those who are godless are, without question, evil and immoral, subject to the many shadowy whims of the primeval id. Despite all these claims, however, one question remains: Does morality require religion? Are the two not, in fact, separate? Certainly, religion and morality have historically been tied to one another, but when it comes down to the core aspects of each, it turns out that neither truly requires the other.

John Arthur, in his essay "Religion, Morality, and Conscience," makes an important distinction between morality and religion. Of morality, he says that it is "to evaluate (perhaps without even expressing it) the behavior of others and to feel guilt at certain actions when we perform them" (34). In contrast, he also says,

Religion, on the other hand, involves beliefs in supernatural power(s) that created and perhaps also control nature, the tendency to worship and pray to those supernatural forces or beings, and the presence of organizational structures and authoritative texts. (34)

Anthropologists share this view, too. According to one source, religion is "any set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices pertaining to *supernatural power*, whether that power be forces, gods, spirits, ghosts or demons" (Ember 447). In neither definition of religion does it state that morality is a necessary element. On the contrary—religion is simply a belief in the supernatural, and it arose out of a need to understand and explain the great mysteries of life. As that same source states, "most [social scientists] think that religions are created by humans in response to certain universal needs or conditions...a need for intellectual understanding, reversion to childhood feelings, anxiety and uncertainty, and a need for community" (Ember 447). Likewise, as Arthur's definition proposes, religion is not an essential component of morality. Morals are merely the devices we use to judge our actions and those of others.

Consider for a moment how many religions exist today. Taking all sorts of denominations into account, the number can quickly reach dizzying heights. As anthropologists state:

There is general recognition of the enormous variation in the details of religious beliefs and practices. Societies differ in the kinds of supernatural beings or forces they believe in and the character of those beings. They also differ in the structure or hierarchy of those beings, in what the beings actually do, and in what happens to people after death. Variation exists also in the ways in which the supernatural is believed to interact with humans. (Ember 450)

Take Christianity, Buddhism, and Greek mythology as examples. All three vary in their beliefs, and yet when it comes down to morals—murder, for example—they all become eerily similar. If morality really requires religion, as the proponents say, then by that logic, the sheer variety of faiths would ensure an equally large buffet of moral codes.

Yet that's not the case. Despite all the religions of the world, replete with their own unique beliefs, almost all of them share the same core morals: don't kill, don't steal, treat others well, etc. How is this possible? The very notion that morals and religion are, in fact, separate is what makes this situation feasible.

Most likely, morals are basic human instincts that arose out of need and practicality—and later these morals were incorporated into organized religion. It's certainly more pragmatic to protect your own family instead of killing them all; hence the universal moral of preserving one's kin. It's no surprise that such a useful practice would eventually be included as a religious tenet, and the sheer universality of it ensures that it would be adopted by faiths across the world. In fact, "many anthropologists take the view that religions are adaptive because they reduce the anxieties and uncertainties that afflict all peoples" (Ember 457). Take a look at the sanctity of cows in Hinduism, for example. It might seem like a silly belief to those unfamiliar with the religion, but in fact the reverence for cows is an adaptation rooted deeply in pragmatism. As Marvin Harris suggested, cows may serve a variety of important needs in India, including resources (cow dung is often used as fuel and fertilizer) and economics (the horns and hides of dead cows can be used in the country's leather industry)—not to mention that cows don't compete with humans over resources (Ember 457). In this case, it seems only natural that a taboo against slaughtering cows would be incorporated into the local religion.

Moving back to the issue of morals, it seems one group of individuals in particular deserves inspection when it comes to this topic: atheists. According to the morality-requires-religion view, these non-theistic members of society should be wreaking havoc on the rest of the world, murdering and pilfering and doing goodness knows what else under their godless—and therefore immoral—beliefs. Because if morality requires religion, and these folks aren't religious, then naturally they wouldn't be moral. And yet *are* they immoral? Of course not. Most atheists are morally sound individuals; they lead normal lives and do good deeds just like their religious counterparts. Now this brings up an interesting question: If religion and belief in a god isn't keeping these people moral, then what is?

In one simple, resounding word: *society*. Indeed, morality is social. As John Arthur states, morality "provides the standards we rely on in gauging our interactions with family, lovers, friends, fellow citizens, and even strangers...morality is social in the sense that we

are, in fact, subject to criticism by others for our actions" (41). Moreover, morals are often enforced by the government, which is an extension of society that is not usually bound by any one religion. Thus atheists stay morally in line because of social pressures, not religious ones brought about by a deity.

Don't forget that it's also wholly possible for someone deeply religious to be immoral. Take the controversy surrounding the Catholic priesthood, for example. These are people steeped in religion, and yet despite that, they went on to do completely immoral things by molesting children. This is a prime example illustrating the fact that religion doesn't instantly grant someone an unyielding sense of morality. In fact, most of the retaliation in regard to this is coming from society and the government, reinforcing the notion that morality is separate from religion and is dictated by the general public.

Another example is slavery in the southern United States. Many slave owners were religious, and yet they kept slaves. If morality and religion are inherently intertwined, then how was this morally permissible? The only answer lies in the fact that morality and religion are separate; this would explain why the slave owners were able to retain their beliefs while not being morally obligated to free their slaves or treat them better. Though Christianity might have found serious issues with slavery, Southern society at the time found no moral problems with keeping slaves or treating them like garbage, and so the practice continued. Slave owners certainly knew better—the abolitionist North saw to that—but the fact remained that the *society* in that region of the U.S. found slavery morally acceptable, which is the primary reason it persisted for as long as it did. Consider the fact that the North, too, had its own share of Christians, and if two parts of the country shared the same religion and yet differed when it came to the moral ground of slavery, then it's obvious that morals *weren't* determined by religion, but in fact by the societies of each respective region. Some may argue that slavery is an economic matter, not a moral one, but if that were the case, then abolition probably wouldn't have been a powerful enough movement to warrant an entire war. Likewise, the foul treatment of slaves isn't an issue that's likely to be boiled down to the simple matter of supply and demand.

Consider the civil rights movement nearly one hundred years later. Though most of the movement's leaders were, in fact, members of the religious community, the success of the movement was due in large part to the fact that society and its morals were now different. Most Christians of the 1960s were practicing the same religion that the slave owners of the 1800s followed, so obviously religion hadn't changed since the Civil War era. What *had* changed, however, were society and its morals.

Lastly, another argument some use is the one claiming that without God, there's no reason to be moral, and so chaos would reign. This posits that without the positive moral influences of religion, the world would essentially fall apart—and violently so. Proponents of this view claim that without the notion of an omniscient deity looming over everyone's day-to-day activities, people would find no reason to be good anymore, giving themselves over to their violent, primitive id and rampaging across the land. There are several problems with this, however: For one, as suggested earlier, some morals are probably a result of inherent human nature—the need to protect one's own children, for example—and so they would most likely survive regardless of a religious/godly presence or lack thereof. Also, while vengeance might increase as a result (which is seemingly bad at first), it may in fact act as a strong deterrent—if a potential criminal knows that he'll definitely be on someone's hit list afterwards, he might think twice about committing a crime. Also, don't forget all the moral atheists walking around nowadays. They already don't follow a god or a religion, and yet they're still good people. There's little reason why they would stop being good people if their beliefs were affirmed.

Groups with common interests would invariably develop—perhaps extended families would band together in order to increase chances of survival. Gather enough of these groups together and they might form into a government that keeps everyone else in line. In that case, morals would be enforced by the proverbial “big stick”—which actually isn't that different from today. Not everyone stops at a red light because God tells them to—most folks do it to avoid the resulting \$300 ticket.

What about animals? Aren't they already godless creatures? And yet they aren't performing massive

killings of one another. If humans are supposed to be above common beasts, then that's all the more reason why we should be able to control ourselves and form a practical, peaceful society. Even without a god to compel people to do certain actions, society itself would pressure individuals to follow the rules and morals set out by the general populace.

Religion and morality can certainly be related in some circumstances. All the faiths of the world that preach morality today are a testament to that notion. But when it comes down to the specifics, it turns out that morality doesn't need religion to function, and religion doesn't necessarily guarantee moral principles. Morality is the vehicle through which society judges its members' actions, whereas religion is the vehicle through which society attempts to understand life's mysteries. Though they may be tied together at certain junctions in history, the paths of morality and religion are ultimately separate, running along like a pair of parallel lines: closely, in the same direction, but always keeping just slightly away from one another.

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Evaluation: *Katya's paper analyzes the relationship between religion and morality, a significant problem in ethics. She does a very good job of examining the various arguments that bear on the relationship between religion and morality and places her analysis in a historical context. When we are finished, we feel we have gained some understanding of how the concepts have been related and perhaps some insight into how they are related today.*

The Olivia Tremor Control – July 30th, 2005

Cale Piepenburg

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

Instructors: Kurt Hemmer and Greg Herriges

Assignment:

*Write a review of an inspiring
musical event that you attended.*

People in the small audience gathered on North Avenue in Wicker Park knew that they were in for something unique and special as The Olivia Tremor Control's sound check was extended to accommodate the obscene amount of bizarre props and instruments brought to the temporary stage set up in the street. Banjos, glockenspiels, a plastic lawn nativity lamb to be played as a drum, organs, a typewriter—this plethora of creative instrumentation gave both hardcore fans and casual attendees something to cheer about at the Wicker Park Festival on July 30th, 2005, as the reunited band took the stage. After all, this was only the third show in several years for the band from Athens, Georgia, and fans had come from across the South and Midwest to see them. A band with a small, loyal, and growing fan base (thanks mostly to the Internet), this multi-faceted group of individuals proved themselves worthy of their rave reviews to most in attendance that night.

Excited to hear the group live, spectators stood on the pavement and chatted with newfound friends as they waited for the laborious sound check's conclusion (apparently there had been some confusion on how to mic a Sousaphone, further complicated by the tech crew's inability to address each instrument by its proper name). A mediocre opening band, New Zealand's Tall Dwarfs, did not improve the demeanor of fans, still frustrated by the extended sound equipment delay.

Thankfully, this inconvenience was declared forgotten by the screams from the eclectic crowd as The Olivia Tremor Control entered, one by one, improvising along with the opening act as they walked onto the stage with their instruments. This entrance music slowly morphed from Tall Dwarfs' acoustic folk melodies into a complex and swirling piece, with special guests Scott Spillane of Neutral Milk Hotel and Deanna Varagona adding interest with tuba and baritone saxophone to the band's organ, eastern-sounding clarinet, tambourines, and singing saw.

As Tall Dwarfs left the stage, a reel-to-reel player was set into motion, blasting a chorus of theremins that echoed off the buildings and L-tracks that bordered the scene. The band bled the theremin introduction into a bouncy and harmonically interesting version of "A Peculiar Noise Called Train Director" (from their excellent sophomore release, *Black Foliage: Animation Music*), with guitarist and tape manipulator extraordinaire Will Hart handling vocals. Rollicking bass lines laid down by John Fernandez (who also doubles on violin and clarinet) slid right into place as every band member exhibited extensive musical knowledge by switching instruments, even within songs.

A unique group of individuals, The Olivia Tremor Control have impressed critics with their wide-ranging talents and abilities to make "psychedelic" music for the modern age that retains the chaos, experimentation, analog magic, and true DIY attitudes of generations past, while also remaining palatable to the somewhat casual music listener. Their little-noticed, but critically acclaimed, debut album, *Music From the Unrealized Film Script: Dusk at Cubist Castle*, carefully balances a great amount of pop sensibility (designed and orchestrated by guitarist Bill Doss) with the tape work, found sound, impeccable production, and musical bizarreness that has become Hart's trademark. The band is also well-known for launching the highly revered Elephant 6 Collective along with 90's psych-pop greats The Apples in Stereo and cult favorites Neutral Milk Hotel, as well as for involvement in the Orange Twin Conservation Community outside of Athens. Creating surrealist masterpieces, Doss and Hart's Beatle-esque working dynamics continued until the band split in

1999, with core members Hart, Doss, Peter Erchick and Eric Harris all moving on to other projects.

As the night on North Avenue got even more humid and the smell of corn dogs drifted nearby, the reunion show in Wicker Park never let up. For the first half of the set, the Olivias rolled out favorite tracks off the somewhat lighter and poppier *Dusk*. "Holiday Surprise 1, 2, 3" blossomed into a dynamic-conscious anthem, with violin and bowed banjo adding a unique texture to the piece. The band also incorporated early in the set some tracks off the 2000 release *Singles and Beyond*, the most notable being a rendition of the quick and complex "Shaving Spiders" and the Bill Doss song "A Sunshine Fix." Inserting a fantastic trumpet counter-melody on this song, Neutral Milk Hotel's Spillane continued to guest on almost every number with a variety of both conventional and unconventional brass instruments. "Define A Transparent Dream" showcased superb vocal harmonies often covered by the busyness of some Olivia Tremor Control songs. Hart again took the vocal lead here, his delivery and style remarkably reminiscent of Brian Wilson's. Peter Erchick glued the otherworldly tracks together with chords on a magnificently present vintage electric organ as well as interesting bits of sound filtered through an analog synthesizer.

"I Have Been Floated," a definite high point on *Black Foliage*, was the only disappointment to fans, as the band seemed unable to capture the giant scope of the song with the limited personnel available. An expertly played singing saw (special guest Julian Koster) set the tone for the song that, while commendable by most standards, fell short of the album version. At this point, the four-year-old daughter of a fan climbed onto the stage from the audience and was welcomed by the smiling longhaired Doss, who gave the small girl a tambourine to play and dance with. At one point, she was given a microphone and her vocals were added to an ambient sound pictorial. Always a group to experiment in unconventional ways, this unexpected event and how the band members took advantage of it made the performance even more special.

The situating of a lozenge-shaped typewriter near a microphone signaled the starting of "Green Typewriters," a suite of surprisingly catchy ambient music, the perfect

close to an amazing show. Will Hart's vocals again floated over a surface of guitar melodies, as paisley patterns and cellular growth projected on the screen in the background added to the surreal atmosphere. Doss clicked away at the green typewriter, the inspiration for Hart's gloppy, trippy masterpiece, and also added melodies on glockenspiel. Hart looked lost in his delivery, rocking back and forth to himself as he sang, capturing the dream-like state of an acid sunrise with his lyrics.

As street employees closed in to sweep North Avenue, Hart talked to fans reluctant to leave the show behind as he tended to the proper disassembly and storage of his equipment. Doss presented the small girl previously on stage with a pair of drumsticks and some guitar picks and hugged her. The Olivia Tremor Control, after playing a fantastic set and proving themselves as musicians filled with innovative ideas, proved themselves great people too. Hanging around to talk to fans even as a crew worked on the disassembly of the stage, Hart seemed to invite everyone in the audience to the band's (communal) house to play music with them. In a way, The Olivia Tremor Control are a great example of how creative music should be played today, and the lifestyle and freeness that should match with it. Hopefully, they reunite again soon.

Evaluation: *Cale's use of technical music language and the enthusiasm of her prose is exhilarating.*

Teenage Wasteland in Aisle 6

Sean Piper

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

Assignment:

Select a story from the syllabus and write a five-page paper of analysis exploring insights of your own. Use ample textual evidence to develop and illustrate your point.

Rebellion, as it is defined, constitutes an act or show of defiance toward an established authority or convention. History and popular culture, it seems, have nearly succeeded in making the word synonymous with cinematic montages of idealistic youths voicing their assorted outrages through bullhorns and determined marches. What gives youth such analogousness to the act of defiance? May it be that the essence of the act does not pertain to anyone else quite as poignantly as it does the younger members of society? For when does authority and convention seem to hold more omnipotence over the very beings of people than in their formative years?

It is important to note that while a city boulevard may hold more dramatic appeal for protest than a breakfast nook, it does not give it any legitimacy. Rebellion's spontaneous nature can often make the most unlikely of settings a stage for discontent. Even the workplace can become a potent venue for voicing dissatisfaction, and it is such an environment that John Updike chooses as the setting for his short story "A&P." This story uses a confrontation between young and old to comment on the often frivolous and innocuous, but no less essential nature of young rebellion. From the onset of the story, we are immediately introduced to Sammy, the main character and narrator, a grocery clerk working a typical afternoon that soon becomes atypical.

The first impression of Sammy is not at all flattering. Sammy's role as a clerk is clear, and with it comes all the trappings of subservience; the demeaning uniform and even his name serve to belittle him. Here, Updike employs a subtlety that only someone who has had a Y grafted to the end of his or her name can pick up on. The reader gets the impression that it is a not-too-fond-of holdover from childhood that he (Sammy) grew out of along with his short pants. The name is uttered one time only, at the end of the story by Lengel, the manager: "Did you say something Sammy?" (336). He is clearly employing his name as yet another patronizing tool he can wield as his trump card. At the story's climatic ending, Sammy is not merely giving back a bow tie and a personalized apron, he is tossing off the shackles of constrict: "I fold the apron, 'Sammy' stitched in red on the pocket, and put it on the counter, and drop the bow tie on top of it. The bow tie is theirs, if you've ever wondered"

(337). What does the bow tie symbolize but a form of obsequious bondage, his name nothing more than that of a warmly regarded butler's?

While the external capitulations Sammy is forced to make as an employee are significant, more significant still are the internal rights he has reserved for himself that are inalienable to anyone forced to work in the service industry. While Queenie and her entourage serve to create the tipping point for Sammy's defiance, it is obvious that he long ago cultivated an acute contempt for all things authoritative. The last refuge of any person is the mind, and it is here that Sammy has built his stronghold of insubordination.

Not only does Sammy's contempt extend to the customers, it lingers on them. Sammy's habit of likening the shopping hordes to farm animals may be humorous at face value, but his remarks contain deeper evidence of his discontent and accompanying dissent. The author gives a clear view into Sammy's resentment in this passage: "A couple of customers that had been heading for my slot begin to knock against each other, like scared pigs in a chute" (336).

Sammy deserves to be commended for his self-restraint in dealing with an age group he clearly loathes. Throughout his narrative, Sammy makes no attempt to hide his disdain for the aged, and the story is rife with his indictments, such as in the passage, "Stokesie with his usual luck draws an old party in baggy gray pants who stumbles up with four giant cans of pineapple juice (what do these bums do with all that pineapple juice? I've often asked myself)." Within the confines of his mind, Sammy may be the cock of the walk, but when subjected to an angry customer, he is quick to remember his place. After taking his lashing from the woman, Sammy is quick to retaliate; after all, if the woman can't be magnanimous in victory, why should Sammy be humble in defeat? "She gives me a little snort in passing, if she'd been born at the right time they would have burned her over in Salem" (333).

There is now little doubt about Sammy's eventual route. His festering contempt for the store and all it has come to represent for him is approaching critical mass. The unjust bequests he makes at the customers' demands, the undignified costume he's forced to wear, a

patronizing manager lording over him, and the underlying monotony such a job must create are all too much to bear. Sammy's a heap of dynamite waiting to go off long before the story is written. In walk the girls with a short shopping list and a detonator.

Sammy's initial reaction to the girls is a sexual one: "The one that caught my eye first was the one in the plaid green two-piece. She was a chunky kid, with a good tan and a sweet broad soft-looking can with those two crescents of white just under it, where the sun never seems to hit, at the top of the backs of her legs" (333). Sammy's reflex is not only understandable, but largely ignorable. Although sexual themes are prevalent throughout the story, they serve to punctuate the statement Queenie, if not all three girls, makes, namely that they (she) are a breed apart. Their defiance of the rules is only a coincidence. The rules do not apply to them. It is not long before Sammy's initial sexual admiration turns into outright admiration.

The homogeneity and starkness of the store that Sammy hates suit Queenie just fine and act as a stark backdrop to her promenade. The drab décor that only a shelf of canned goods can provide gives awesome contrast to the trio of temptresses and only serves to make their tan lines appear all the more striking. The mood of the moment is well characterized in this excerpt:

You know it's one thing to have a girl in a bathing suit down on the beach, where what with the glare nobody can look at each other much anyway, and another thing in the cool of the A&P, under the fluorescent lights, against all those stacked packages, with her feet paddling along naked over our checker-board green-and-cream rubber-tile floor. (334)

The distinction this environment provides, however, is not limited to the inanimate. While the shopping cart "sheep" may not be alive in spirit, their varicose veins are still pumping blood and serve as additional contrast to give Queenie, above all three, a dominating presence in the store.

The spotlight is now fixed on Queenie: strolling down the aisle, it's as if she's fulfilling some kind of manifest destiny. While it may be easy for the reader to recognize her behavior for what it is, Sammy is unable

to, and he mistakes it for a defiant act he believes it to be. It is through Queenie that Updike is careful to distinguish the two dynamics taking place. Updike clues us into this during the confrontation between Lengel and Queenie, and it is exemplified in the following lines:

All of a sudden I slid right down her voice into her living room. Her father and the other men were standing around in ice-cream coats and bow ties and the women were in sandals picking up herring snacks on toothpicks off a big glass plate and they were all holding drinks the color of water with olives and sprigs of mint in them. (335)

A class line has now been drawn, and with class distinction comes class privilege. In this case, Queenie is afforded the luxury of rebellion, and while Sammy may think that his youth is membership enough, the reader knows that it is not. But for Sammy it is too late. He has already been ensnared by her gambit, and the stage has been set.

Token item in hand and patrician nose cocked high, the siren approaches the register. As she struts the final gauntlet, Lengel succeeds in tripping her up at the finish line. Lengel emerges from his office with not only his authority pinned to his chest, but carrying his religious doctrines in tow. The reader is given a sense of his character in the passage, "Lengel's pretty dreary, teaches Sunday school and the rest, but he doesn't miss that much" (336). Lengel does not miss the opportunity to assert his position and pre-scripted notions. The party has been formally crashed, and it seems that the powers-that-be are preparing to tally another victory when Sammy in classic altruistic fashion attempts to rescue the mood: "The girls, and who'd blame them, are in a hurry to get out, so I say 'I quit'" to Lengel quick enough for them to hear, hoping they'll stop and watch me, their unsuspected hero." It is almost immediately that Sammy is struck by the gravity of his action, and the idealistic waves he was riding high on a moment ago come crashing down. "Lengel sighs and begins to look very patient and old and gray. He's been a friend of my parents for years. 'Sammy, you don't want to do this to your Mom and Dad,' he tells me. It's true, I don't. But it seems to me that once you begin a gesture it's fatal not

to go through with it." Maybe not in so many words, but what Sammy says in this sentence exemplifies the theme of rebellion for its own sake. Might it be that in the heart of every young person dwells the spirit of the thrill-seeker? Do the barriers imposed by society represent a wall for willing youths to scale? When questioned as to his internal motives for climbing Mt. Everest, George Leigh Mallory is famed for saying, "Because it's there."

Might the act of rebellion itself hold the same innate worth to Sammy? Clearly it does, but the rebellion was all. He allowed himself to be pulled in by the undertow of someone else's act and never stopped to question what that act was or how it included him. The only thing that ever occurred to Sammy was that an act was being committed, period. Was he wrong to quit? Should he have retracted his statement? "But it seems to me that once you begin a gesture it's fatal not to go through with it" (337). The near-closing words pass on the awareness that there are more important things at stake for Sammy than the loss of his job and the approval of his parents. His dignity and tenacity are too valuable to throw away, and although he chose the wrong bandwagon to hitch a ride with, he needs to follow through with his decision. To acquiesce at this point would be fatal, but just as dangerous to Sammy's long-term well-being would be for him to ignore the events that just transpired. If he leaves his job with nothing else, it must be the acquired wisdom that there is a time and place for rebellion and a time for compliance. It is the accruing of this wisdom that makes rebellion such a necessary element of human development. Rebellion gives a person a unique perspective on the rules, laws, or conventions they break. Simply put, it is a method for determining which rules need to be upheld and which warrant disregard.

Evaluation: *Sean's understanding of Sammy's juvenile need to rebel demonstrates a maturity and sophistication beyond his own years, as does his commanding prose. Updike would be impressed!*

How Does My Garden Grow?

Arlene L. Pitek

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Doris Howden

Assignment:

Develop an essay using a dominating organizational pattern (process, comparison-contrast, or causal analysis) and a sub-pattern. In addition, develop ideas using strategies that we have focused on in earlier essays (examples, description, and narration) and that were illustrated by professional writers in assigned essays.

The kettle whistles, and I go to the stove to pour the boiling water over the lemon verbena teabag that's in my favorite, finely patterned, blue and white porcelain teacup. I tighten my fluffy, pink chenille robe against the morning chill of an early fall and settle onto the sinking-into-a-cloud softness of the cushioned window seat in my large bay window. I sit, knees folded to my chest, and with teacup in hand, look out the slightly steam-sweated kitchen window upon the wonder of an early morning landscape white-washed with frost. As I sit sipping my subtly fragranced, steaming cup of tea and admiring the delicate beauty that has laid my garden to rest for the season, I feel no regret as I reflect on and savor the unique joys that came with each stage of creating my little garden.

While I've always loved the thought of gardening and enjoyed looking at enticing I-can-picture-myself-in-that setting photographs in numerous gardening magazines that were purchased with great enthusiasm and ambitious plans, the reality is my horticultural aspira-

tions always wilted with summer's heat. My endeavors had been mostly limited to container gardening, as well as a smattering of plantings along the front yard foundation of my house, and around the mailbox. Those few simple efforts formed the bud from which my awakened creativity was to bloom

It started last spring when, from those few gardening efforts were left over a dozen or so white cleome plants. I couldn't bear the heartbreak of sacrificing them to the compost heap, so I began looking around the yard for a place to plant them. There it was, a six-foot by eight-inch strip of bare ground running along the inside length of the dog run fence. "Why not brighten a spot not usually associated with beauty?" I thought.

Invigorated by breathing in the it's-good-to-be-alive, clean freshness of the spring air, a trowel carried with determination in my gloved right hand and the cleomes carried tenderly in my left, I approached that long neglected patch of dirt that was soon to play host to my tender young plants. Laboriously I jabbed, struck, pried, and chipped away at that hardened crust of earth with my trowel until hole after hole dotted that barren strip. Rising blisters had me questioning my folly, and I remembered why that area had remained neglected. I tried to recall if there were any bandages in the medicine cabinet as into each hole I sprinkled a bit of fertilizer and then poured the water that would soften the ground and make the newly carved excavations a more welcoming environment for plant life. Tiring, I felt less invigorated and it seemed the air, although still clean, had lost its good-to-be alive freshness.

My back was starting to ache from the bent-over digging, and I was growing anxious to get this chore over with. I positioned each plant in its hole at the proper height with my left hand, while my right swept the surrounding area of the loosened topsoil that needed to backfill each cavity. I was moving along, assembly-line style, as wearily, one by one, I settled each tender young cleome into its new home. With each one I planted, my fading enthusiasm kept track of how many more were still left to go.

Two hours later, although I hadn't been aware of it, a sense of calm had overtaken me. I was relaxed, and all thoughts of that compost pile had faded. Mind and spir-

it refreshed and knees creaking, I rose to look upon the completed row, blisters now forgotten, with relief that the job was done, but also with a sense of accomplishment. I stood proudly surveying my little patch. My once destined-to-be compost orphan plants now faced squarely into the sun, holding promise of visual delights to come. Yet for all their contentedness, as I gazed affectionately upon them, I knew they would be lonely, in need of companion planting. Perhaps a splash of another color was needed to offset and enhance their future white blooms. Trowel and gardening gloves left abandoned at the site, I was off to the garden center where I toured, one after another, the many aisles of temptingly displayed possibilities.

I found myself surprised at how much delight the thought of that little flower bed was bringing me, but daylight was fading, and the salvia I'd decided on were eager to be in the ground. Blisters be damned! There was work to be done! I retrieved my gloves and once again, to that hardened patch of ground, lay siege with my trowel, setting the salvias in place.

Several weeks went by and, because I had been dutifully tending to the needs of my young charges, they quickly recovered from the shock of transplanting and were happily settled into their new surroundings. I enjoyed standing there, hose in hand, as I made sure each had its morning shower. They were filling out and growing tall, reaching skyward in front of the black chain link fence.

The black chain link fence. Uhhh, the black chain link fence. That stark, bare, black, chain link fence. Not the best staging for showing my progeny to their best advantage. I thought, "How much nicer it would be to have a backdrop of lush green vegetation to add further interest to my little plot."

Off again to the plant nursery I went, this time returning home with a packet of seeds for a clinging vine called moonflower, which would grow upward to disguise and eventually cascade over the top of that chain link fence.

To soften their shell, as per the directions on the envelope they came in, I soaked the seeds in warm water overnight. The next morning, that familiar trowel and I were back to further renovate that strip of prime

dog run property. The digging this time was easier, as each only needed a small, two-inch deep hole the width of a fat pencil, and all my previous efforts had somewhat softened the ground. I stood back and gazed down at my little flower patch with satisfaction. In my mind's eye, I envisioned all its future glory.

About four weeks later, I noticed several tiny, tiny, little mounds of erupted soil. The moonflowers were sprouting from their birthplace under the dark earth and having their first peek at the sun. It was now official summer.

Finished planting, I still enjoyed my continued rounds to the local garden center where my new friend, Doris, and I would discuss new arrivals and upcoming sales. During one of those rounds, I was inspired to make the addition of a green, grass-like spike-leaved plant surrounded by the white, dancing-fairy flowers of delicate nemesia. They looked so nice in their terra cotta pot, and I really did need something to fill that empty spot near the side entrance to the garage.

"That's it. I'm finally done," I said to myself. "Now I can relax and just enjoy the fruit of my efforts." And enjoy it I did. Everything was in full bloom. I had planted the moonflowers a bit late, but no need to worry. Despite their late arrival to our family, those happy-go-lucky vines enthusiastically raced to the top rail of the fence where they romped, stretching ribbon like across its length, their eventual mass cascading over, forming a thick blanket of luscious, large, heart-shaped leaves. However, in a hurry to reach their sunny perch, they hadn't spread in width to cover the chain link the way I'd hoped; their tendrils tenaciously clung too tightly to the fence to be easily positioned into a more spreading pattern, and I quickly tired of trying to persuade them otherwise. Besides, the shrub-like growth of my now four-foot tall cleomes was doing the job nicely.

And the cleomes, ah! The cleomes. Tall, graceful, and elegant, their pungently scented, six-inch, white, feather duster blooms reminded me of clouds billowing to the rhythms of the breeze. The elongated seed pods, sprouting at the end of thread-like stems circling the circumference of the plants, added to their delicate beauty. The leafless lower stalks of the cleome were well hidden by the bushy salvia.

And the salvia, ah! The salvia, with their spikes of brilliant red tubular flowers atop a mass of dark, blue-green leaves, had grown to just the right height to stand in stark contrast to my beautiful cleomes. Their leaves, when slightly crushed or brushed against, gave off an aromatic scent reminiscent of fresh pineapple.

And the purple leaf plum, ah! The neighbor's purple leaf plum tree, spreading through the fence separating our two yards, had completely taken over the corner of the dog run with its unruly branches. Luckily, on my last visit to the garden center, Doris convinced me to purchase the lopping shears that were on sale. Those branches with their purplish red leaves that are covered with small, pale pink flowers in spring were too pretty to cut away. "I'll just remove the dead wood and tidy it up a bit," I thought. When I was finished, not only were things looking neater, but the space hollowed out under the lower branches provided my dogs with a cool, shaded cave in which they found escape from the hot summer sun in their newly completed paradise.

Yet, even though there really was nothing more that could be done to that dog run, I still enjoyed my visits to the garden center. I enjoyed learning to identify all the plants and took delight in seeing all the shapes, textures scents, colors, and...sounds? The trickling of water? The aquatic center! Why had I not noticed it before? Water lilies are nice. I like water lilies. Fish are nice. I like fish...Doris!

Now, with the small pre-formed plastic pond I had purchased and its accompanying plants and fish in place, that once barren patch of dog run grass had become a refuge for all. My dogs not only enjoyed the comfort of their cave, but no matter how many times I admonished them, "Do you know what fish do in that water?" they continued to enjoy the constant supply of cool drinking water this aquatic addition provided. That small pond, with its water hyacinths (pale lavender flowers) that sparkled in the bright sunlight and the butter-cream yellow water lily, not only refreshed the dogs, but also visiting birds, yellow jackets, and the occasional dragonfly.

As pleasant a spot as it was by day, it was the garden at evening that held a special magic for me. The spiral twisted buds of the moonflower would begin to unfurl at

sunset, revealing six-inch, sweetly scented white blossoms that dazzled through the night, only to fade with the light of late morning. Moonlight illuminating the white cleomes and moonflowers created a dramatic show, and carried on the breeze, their mingled fragrances appealed not only to me, but also to the hummingbird moth who once visited.

As the season wore on, the joys of my newly created patch of paradise were such that my usual eager anticipation of fall's cool, crisp, weather was marred by the awareness that along with a welcomed respite from the summer's heat would come the demise of what had been a source of much delight.

Now, as I sit at my window no longer holding the long-since-finished cup of tea, my hands instead, registering the purring vibrations of the calico cat napping contentedly in my lap, I marvel at how pretty my withered, skeletal plants look, bundled up in their frosty cloaks, and I know that the change of seasons and the approaching winter cannot diminish the delight and satisfaction my garden brings to me. I realize that my exuberance in creating that garden was, as with life, about the journey. The process fulfilled my need to create, and something more—some innate need to shape my environment and pay homage to my nesting instincts. I found escape from the stressed-out, artificially manufactured, aesthetically starved world we live in. Creating my garden gave me a chance to connect to my true nature, my natural self. It was also about learning to see the beauty in all that surrounds me, even a dog run.

As I rise to rinse my teacup, my eye catches the gardening magazines tossed causally on the kitchen table, and remembering their photographs showing gardens in all their complexities, I wonder, "From what inspiration did those gardens grow?" My garden grew from a few extra plants I couldn't bear to throw away.

Evaluation: Arlene effectively uses what she has learned about description and narration to develop a thesis that shows us the process of transforming a dog run into a lovely garden. In addition, and even more important, she shows dynamics—the causes and effects—of the creative process, which, once it sprouts, feeds itself and nourishes the artist.

A Critical Review of Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*

Chris Poulos

Courses: History 212 (Recent American History)
and Literature 115 (Fiction)

Instructors: Tom DePalma and Catherine Restovich

Assignment:

*Read a book that focuses on the 1960s
and write a critical review.*

Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* encompasses personal narratives, philosophical essays, examinations of music and literature, and broad views and interpretations of society and capitalism as a whole. Due to the nature of this book, there is no clear-cut thesis, but rather a multitude of themes that revolve around an intellectual quest—set forth in "On Becoming"—to understand the "dynamics of race relations in America" (24). Anyone who has attempted the same sort of intellectual quest knows that it is no easy task. There is not *one* book that has the *one* answer, simply because there is not *one* answer. Understanding the "dynamics of race relations" implies an answer involving different relationships. It involves many studies of many different subjects with no clear beginning and ending; it becomes an ongoing quest to stay involved and accurately understand one's own times. So, it is easy to understand how one could become confused and fall into different traps of our culture in attempting to understand this broad question. Cleaver is no exception. His skeptical attitude allowed him to write many insightful interpretations of America in the 1960s and its context in history and the world. Despite the fact that the majority of these essays are personal and polemical, his critical, intellectual side shines through in certain parts of the book;

however, there are still themes of heterosexism, sexism, and machismo. One must keep in mind that even this can be used as historical evidence to show a common, widely accepted way of thinking in American culture.

Cleaver divided *Soul on Ice* into four parts. Part one, "Letters from Prison," is Cleaver's awakening to his and black people's place in society. He speaks of two events that are crucial in this awakening. First, *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court decision to outlaw segregation in 1954, which was the same year he began serving a sentence in Folsom Prison for possession of marijuana—a metaphorical coincidence signifying the beginning of his journey. Cleaver said that it was not only an important event for him, but also for black people, as a whole, in America:

Prior to 1954, we lived in an atmosphere of novocain. Negroes found it necessary, in order to maintain whatever sanity they could, to remain somewhat aloof and detached from "the problem." We accepted indignities and the mechanics of the apparatus of oppression without reacting by sitting-in or holding mass demonstrations. (17)

He became skeptical of *everything* in American society: "marriage, love, God, patriotism, the Constitution, the founding fathers, law, concepts of right-wrong-good-evil, all forms of ritualized and conventional behavior" (19). He used skepticism to try and throw away all the biases and prejudices that he learned through American society, and began to intensely study his beliefs and how they related to society.

The other crucial event was the death of Emmett Till in 1955. Cleaver saw the death of Emmett Till as caused by one of the prejudices he was trying to understand and discard: the beautification of white women—a struggle that repeatedly arose in this work. Coming to the realization that he placed white women above any other women, Cleaver referred to her as, "The Ogre" that "possessed a tremendous and dreadful power over me..." (19).

This is the first place in *Soul on Ice* that the themes of heterosexism and machismo arise. By conceptualizing women as seductive "ogres," Cleaver displaced the blame of Emmett Till's death solely on Carolyn Bryant, the woman whom Till (depending on the source) winked

or whistled at, not the racist white murderers or racism in the social structure. As it states in *Soul on Ice*, "Here was a woman who had caused the death of a black, possibly because, when he looked at her, he also felt the same tensions of lust and desire [as when Cleaver looked at her]" (23). The belief that women are irresistible sexual beings is held and perpetuated by many sexist groups and people. In this view, part of the blame for the rape of a woman shifts from the men and their lack of control to women's natural seductiveness or style of dress.

This attitude perhaps was more explicit during Cleaver's time, and it deeply affected his analysis of his rape of white women. His analysis focused on women's natural seductiveness, rather than the effects structural sexism had on his actions. Cleaver also analyzed his rape of white women from a critical race perspective by viewing it as a way to defy the law of white men. Though this was insightful, it failed to look at gender, as well. There was no mention of his attitudes of heterosexism and machismo, which definitely had relevance. By neglecting these prejudices, Cleaver provided a narrow understanding of rape, and, more importantly, misplaced the cause of rape on women.

The rest of "Letters from Folsom" dealt with Cleaver's relationship with a white female lawyer, Beverly Axelrod, which did not seem to end well; his reactions to the Watts riots, which he was enthused with; some of his religious views and anecdotes; an average day in Folsom Prison; and more importantly, his reaction to Malcolm X's death. Here is an instance of Cleaver's admirable, critical, intellectual side. He did not write a tear-jerking essay. Rather, he talked about the separation between Elijah Muhammad followers and Malcolm X followers, and reasons why X was murdered. "Letters from Folsom" was primarily a personal narrative coming to terms with different aspects of his social, political, and economic relationship with society. Much of his writing was insightful, but one should not ignore the underlying themes of heterosexism and machismo.

Part two, "Blood of the Beast," was written as a series of philosophical prose pieces. One essay, titled "The White Race and Its Heroes," revolved around the idea of white man's mythical hero changing, while also discussing the influence of the black revolution on American

culture and the rebellion of white youth. Another essay, titled "Lazarus, Come Forth," talked about black celebrities being either athletes or entertainers, and how both are tools, or "Uncle Toms," of the white man. He then talked about the Muhammad Ali-Patterson fight, and how Muhammad Ali broke away from that white control:

But he is also a 'free' man, determined not to be a white man's puppet even though he fights to entertain them; determined to be autonomous... A racist Black Muslim heavy weight champion is a bitter pill for racist white America to swallow, Swallow it.... (95)

Three other essays revolved around black people's relationship with the Vietnam War. One point he discussed, in "Law and Order," was that black people were dying for the sake of another country's freedom, while in Watts they were dying because America was not free yet. Cleaver had an intelligent, skeptical eye in these essays, with many notable ideas. "Notes on a Native Son," was a change from these other essays. This essay talked about James Baldwin and some of his work. He described James Baldwin's work as:

...the most grueling, agonizing, total hatred of the blacks, particularly of himself, and the most shameful, fanatical, fawning, sycophantic love of whites that one can find in the writings of any black American writer of note in our time. This is an appalling contradiction and the implications of it are vast. (97)

He went on to describe the presence of homosexuality in James Baldwin's works, which is the reason for his critical views of Baldwin. Cleaver viewed Baldwin's sexual orientation as emasculate and, therefore, counter-revolutionary.

"Notes on a Native Son" was a rapid regression from Cleaver's prior progressive intellectual views. For example, Cleaver stated, "Homosexuality is a sickness, just as are baby-rape or wanting to become the head of General Motors" (106). Despite Cleaver's attempt to abandon his prior conceptualization of right and wrong, in "Letters From Prison," it is clear these biases, perpetuated by the social structure, prevailed. Another example of this was his naivete in thinking that gays are inherently feminine—a misconception that directed his disdain of gays.

Due to this misconception, Cleaver felt that gays are incapable of being revolutionary. One could parallel this to the John Wayne mentality (popular in the 50s and 60s), which implies that *real* men use guns and constantly express their heterosexual masculinity. "Notes on a Native Son" demonstrated a lapse in Cleaver's intellectual analysis, but, again, highlights a common way of thinking during his time and a way of thinking still perpetuated in American society.

The third section, "Prelude to Love—Three Letters," consisted of letters Cleaver wrote to Beverly Axelrod and her response. The final section, "White Woman, Black Man," consisted of three essays, all pertaining to women's relationship with men in American culture.

There is a strong emphasis of heterosexism and machismo in this final section. Here are two examples. First, in "To All Black Women, From All Black Men," Cleaver called for a romantic unity between black women and men, and a return to the days before slavery. As he put it, "...before we could come up from slavery, we had to be pulled down from our throne" (189). He called for a heterosexual unity, where the woman was *his* Queen, "...put on your crown, my Queen, and we will build a New City..." (192). In this romantic vision, Cleaver neglected non-heterosexual relationships and the individual rights of his woman.

The second example of heterosexism and machismo in this section is in "Primeval Mitosis," an allegorical account of the separation of men and women, and of the class and race struggle in the United States in the 60s. This bizarre essay described class and race struggle in terms of the Omnipotent Administrators (white men), Supermasculine Menials (black men), Amazons (black women), and Ultrafeminines (white women). It is clear from the beginning that (hetero)sexism and machismo run throughout this essay—look at the construction of the names for (white and black) men and women. I will highlight three key areas of these prejudices. First, at the beginning of his allegory, Cleaver stated, "The roots of heterosexuality are buried in that evolutionary choice made long ago..." (164). This is a common heterosexist notion still perpetuated by people today, such as sociobiologists. Cleaver used the shady argument that heterosexuality is a "natural" occurrence, and that men and women "natural-

ly" belong together. Moving on, Cleaver's machismo came through when he discussed the Supermasculine Menials and their and the Omnipotent Administrators' fight for the "crown of masculinity" (173-174). According to the allegory, the Supermasculine Menials and Omnipotent Administrators needed to fight for the "crown of masculinity," in order to prove their manhood. Finally, his sexist views arose when he discussed the fight for the "crown of femininity" (174). Cleaver treated women as objects to be won, and a way to attain manhood.

All in all, *Soul on Ice* is a worthwhile piece of historical literature. It highlights many aspects of the 1950s and 1960s, and provides great insight into some important events—*Brown v. Board of Education*, the death of Emmett Till, the Watts riots, the assassination of Malcolm X, etc. As with any text, it is important to keep in mind the influence of structural heterosexism and implicit themes that arise as a result. Even though Cleaver was a progressive author, he fell into regressive ways of thinking, which had yet to be challenged by second wave feminism. Despite this, Eldridge Cleaver's heterosexist and machismo views should not be disregarded. They highlight a common way of thinking in the 1950s and 60s, and, as mentioned several times, a way of thinking that is still acceptable today. In order to fully understand *Soul on Ice* as a history text, one must examine these implicit prejudices of Eldridge Cleaver and the American society.

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Evaluation: *Chris provides keen insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the complexities in Cleaver's writings.*

Richard Wright's Bigger Thomas

Louise Rizio

Courses: History 112

(The American Experience Since 1877)
and English 102 (Composition)

Instructors: Tom DePalma and Catherine Restovich

Assignment:

Write a literary research paper.

“Not only had he lived where they told him to live, not only had he done what they told him to do...but even after obeying, after killing, they still ruled him. He was their property...what they did claimed every atom of him, sleeping and waking; it colored life and dictated the terms of death” (Wright, *Native Son*, 331-332). Richard Wright’s protagonist, Bigger Thomas, knows what it feels like to be trapped. Being a poor, black man in the 1930s, Bigger never had a chance. One cannot help but feel sympathy for a man whose life is dictated by society’s expectations. Bigger Thomas lives in a broken down, one-room apartment with three other family members. Bigger then enters the outside world armed only with an eighth grade education. With racism ingrained into his character, Bigger lashes out against a world that repetitively reviles and rejects him. Never comfortable in his black identity, Bigger adopts a new title—murderer.

It is from Bigger’s fateful act of smothering a young, rich, white socialite—Mary Dalton—which readers begin to feel differently about Wright’s protagonist. After initial feelings of sympathy for Bigger’s miserable and oppressive life, many readers turn against Bigger for ending a young woman’s life. Yet despite the tragedy that Mary Dalton’s life ends, an underlying truth about Bigger’s actions must be recalled—Bigger only kills Mary accidentally (Gallagher 3). The scene where Bigger ends Mary’s life is representative of all of *Native Son*, because readers are plunged into a bewildering maze of

emotions. From this point, readers must choose between hate and scorn or sadness and pity. Some readers immediately despise Bigger, and regard him as a “sociopath” (Bradley 428). Yet other readers of *Native Son* want only to feel sorry for Bigger Thomas. They describe Bigger as, “a victim of his emotions” (Gallagher 4). With these conflicting readers’ emotions of pity and hatred, the question remains as to how Wright intended his readers to react to *Native Son*. With the line between “good” and “bad” so repeatedly blurred, perhaps the only solution is to find middle ground. Maybe Wright’s purpose in writing *Native Son* was not to make people cry, or get angry; maybe Wright just wanted people to think. In presenting readers with a wide range of feelings, perhaps readers are meant to leave the maze with a realization of how the poverty and racism controlling Bigger’s life needs to be changed. As a man that spent his life working for social change, Wright wrote novels to get peoples’ attention and think seriously about civil rights. Maybe Wright saw the best way to get peoples’ attention would be from exposing readers to the darkest depths of which a man could be affected by society. Richard Wright’s purpose for creating Bigger Thomas was not to elicit feelings of either pure sympathy or blind anger. Rather, Wright intended for the reader to understand Bigger enough to recognize a profound need for social change.

The German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, defined an act as being morally good, if it was enacted because it was “just the right thing to do” (Kant 82-93). Furthermore, Kant claimed that an act done out of sympathy was not as virtuous as an act done from pure moral obligation (82-93). According to this noted philosopher, a clerk should not charge a low price to a customer because he feels sorry for him (82-93). Instead, a clerk should charge a low price to all customers simply because it is the right thing to do (82-93). One may wonder what connection an 18th century philosopher’s moral theory has to do with Bigger Thomas. However, it is clear that the people who most impacted Bigger followed a belief reminiscent of Kant, in that they treated him with understanding or a moral sense of duty rather than pity.

Pity does not bring out a change of actions; it is a comforting feeling that helps one feel safe in his or her

position. To simply feel sorry for Bigger is to forgive him of wrongdoing and thus deny the necessity for social change in Bigger's world. In an essay about the writing of *Native Son*, Wright describes a previous novel's attempt to get society's attention. After receiving reviews of *Uncle Tom's Children*, Wright realizes, "I found I had written a book which even bankers' daughters could read and weep over and feel good about. I swore to myself that if I ever wrote another book, no one would weep over it; that it would be so hard and deep that they would have to face it without the consolation of tears" (Wright, "How Bigger Thomas Was Born," 454). So with Bigger Thomas, Wright created a man that was easier to hate than feel sorry for. Rather than respect a woman who loves him, Bigger uses Bessie Mears for sex and kills her when she gets in his way (George 311). Bigger shows no humanity towards Bessie; he rapes her, bashes her head in with a brick, and then throws her out of a window and down an air-shaft (Wright, *Native Son*, 233-238). Wright makes it violently clear that pure sympathy is not *Native Son's* aim.

To feel pure sympathy for someone is to be swallowed up by an emotion that shields one from responsibility. Throughout the course of *Native Son*, Mr. Dalton personifies the ineffectiveness of pity. Mr. Dalton is a well-respected millionaire whose actions appear charitable. It is said that Mr. Dalton, "does a lot for your (Bigger's) people," by donating five million dollars to black schools (56). In another token gesture, he donates ping-pong tables to the South Side Boys' Club. However admirable Mr. Dalton's actions appear, his money does little to actually help African-Americans. Rather than treat blacks as equals, Mr. Dalton perpetuates the racial divide by overcharging blacks for run-down apartment buildings (326). Mr. Dalton only feels enough pity for blacks to hire the occasional servant. By hiring Bigger as a chauffeur, Mr. Dalton feels reassured in the idea that he is trying to help blacks (294). Instead of reaching out to better the lives of African-Americans, Mr. Dalton throws blacks the occasional bone and continues to exploit them for profit. Mr. Dalton's façade of sympathy allows him to take advantage of African-Americans and further prevent any kind of social change. As exemplified by Mr. Dalton, pity does not bring about the changes in society that Richard Wright calls for.

In contrast to Mr. Dalton, Jan Erlone truly attempts to help Bigger. With full knowledge of Bessie's violent death and the loss of his own girlfriend, Mary Dalton, Jan is an unlikely ally for Bigger. Despite an awareness of Bigger's most horrifying acts, Jan reaches out to help him. The young man decides to help Bigger come close to having a decent defense by finding him a lawyer. It may seem strange that a murder victim's boyfriend should help the suspect's defense, but Jan gives an explanation, stating, "Though this thing hurt me, I got something out of it...it made me see deeper into men...I didn't come here to feel sorry for you...I'm here because I'm trying to live up to this thing as I see it" (288). Although Jan was not bitter or angry towards Bigger, Jan could not absolve him of guilt either. He admits his pain, saying, "And it ain't easy Bigger. I—I loved that girl you killed" (288). Jan thought about what made Bigger hate and kill, and through this reflection he was motivated to change the injustice that inspired it. In "The Horror of Bigger Thomas," Stephen K. George argues during the jail scene with Jan and Bigger, "Jan for the first time, has begun to see the infinity of Bigger's being, as well as the inescapable ethical responsibility he owes to him" (George 311). By finding a balance between his own pain and pity, Jan Erlone is able to care enough about Bigger Thomas to attempt to change his life.

However noble, it may seem useless that Jan tries to save Bigger. A black man on trial for raping and killing a white woman during the Great Depression has no chance at receiving a fair trial. Bigger's execution date had been set, when the public was given knowledge that a black man was suspected. With a case so clearly biased, it may seem hopeless that Jan asks Max to defend Bigger Thomas. Yet it is in Max's closing arguments that Bigger's defense at the trial is not in vain. Rather than be guided by pity and argue for a "not guilty" sentence, Max aims to give Bigger life in prison. Max spends time exploring what makes a man like Bigger Thomas commit murder. In front of the judge, Max contends, "His entire existence was one long craving for satisfaction...and we regulated every part of the world he touched. Through the instrument of fear, we determined the mode and the quality of his consciousness" (Wright, *Native Son*, 402). To Max, Bigger's life is one to be examined, not condemned. Whether this

was said to deaf ears, it still serves a purpose that Bigger's way of life, motives, and humanity are addressed. Although the court and public in general are resolved in their decision to execute Bigger, perhaps Wright's readers are the ones to save him. Perhaps, if readers of *Native Son* go beyond the relief of sympathy, if they dare to feel uncomfortable in trying to understand Bigger, then they can be moved enough to change Bigger's world.

As an oppressed and alienated young man, Bigger's world was one that revolved around hatred. Even before the death of Mary Dalton, Bigger Thomas is despised by others around him. His own mother knows only disdain for him, calling him a "tramp," "without manhood," "plain dumb black crazy," and "the biggest fool I ever saw" (7-9). The matriarch of the Thomas family sums up her feelings with the phrase, "Bigger sometimes I wonder why I birthed you" (8). Once Bigger leaves his home, the outside world is even less welcoming. Bigger's own friends recognize the destructiveness of his "hot temper" (26). Bigger's friends and family are not misguided in noting Bigger's anger. In addition to committing rape and murder, Bigger commits much more violence in his mind. It is said Bigger, "actively fantasizes killing Gus, Mr. Dalton, Jan and Mary, Peggy, Britten, Jan again, Bessie...., a reporter, a black couple he overhears, all the men searching for him, and all the people at the inquest and at the trial" (Tremaine 424). It appears almost everyone Bigger meets incites a murderous rage inside of him. With such a menacing anger controlling him, it becomes apparent that a solution must be found for Bigger Thomas.

The destructive rage found in Bigger makes its presence most obvious when Bigger gets rid of Mary's body and rapes and kills Bessie. The grotesque manner in which Bigger destroys a dead body and a living, breathing person makes it easy for readers to react with disgust. It is evident in both of these actions, however, that a fierce anger directed at Bigger is a driving force for his own violent acts.

The manner in which Mary Dalton dies and is disposed of has more bearing upon Bigger and the other characters than the entirety of her life. Briefly introduced, Mary is a young, rebellious, rich, white socialite. She flirts with ideas about communism and social equality, but these ideas are inevitably superficial. With regard

to social justice for African-Americans, Mary seems to be an advocate. On the other hand, Mary's words asking to visit a black apartment building, and a comparison with these tenements to European vacations prove her desire for equality as a type of tourism (Wright, *Native Son*, 69-70). In addition to that, Mary's choice to sing a slavery song to her black chauffeur makes it apparent that her understanding of the racial divide is only skin deep (77). Yet, however ditzzy Mary Dalton may be, she certainly does not deserve to die. Nevertheless, it seems that Mary's desire to fraternize with Bigger unintentionally sets off an escalating series of events that conclude with her body lying in a furnace.

At first, it may seem baffling how in a few hours Mary Dalton goes from hanging out with Bigger to being blood on his hands. These events are encouraged, however, by a hatred Bigger has known his entire life. When Bigger is alone in Mary's bedroom, he is terrified to see Mrs. Dalton approaching him (85). It is said that, "over three hundred years of conditioning tell him the implications of his being found in the unconscious Mary's room, and he acts in response to a racial prototype rather than to the specifics of the situations" (Gallagher 2). Fully aware of his identity as a black man, Bigger knows that his place in a white woman's room will result in him being labeled a "rapist," and will result in his death. If only for self-preservation, Bigger covers Mary's face with a pillow in an attempt to stop her from alerting Mrs. Dalton (Wright, *Native Son*, 85-86). In the briefest of moments, Bigger accidentally smothers Mary to death and forever changes his life (Gallagher 3).

At this point, readers have a choice between sympathy for Bigger's plight or anger for the gravity of his actions. Again led into a maze of emotions, many readers choose the path of anger upon discovering the violent lengths to which Bigger tries to save himself. With the weight of rape and murder of a white woman hanging over his head, Bigger is desperate to evade a ferocious anger from the white public. With survival on his mind, Bigger comes to the conclusion that Mary's body must be disposed of in order to save him. Subsequently, Bigger stuffs Mary's corpse into a large furnace (Wright, *Native Son*, 91). He then cuts off her head with a hatchet, and puts the bloody mess into the furnace, thus getting rid of the incriminating body (91-93). With an ever-present under-

standing of his ill-fated black identity, Bigger Thomas wipes out a human being.

Upon learning of Bigger's sickening acts, many readers of *Native Son* travel the rest of Wright's maze with a bitter anger towards the protagonist. Such an anger is understandable, but it is not the desired effect of Wright's writing. If Wright had wanted to make Bigger a character to simply hate, he could have easily made Bigger commit murder in this first section of the novel. Rather than promote only hate, Wright makes it evident that Bigger did not deliberately kill Mary (Gallagher 3). Consequently, Bigger's disposal of Mary's body can be seen as an act of self-preservation, a desperate attempt of Bigger to save his own life. The entire time Bigger destroys Mary's body, thoughts of whites' hate for him dominate his thoughts. Symbolized as "the white blur," Bigger fears capture and death (Gallagher 2). Knowing a life of racism that dates back to his ancestors, Bigger acts in a manner that is fostered by a deep anger that is held for men of his race. Seeing as how anger leads to Bigger's disturbing and violent acts, further anger will not save him. Rather than regard Bigger as purely bad, he is better characterized as "a monstrous symbol of what could happen nation-wide if society refuses to make the American dream of freedom and opportunity open to all" (George 309). If one still finds trouble escaping anger, perhaps it is helpful to reconsider Bigger's situation with the exception that he is white. If Bigger were white, then at most there would have been a misunderstanding with the Daltons. There would be no killing, no severed head, no burning body, and no call for social change in America. Richard Wright did not intend for readers to hate Bigger, otherwise his actions would be more clear-cut. Instead, Wright intends for readers to look past anger and realize the depths to which a man can be perverted by society.

Seeing as how Bigger is an angry and violent young man, one still may find a mirrored sense of anger as a satisfactory reaction to Bigger Thomas. After Mary's death, many of the characters of *Native Son* choose to find scorn with Bigger, and he in turn hates them. The public in general detests Bigger and labels him as a "jungle beast" that must be killed in a brutal fashion (Wright, *Native Son*, 297). Angry mobs would like nothing more than for Bigger to be lynched (303). Hatred is what Bigger grew up with, and it only encourages his

sinister acts. The hysterical anger surrounding Bigger after he kills Mary only makes matters worse. Guided by a frantic rage, thousands of police and vigilantes overrun the South Side of Chicago. It is said that in efforts to capture Bigger, one thousand black homes are searched (255). In addition to the invasion of innocent peoples' homes, every form of transportation in the black area of Chicago is stopped and searched (244). In a maddening desire to catch their pariah, whites arrest thousands of innocent black man that resemble Bigger (244). Riots ensue and several black men are beaten (244,255). In the midst of an anger that borders hysteria, it is clear that anger serves only to promote more anger.

In the midst of a divided society, the damaging effects of blind anger are mirrored in Bigger Thomas. For it is when anger reaches its peak, when police swarm the South Side, when innocent people are beaten, that Bigger reaches his own most desperate moment. Aware of the circus surrounding him, Bigger becomes more eager to escape. It is out of this desperation, that Bigger commits his most intentionally gruesome act. Once he is vilified by the public, Bigger accepts society's condemnation and murders Bessie Mears (237). In fact, it is in awareness of "the white blur hovering near," that Bigger feels capable of killing an innocent woman (236-237). It is apparent that Bigger's most hateful acts are inspired by the hatred others feed him. The threatening repercussions of anger make its application to Bigger Thomas ineffective.

Richard Wright's purpose for creating Bigger Thomas was not to elicit feelings of either pure sympathy or blind anger. Rather, Wright intended for the reader to understand Bigger enough to recognize a profound need for social change. The poverty and racism surrounding Bigger are as heartbreaking as his actions are deplorable. Presented with compelling sadness and perhaps equally compelling feelings of disgust and anger, readers make their entry into Wright's emotional maze. At first, one may be inclined to absolve Bigger of guilt and feel bad for this unfortunate young man. Bigger never received a decent education, decent housing conditions, or a day outside his black identity. Yet feeling sorry for Bigger does not eradicate the social issues that led him to murder. The uselessness of pity alone is shown with Mr. Dalton. This business owner claims to have concern for blacks; he even has the occasional

black man in his home. On the other hand, the black man Mr. Dalton lets into his life is not an equal, he is a servant that sleeps on a cot in the basement. Meanwhile, many more blacks live in rat-infested tenements that are conveniently overlooked by Mr. Dalton. Pity is ineffective, because it is an easy way out from moral obligation.

With sympathy unsuccessful in changing Bigger's world, one may turn to anger. After all, Bigger commits the cardinal sin, murder. Yet to hate Bigger is to execute him in the same way the city of Chicago does. To simply be angered by Bigger's character is to lose track of why Wright created him. Taking a closer look and seeing how poverty and racism can turn a man toward evil is to recognize the need for equality. In fact, people that still hold Bigger accountable for his actions, yet want to help him, are the ones to save him. People like this are represented by Jan. Jan had the best reason in the world to retaliate at Bigger, but instead he chooses to help him. In explanation for reaching out to Bigger, Jan states, "I saw if I killed, this thing would go on and never stop" (288). Jan's genuine caring is what breaks this cycle of violence. In fact, Bigger's impression of whites as a "looming mountain," is crumbled when Jan lends a helping hand (George 312). For the first time in his life, Bigger sees "a white face, but an honest one" (312). Perhaps if there were others like Jan, then Bigger's world would not be consumed by racial issues (312). If Bigger could have lived in a world where whites were people he understood, rather than a "white blur" that hates and despises him, then maybe Bigger would not have been led to murder. If a man is driven to kill by ferocious hatred, then clearly hatred is not this man's solution.

To create a man that was mistreated and met an ill fate due to his circumstances is to rewrite a story many already know. Yet to disturb readers, and challenge them to try to understand, is to truly bring attention to the issues surrounding Bigger's life. Wright meant to go beyond what had already been done, by creating a protagonist as notorious as Bigger Thomas. It is in Bigger's evil, that he gains depth; he becomes a character, not a caricature. This black man's life is saddening and frustrating, but never forgettable. If readers could think about the oppression Bigger lived under, and the ways in which it corrupted him, then Wright found resonance with his readers. If a tragic life like that of Bigger

Thomas is not forgotten, then maybe that is what makes Wright successful. Perhaps showing the lengths to which poverty and racism can damage a person is the only way to eradicate such evils in society. It may seem idealistic to challenge people to look past race in search of some common understanding. It may seem even more far-fetched to think that one writer's words can inspire such a course of action. If even a white, teenaged girl from the suburbs cannot forget Bigger Thomas, then maybe there is a chance for us all.

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Evaluation: *Louise captures in this essay what I hope to accomplish after four weeks of teaching Native Son. Her thesis, that Wright asks his readers to understand Bigger Thomas (not hate him or feel sympathy for him) is brilliantly executed.*

Thinking Outside the Boxing Ring

Sandra Siniscalchi

Courses: History 212 (Recent American History)
and Literature 115 (Fiction)

Instructors: Tom DePalma and Catherine Restovich

Assignment:

*Write a perspective paper on a topic
regarding the 1960s in America.*

[The events described in this paper are fictitious and in no way represent the views of the people depicted in it unless otherwise referenced.]

It was a summer night, 1965, when it happened, when the moon fell apart. What I was doing when it happened, perhaps only my private pages will ever remember.

The stadium was filling quickly. Whole sections were reserved for NAACP, SCLC, CORE, and the Nation of Islam. There was even seating for the administration: THE administration. Lyndon B. Johnson was already holding a half-empty bottle of beer. However, the entering crowd's attention was on another: Rita Schwerner was entering, somberly accompanied by Coretta King and Sally Belfrage. There were four empty seats for John, Paul, George, and Ringo. Three of these seats remained empty throughout the night. Many colorful characters filled the seats as tension grew. The final group to enter was SNCC. As though planned for attention-getting, the group ran in at precisely one minute before the opening of the night.

The Singing Nun did not wait for the SNCC to complete their non-violent sitting down. She began "Dominique" with a passion that would have made even

Kurt Vonnegut turn idealistic. When she finished, Philip A. Randolph took the floor to present and honor me as the night's special guest. He eloquently explained who I was and as he announced, "Mose Wright," I stood up from my front-row seat. Being emotionally overwhelmed, all I managed to share with the audience were the following words: "Tonight we have finally arrived at the last bleak news of the ballad, the rest of the rugged music, the last quatrain.ⁱ My plea tonight is for no more murder, no more burial, no more childless mothers, no more pulled taffy."ⁱⁱ

After I returned to my seat, Coretta King began to sob violently as Ringo played a drum roll. The stadium grew completely silent, except for Johnson's gurgle. The two competitors simultaneously approached the boxing ring. While many non-violently chanted, "One, four, two, three, champion King'll be," others violently waved fists in the air while shouting, "Long live Malcolm X!"

After Johnson called in the national guard, the chanting temporarily halted. The match began. Facing each other, the panther and the lash finally met.

Malcolm took the first jolt, and King's right cheek received a purpling blow. I closed my eyes as stinging memories of a 1955 summer night flashed through my mind and ripped through my heart. Gasps were heard as King turned the other cheek. Malcolm seized the moment. The Singing Nun let out a cry for mercy.

"You must learn," began Malcolm as he continued in violence, "who your real enemy is, and it is not me." King was down. As the counting began, all King could do was the 1964 freedom summer roll, putting his head between his knees and holding himself with his hands. I could hear the Temptations humming "Ball of Confusion." Seeing the need for encouragement, Joan Baez stood up from her seat among the spectators. All movement ceased as she gently intoned "We Shall Overcome." However, Malcolm had already won the round.

"Let freedom ring,"ⁱⁱⁱ King uttered as he stood to the ringing bell of a new round. "The creation of tension is part of the work of the nonviolent resister. I must confess that I am not afraid of the word tension. I have earnestly worked and preached against violent tension, but there is

ⁱ Brooks, Gwendolyn. "Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile, a Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon."

ⁱⁱ The last quatrain of "The Ballad of Emmett Till."

ⁱⁱⁱ King Jr., Martin Luther. "I Have a Dream."

a type of constructive nonviolent tension that is necessary for growth."^{iv}

King said this while he stared deeply into Malcolm's eyes and approached with stiff determination. For a fleeting moment Malcolm grew tense and lost focus on his planned move. Then, as he positioned himself for a strong right hook, he replied, "We want to have just an off-the-cuff chat between you and me, us. We want to talk right down to earth in a language that everybody here can easily understand. We all agree tonight that America has a very serious problem. We're her problem."^v He sent King back a few steps with his blow.

King replied, "I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation. We have come to this spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood."^{vi} King stood taller as he raised his voice on the final four words.

Malcolm took a few quick steps closer to King and yelled, "We have a common enemy. He's an enemy to all of us. I know you think that some of them aren't enemies. Time will tell. The only solid rock of brotherhood on which we may unite is the basis of what we have in common - a common oppressor, a common exploiter, and a common discriminator."^{vii} How many Watts will it take to enlighten your mind?" Malcolm's new blow sent King down.

Back in his corner, King's coach, Bayard Rustin, spoke quickly about Gandhian tactics. "Do not be afraid to experiment with new and creative techniques for achieving reconciliation and social change,"^{viii} pleaded Rustin as he helped King rinse with water.

With a new determination, King eagerly approached Malcolm at the next round. Again, Malcolm went for a right hook. However, this time King dropped to the floor before being hit. Eager, as usual, to use the system, King knew there were no rules concerning his move. Surprised and confused, Malcolm stared down at King. King was sitting and had no intention of moving. Hesitating whether or not to try another blow, Malcolm turned to his

coach, Elijah Muhammad, for a cue. Muhammad threw his fist in the air and shouted, "Black power!" Malcolm turned back to King and yelled down to him, "This is no Negro revolution. This is a black revolution!"^{ix} Malcolm was about to hit King, when his attention shifted to a group entering the stadium. James Meredith entered with a National Guard escort and headed for the last empty front-row seats. Johnson failed to restrain himself and bluntly exclaimed, "I gotta get y'all off duty. Front row seats! I was too busy worrying about Vietnam to re-assign ya. Hmmm... Vietnam could be a good change..."

King took the distraction as an opportunity to rise to his feet as he proclaimed, "One day sons of former slaves and sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood."^x Malcolm shouted, "We will rise, we will have a separate nation!" and then proceeded to knock King down once again.

The new round started with a new weariness. Reverend Glenn E. Smiley had encouraged King that there is the more excellent way of love and nonviolence.^{xi} King was feeling weak as he faced Malcolm once again. Just as the action was about to begin, a crackle in the sky was heard. People outside the stadium were heard screaming as though Armageddon were in fact materializing. The moon was breaking apart into pieces. Malcolm turned to Elijah Muhammad, who was already summoning Master W.D. Fard for an explanation. Master Fard trembled in his elderly voice and proceeded to explain that this was the conclusion of Mr. Yacub's history. Now the time was ripe.

With new strength, Malcolm continued the round that had only officially started. King positioned himself defensively. The blow was too strong. He was not only down, but unconscious. The rules of the night specified that the match must continue at all costs and not end until a conclusion was reached.

King was taken out of the ring on a stretcher. To keep the match going, a temporary substitute was necessary. Jackie Kennedy was not seated far from me, and I heard her gasp as King's substitute came out. Coretta followed her husband's stretcher out of the crowd. Emmett's mother was crying, for the sight of another beaten

^{iv} King Jr., Martin Luther. "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

^v Gosse, Van. *The Movements of the New Left*.

^{vi} King Jr., Martin Luther. "I Have a Dream."

^{vii} Gosse, Van. *The Movements of the New Left*.

^{viii} Sitkoff, Harvard. *The Struggle for Black Equality*.

^{ix} Gosse, Van. *The Movements of the New Left*.

^x King Jr., Martin Luther. "I Have a Dream."

^{xi} King Jr., Martin Luther. "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

young man was a blow on her emotions. No one noticed the plight of these women.

To maintain equity, Malcolm, who was actually still well and energetic, was also allowed a substitute. As the new round was beginning, Marvin Gaye exclaimed, "What's going on?" These words were in the hearts of many as Robert Kennedy faced Muhammad Ali. Even Johnson sat up straighter. Ali began bouncing around Kennedy as if studying him. "You look like an angel, you talk like an angel, you walk like an angel, but I've got eyes. You're the devil in disguise."^{xii} With that, the two went full force as Malcolm sat contemplating a new strategy.

Meanwhile, in closed quarters, King was still unconscious. I was later told that his mind had drifted toward something more real. He was having a sort of vision. He could see Frederick Douglass in a warm southern cotton field. He was saying to King, "Who would be free, themselves must strike the first blow."^{xiii} King listened and watched as Douglass wept, not with the cowardice of a boy, but with the wisdom of a man. His vision then changed to view Douglass's death in 1895. King's dream was interrupted, however, when John Lewis walked into the closed room and exclaimed, "Wake up King! Mr. Kennedy is trying to take the revolution out of the ring and put it in the courts."^{xiv} As King slowly awoke, he remembered the words of Langston Hughes in his poem "Frederick Douglass: 1817-1895." He found strength in the words, "He died in 1895. *He is not dead.*"^{xv}

With new courage, King got up and walked back out to the crowds and the boxing ring. Bayard Rustin and Rev. Smiley sighed in relief. Kennedy had been getting hit badly, and was ready for a substitute of his own. As Ali saw King return, he stopped immediately and accepted a loss for the round because King was, as the Kinks were humming, a well-respected man.

The original two faced each other once again. King marched toward Malcolm, determined, as though he were marching from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial. Bob Dylan saw this new enthusiasm and shouted that King was not, in fact, only a pawn in

their game. In response, the Black Panthers waved their fists and borrowed the chant, "Burn baby burn!"

Malcolm had devised a new strategy by which he was sure he could win, but Elijah Muhammad had a different plan for Malcolm and coached him to do just the opposite. Though he verbally agreed, Malcolm began to question Elijah Muhammad and some of what he had been teaching him. He determined that later that night he would read and find out for himself what exactly he was supposed to be following. However, now he had to face King.

The two stared at each other in the eyes. King began to speak. "I just had a dream," he said and then continued, "Douglass was someone who, had he walked with wary foot and frightened tread, from very indecision might be dead."^{xvi} King concluded, "I have made my decision." Malcolm was partly listening to King and partly listening to his own previous thoughts. Neither King nor Malcolm moved for what began as a few seconds and gradually turned into minutes and eventually hours. It was finally obvious to the agonized crowd that this match was, in fact, no match at all. It had only been a matter of time before this would be apparent. The wrong people were facing each other. It was not really a panther and a lash who were fighting, but two brothers with a relationship far more complex than a boxing match or a battle of wits.

Later that night, as I pondered the previous events, I looked out my window and up at the moon, that broken and shattered moon, and thought about Emmett, broken like this heavenly object. Why had the moon broken? To be a beacon of light for the world to see? To be a beacon of darker light but, nonetheless, still sunlight?

^{xv} Hughes, Langston. "The Panther and the Lash."

^{xvi} Ibid.

^{xii} Presley, Elvis. "(You're The) Devil In Disguise."

^{xiii} Hughes, Langston. "The Panther and the Lash."

^{xiv} Gosse, Van. *The Movements of the New Left*.

Evaluation: *We have rarely read a paper that synthesizes history and literature with such insight. Sandra's surreal tale somehow gets across the gritty realities of the 1960s.*

A Tale of Two Scotty's: A Comparison of Raymond Carver's "The Bath" and "A Small, Good Thing"

Todd Tosi

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment:

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

Raymond Carver is arguably one of the literary world's most regarded contemporary writers. Indeed, "He has been identified as the leader of the renaissance of the short story that began in the late 1970s..." (Hallett 43). Especially worthy of mention is the "minimalist" label tagged upon Carver early in his writing. Morris Dickstein described Carver's particular brand of minimalism: "less is more: less psychology, less literary language, less continuous narration, only spare disjunctive details which ourselves must assemble" (qtd. in Hallett 46). Perhaps due to this writing style, Carver was also known for taking knife and pen to his previous works. In a discussion with Larry McCaffery and Sinda Gregory, Carver elaborated, "From the very beginning I loved the rewriting process as much as the initial execution. I've always loved taking sentences and playing with them, rewriting them, paring them down to where they seem solid somehow" (75). Nowhere is Carver's revising skill more evident than in the transformation of his short story, "The Bath" into "A

Small, Good Thing." The revision also signaled a change in his usage of rewriting. William Stull notes that "Carver is a rigorous reviser of even his published work, and until recently, at least, his inclination has been to condense rather than expand stories" (18). An informal check on that remark is valid when the length of "The Bath" and "A Small, Good Thing" is considered. The latter is triple the length of the former. But it is the change in content that is most relevant.

Both stories follow essentially the same framework: the plight of a family whose son is struck by a car on his birthday and are in turn tormented by the forgotten baker whom they've hired to bake the child's cake. The similarity ends there. Cynthia Hallett expands on that: "Although the characters, initiating situation, and crisis remain the same, these stories are so different in style, content, and effect that...they cannot be identified simply as separate versions of the same story. They are not the same story; nor is one merely an extension of the other" (63). Hallett's statement really underscores Carver's achievement. The stories are not the same. After finishing each story, the reader will feel two entirely different emotions: abject fear and terror upon the conclusion of "The Bath" and redemption and hope at the ending of "A Small, Good Thing."

"The Bath" was included in Carver's collection *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* in 1981 ("Chronology" 3). Stull so aptly labeled these stories as examples of "existential realism," a style that is black and white in its treatment of its subjects (19). "The Bath" is no exception. It begins mundanely somewhere in American suburbia with a trip to the local bakery:

The baker listened thoughtfully when the mother told him Scotty would be eight years old. He was an older man, this baker, and he wore a curious apron, a heavy thing with loops that went under his arms and around his back and then crossed in front again where they were tied in a very thick knot. He kept wiping his hands on the front of the apron as he listened to the woman, his wet eyes examining her lips as she studied the samples and talked.

He let her take her time. He was in no hurry.

The mother decided on the spaceship cake, and then gave the baker her name and her telephone number. The cake would be ready

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Monday morning, in plenty of time for the party Monday afternoon. This was all the baker was willing to say. No pleasantries, just this small exchange, the barest information, nothing that was not necessary. (249)

Interestingly enough, that last line quoted serves as a sort of style template for the entire story (Meyer 130). Minimalism reigns supreme from beginning to end; other than Scotty, who functions more as a plot device than character, the other players remain nameless until nearly the end when his mother's name is disclosed.

After Scotty's condition worsens, he is taken to the hospital for treatment, the impending birthday and cake forgotten. His mother and father meet there and, in keeping with the style and mood of the story, exchange the barest of conversation:

The husband put his hand to the back of the woman's head.

"He's going to wake up," the man said.

"I know," the woman said.

Hallett comments on that style: "...the story is relayed in quiet, simple sentences...the narrative voice seems flat, distant, emotionless, even disassociated" (61). Because of this economy of words, Carver is successful in purveying the sense of gloom and despair that permeates "The Bath."

Intertwined with the parents' plight is the situation faced by a nameless family in the hospital waiting room; waiting for information on their "Nelson" (253). Again, Carver uses the sparsest of details and conversation to further the desperate mood of the story. The encounter serves to heighten and sharpen the frightening unknown that encapsulates the story.

The baker figure in the story is central to promoting what one writer called "existential terror" (Gearhart 137). During Scotty's parents' ordeal, Carver has him constantly injecting his foreboding presence through anonymous phone calls to them in an attempt to punish them for forgetting the cake. His calls continue to the very end of the story when the mother returns home from the hospital to rest:

The telephone rang.

"Yes!" she said. "Hello!" she said.

"Mrs. Weiss," a man's voice said.

"Yes," she said. "This is Mrs. Weiss. Is it about Scotty?" she said.

"Scotty," the voice said. "It is about Scotty," the voice said. "It has to do with Scotty, yes."

Here, the story abruptly ends. Hallett maintains that there is no conclusion, at least not one that is completely resolved (61). Stull states it better: "Pity and fear abound in these stories ... Carver ... affords the readers no catharsis, the characters no exit" (19). There is no happy ending; there are only unanswered questions. Ann Beattie remarks on this most typical of Carver's endings: "Carver's most poetic writing often comes at the very end of a story – his language freezes moment in time with a clarity and complexity that allow us all the advantages his doomed characters are denied..." (5). True, but because Carver so excels at this style, in the case of "The Bath," the reader is still left with an unpleasant feeling in the gut.

"A Small, Good Thing" first appeared in the Carver book, *Cathedral* (1983). Overall, *Cathedral* earned critical accolades for its departure from what Ewing Campbell called "quintessential Carveresque" or the muted, black and white approach Carver had used in prior stories (152). The story essentially follows the same plot path as "The Bath." However, Carver has spent more time developing the characters and given them "flesh, blood, and consciousness" (Stull 20). Nameless souls are now graced with names and history; the father becomes college-educated Howard, the mother becomes Ann (and the viewpoint through which most of "A Small, Good Thing" is portrayed), and even minor players like the doctors and Nelson's family are "given essential identities" (Stull 20-1). This evens out the narrative and enables the reader to empathize with a character; focus is on the story itself and not its mood. Cynthia Hallett agrees: "The fuller style of 'A Small, Good Thing,' replete with description and event, furnishes an altogether different story that seems to dramatize a theme more than an experience" (63). The baker, whom Carver characterizes as "not jolly" and making Ann, Scotty's mom, "uncomfortable" also benefits from the rewrite (Carver, "A Small, Good Thing" 254). Thus, the reader is given a glimpse of the baker's future behavior.

Indeed, the baker continues his harassment of Ann and Howard as they endure the crisis of their son's injuries. Carver continues to tweak the human element of the story when Ann again encounters the exhausted family in the hospital waiting room. "The Bath" portrayed this group indeterminately and concerned only with the status of their son, "Nelson." Now, the family has become African-American and its son, now "Franklin," the victim of a knife attack. The connection between mothers cements the human element of the story, and the subsequent revelation of Franklin's passing prepares the reader for a similar circumstance for Ann; the seed has been planted.

Finally, the story breaks away from the sudden and frightening end of "The Bath." Scotty, in a convulsive fit, dies in front of his parents. Carver resolves any issues Ann and Howard might have with the hospital and its doctors. He even remolds the character of the primary physician, Dr. Francis, adding depth to a minor player in the story. Howard breaks down in front of the doctor. What was once a tale of unabated fear and the dark unknown has now been transformed into a melodrama; the only aspect left unanswered is the baker and his behavior. Of course, after Scotty's death, the threatening phone calls continue until finally Ann recognizes the malfeasant caller as the baker. Howard and Ann confront the baker and in a twist of events brought on by Ann's anger, it is the baker who laments his existence and confesses his foibles. Scotty's parents take solace in his confession and the bread he makes (Facknitz 110). Catharsis occurs not only for Ann and Howard but for the baker as well, and all the open issues left by "The Bath" have now been addressed.

It is this ending of "A Small, Good Thing" that fundamentally separates the story from its predecessor. It "goes farther still... beyond the limits of humanism, toward a final vision of forgiveness and community rooted in religious faith" (Stull 21). Consider the behavior of the baker:

He served them [Scotty's parents] warm cinnamon rolls just out of the oven, the icing still runny... He waited. He waited until they each took a roll from the platter and began to eat...

They ate rolls and drank coffee... Then he began to talk. They listened carefully. Although they were tired and in anguish, they listened to what the baker had to say. They nodded when the baker began to speak of loneliness, and of the sense of doubt and limitation that had come to him in his middle years. (Carver, "A Small, Good Thing" 270)

The baker has become minister to Scotty's parents, offering a kind of communion to them in this very uncertain time. And in return they offer redemption to him as he "confesses" his life's weaknesses. Although its ending is anything but joyful, "A Small, Good Thing" offers a sense of peace and resolve that "The Bath" does not.

While Carver himself maintained that "A Small, Good Thing" is the stronger of the two, he admitted that he "consider[ed] them to be really two entirely different stories; not just different versions of the story..." (McCaffery 69). In the same interview, Carver hints at a possible intention for revising the earlier work: "The story hadn't been told originally; it had been messed around with, condensed and compressed in 'The Bath' to highlight the qualities of menace that I wanted to emphasize ... I still felt there was unfinished business ... I ... tried to see what aspects of it needed to be enhanced, redrawn, reimagined" (McCaffery 69). When viewed from this perspective, it's easy to appreciate Carver's thinking. "The Bath" does convey an almost inhuman menace that transcends the immediacy of the characters and their behavior. The net effect of any emotional distress is foisted upon the reader. Writer Campbell observes this: "[The Bath] portray[s] unpleasant realities without relief... Carver chooses to eliminate character-shaping relations and to give only the result of the character's static confusion" (Campbell 153). When injected with humanity and emotions, this disembodied evil is transformed into a full-fledged passion play where tragedy, sin, and redemption all figure prominently.

Also figuring in the reason for revision was perhaps Carver's recognition that his style was becoming "too attenuated" and that he wanted to "break out" of his "personal and aesthetic" direction (McCaffery 68). Unmentioned by Carver but another reason for his overhaul of "The Bath" may be due to the chop job perpetrated

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ed upon the story by his editor at the time, Gordon Lish, prior to its publishing in *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*; the story suffered a reduction of eight pages from its original twenty ("Chronology" 3). In a collection of interviews devoted to the subject of Carver, literary peer William Kittredge confirms that "The Bath" was "enormously diminished in its emotional power" (Halbert 152). If the "The Bath" in its earlier, uncut form resembled anything like "A Small, Good Thing," then Kittredge's statement is certainly valid and suggests, possibly, that Carver's fiction has had a human side all along.

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Evaluation: This literary research paper is especially interesting because it discusses an author's style very intelligently, and it provides a nice historical perspective on the transformations of the author's work. Todd's writing is economical and lucid, making this an enjoyable read, as well.

A Prescriptive Proposal: Dialectic

Cyrus Vaziri

Course: Philosophy 231

(History of Philosophy—Ancient and Medieval)

Instructor: John Garcia

Assignment:

Write 9- to 12-page paper dealing with any question addressed in the course so far.

The issue should be treated in depth, with clear explanation of how one of the philosophers covered in the course addresses the issue.

There is little argument within the academic community that a higher emphasis be placed on the teaching of philosophy. After the Enron scandal, the entire establishment of business education called into question the methods by which prospective businessmen and women were learning the behavior behind the global economic stratum. Suddenly, it was realized that beyond the raw numbers and quantitative permutations existed a qualitative layer that held equal importance. The realization was simply that the idea of ethical conduct was quite real and applicable, and further that in light of corporate scandal, this idea was left mostly neglected. Beyond the realm of business, we can see the deeper implications of philosophic notions within the medical discipline. Here, the ethical issues are visible more radiantly, since most cases involve the physical (and mental) well being of human life. Several weeks ago, I overheard a nursing student expressing her satisfaction with her biomedical ethics class, saying that before that class, she would never have imagined some of the scenarios and questions posed. In recent times, medically assisted suicide has caught our nation's attentions. Judging by our reactions as reported by popular media, the need for a structured philosophic approach is higher than ever, as most arguments proposed for and against were either highly

emotive or too deeply rooted in one religious ideology. Whether we choose to accept or deny it, we are immersed in philosophic dilemmas. I find this to be a self-evident position, since we are constantly wading through human initiatives and ideas, and behind every one of these is a philosophic position at work. The issue at hand now is how we bring the broadest understanding of the philosophies at work. To do so, we will examine the best method in achieving this understanding, consider some problems with the prescribed method, and finally examine a modern and humanistic perspective on the need for the understanding of philosophy. I believe we can find this prescribed approach in Plato's *Republic*, where he describes dialectic as "the coping-stone that tops our educational system" (*Republic* 534e). From my own studies and observations in philosophy, I find myself entirely in agreement. It is in Plato's conception of dialectic where the best understanding of philosophic ideas may be achieved.

To begin our discussion of the value of dialectic we must come to a clear understanding of Plato's definition of it. His description of the dialectic method is that it is the only procedure that breaks down unfounded assumptions as it drives towards a first principle and that it achieves this using reason and specific branches of study (wrongly identified as true knowledge) to find this first principle (*Republic* 533d). So, it would seem a fair conclusion drawn from Plato's description of dialectic that we may arrive at some foundational understandings by reasonably and rationally arguing through various proposals using our understanding of the sciences (physics, mathematics, geology, etc).

At first, there might not seem to be much to this idea of dialectic. It is so general that we would like to believe this is how we always get to the bottom of philosophic dilemmas, but I believe this assumption to be no more than wishful thinking. It is often the case that the most basic notions are the ones that escape us, and this especially applies to Plato's dialectical method. The approach taken for most intellectual discourse contains a unifying theme that separates it from the proposed approach. The theme we find virtually everywhere is one of relativity. While people still take part in philosophic discussions, there is little or no ambition for

arriving at a higher understanding due to this relativist undercurrent. Ideas are exchanged until what is considered an impasse is reached. Rather than work through the difference in interpretation, an agreement is made to simply understand that this disagreement is present (recall the proverbial statement “let us agree to disagree”). Sadly, most people are content to leave the discourse at this point by simply moving on to another topic. So content are they with this surrender that it may even be considered a conclusion in itself. This conclusion is implicit but nonetheless present: there are no ultimate truths to be reached, for each person or group of people have their own truth.

Can this really be the case? After all, we do agree that mathematical principles are truths. Can we not say the same may apply to some philosophic positions? Unfortunately, we cannot digress into a discussion of absolutism versus relativism; however, in staying with this idea of dialectic and academic progress, we may argue that this relativist approach is a weak one when compared to Platonic dialectic—the reason being that the relativist approach quickly grows stagnant. We can see this when we recognize why we enter into any discussion: to come to some understanding we would not come to on our own. This is a core component in dialectic, that so much can be achieved with the plurality of human minds. We will examine the importance of this plurality in the discussions to come, but for our purposes, we must recognize that the reason we enter into discussions is that we do in fact understand that issues come to greater light when another mind is put on the case. It seems wholly foolish not to take advantage of this core idea. When we take the relativist retreat for a difference in ideas, we negate the possibility of coming to a new or greater understanding of the discussed topic. Instead, we end up exchanging ideas without synthesis. This is analogous to two musicians playing two entirely different pieces of music at the same time. While each might be interesting on their own, when put together, some harmony (or synthesis) must be achieved in order to compose a new piece of music. Plato’s dialectic does try to achieve a harmony or synthesis in human thought. By driving toward a first principle in philosophic discourse, we are given incentive to not cut the conversation at an impasse, rather to dig deeper into the implications of each position and find either common ground

suitable to move onward upon, or to find one of the conflicting positions faulty. I must stress here that this is not pure conjecture. Plato frequently mentions reason as a means for finding truth, and there are many instances where a difference in ideas may be resolved with a little logical reasoning.

This leads us to why the relativist retreat is favored so much. I believe a primary factor in this is an issue of respect. Personally, I do find it an attractive characteristic to argue passionately. It brings an issue to life and helps us understand that the issue transcends the objective art of argumentation; however, there is a fine line to walk. There is great difficulty in arguing passionately and at the same time avoiding arguing entirely emotively. I believe most of us are so afraid of digressing into the total emotive argument to the extent that we take the relativist retreat at the first sign of trouble for fear of treading on another’s feet. But if we really understand what it is to argue passionately, then it is easy to keep the distinction clear and maintain a truly dialectic approach. If we have a strong intellectual attachment to a topic being discussed, then we must treat it accordingly by allowing whatever reasoning necessary to get to the bottom of it, or to the first principle, as Plato would put it. Part of holding a position intrinsically significant is understanding that the emotive digression is merely an obstacle that must be overcome to further our knowledge of it. If we can imagine two participants engaged in intellectual discourse who truly acknowledge this, it is easy to predict how they would deal with the impasse: first, that the impasse is not an impasse at all, rather an opportunity to reveal fault or find harmony; second, that if the issue really is important to the individual, merely saying “to each his own” does nothing to express this importance.

Having analyzed why our notion of dialectic is rarely pursued, we must now look at why this method is so essential in enriching not just our understanding of philosophy, but of virtually all areas of academic thought. As mentioned earlier, the true power of dialectic lies in the plurality of minds. We stated that the issues (especially philosophic issues) come to greater light when multiple minds are employed. If we can understand why it is, exactly, that the plurality of mind holds so much importance in dialectic, then we may also see why the dialectic approach is the best available tool in education.

There is a lovable archetype within philosophy, of the lone bearded wise man sitting atop a mountain summit, deep in thought. As charming as this may be, I find it to be disturbingly inaccurate. The more realistic image we may draw from philosophy is scholars, students, or any laypersons actively arguing amongst each other. It is here where philosophy is born and lives. One mind alone is not enough to do justice to any issue for several reasons. One of these is easily seen when we recall a difficult problem we have encountered. An elementary example of this is a crossword puzzle or even a word search puzzle. Often, there comes a point where we get stuck and can find no solution to the puzzle. Then, another person comes and takes a glance at the puzzle and finds the answer in almost no time at all, compared to the time the first person spent gazing upon it. This might seem an oversimplification when put against the troubles we encounter when deliberating over real philosophic dilemmas, but there is an unchanging principle at work between the example and all other philosophic dilemmas: another mind offers a fresh perspective, especially when the initial mind has entrenched itself in the problem for a great amount of time.

Another reason that is more applicable to real philosophic dilemmas is the different backgrounds multiple minds provide. Obviously, no two minds share the same experiences or upbringing, and this becomes incredibly useful when it comes time to discuss some important issue. When we view the human mind as a vast collection of different experiences and interpretations, it is hard not to conclude that this can only be beneficial when engaged in dialectic. While the main idea behind dialectic is seeking out a first principle, I can think of nothing more useful than a broad catalog of differing interpretations and experience to compare in seeking some truth. Again we have a simple principle at work: With many minds, we form a broad network of information that can be utilized to enact the dialectic method.

My final reason for proposing the communal approach to philosophy and intellectual discussion in general is slightly more ambiguous, as it is hard to identify where its essence resides. There seems to be some phenomenon within the act of communication itself that yields progress. This can be better illustrated by comparing it to our own internal dialogue. Just as we talk ourselves through perplexing issues within our own minds,

using internal dialogue to move from idea to idea, we do the same when we engage in dialectic; however, I would like to take it further on the premise that true engagement in dialectic is a most intimate act because true engagement would exclude any pretense, leaving the participants with nothing but their ideas and dedication to coming to a viable conclusion. Of course it might be that the phenomenological nature of communication is simply the product of the previous mentioned benefits to multiple minds at work, but just as it is difficult to explain our own existence as the sum of our biological parts, it is difficult to tack down why we come into so many new ideas through the act of communication.

When we put all of this together, it is not hard to see why Plato's dialectic method is such a powerful tool in extending our knowledge. Offering fresh perspectives when one mind is bogged down over a particular dilemma, offering a wealth of different information, and the cumulative power of communication itself possesses a lot more potential than the individual approach. But this alone is not enough. We must return to the *Republic* to see what really establishes dialectic as our prescribed method. As mentioned earlier, a key component in Plato's dialectic is striving toward a first principle. It is for this reason that the use of dialectic can help us overcome the stagnancy of the relativist approach to discourse. In effect, it prevents the argument from stalling when a discrepancy in positions comes to a head, by keeping the argument moving towards a higher truth. It also instills passion into the argument. If we acknowledge the existence of concepts such as first principles, or ultimate truths, or the good, we establish them as greater than human life (but certainly not excluding human life). With goals such as these in our intellectual sights, I find it would be hard not to feel passionate about seeking truth through dialectic.

There is an even more fundamental importance within the dialectical method, which makes it most important in education. When Plato begins describing his idea of dialectic, he returns to the allegory of the cave in saying, "The prisoners in our cave...were released and turned round from the shadows to the images which cast them and to the fire, and then climbed up into the sunlight" (*Republic* 532b). If the prisoners of the cave were released, the logical question we may ask ourselves is "by whom?" As we later find out in the *Republic*, it is

the duty of those who have come to see The Good (the true philosophers) to do so, but there is also another conclusion to be drawn from this. The conclusion is quite simple: it takes another to free another. This simple interpretation is relevant to the nature of dialectic in that it affirms the power of multiple minds and the need for multiple minds. It most certainly is ideal that we have those with true vision leading the ignorant out of the cave, using dialectic; however, an even more striking conclusion we can draw from this statement is that we cannot achieve these higher understandings alone. Rather, we must have the assistance of others, and to do so, we must use dialectic.

The question now is whether or not this use of dialectic really works. An almost universal complaint we hear from students is that their classes are too large, and that if given the choice, they would opt for the smaller class. The explanation for this is usually the individual attention received in smaller classes. This may seem to detract from our proposal that the more minds present yield more potential for arriving at higher understanding, but upon closer analysis, it does not. Ironically, the larger a classroom becomes, the more isolating the experience becomes. Because we understand that so many people trying to contribute in a discussion would be chaotic given a large number of students present, we tend to keep quiet and listen to lecture. Unfortunately, this isolation can lead to misunderstanding and failure for many. The response to this isolation affirms the power of dialectic (or at least the struggle to achieve something near dialectic): tutoring, appointments with the instructor, and small study groups are desired. I believe it is the intimate and direct nature of dialectic that is truly being sought after here. A setting in which a number of minds large enough to get an exchange of ideas flowing but small enough so as not to be overwhelming seems to be most conducive for learning. Whether the other requirements for Platonic dialectic are fulfilled or what the content of the tutoring or discussion might be are not as important as the natural tendency seen toward a more dialectic setting.

Even though there are some great benefits of the dialectical method and even some natural tendencies toward it, it is not without fault. One of these problems is as close to its essential nature as are its intrinsic benefits we just discussed. Plato would describe this problem as “eristic,” or the use of invalid arguments (Edwards

386). In Plato’s allegory of the cave he made it quite clear that it must be those who have gained understanding of The Good (or seen the sun) to use dialectic to free the prisoners from the cave of illusion. It is because of this notion of eristic that he points this out. While dialectic on its own is a noble concept, there is plenty of room for foul play or unintentional misuse. A prime example of this is the numerous conversations one may overhear that are obviously pseudo-philosophical, such as two inebriants haphazardly arguing appearance versus reality from having recently watched *The Matrix*. The problem here is that it is tricky business in determining what may be tagged as pseudo-philosophical, for running the risk of acquiring an overly cynical or elitist mentality. But suffice it to say, there exist some clear examples of arguments with little or no epistemological or rational backing.

A greater problem with the misuse of dialectic is its deliberate misuse. We need not look far to find this, for many of us have encountered skilled liars or smooth talkers. Unfortunately, there are those who have a firm grasp on the art of argumentation and will smuggle it under the guise of dialectic to achieve more devious results. Political and corporate scandals often come about in this manner. On these professional levels, blatant devious behavior rarely works; rather, a calculated and well composed approach at deception is required. Unfortunately, using the dialectical method comes in handy here as it can make for a great presentation and is appealing on the interpersonal level.

Plato’s most reputed student carried on the idea of dialectic and did more by ways of addressing these problems with the original conception. For Aristotle, Plato’s dialectic was not enough for gaining true knowledge; rather, it “required demonstration, which is valid reasoning that starts out from true and self-evident premises” (Edward 386). This further requirement weeds out the haphazard use of dialectic for the most part. By agreeing to start the dialectic method with these self-evident premises, it becomes increasingly difficult to throw out an outlandish prediction about the nature of reality. Instead, we are forced to work with an affirmable foundation in reality. While this may not guarantee the avenues pursued from this point of egress will remain coherent, it is an important clarification of the dialectic method.

Unfortunately, this modification does little for the possibility of eristic. The whole idea in launching a fallacious argument is making it seem plausible, and in most cases, this can be done using Aristotle's requirement. The misuse of dialectic often does begin with a self-evident premise and builds using sound logic; however, after a number of coherent connections have been laid out, the deception begins by weaving in the fallacies among the truths to achieve the desired outcome. For our ancient philosophers, the response to this misuse of dialectic is that it is not dialectic at all, rather sophistry. But it still remains that the very same method is used for more devious reasons. There really is no simple amendment for this, only that we familiarize ourselves with true dialectic to the point that we can scrutinize and seek out the good argument from the bad.

Plato's idea of dialectic is by no means a perfect concept, but this is the case with any prescribed philosophical method. The nature of philosophy is one of growth, and this means that in the present, no method or theory may be considered absolutely complete. But occasionally a proposal does come along with such potential that it is well worth our time in examining, modifying, and employing. I find this to be the case with dialectic. Although we have discussed the utility of Platonic dialectic, I must stress again that this is the method we most focus on if we are to make any progress in human thought. As we are communal beings, so are our ideas. Without the nourishment of fellow minds, an idea is likely to face the same outcome of the entirely isolated mind: degradation to the point of no return. This isolation seems to comprise the overall status of the philosophical inquiries of the vast majority of our population. Jacob Needleman illustrates this point beautifully in *The Heart of Philosophy* by describing an account with an insurance executive: "He stands there, torn for a moment between two worlds, two aspects of himself. He chooses, finally, to speak to me and pours out thoughts and questions that have been lying half-starved in his mind for thirty years" (Needleman 10).

Even though we do find ourselves engaging in intellectual discourse from time to time, it is comparable to trying to sustain the human body by eating only celery. Without the intent and passion to actually seek out truth, it is merely empty filler. The idea is still isolated and left to collapse in on itself due to the neglect and passage of

time. Even if we are not willing to adhere to metaphysical notions such as an ultimate truth or Plato's Good, we can take the dialectical method one step at a time and at least escape the relativist retreat by simply understanding that a clash of ideas does not necessitate an emotive digression. We have seen time and time again how well humans operate in small groups, and that is essentially what Plato's dialectic is. By working with fellow people and striving for real answers, we can come to greater understandings of the reality around us.

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Evaluation: *In this paper, Cyrus argues for a thesis that is truly original. He manages to show that philosophical thinking actually has a particular method to it, and that the use of this method can lead to significant improvement in the way we think about our lives and about the way we view education. The reader, whether familiar with philosophy or not, finishes the paper with an increased understanding of complicated material as well the realization that philosophy can be relevant to our lives. The degree to which this paper shows the relevance of philosophy marks it as truly memorable.*

Embracing the Archetype: An Awakening of Identity Through Timeless Myth

Christine Welsh

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment:

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

In her short story “Yellow Woman,” Leslie Marmon Silko tells a tale of a modern-day woman of the Pueblo culture of New Mexico, who embarks on a dreamlike journey when she meets a stranger along the river outside her pueblo home. The woman becomes sexually intimate with this man and goes with him to his isolated home in the mountains, leaving behind her husband, child, and extended family. The narrator imagines herself following in the footsteps of Yellow Woman, a prominent character of the old stories told by her grandfather, with the stranger playing the part of an evil ka’tsina, a mountain spirit who abducted Yellow Woman in those stories. The further he leads her away from the familiar surroundings of the pueblo, the further she retreats from her ordinary, modern existence, and questions her identity. She begins to wonder if she really is becoming the Yellow Woman of the past and whether she will ever go home. She questions the man’s identity as well when he also plays into the myth, refusing to identify his origins and enigmatically suggesting that he really is a mountain ka’tsina. Though the element of abduction is present, the woman has more than one opportunity to leave, yet she chooses to stay, even turning back to him after having twice started for home. She finally does return, but only after fleeing when the man draws his gun in a confrontation with an unarmed white rancher. Even then, she pauses along the trail to wait for him. Only when she hears the shots from a distance does she go back down the mountain toward home.

At first glance, “Yellow Woman” may seem little more than the story of a questionable adventure undertaken by a confused runaway. However, although the three days she spends with the man are punctuated with moments of danger and uncertainty, they are also filled with moments that imbue the woman with a sense of beauty and continuity and awaken her to her own identity and sensuality. Throughout this journey, the narrator is drawn back and forth across the boundaries of myth and reality, time and timelessness. During this time, she draws upon the powerful influence of the stories told to her about Yellow Woman’s character. By the time she does return to the pueblo and to her family, she has fully embraced the spirit of Yellow Woman.

The manner in which the blending of time, myth and reality in this story play out in the narrator's behavior may be difficult to understand for the non-Native American reader who is not aware of the significance of oral tradition in the Pueblo culture. Silko, who was born in New Mexico in 1948 and grew up on the Laguna Pueblo, writes this story from the very center of this tradition. As a child, she was given a sense of not only her own identity as an individual, but of the Pueblo people as a whole through the stories told to her by her grandmothers, aunts, and other members of the community ("Yellow Woman" 379). Silko tells us that it is through these stories that the Pueblo people come to know who they are. These stories contained not only the origin and history of the ancient Pueblo people, but were replete with teachings on everyday life. Because this history was never put into a written language, "the ancient Pueblo depended upon collective memory through successive generations to maintain and transmit an entire culture, a worldview complete with proven strategies for survival" (Silko, "Landscapes," par. 15). This provided an important continuum between past and present, as Silko explains further: "Whatever the event or the subject, the ancient people perceived the world and themselves within that world as part of an ancient, continuous story composed of innumerable bundles of other stories" (Silko, "Landscapes," par. 15). This rich oral tradition not only preserved the collective knowledge of generations but maintained a history of their experiences right up to the present in a flow of timelessness central to their philosophy ("Yellow Woman" 383). Silko reflects this in "Yellow Woman" as the story's narrator moves fluidly between the past and present, and places herself within the realm of the mythic stories of her people, even upon her return to her modern day life.

The narrator in "Yellow Woman" only gradually comes to the realization that her story is one in a "bundle of other stories." This theme of awakening is evident from the opening paragraph, which describes a literal wakening, as the narrator finds herself lying along the banks of a river in the morning light. In the opening moments of the story, we know nothing of who she is and where she is from, other than that she has apparently had an intimate encounter with the man sleeping next

to her. Even the landscape around her seems to be waking up as she watches the sun rise and listens to the water flowing in the river. She keenly observes every detail of her surroundings, right down to the brown scratches left by the birds in the white mud near the river.

When she rises, she thinks about going home and follows their footprints back from the way they had come the previous afternoon. She is unable to see her pueblo but can visualize its location: "I knew it was there, even if I could not see it, on the sand rock hill above the river, the same river that moved past me now and had reflected the moon last night" (629). Again, the narrator is acutely aware of the details of the landscape, which is not surprising, given the importance of landscape in Pueblo stories. As Silko tells us, "The myth, the web of memories and ideas that create an identity, is a part of oneself. This sense of identity was intimately linked with the surrounding terrain, to the landscape that has often played a significant role in a story or in the outcome of a conflict" (Silko, "Landscapes," par. 42). At this point in the story, the narrator's sense of identity is still connected to the familiar, immediate area around her pueblo which, although unseen, is linked to her by the river that flows past her toward her home.

The woman starts to head for home, but changes her mind when she remembers the man, still asleep by the river. She walks back toward him and follows the river back again, noticing that, "the white sand broke loose in footprints over footprints" (629). This image of the footprints, tumbling over themselves in both directions, is the first hint of the sense of the timelessness Silko will continue to convey throughout the story. Like the footprints, the narrator will find the past mingling with the present in a way not uncommon to the Native American way of thinking about time. Rather than the more European idea of time always moving forward in a linear fashion, the Native American concept of time and space is circular and layered. The past is not just a time gone by, but is closely linked with the present ("Yellow Woman" 383).

The narrator tells the man, named Silva, that she is leaving, but he stops her in her tracks when he calls her Yellow Woman, a name that momentarily suspends the present and poises her on the brink of the past. She

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remembers her grandfather telling the stories about Yellow Woman and her many adventures, and especially how Yellow Woman had been kidnapped by the evil mountain ka'tsina and taken away to live with him. She protests, but when she asks Silva who he is, he mysteriously declares, "Last night you guessed my name and you knew why I had come" (629), reinforcing the roles they seemed to be playing. Could he really be the ka'tsina come to kidnap her? In an attempt to keep the past and present clearly delineated, she tries to remind herself that they were just ordinary people. In her critique, Catherine Lappas believes that this indicates "a condition born of cultural dislocation: She is an Indian woman living in a Western world that dismisses all stories as irrelevant and, in some cases, antithetical to lived life" (391). The woman tells herself and Silva that those were just old stories that had nothing to do with them, seemingly disavowing anything more than an inconsequential connection between herself and her cultural heritage. But Silva continues to call her Yellow Woman, drawing her back into the myth. When he touches her again, she willingly embraces him in another sexual encounter, thinking about the mythic Yellow Woman and all her adventures.

What would compel a woman to engage in risky behavior, leaving behind a baby and a family to run off with a man she has only just met? The narrator herself does not seem to know, and this makes her afraid. Perhaps the woman is feeling dislocated by the western world or maybe she is longing for something else, something internal, that she sees in the archetype of the mythical Yellow Woman. In his study of the subconscious, psychologist Carl Jung noted that such archetypes are patterns or models passed down through the collective consciousness of generations in the form of traditional lore. Jung writes that, "The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear" (5). The woman in the story has heard about Yellow Woman all her life from her grandfather, who has since passed away. With his death, however, this link to her heritage is gone, and she no longer hears this treasure trove of stories. As a modern-

day Pueblo woman, she is now caught between two worlds, the ancient tribal way and the modern western way that has engulfed it. To which one does she belong? This disconnect has led her to tentatively grasp onto the archetype of Yellow Woman as a well-spring of personal identity. Silko tells us that, "Kochininako, Yellow Woman, represents all women in the old stories" (Silko, "Beauty of Spirit," par. 25), whose courage and passion are important elements with which to identify.

Jungian psychologist Clarissa Pinkola Estes would not be surprised at the influence of the Yellow Woman stories upon the narrator. Estes, who wrote extensively about female archetypes found in legends, believes that women can find strength and wisdom by embracing these mythic figures and learning from their stories, bringing this archetype into active consciousness. "Fairy tales, myths, and stories provide understandings which sharpen our sight so that we can pick out and pick up the path left by the wildish nature," writes Estes, "The instruction found in story reassures us that the path has not run out, but still leads women deeper, and more deeply still, into their own knowing" (6). Finding herself out of her normal bounds and attracted to a mysterious and possibly dangerous stranger, it would seem only natural that the narrator would latch onto the bold and courageous persona of Yellow Woman.

The narrator finds herself pondering the similarities between the stories she has heard and her own situation. Had Yellow Woman also been just an ordinary woman who had been kidnapped by a strange spirit, and did she know that she would become part of the stories passed down through the generations? This thought process exhibits what Jim Ruppert calls "the proper psychic framework of a balanced being," in which the woman is able to move along with the storyline while still engaged in the present (399). It also demonstrates the narrator's assimilation of her identity into the story identity as a direct result of the influence of oral tradition. She turns to the Yellow Woman story thinking that "This is the way it happens in the stories . . . with no thought beyond the moment she meets the ka'tsina spirit and they go" (630). The parallel between the actions of the Yellow Woman archetype and her own are beginning to feel natural, as if it was meant to be.

Many of the traditional Yellow Woman stories are about abduction and at first, when Silva pulls her by the wrist along the path, she resists, but only slightly. She is beginning to feel as if she is indeed following the instruction she has received through hearing the many Yellow Woman stories. However, she is still attempting to orient herself between the story and reality, hoping that they will run into someone who will reinforce that she is in fact a modern woman. She still sees the Yellow Woman stories as a remnant of a bygone era with little connection to her own life, "because she is from out of time past and I live now and I've been to school and there are highways and pickup trucks that Yellow Woman never saw" (630). As Pauline Morel writes, "She is reluctant to equate her adventure with that of Yellow Woman as she cannot yet envision a medium ground, a borderland uniting past and present, modern and ancient" (35). She is straddling a fine line between myth and her own reality, still trying to separate the old ways from the new.

They head for the mountains on horseback, and she is again very aware of her natural surroundings. The landscape is changing, and she can no longer see the sandstone and river of her home. Now that he has her in his own domain, Silva seems to reinforce the ka'tsina myth by singing mountain songs. His own behavior fits the mythic character, as he lives a minimalist lifestyle, with only the barest of comforts, and apparently survives by stealing cattle from local ranchers. When they arrive at his cabin, Silva also follows the mythic storyline by asking her to prepare food for him, just as the ka'tsina had done with Yellow Woman in the story. Silva admits to stealing cattle, and she begins to wonder about him. He can speak her language but lives totally outside of any tribal community. When she asks him if he is Navajo, he calls her Yellow Woman again and says, "I have told you who I am. The Navajo people know me, too" (632). However, he is not necessarily denying a tribal affiliation in this subtle play on words. The Navajo could know him as the man, Silva, and they would also know the ka'tsina story. In this way, he embraces an archetype of his own: a free spirit that is not bound by any manmade border or law.

Outside the cabin, she stands on the edge of the trail and feels "nothing around me but the wind that came down from the blue mountain peak behind me" (631). The narrator can no longer see any recognizable details of her familiar world and is figuratively stripped of everything but the elements around her now. In this setting, which is familiar to her only through the legends, she enters what Bernard Hirsch calls "the more expansive and truer realm of imagination and myth" (394). Silva is able to point out the boundaries of the different cultures below, the Navajo and Pueblo reservations, the American and Mexican ranches. She sees that her pueblo is only a small part of a much larger landscape, bounded by mountains that are barely visible in the distance.

The woman and Silva become intimate again, and although she starts out willingly, she pulls away from him when he teases her. He reinforces the myth again by physically overpowering her just as a ka'tsina might have overpowered Yellow Woman. She does not resist him, however, even though she knows he could hurt her. She is compelled by this power and has been all along. Though some may see this as a rape fantasy, Hirsch does not agree: "the coercive element, though present, is not the controlling one. Yellow Woman is at all times in charge of her own destiny. She understands and accepts her sexuality, expresses it honestly, and is guided by her own strong desire" (395). Silko herself speaks to this issue, noting that this sexuality is part and parcel of the myth, that for the mythic Yellow Woman, "her power lies in her courage and in her uninhibited sexuality, which the old-time Pueblo stories celebrate again and again because fertility was so highly valued" (Silko, "Beauty of Spirit," par. 25). Afterward, the narrator feels tenderly toward Silva: "I touched his face and I had a feeling – the kind of feeling for him that overcame me that morning along the river" (632). Her sexual experiences with Silva are one more element of the Yellow Woman archetype that is absorbed by the narrator.

In the morning, there is no sign of him, and she contemplates leaving for home. But as she sits outside and eats, she is again immersed in the elemental setting and the details of the mountain landscape. She wonders what her family is thinking about her disappearance and remembers her grandfather. She knows that he would

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simply explain things in Yellow Woman's terms: that the narrator, like many others of her kind, had been abducted by a ka'tsina. She places herself within the flow of time of her heritage when she thinks that someday, a story about her disappearance would be added to the traditional lore of her people. The fact that she might not return does not seem to trouble her: "Silva had come for me; he said he had. I did not decide to go. I just went. Moonflowers blossom in the sand hills before dawn, just as I followed him" (633). She has absorbed the mythic Yellow Woman now, following a path that seems fated for her, just as surely as the wildflowers follow a natural order. She returns to the mountain house and remembers that she meant to go home, "But that didn't seem important any more, maybe because there were little blue flowers growing in the meadow behind the stone house and the gray squirrels were playing in the pines next to the house" (633). The picture of Yellow Woman, surrounded by the elements of nature and encased in layers of storytelling, is complete.

Back at the cabin she finds Silva butchering a steer, which he has not killed for his own use or for her, but to sell for profit. This jars against the myths in which Yellow Woman's encounters with spirits often bring relief for her and her people from famine and drought (Silko, "Beauty of Spirit," par. 27). She again questions him about who he really is, but still he will not answer and only directs her to help him take the meat to town. They follow a trail west, and when she thinks she sees signs of modern civilization, Silva tells her she is wrong, perhaps to keep from breaking the spell of Yellow Woman story. As she has done throughout the whole story, she goes back to noticing the beauty of the natural setting, seeing every color of cactus flower, even observing which colors were in bloom and which were still in the bud. Not even the subtlest detail of the landscape seems to escape her.

They are soon discovered by an unarmed white rancher who confronts Silva about the meat and is determined to have them arrested. Silva tells the narrator to go back, and when she looks back at Silva, she sees "something ancient and dark – something I could feel in my stomach – in his eyes, and when I glanced at his hand I saw his finger on the trigger of the .30-30 that

was still in the saddle scabbard" (634). This is the essence of the mountain ka'tsina archetype that she recognizes from the stories – evil and destructive. The mythic Yellow Woman exhibits her strength through beauty and sensuality, not through violence (Silko, "Beauty of Spirit," par. 32), and this time the narrator knows she must leave or she will become caught up in something dangerous and beyond her control.

She rides away, then pauses to look back, but she can't see where they were. When she she sees jet trails, the first real sign of the modern world that she has seen in two days, it seems to signal the end of her immersion in the story of the past. When shots are fired, she suddenly heads down the mountain, this time for home. Along the trail, the scenery gradually returns to that of the river and the sandstone mesas, returning her to a more familiar realm and time. She steps back into her current reality and lets go of the myth when she sets the horse free, still with its cargo of meat, and sends it running back toward the mountains.

Rather than wait by the road for someone to pick her up, she walks back home along the river, the same path they followed on their way into the mountains. It is as if she consciously decides that she must complete her journey on her own terms. As unfathomable as Silva still is to her, the sight of the leaves that he had trimmed from the willow branch wilting in the sand makes her feel sad at leaving him. She knows she has come too far back toward her own life to return to him now. Still, she does not question her own actions and places herself within the timelessness of myth when she says, "And I told myself, because I believe it, that he will come back sometime and be waiting again by the river" (635). The mythic world imparted to her through oral tradition has given her a new and different sense of her own reality. As Ruppert explains, "In the story reality, the seeming simplicity and reality of objective actions are reinterpreted and woven into a larger scheme through which the actions take on a new and deeper meaning and their place in a mythic pattern emerges" (398).

When the narrator returns home, she finds a scene that Hirsch describes as "a world governed more by routine than by passion, a world somewhat at odds with itself, as mother instructing grandmother suggests, and

a world no longer receptive to the wonder and wisdom of the old stories" (394). She decides to tell her family that she had been kidnapped by a Navajo, repeating common themes of abduction and tribal interactions. Remembering how much her grandfather liked to tell Yellow Woman stories, she knows that she has brought forward an identity that is not only meaningful for herself, but for her entire community (Ruppert 399). By entering into the Yellow Woman story and emerging with a new one of her own to tell, she repeats the traditional storytelling pattern, preserving an important aspect of her culture.

Like the grandfather in the story, Silko admits that Yellow Woman stories have always been her favorite. With her courage and passion, Yellow Woman represents an influential avatar that Silko herself has often drawn upon: "The stories about Kochininako made me aware that sometimes an individual must act despite disapproval, or concern for appearances or what others may say. From Yellow Woman's adventures I learned to be comfortable with my differences" (Silko, "Beauty of Spirit," par. 30). Having a psychological source of strength in the form of a cultural archetype can be a powerful ally. As Jung notes, "Archetypes are complexes of experience that come upon us like fate, and their effects are felt in our most personal life. The anima no longer crosses our path as a goddess, but it may be, as an intimately personal misadventure, or perhaps as our best venture" (30). Whether the reader sees this story as a venture or a misadventure, Silko's narrator returns to the routine of her regular life with the knowledge that the spirit of Yellow Woman, and all that her stories entail, now forms part of her personal and cultural identity. Likewise, by creating this modern-day Yellow Woman, Silko comes full circle with her own strong cultural identity, contributing a new story to the still-living oral tradition.

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Evaluation: *Christine's preparation to write this research paper went beyond the standard review of the usual anthologized sources, and her synthesis of those sources with her own perceptions has resulted in mature and thoughtful academic writing. This is an excellent example of how a literary research paper should illuminate and make meaning out of a work of literature.*

Afterword

Forty Years and Forward: Another Harper Student on Writing

Kris Piepenburg

This year, Harper College celebrated its fortieth anniversary, at a number of events on and off campus, including a fine Gala hosted by the Harper College Educational Foundation this fall. Although a fortieth anniversary probably is not a whole lot different from a thirty-ninth or forty-first (well, this may be true for anywhere but Harper), these milestone anniversaries stand out for the self-reflection that invariably results from them. The blueprints and photos from Harper's past on the *Anthology* covers and the following thoughts on teaching and learning are just a small contribution to the slowly filling pool of institutional self-reflection, and a tribute to how things have changed—and remained the same—in the passing years.

My first writing class as a student at Harper College was English 101, with Professor Peter Sherer, in H building, on weekday mornings, in the fall of 1979. I can recall the homogeneity of the students in that class (white students fresh from the local high schools, with one or two returning adults), and I can recall three assignments I completed, only one of them well. The first that I recall was the assignment simply to “write a poem.” The poem I wrote at the age of eighteen was a lament about how the suburban area we lived in was being “covered with wax” and losing its individual character to franchises and housing developments (kind of an obvious perception). Professor Sherer was impressed, and we discussed the poem in a communal office in F Building, with some other English faculty who happened to be around. The second assignment I remember was an in-class grammar test, part of which involved the identification of different types of phrases. I scored horribly on this test, but I clearly recall being able to identify appositive phrases really well. The third assignment I recall was to write a persuasive essay, on

which I received the grade of C-. My interest in writing persuasive essays was not high. I was more interested in writing fiction and poetry and had not developed the patience needed for more formal types of writing. I am sure that my daughter, attending Harper this past year, was writing more effectively in Hemmer and Herriges' Rock and Roll Learning Community than I was in Sherer's 101.

Now, as I teach composition to incredibly diverse groups of students, in terms of culture, age, ability, and motivation, I am constantly questioning my methods and purpose, and thinking about the variables in our students' lives that affect how they perform in our classes. I see my past and impatience in some of the 18- to 20-year-old students, and I see a much greater variety in the student population than what was evident in Professor Sherer's class in 1979. Because of this variety, I am constantly adjusting courses, assignments, and methods, to hopefully teach a concept or skill more effectively. Now, especially, faced with an ever-widening array of student abilities and needs with respect to reading and writing in English, the challenge of teaching composition effectively for an entire group is much greater.

In one of my English 102 sections this semester, among a group that includes Indian, Pakistani, African, Eastern European, Filipino, and Chinese students, all with varying levels of skill in English reading and writing, there is also a student who reads by placing a finger under every word and semi-vocalizing it; a middle-aged professional man who comes to class halfway through on some nights, or not at all, and turns in assignments late, or halfway completed; and some younger students whose commitment to the class is impeded by work schedules, lack of motivation, or an unclear idea about the level of effort needed to succeed at the college level.

Others of the group read and write at high levels and don't need much assistance from me. The students of this group clearly have a diverse assortment of talents, experiences, and needs, and most are working very hard alongside me, and alongside the tutoring and writing center personnel, to complete and revise their writing assignments.

Every semester and every week, as I prepare a class for a group such as this, I think about a number of questions: What will help these students most, in the short term and in the long? What reading and writing assignments are truly meaningful? What activities will actually lead to improvement of skills and competencies? What will result in good preparation for higher-level studies and professional responsibilities? How can I best teach the necessary research and writing skills and competencies in such a diverse group? Every instructor asks these types of questions, and the answers are always a little different, depending on the instructor, the individuals in a class, and the composition of the group as a whole. Sometimes, in finding answers to these questions, I rediscover things I ought to have remembered, such as the limited value of lecture in actually having students develop and employ new skills, or the fact that too many detailed written instructions at once can confuse or lose the students. Teaching is always a combination of forward and reverse movement, but this may be more so in highly diverse groups of learners.

Despite having doubts and questions, and despite the challenges of the Harper college classroom in 2007, forty years and forward, there are a few things I am sure of when it comes to the teaching of reading and writing and their importance in every student's future. This edition of *The Harper Anthology* is full of excellent research-based writing, of the sort commonly assigned in English 102, which requires completion of a literature-based research paper at the semester's end. At times, while describing how to prepare and write such papers during a class such as the one mentioned above, I have questioned the meaning and purpose of the assignment. However, inevitably, I come to the same conclusion: while the investigation of a work of literature through research might not be something a student will ever do again, the scholarship and attention to detail necessary to complete such an assignment honestly and well is some-

thing that a person will need to repeat—and further develop—in the course of academic and professional life, whether it is 1967, 2007, or 2027. The development and mastery of these skills will help a person earn degrees and contribute to the professional world, and some of those who master these scholarship and writing skills will someday use them in important and worthwhile causes, in any number of fields and on any number of fronts.

As Harper completes its fortieth anniversary year, it is tempting to dig deeper than this, to try to find the profound statement that brings things all together, that puts everything in perspective, or describes what is eternal in our mission. The above comments on scholarship and writing probably come as close as I can to expressing something of that. However, as I was writing this Afterword, and looking at the pictures of the faculty from 1967 and 1975 on the inside back cover (all now retired, except for one—can you spot who it is, in the picture?), the idea held within a poem by Beat Generation poet Allen Ginsberg kept circling near. The poem, called “In the Baggage Room at Greyhound,” has Ginsberg searching for “eternity” in the faces of his coworkers, and the passengers, and in the luggage and parcels—all lovingly described—at a California Greyhound station. He realizes, while sitting on a massive luggage rack one night, that none of these things are eternity; instead, eternity lies within the racks, “the racks [that] were created to hang our possessions, to keep us together, a temporary shift in space, God's only way of building the rickety structure of time.”

Anniversaries, as they go by, increase the sense of what truly is and isn't eternal. The student body, faculty, and administration at Harper College have changed completely over time, an idea which may not have been thought much about in 1967 or 1975. Despite this, the College stands, somewhat like one of Ginsberg's luggage racks, as clumsy as that sounds. The workers, passengers, and parcels change, but we devote our time here, all of us, in ever-changing personal combinations and dynamics, to activities that for humankind truly are eternal—teaching and learning, and developing and sharing creative work and scholarship.

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