

THE HARPER ANTHOLOGY

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

Volume XXI



Student Authors

Lindsay Ansai

Leila Arab

Heather Arredia

Aaron Auclair

Anne Azzo

Colleen Barnett

Christina Bergquist

Deanna Brightwell

Alissa Brunet

Will Delea

Mikey Fricano

Keith Gabler

T. J. Garms

Anna Gueorguieva

Marcos F. Hernandez

Kelly Ichinose

Lauren Kosrow

Muxiang Liu

Lauren Lykke

Vanessa Mensie

Rodrigo Narbona

Eunice Oh

Roman Pakhlevanians Jr.

Jason Paszek

Sylwia Patralska

Peter Rapp

Adriana Soto

Katy Spencer

Julie Swenson

Nana Takahashi

Kimberly Thompson

Vanessa Valenti

Jacqueline Valentino

Nathan Van Opdorp

Jessica Vonasch

Christine Welsh

Denis Yavorskiy



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Foreword

Welcome to Volume 21 of The Harper Anthology, the Harper College English Department's annual journal of the finest student-written academic papers from across the campus. This issue features a variety of types of academic papers, ranging from narrative essays written for English composition classes, to a professional-grade business proposal composed for a computer networking course. Many research-based papers for English, Literature, and Humanities courses also are included.

The Harper Anthology was created over twenty years ago by members of the English Department to honor student writing, but also to serve a variety of educational purposes at the College, especially as an instructional aide in the teaching of writing. The Anthology has now enriched instructional activities at Harper for more than two decades, through instructors' assigned reading and discussion of these student texts, as models for high-quality college-level writing. Without a doubt, many of the papers in this volume took inspiration from samples of excellence from previous issues of this publication. And the fruits of this publication are evident, also, in the many thousands of academic papers not published within these pages, which have certainly been touched and shaped by these fine examples published and distributed year after year. The Harper Anthology is an "instructional supply" that has come to be an indispensable and unique hallmark of the composition classroom here at Harper, making a difference in the education of countless students, in a real-world, personal, and effective manner.

The pictures on the covers of this volume make me reflect, again, on the interactive atmosphere that permeates teaching and learning at Harper College. The composition classroom, which I am most familiar with, is part of life for thousands of students each semester, as they develop and enhance critical reading and writing skills in the two composition courses required for degrees. Carefully guided peer editing sessions like those depicted on the covers help students move each other toward excellence in academic writing, as they read and evaluate each others' work. Sessions like these are as enriching and fulfilling for me as they are for my students; listening to their discoveries and demonstrations of new knowledge provides evidence, again, of minds developing in response to the challenging educational opportunities and high academic standards that drive instruction at Harper College. The papers in this volume of The Harper Anthology, again, result from and contribute to these opportunities and standards.

--Kris Piepenburg, Chair, for The Harper Anthology committee: Charles Brown, Barbara Butler, Brian Cremins, Keith Jensen, Kurt Neumann, Pearl Ratunil, and Josh Sunderbruch

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**Division of Enrollment and Marketing/
Harper College Printing Center:**

Maryellen Riley, Matt Nelson,
Angelina Quijano, Jan Elbert, Steve Schwertfeger,
Tom Gibbons, Tony Garcia

Harper College Liberal Arts Division:

Dennis Weeks, Tammi Jungdahl,
Donna Lannerd, Lisa Larson

Editorial Assistance: Becky Creutz

Special thanks to Matt Nelson and Angelina Quijano for technical assistance; to Dennis Weeks, Teresa Chung, and Josh Sunderbruch for encouragement; to Chris Padgett, for web assistance; to Becky Creutz for her patience and assistance; and to the students and faculty who have patiently awaited this issue.

Harper Students on Writing

Leila Arab

Writing is probably one of the greatest forms of vulnerability. As a writer, one must be fearless, and never hesitate or back down from the thoughts or feelings that one chooses to express because that would be preventing creativity from spreading its magnificent wings. I believe every writer should dive themselves into a subject that they are uncomfortable in, so that the writer can discover what lies inside him- or herself, which can cause massive amounts of creativity and the birth of something new. However, pulling out those thoughts or feelings is different for everyone. I have to listen to music while I write in order for my creativity to start. Any music that charges an emotion in the heart is perfect for writing, in my opinion. The right song may lead to the right essay, story or poem—who knows! To be a writer, one must be a fearless and vulnerable person who branches out into the unknown psyche of one's own mind and heart. By doing this, one may succeed in the art of writing.

Heather Arredia

For me, the written word has always held special meaning, so it's not surprising I chose to pursue my English degree. There is something so unique in a written statement that cannot always be fully conveyed through speech. This could be why I will read a good book a dozen times over. The structure is such that I will continue to be moved by the powerful words again and again. I want to have the privilege of creating an appetite in readers that

will keep them coming back for more, like I came back for more. Sadly, in today's age of technology, few people actually sit down and read a book all the way through. We read on the run, scanning information on the computer, but never sitting still long enough to absorb much of the contents. The distinctive experience of reading and engaging literature is lost. There is just something so personal in curling up on a couch, hearing the crack of a newly opened novel and feeling the crisp pages as they turn in my hands. With a good book, I can become lost within the characters and the scenery of the story. Passing on that experience is what keeps me striving to write to the caliber of the great authors I have read.

Alissa Brunet

The night-before-deadline paper-writing session may not produce the finest specimen, but it has taught me a few things about the writing process. I tend to be highly critical of my own writing. Perfectionism ends up preventing creativity, and this can lead to major writer's block. The urgency of a deadline forces you to put criticism on hold for a while and focus on fully exploring your ideas. It also allows you to consider ideas or points that might seem trivial, but which bring up other aspects of the subject that you may not have noticed before. I try to take what I've learned from these hurried papers and apply it to my writing in a timely manner. When you stop battling creativity with criticism, you can utilize the best of both powers, allowing yourself to explore every possibility, and then fine-tuning your ideas to select the best of them.

Mikey Fricano

One may puzzle oneself over the art of producing an appealing or exceptional work of writing. One may question how or why one's writing skills excel considerably above another's. Two years ago, I believed that writing was a talent that people may or may not naturally possess. Preceding my education at Harper College, I believed that my ability to effectively communicate in the form of writing was inferior. However, I have developed the ability to forge appealing works of writing by exercising dedication. The most crucial facet when writing concerns one's psychological state of mind. If a writer is not enthusiastic for the act of writing itself, then the final product may not be as appealing to others because the writer would then lack the incentive to maximize

Martha Craven Nussbaum

Lindsay Ansai

Course: Humanities 105
(Great Ideas of World Civilization)

Instructor: Bobby Summers

Assignment:

Each student was to write a paper discussing the work of a contemporary scientist, philosopher, artist, politician, or other "great thinker," to convince readers that the person is worthy of this title.

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."

—Karl Marx

Introduction

The tomes of philosophy and scores of philosophers fill countless shelves in libraries and countless offices (or graves) across the world; each tome holds a different thought from the head of a different thinker, who each individually thinks that he is right, or at least more right than the philosopher who preceded him and who will follow him. Thoughts without actions, however, are worthless. The measure of a great thinker rests not only in the validity and value of her thoughts, but in her actions and the actions her thoughts encourage and provoke. Over the past fifty years, Martha Craven Nussbaum has emerged as one of the preeminent thinkers, and actors, of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The sheer volume of her work precludes perfection, yet as a dynamic woman and living philosopher, her influence encompasses the state of modern philosophy, making her worthy of further study. Philosopher, professor, and writer, Nussbaum draws from several disciplines to form

and support her theories, which include the development of the "capabilities approach" and "neo-stoicism," as well as insight into modern ethical conflicts.

Biography

Born in 1947 in New York City, Martha Craven grew up to attend a succession of prominent schools. From 1964 to 1966, she attended Wellesley College and finished her BA at New York University; from there, she went on to attain both her MA and her PhD from Harvard University. Her focus included theater, the classics, and later philosophy, and she taught classics and philosophy at Harvard in the 1970s and 1980s. She would marry Alan Nussbaum, convert to Reform Judaism, and have one daughter, Rachel, before divorcing Alan Nussbaum in 1987. In 1988 she was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and in the early nineties, she moved to lecture and teach at the University of Chicago.

While in school, her studies went against the traditions of academia in the sense that she strove to derive philosophical and practical meaning from ancient Greek literature; in general, literature was used only to analyze their philological and "aesthetic" implications, whereas philosophy was confined to "metaethical concerns" (Kramer, 2000). Nussbaum decided to combine the two, and through her work and research, she formed theories that encompassed narrative literature and philosophical meaning.

Today, Martha Nussbaum is appointed in the University of Chicago Philosophy department, Law School and Divinity School; is an Associate in the Classics department and the Political Science department; and is the Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics. Some of her other highlighted honors include the NYU Distinguished Alumni Award, the Brandeis Creative Arts Award in Non-Fiction, and honorary degrees from thirty-two colleges in the United States, Canada, Asia and Europe.

Main Works

Martha Nussbaum's body of work ranges from books, to articles, to legal briefs; her subjects run the gamut from political science, to literature, to philosophy. Some claim that "it [is] a full-time job simply reading all

her output,” but the heart of her writings lives and beats in her books (Reeve, 2003). In particular, her work on the capabilities approach in regard to (female) equality, and emotion as relevant ethical moderator in context to the classics, stand out as being her key contributions.

One of her earliest works, written in 1986, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, clearly reflects her foundation in a cross-curricular treatment of literature in context to philosophical and moral teachings. In it, she analyzes Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, among other works, in order to address claims that though Aristotle expounds greatly upon virtue, he does little to directly outline the way to become virtuous. Nussbaum begins to clearly define that moral development requires emotional involvement to a high degree, especially emotional development that is cultivated so that one can fully achieve “proper passivity and passional responsiveness,” which come together to correctly guide one in the decision-making process and understanding “self-sufficiency and the uncontrollable circumstances of human life” (Cain, 2005, p. 175).

Literature or drama, in this case Greek tragedy above all, forces an audience to give themselves up to emotional response, which they would then use in conjunction with general philosophical outlines (i.e. Aristotle’s vague ethical structure) to become moral. Tragedy and drama also allows for audiences to experience “parallel deliberation” with the actors on the stage: namely, the audience watches the actors deliberate, choose, and act as they, the audience, form feelings in compassion with the pantomimes (Cain, 2005, p. 175). Tragedy and literature are meant to complement general philosophy, to give vague theories concrete existence in life; Aristotle’s works, together, seem to promote this complement, and so do the works of Nussbaum as she continues to write. Nussbaum’s idea of “neostoicism” begins to emerge out of her connected analysis of the classics, philosophy, and ethics. In *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, Nussbaum writes, “the Stoics’ normative ethical theory relies heavily on their analysis of emotions as value judgments,” and the core of this work is that emotions are not a matter of whimsical and subjective motivators, but a matter of necessary intelligence (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 298). Emotions are highly intelligent and essential in

making a positive, rational choice; emotions give us the basis for our beliefs and no matter how many rational facts one may know, one does not act on the suggested, factual action unless one believes in it. It follows then that emotions like love, compassion, anger, and fear, if tempered with critical analysis, are key components to living a virtuous, flourishing life.

In conjunction with Amartya Sen, a prominent economist, Nussbaum developed the *capabilities approach* though the mid-eighties to early nineties, and later reiterated the theory in her 2000 work *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. A model for assessing the general welfare of a community, the capabilities approach directly addresses the freedoms a people have in regard to accessing opportunities, and making choices, that foster value in a human life; it then directly criticizes measurements of pure wealth or output, like the GNP per capita model currently employed by most of the world’s nations (Alexander, 2004, p. 451). Nussbaum, on her own, proposed ten basic capabilities: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination, and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; living in relation to other species; play; control over one’s political and material environment (Enslin, 2004, p. 509). This model was developed to counter the human rights model that so pervades cultural ideology and legislature. In clipped terms, instead of focusing on what humans should have or do not have, the capabilities approach is meant to focus on what humans *do* have, and more importantly, in what beneficial capacity. Though Sen eventually brought human rights and capabilities together in one theory, Nussbaum took a more “radical” stance in asserting that there are certain capabilities that should support any flourishing society, that there are certain capabilities that should be “entitlements” (Alexander, 2004, p. 458). Life and virtue are covered by the idea of “deontological eudaimonism,” or a flourishing moral existence based upon entitled capabilities (Alexander, 2004, p. 452).

As suggested by the title, the capabilities approach comes to light again in *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach (2000)*. Education, according to Nussbaum, needs to use the capabilities approach to provide adequate schooling for female children, in order to

fully promote their potential “adult capabilities” (Enslin, 2004, p. 511). Furthermore, education is paramount in promoting a nation’s welfare, particularly when it comes to the education of women and female children; literacy is a key, if not the key, component to lifting up the state of a population’s welfare, and needs to be promoted against traditional objections.

Influences

In general, the ancient Greek philosophers play heavily in Nussbaum’s work, notably Aristotle, as she expands and defends his writings on virtue, ethics, and emotions. Her model of a valuable human life corresponds with the Aristotelian or ancient Greek idea of *eudaimonia*, or a “flourishing existence,” in that happiness, emotions, and virtue are dynamic and ever developing. She herself reveals her Greek influence in saying that “emotions appear to be *eudaimonistic*,” and continues to expand her ideas on this “Greek...ethical theor[y].” (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 31).

Martha Nussbaum speaks against relativism, and her theories, notably the capability approach, have underpinnings that contradict utilitarianism directly. That being said, John Stuart Mill comes to light as an influence in that Nussbaum strove to work in a nonutilitarian mindset; the idea, for instance, that general good can be calculated by economic statistics does not fit within the capabilities approach since welfare is measured by overall well-being in terms of a person’s capability to choose and lead a valuable life.

John Rawls directly influenced Nussbaum’s work. Indeed, she was a student, colleague (if not friend, in the end) to Rawls; he often offered her encouragement in regard to her philosophy work (Reeve, 2003). Her 2006 work *Frontiers of Justice*, not otherwise in this essay, sought to expand the work Rawls had done in his own *Theory of Justice*, concerning the social contract set up in a society.

Of course, one would do well to acknowledge Amartya Sen as one of Nussbaum’s major influences and colleagues. As mentioned above, it was with Amartya Sen that she helped to further develop the blueprints of the capabilities approach; though her views later diverged

from those of Sen, his theories seem a necessary contrast in order to fully understand her own thoughts on capabilities in modern society.

Influences on Society/Legacy

Often, a philosopher’s influence is not directly tangible, as it is hard to empirically chart the progression of a profound, significant thought or idea. Overall, Nussbaum’s influence can be felt in campuses where she has lectured, and her ideas have infiltrated many avenues of intellectual and public communities.

Foreign Policy Magazine named her as one of the “Top 100 Public Intellectuals” in 2008. According to a follow-up article, *Foreign Policy Magazine*’s criteria for a “Top Public Intellectual” are as follows. “Candidates must be living and still active in public life. They must have shown distinction in their particular field as well as an ability to influence wider debate, often far beyond the borders of their own country.” Martha Nussbaum is an accomplished author and figure in her fields, as demonstrated by her numerous appointments and honorary degrees. She has also influenced and created her fair share of debate, whether it be testifying as an expert witness in a Colorado bench trial, or appearing in an article written by a professor in Johannesburg, South Africa (Boynton, 1999; Enslin, 2004, p. 515).

In the 1993 court case *Romer v. Evans*, which challenged an antihomosexual amendment in the Colorado constitution that would overturn anti-discrimination laws, Nussbaum testified that there was no classical precedent for discrimination against homosexuals (Boynton, 1999). Citing interpretations of Plato’s *Dialogues*, Nussbaum acted as a “lawyer for humanity,” a phrase coined by Seneca, and a role she sought to fill in her everyday life (Reeve, 2003). The Supreme Court ruled the Colorado amendment as unconstitutional, and though it was surely not due solely to the testimony of Nussbaum, her influence and knowledge did play a part in the trial.

The United Nations Development Program included consideration of the capabilities approach when formulating the Human Development Index (HDI), which measures “individual well-being rather than the aggregate” (Enslin, 2004, p. 515). Though Amartya Sen is directly attributed to the capability approach in relation

to the HDI. Martha Nussbaum's work with him also directly affiliates herself with its general development. Though there has been criticism of the HDI, as it still relies on numerical measures of supposed capabilities, this relatively new measure of a country's "wealth" was created in part because of the impact Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen created with the capabilities approach.

Conclusion

Like Aristotle, Descartes, Murdoch, and philosophers of their kind are recorded in history, for better or for worse, it is no far stretch of the imagination that Martha Nussbaum might also be recorded in such a way. Surely her body of writing, on topics like the capabilities approach, emotions as intelligence, and the relevance of literature and tragedy to an ethical life, gives her a longevity that lifts her up to a prominent position in the modern century's influential philosophers. Where her writings might fall short, her lectures and public presence take over. A single person creates small ripples, but with persistence, has the potential to create a tidal wave of difference. In arenas stretching from gender equality to the Greek classics, from law to economics and political science, Nussbaum's intellect, writing, and influence have certainly shifted the tides.

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Evaluation: *This paper nicely demonstrates why Nussbaum is truly a "great thinker."*

The Struggle Within

Leila Arab

Course: Literature 112 (Literature and Film)

Instructor: Kurt Hemmer

Assignment:

*How do the differences between the screenplay and the film of *On the Waterfront* influence the emotional response between the reader of the script and the viewer of the movie?*

In one of the most famous scenes – the “contender” scene – in the film *On the Waterfront* by Elia Kazan, Terry Malloy confronts his brother Charley Malloy. He has to choose between ratting out his brother, who works for the mob, or saving the innocent dockworkers from corruption and disaster. This decision is in the palm of Terry’s hands, but he is conflicted because he does not want to be a rat or cheese-eater (100). Terry seeks aid from his brother, but only to find that Charley bribes and threatens him to be silent or deaf and dumb (41). For this scene, Budd Schulberg’s screenplay *On the Waterfront* has a different perspective than Kazan’s. Marlon Brando and Rod Steiger change the shape of this scene by changing the characters. Kazan’s film and Schulberg’s screenplay are similar, but Brando’s and Steiger’s performances change the shape of this scene by altering the characters into more well-developed people, which make the conflict within Terry more dramatic.

The “contender” scene in Schulberg’s script gives readers an insight into Terry’s inner turmoil more obviously and less dramatically than the film does. When Terry and Charley speak in the cab, the mood of the scene has tension, and Charley jumps right into business. When Charley bribes Terry with a new job, and then tells him to say and do nothing, Terry begins “struggling with an unfamiliar problem of conscience and loyalties” (101). While reading, the reader understands Terry’s struggle and confusion:

CHARLEY. You don’t mean you’re thinking of testifying against –

TERRY. I don’t know – I don’t know! I tell you I ain’t made up my mind yet.

That’s what I wanted to talk to you about.

CHARLEY. Listen, Terry, these piers we handle through the local – you know what they’re worth to us?

TERRY. I know. I know. (101)

He wants to keep his loyalty with his brother and the mob, but in keeping silent, he betrays Edie, Father Barry, and all the dockworkers who need to be free of the mob’s power and corruption. Charley does not help his brother in his difficult situation, and readers feel the urgency and restlessness of Charley. He pushes Terry into a corner to make up his mind quickly before they reach their deadly destination, but Terry is desperate and still in distress:

CHARLEY. The point is – there isn’t much time, kid.

TERRY. I tell you, Charley, I haven’t made up my mind!

CHARLEY. Make up your mind, kid, I beg you, before we get to four thirty seven River... (102)

Terry’s distress is halted by the fact that he realizes where his brother is taking him. Readers are aware of the disbelief and shock when they read the line “Charley... you wouldn’t take me to Gerry G...?” (102). Readers may believe this to be a big betrayal, but when Terry tries escaping the cab, Charley draws out his pistol. This, by far, is the biggest betrayal Charley could have done to his brother, and readers realize this as they read the desperate and sad lines of Charley. Schulberg’s words bring out a feeling of sadness to readers:

CHARLEY. Take the boss loading, kid. For God’s sake. I don’t want to hurt you.

TERRY. Charley... Charley... Wow...

CHARLEY. I wish I didn’t have to do this, Terry. (103)

Even though Schulberg’s script impacts readers, Brando’s and Steiger’s performances are much more dramatic than Schulberg’s screenplay.

In Kazan’s film, Brando and Steiger use their tone and body language in a way that makes this scene more

dramatic than Schulberg's screenplay. The two actors start their conversation out with a laugh, and they lead into the main topic with ease and a relaxed attitude. However, as Brando and Steiger start arguing, things become serious and dramatic. Steiger tells Brando to hurry up and make a decision before they reach their destination, and as Brando figures out where they are headed, his facial expression is very powerful. Viewers see and feel the exact moment when everything clicks together, and Brando looks incredibly shocked. As viewers, we witness the shock and utter disbelief that Brando has on his face. He cannot believe what he is hearing, and almost in an angry tone he questions his own brother. Through desperation, Steiger pulls out his pistol, but his tone does not sound threatening. In fact, Steiger's tone sounds desperate, and he wants to help his brother out by forcing him into saying nothing. The tone of voice and drawing out the gun makes this scene far more dramatic than Schulberg's screenplay.

Viewers are still on the edge of their seats when Steiger pulls out the gun on Brando, but Brando does something very unique in this situation. Brando portrays Terry as a bum, but strangely enough, he switches the roles between the two brothers, which adds to more drama. Brando makes Terry the bigger man by gently pushing the gun away from him. By drawing a gun on his brother, shame, embarrassment, and guilt wash over Steiger's face, and this makes Charley into the real bum. When Brando gently pushes the gun away, the viewer cannot help but feel the disappointment of Terry, and the humiliation of Charley. As Brando gazes off into the distance, a jolt of sadness rushes to viewers because he feels disappointment and shame for his brother, and he still can not believe his own flesh and blood would pull a gun on him. Steiger is completely mortified and guilty for what he has done, and he himself cannot believe what he just did. He feels so awful that he wants to almost cry, and Steiger can barely say his lines afterward. Charley can hardly speak after his terrible action, and he tries to hide his shame by changing the subject to Terry's old boxing days. However, Charley's face is filled with agony as Terry tells him that he could have easily won the match that night. With such power and force, Brando tells Steiger that it was his fault that he did not turn out to be anything, and that it was his fault that he turned into a bum. Brando blames Steiger for ruining his life, and the audience witnesses the look of disappointment on

Brando's face when he shakes his head. The music adds to the agony of both characters, and Brando's expression of dissatisfaction toward Steiger makes this scene more dramatic. A very emotional part about this scene is when Brando says that he should have looked out for him a little bit more because Brando's facial expression and tone of voice brings a tear to viewers' eyes. Brando says this to Steiger in a soft and caring tone that makes Steiger even more agonized and ashamed. However, the most emotional part about this intense scene is when Terry says that he could have been somebody. His face is filled with grief and regret, wishing that he really could have been a "somebody." By blaming Charley, Terry finally realizes that he is a bum, and that he cannot do anything about it now. Viewers feel the power of Terry's words and see that Charley cannot deny the truth. Giving him his gun, which was not in the screenplay, shows that Charley feels awful for not helping Terry in the past, and this tells the audience that their relationship is much more intense than it is in the screenplay.

Kazan and Shulberg created a timeless scene that will impact viewers and readers tremendously. The way the dialogue is written, and the insight into Terry's turmoil brings out sympathy from readers. Seeing the agony and disappointment from both characters brings out pity and tears from viewers. Loyalty is incredibly important, but breaking that bond toward a group or individual can be one of the hardest tasks anyone may face. By telling the truth to the court, Terry gains the respect of the workers, Edie, and Father Barry, but loses his bond with the mob and Charley.

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Evaluation: *I was particularly impressed with Leila's ability to dissect a single scene from the screenplay and the movie and articulate how actors have the ability to influence how a writer's words are interpreted.*

Literature Through a Child's Perspective

Heather Arredia

Course: Literature 219 (Children's Literature)

Instructor: Barbara Butler

Assignment: *Interview a child about her reading habits and write an analysis of the interview.*

Having two girls of my own, I've experienced first-hand the creativity and make-believe world of a young mind. Children have the ability to explore far-reaching lands and magical realms on any given day. When introduced to literature, the experience may further develop their imagination so that in a blink of an eye, they may be free-falling with Alice down a rabbit hole or attempting to convince some silly creature that green eggs and ham really are delectable. However, Stephanie, an adorable eight-year-old with long, flowing, brown hair and two enormous dimples that appear to be embedded in her cheeks, doesn't fit into this scenario. On Stephanie's list of things she most enjoys, books fall way down on the list. To Stephanie, reading is homework assigned by the teacher that's meant to take away from her real fun, or a chore mom makes her do when she'd rather be watching a movie. I know so much about Stephanie because she's my daughter. I have always wondered how someone like me who loves reading, can have a child who doesn't share that same passion for literature. Stephanie and I sat down one evening to discuss books and how they made her feel. While I expected I knew the answers to some of the questions, Stephanie, as is her usual way, gave me sincere, yet at times heartbreaking, insight into how a little girl's insecurities about reading have slowly taken the joy and wonder out of beloved fairy tales.

So much of Stephanie's concerns about books seem to stem from her belief that she doesn't read well. She has the impression that she should know all the words for books written for a third grader, yet she insists, "The books always have words that I can't read." Given that

Stephanie is often discouraged about her reading material, a flippant "sometimes" was her response when I asked if she enjoyed reading. Stephanie went on to explain that if she's in a bad mood when she begins a book, her mood might distract her too much from the story and ruin the story itself. This led me to me ask her what kinds of books she might enjoy reading. Big picture books seemed to be a favorite; however, she was reluctant to check those kinds of books out of her school library because "if I get books that are too easy, kids in my class are going to think that I can't read." I wanted to show Stephanie that there are numerous stories that contain glorious pictures for her age to choose from. I figured asking Stephanie about some of the best books she had ever read would give me some insight into other titles she might enjoy. However, sheepishly, she said she most enjoys the books she writes herself because "if I made them up, it might be easier for me to read them."

In Stephanie's room, she has quite an extensive collection of books based on movies that she has watched at the theater. I was curious to know if she thought getting a book based on a movie that she hasn't seen yet would be a good gift to her. After thinking this through for awhile, she slowly answered that she would rather see the movie first, so that when she bought the book after, she could picture in her mind what was going on while she read. While in some respects I would love for Stephanie to be able to imagine to herself how a story might unfold in her mind's eye, I soon realized that because Stephanie is able to believe that magic really does exist or that it is possible for a spider named Charlotte to spin a web of words to save a pig, her imagination is just fine. Our conversation then turned a little silly when I asked Stephanie what one might do to make books more enjoyable for her to read. With a tilt of her head and a half grin, she looked up at me and explained that the pictures inside of books should be in video, "so that I wouldn't have to read the words when the books opened."

Lastly, we talked about school. We discussed what subjects she enjoys the most as well as if she thought becoming a good reader was important to her education. Stephanie admitted that of her subjects, math was her favorite because she found the lessons and math games to be an entertaining part of her day. She also really

enjoys learning about numbers. We talked about how reading is a big part of school and how we need it for all lessons, including math. I asked Stephanie if she would like to be a better reader in the future. She admitted she would because then she would do better in school and might be able to keep up in some of the reading games that are played in her class. Coming to the end of our interview, I asked Stephanie if she considered being able to read different types of literature to be important to her. Seriously thinking about her answer, she threw her head back and, with a twinkle in her eye, responded, "Of course, it will help me with tests."

While I am hopeful in the future Stephanie may at least find an appreciation for literature, if not a love as I have, I do know that she does possess an enormous amount of imagination and wonder and that fairy tales do have a place in her reality. I believe as she grows and her confidence in her ability matures, she will soon recognize the value of what the written word can represent for her, in school as well as in play time. When soon she is able to read and understand those bigger words that frustrate her now, she will then open herself up to those fairy tales that she so longs to be able to enjoy.

Evaluation: Heather's essay is especially poignant because she is interviewing her own daughter. The characterization of eight-year-old Stephanie as a reader is vivid and memorable.

Three Forms of Belief in *The Death of Vishnu*

Aaron Auclair

Course: Literature 208 (non-Western Literature)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment:

As part of the exam on Indian literature, students were asked to write an essay on a theme in Manil Suri's novel The Death of Vishnu.

Through the growth of knowledge and reason, man has greatly increased what he knows about the physical world. What happens, though, when man encounters the unexplained when what the heart and mind feels goes beyond that of all rational knowledge? At this juncture, we arrive at belief and faith. Belief is when man suspends his knowledge of the world and puts his faith in something he or she cannot touch. Most commonly, this concept is associated with religion and God. For some, belief is easy, as they simply place their hope in the absurd, while, for others, reason simply overrides all that faith and belief offer. Soren Kierkegaard, a 19th century existentialist philosopher, once wrote that "Faith is the highest passion in a man. There are perhaps many in every generation who do not ever reach it, but no one gets further." Through belief, there are an infinite number of possibilities. For each individual, faith and belief are arrived at differently. Some spend their whole lives seeking faith and never find it, while others place their faith blindly in the unexplained. Then, there are those who feel that faith is something that must be internalized and that we all must find our own beliefs from within, making them a part of ourselves. Manil Suri, in his novel, *The Death of Vishnu*, explores various forms of belief and how each individual deals with the unknown in diverse ways. In this novel, we are presented with three forms of belief through three of the characters: Mr. Jalal, who has very little to no faith, symbolizing reason and rationality; the main character, Vishnu, who is the other polar extreme, symbolizing blind

faith; and, finally, Mr. Taneja, who symbolizes a faith that is discovered through the self. All of these characters discover themselves individually through their various forms of belief, all standing at different places in their lives.

Rene Descartes, a 17th century French philosopher, once wrote that, "If you would be a real seeker of truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life you doubt, as far as possible, all things." For Descartes, this doubt is what defined him as a rational thinker, as he also went on to state, "I doubt therefore I think. I think therefore I am." Through doubt, we must seek to rationally explain our world through knowledge and reason. In *The Death of Vishnu*, we are presented with a Cartesian form of thinking in the character of a lapsed Muslim, Mr. Jalal. For Mr. Jalal, religion is simply a cop out, as everything can be discovered through reason. On page 64 of the novel, Jalal's thoughts surrounding religion are explained as such: "The problem was his interest in religion only seemed to extend to reading about it, not practicing it. 'Thought control,' he would call it, 'something to keep the teeming masses busy.'" For him, the ideal form of religion was arrived at by the Mughal ruler of the 1500s, Akbar, who used reason to try to combine both Hindu and Muslim in order to successfully unite his kingdom. Yet, as Jalal ages, he, like Descartes, felt that he must doubt his knowledge as far as possible, and he seeks out religion in hopes of possibly understanding the world, as he feels he is missing something by not grasping religion beyond what is written in the holy books he has read. As time passes, Jalal cannot grasp religion and belief, so he seeks a way to prove his belief. Having read the story of Surdas, he believes that the only way to enlightenment is through renunciation and suffering. The story of Surdas, on pages 86 and 87, tells of a man who believes that he has sinned greatly through his eyes. With this belief, Surdas believes that he must repent through stabbing and blinding himself. Using a dagger, he stabs out his left eye and screams. Then, with a sense of relief, he stabs his other eye and faces those outside his door, exclaiming that he is now "free." Hoping to become a modern day Surdas, Jalal begins to fast and sleep on the hard floor of his bedroom. As this fails to bring him to enlightenment, he once again seeks to justify himself by sleeping next to

the dying Vishnu, as he believes that knowledge can be quickly grasped through the dead. That night he has a vivid dream in which he witnesses Vishnu rise as a god and commands that Jalal spread his message unto the world. Jalal, feeling that he has been enlightened, quickly tries to explain to those in his apartment that he has had a vision, with too little success, as those around him believe he has gone insane. As a large Hindu crowd threatens to kill him, due to the Hindu neighbors' daughter Kavita cloping with his Muslim son Salim, he once again tries to justify his belief by trying to become a martyr. When this fails, he runs for his life to the balcony, where he tries to climb to the upstairs apartment for safety. At this point, we are witness to his falling out of his faith and back to reason. Between pages 269 and 271, Jalal has a crisis of faith in which he debates whether his revelation was indeed that or rather a memory that escaped his subconscious, of the Hindu text *The Bhagavad Gita*. Once again seeking out a rational answer, through his doubt, he plunges from the balcony and metaphorically out of his belief. For Jalal, truth cannot be sought through belief but rather through rational thought, as in the end he has, as Descartes states, "doubt(ed), as far as possible, all things," in hopes of attaining truth. In the end, the truth he discovers is that his world cannot be defined through belief.

Another form of belief that is presented in the novel is blind faith, which is symbolized by Vishnu. As Gandhi once stated about the subject, "Faith... must be enforced by reason... when faith becomes blind it dies." In a way, this quote is found quite metaphorically in the novel, in which the low-caste Hindu Vishnu, who believes that he is a god reincarnate, lies dying. Throughout the novel, we witness a strong connection between Vishnu and Hinduism and Hindu mythology, and we are provided with many flashbacks in which Vishnu is taught about Hinduism through the stories of his mother. This is especially present in the stories about the spirit Jeev and Vishnu and the various reincarnations of the god. Throughout the course of the story, Vishnu is ascending a staircase, which seems metaphorical of each thing he must give up in order to be enlightened (vanity, material, physical, and self). Believing he is a god, Vishnu ascends the staircase and at each level is reminded of the ancient Hindu stories his mother taught him. While these stories

teach renunciation, equality, sharing your wealth, and spiritual birth, we see Vishnu, who blindly believes in these stories, missing their true message as his life simply revolves around material and physical possessions. We see Vishnu's relationship with the prostitute Padmini, in which Vishnu is attracted to both carnal and material possessions, which he never quite gives up in the end. This becomes particularly evident in the scene in which Mr. Jalal places a mango next to Vishnu's body as an offering, and Vishnu's spirit, looking on, becomes upset because he can no longer eat the fruit and enjoy it (especially in the sexual way with the prostitute Padmini). Further, throughout the book, Vishnu seems to believe that he is simply entitled to a spiritual life, as he is a god; so, he never tries to achieve enlightenment as he believes it is owed to him. Vishnu seems very similar to Mr. Jalal's wife, a devout Muslim, who states often that "the only god is God." In the same way that Mrs. Jalal blindly believes in God without feeling him spiritually, Vishnu believes in the stories without ever practicing them. In a way this is also similar to Mr. Jalal, who only knows religion through books. However, unlike Mr. Jalal, Vishnu believes he can not only achieve, but transcend faith and become a god simply because he has been taught he is a god. In the end of the novel, Vishnu's spirit stands before a blue boy (symbolic of Krishna) who tells him that tomorrow he goes back to Earth. This seems to suggest that Vishnu is not a god, as he believes, and we are left to wonder what he will come back as due to this error of following a belief without any reason. Getting back to Gandhi's quote about faith dying when it is blind, we witness Vishnu, who symbolizes faith, die in the story because there is no enforced reason to his belief. Through Vishnu, we learn that not only must we know the stories behind our faith, but we also must understand and practice them to achieve enlightenment.

Buddha once wisely spoke that, "Peace comes from within." This maxim is symbolized in the novel by the Hindu character of Mr. Taneja, who through his spiritual growth comes to discover this about faith and belief. The story of Mr. Taneja is quite possibly the most tragic in the novel. Vinod Taneja was married to a woman named Sheetal. Like most arranged marriages, theirs started off quite rocky. Early on, we witness the first night

they spend together after being married in which they try to have sex, but know little about it except for what they have been taught about traditional roles. Additionally, early on, we see a rift in generations after Vinod slaps her, and she runs away feeling that she should not be treated the traditional way. Over time, the marriage becomes closer, and the two seem to genuinely love each other. As Sheetal slowly starts to die from cancer, we see the toll it takes on Mr. Taneja, who tries to hoard sleeping pills from his wife in hopes of committing suicide when she dies. When Sheetal makes him promise not to commit suicide, he agrees quickly as he wishes to honor his wife. After her death, Mr. Taneja isolates himself from the world due to his anger about his wife dying. Each day, he listens to a record that reminds him of her as he slowly sinks deeper and deeper into despair. One day, he leaves his apartment, hoping to seek some advice from a Swamiji who tells him, "It's anger – anger hidden so deep you don't even recognize it. Anger that your wife has been taken away. Anger that you have been forced into this path that is not of your choosing. Anger that you were not asked to choose, though you know in your heart that if you had been, you would have chosen the easier way, not this way, my son, not this way, so full of pain, and yet reaching such heights that you have yet to see" (258). Slowly, coming to the realization that it is only through the conquering of this anger and seeking the proper path to enlightenment, Taneja seeks to spiritually improve himself by creating an inner peace. On pages 260 through 262, we witness him begin to let his anger subside through the release of an envelope into the ocean. After much meditation, he soon internalizes his beliefs and spirit to the point in which "He would close his eyes, and let the water seep out of his mind. In its place he would wait for the calmness of the sound to descend. Soon the cells in his brain would begin to light up or switch off, to form the familiar pattern, and he would transcend the limitations of the finite, of the physical and perishable, as he lost himself in the harmony and the eternal resonance of the beautiful sound *Om*" (263). Through his thinking, Mr. Taneja is able to transcend his own world and become whatever he seeks to be. It is through the character of Mr. Taneja that we see a character not being bound by his beliefs but, rather, he is freed by them and is able to grow mentally and spiritually

in the world. The belief that Taneja embraces is one that soothes the soul and unites a person as a single being rather than a fragmented individual tormented by sorrow and anger. As the Buddha stated, it is through an inner peace that we can seek out ourselves and reach a truly enlightened state, much like Mr. Taneja.

To conclude, we once again arrive at Kierkegaard's quote at the beginning that "Faith is the highest passion in a man. There are perhaps many in every generation who do not ever reach it, but no one gets further." This statement holds great truth in the novel, *The Death of Vishnu*, where we see three separate individuals seek out faith in their own way. We first witness Mr. Jalal, who is a member of "every generation," who Kierkegaard would claim never reaches faith. Rather, Mr. Jalal is bound by the Cartesian world in which, through doubt and reason, we can understand everything there is to life. Following Mr. Jalal, we have blind faith, which is symbolized by Vishnu. It appears that Vishnu unwisely tries to transcend faith and become a god, despite faith being the "highest passion in man." In the end, we witness Vishnu being sent back to Earth as a lesson that faith indeed cannot be transcended. Finally, we have Mr. Taneja, who does indeed discover that belief is the "highest passion." In the end, we witness Mr. Taneja discover that true faith comes from within, and it is only through this inner acceptance of the world and the absurd, or that which is out of our control, that we can truly be freed from the constraints of the world and find the "inner peace" promised by Buddha.

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Evaluation: *This is a beautifully in-depth discussion of the core theme of this novel—the character's struggles with religious faith, in the worldly realm. Aaron nicely brings his own knowledge of philosophical ideas to bear in this analysis, as well.*

A Call for a Regulated Kidney Market

Anne Azzo

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Teresa Chung

Assignment: Write a paper in which you take a position on the issue of legalizing kidney sales and refute one or more of the arguments made by the assigned authors.

Walter Payton, a former Chicago Bears football player, was a strong and fit man. He contracted a liver disease that made organ transplantation necessary for Payton to live (Drchrs par. 2). Because of his thoughtful nature, Payton volunteered to be moved down the organ waiting list. Unfortunately, the former Chicago Bears great died while waiting for a liver. Payton's story serves as a reminder that many patients die while waiting for an organ. There has been a lot of effort to decrease the number of organ transplantation-related patient deaths of patients who are waiting for organs. One of the ideas being tossed around involves kidney markets. This issue is extremely controversial. There are a number of people who claim that a legalized kidney market could be harmful because it could exploit the poor, which is one of the main reasons why some people are not in favor of having a kidney market. In this essay, I will be discussing about a regulated, or fixed-priced, kidney market so that everyone on the organ waiting list has a chance to receive a kidney up for sale. I will also address some of the main arguments the opposition makes, which includes the "exploitation of the poor" argument. A regulated kidney market should be established in the United States because there will be fewer deaths of people on the organ transplantation waiting list; a regulated kidney market would minimize or eliminate the illegal black kidney markets that already exist; and patient autonomy should be respected in this situation.

First of all, there will be fewer deaths of people

waiting on the organ transplantation list. There has been a shortage of transplantable organs, and most experts agree that the national waiting list is likely to get longer in the future years ("Organ Selling" par. 5). The annual death rate of patients waiting on the organ list in the United States is about six percent (Wolfe, Ashby, Milford 1725). Sadly, this death rate is likely to increase in the future years due to the major shortages of transplantable kidneys. However, legalization of kidney sales would increase the amount of transplantable kidneys available, which will save lives. Consider the following: A reinforcer is some stimulus that will increase a certain behavior. Psychologists call money a reinforcer (Rathus 12). According to psychology, money is a strong incentive for people to do just about anything such as giving up a kidney. If kidney "giving" becomes money compensated, then there will be more people giving up a kidney of theirs. In turn, that increases the supply of kidneys available for transplantation. Therefore, there will be fewer deaths of people on the kidney waiting list.

Second, a regulated kidney market would minimize or eliminate the illegal kidney black markets that already exist. The following is a definition of a black market: "First, someone must have a product or service to sell, and someone must be willing (and able) to buy it. Second, the deals must be illegal. Third, law enforcement people must be unaware of the violations or lack the resources or desire to stop them" (Laughlin). The organ shortages fuel the need for the kidney black market. "In most of the world, laws specifically ban the sale of organs...but with demand so high, many have attempted to profit by selling organs such as kidneys, obtained from living donors tempted to give up their 'spare' organs for cash" (Handwerk Par. 5). Organ trafficking exists all over the world now such as in South Africa and Brazil (Handwerk Par. 1 and 2). By legalizing kidney markets, the organ shortages will be either eliminated or minimized, which will hinder the kidney black market. For example, the Prohibition Period is a classic example of how legalizing a good that is on the black market can eliminate or minimize the black market for a particular good. "In the case of the legal prohibition of a product viewed by large segments of the society as harmless, such as alcohol under prohibition in the United States, the

black market will prosper... Underground markets can be reduced or eliminated by removing the relevant legal restrictions, thereby increasing the supply and quality of formerly banned goods” such as removing the alcohol restrictions by repealing the Eighteenth Amendment (*Answers.com* par. 10). The kidney black market is very dangerous because there is little to no supervision, which could lead to fungal infections and death (Osterweil par. 6). Outcomes of twenty-two Canadians who went abroad for kidney transplantation showcase the dangers of the illegal kidney markets: “One third of all the patients transplanted outside of Canada required immediate hospitalization, primarily for sepsis, and one-third required hospital admissions...” (Osterweil par. 8). Friedlaender says, “... instead of leaving our patients exposed to unscrupulous treatment by uncontrolled free enterprise, we as physicians must see how this can be legalized and regulated” (Finkel par. 30). Having a legalized kidney market would be safer for both the donor and the vendor because the transplant and recovery would be carried out and supervised in a professional manner at a hospital within the country. Therefore, a regulated kidney market would minimize or eliminate the illegal kidney markets.

Third, patient autonomy should be respected in this situation. “The ban on sales is paternalistic and ignores the need to respect individual autonomy” (Matas par. 20). Imagine two people who are willing to undergo surgery that removes their kidneys, and those kidneys get transplanted into people who need the kidneys. One of the surgery participants is going through with the surgery for altruistic reasons. The other is going through with the surgery because she will get rewarded money in return for her kidney. The participant who is selling her kidney would get denied while the other participant would not. Therefore, there is a discrimination against the kidney seller, which violates the right to liberty, or a right where “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights...without distinction of any kind...” (*United Nations Population Fund* par. 2). Nonetheless, the right to liberty is an example of equal rights, which is listed in the U.S Constitution as a fundamental right. Because this country is guided by the Constitution, there are many Americans who favor equal rights measures. Recently, the view on a kidney market has gained

acceptance (Finkel par. 44). However, patient autonomy should not be allowed in every medical situation. It is restricted when there is possible harm to the patient herself or possible harm to the organ recipient (Lcino-Kilpi, et al 64). Patient autonomy should be allowed in this situation because the procedure could save the organ recipient’s life. In addition to that, there is a minimal risk of harm to the vendor, which will be discussed at the end of the following paragraph. Delmonico and Schep-Hughes state that the poor do not make the choice to sell their kidneys free of social or economic pressures, which should limit patient autonomy because of possible exploitation on the poor (Delmonico par. 11). Then again, a kidney market does not take away any preexisting options of additional income that everyone has. Kidney compensation would be an additional source of income, not the only source. Therefore, the social and economic pressures are not as strong as Delmonico and Schep-Hughes imply. Also, critics hold a paternalistic view on this subject. The critics say they are trying to shield the poor from themselves. This paternalistic view is actually harming people because the deaths of people on the organ waiting list is preventable, and low income families could use another source of income. It is also unfair because the critics are assuming all poor people are too ignorant or too vulnerable to make their own decisions. “If the rich are free to engage in dangerous sports for pleasure... it is difficult to see why the poor, who take the lesser risk of kidney selling...should be thought so misguided as to need saving from themselves,” says Dr. Friedlaender, a kidney specialist and avid kidney sales supporter (qtd. in Prusher par. 9). Consequently, patient autonomy should be respected in this situation.

As mentioned before, critics of kidney markets believe that such a system should not be implemented because it will exploit the poor. However, there are other sorts of bodily markets that do not raise controversy concerning exploitation of the poor, such as blood, sperm, and egg markets (Matas par. 25). Also, the monetary compensation will increase the vendors’ quality of life. For example, there are many Americans going to India to find women who are willing to become surrogate mothers for monetary compensation (“Journey to Parenthood” 2). Usually, the surrogate mothers are very poor. The

surrogate mothers receive thousands of dollars from the American buyers. “According to Dr. Patel, each woman receives a payment of approximately \$5,000—which is equivalent to almost 10 years’ salary” (“Journey to Parenthood” 5). There are many people claiming that the use of surrogate mothers in India is exploiting the poor. However, the Indian women are thankful because they are now able to buy nicer homes and send their children to school (“Journey to Parenthood” 5). An American participant passionately states, “You don’t know how that [infertility] feels. And we were able to come together, [Sangita] and I, and give each other a life that neither of us could achieve on our own. And I just don’t see what’s wrong with that” (“Journey to Parenthood” 6). Some opponents state that the kidney removal surgery for the poor is risky. However, kidney transplantation is now safe and standard (“Organ Selling” par. 1). Also, there are medical exams that determine the health risks for donors and recipients. If the donor is not in good general health, the doctors will refuse to use his or her kidney (UPMC par. 8). Therefore, medical exams can eliminate the unhealthy potential vendors, which cut the major health risks of the people who are unsuitable for selling kidneys.

A regulated kidney market should be established in this country because there will be fewer deaths of people on the organ transplantation waiting list; a regulated kidney market would minimize or eliminate the illegal kidney black markets; and patient autonomy should be respected in this situation. Money would encourage more people to “give” their kidneys, which will save more lives. Organ shortages create the need for a black market, and legalization of kidney sales will either eliminate or minimize the organ shortages. The ban violates the right to liberty, and the critics’ paternalistic view is actually harming people. It is urgent for government to act in this issue. There is a growing need for kidneys, and there are many deaths of people waiting for a kidney because of kidney shortages. A method needs to be implemented soon, and a regulated kidney market is the best solution for this terrible problem.

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Evaluation: In her argument, Anne takes few things for granted and makes especially judicious use of ethos and pathos in her considerate response to concerns about exploitation of the poor:

I Didn't Order That

Colleen Barnett

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Leona Laouras

Assignment: *Write an autobiographical essay.*

The dreaded day came when my parents shook their heads at me and wailed, "Get a job!" A job sounded so peculiar! At 15, I questioned why I needed a job. My best friend had recently heard the dreaded news, too, so we found ourselves applying for jobs everywhere. She suggested a serving job at Luther Village, a retirement community in biking distance. Since I would also have a companion, I obliged. Within a week or two, my friend quit, leaving me to fend for myself. I had never waitressed before, let alone for rich old people. Servers also had to bus, host, and partake in usual nightly clean ups. We did not receive tips, but our hourly wage was more than double that of regular servers. Within the first week, my shoulders and feet hurt by the end of each night. But beyond all the coffee pots and trouble, there was much more to be learned.

So much work was involved. Everyone always wanted something! Sour cream over there, extra crispy fries here, no vegetables there, no ice for her, ice for him, chocolate on chocolate but no nuts and cherries, vanilla on butterscotch and cherries but no nuts, and Mrs. Batemen wanted chicken noodle soup without the chicken again. If I wasn't forgetting baked potatoes, I was letting residents receive free coffee because I simply couldn't find the COFFEE button on the computer. They complained about the temperature of everything: the meat, the vegetables, the plates, the coffee, the ice

cream, the weather, and the dining room. I would be red in the face when the air-conditioning didn't work as they shivered in their cardigans. On busier nights, I never had time and they always had requests. German Ms. Krause wanted half-decaf, half-regular. Mr. Donatello would ask for soup but never seemed to touch it. Ms. Kaiser only wanted a fourth of a cup of water. A *fourth*. Little old Ms. Cant said her fruit was too hard when it tasted just fine to me. The cooks put the wrong vegetables on, and Mr. Smith called me stupid. I couldn't believe how I was being treated, the nerve of these people. Why were these rich old folks in Luther Village when they could be basking in the Caribbean sun, far away from me? They drove slowly, they didn't understand what I was saying, they called me ugly because of my piercings, they pointed out all I did wrong, and they never said thank you. The older servers seemed so laid-back, saying, "Just smile and do what they want."

So I began to smile and do what they wanted. The days began to feel shorter, and I began to remember who wanted the sugar-free sugar and who wanted the steak knife with the fish. We were taught how to serve properly – clear with your left hand over their left shoulder, serve with your right hand over their right shoulder, women and children were always asked what they wanted first, and never serve the next entrée before clearing the last. I was finally becoming accustomed to the art of serving. The easier things became, the more I realized I just had to swallow a lot of my complaining and just learn how to deal. If Mrs. Wright complained about her chicken being cold, I nuked her plate in the microwave, and to my surprise, she said, "It's perfect now!" I began to realize that this job wasn't that bad; I just had to learn not to let the customers get to me. Little things became no big deal, and before I knew it, I had survived four months and Christmas arrived.

My coworkers and I slaved over, quite personally, beastly and repulsive Christmas decorations. They were not the traditional green and red but an off-beat dirt red and vomit green. How these residents were excited about all *this* was beyond me. The morning of Christmas, I was anything but excited to spend my day at work. My parents were upset I was missing "family time," and my siblings were upset that we had to get up extra early to open presents so I could depart by 9 a.m.

During the morning rush, a single man, Mr. Howard, sat in my section. The dining room was set up for the residents' families; each table was set for no less than five. I helped him turn his coffee cup over since he struggles with arthritis and remembered that he drank decaf because he was allergic to caffeine. He did not ask for any help as he limped back and forth between the buffet tables and quietly lipped, "thank you" when I lifted his dirty plates from in front of him. My manager told me that when Mr. Howard was younger, his school had a fire that took 92 of his classmates and three nuns. He survived by jumping out a window, which inadvertently shattered his right leg and left him with a nasty limp and a much smaller leg. I watched him watch other families and not touch his soup. I imagined myself with a limp – how I could never run again or play sports. Tying my shoes would hurt; going up stairs would be difficult; and I would be left with general uneasiness for the rest of my life. There was a single slice of cheesecake left, so I brought it over to him thinking he would like it. As I set it down, he slowly looked up with the biggest smile spread across his face. I asked him why he did not touch his soup but asked for it, and he replied that today's "shakes" were worse than yesterday's. His fingers trembled as he reached for his fork, and he thanked me for the great service.

The plastered smile on my face soon became a genuine one. The littlest things seemed to light up their faces, just as much as asking how their day had been – and I caused that. How wrong I was about these cranky people. Ms. Cant was delighted to find I remembered she liked the squishy fruit, and crazy Mrs. Bateman loved how I would ask about her grandchildren. Ms. Kaiser only wanted a fourth because she was too weak to lift anymore, and Mr. Smith called *everyone* stupid. I joked with the ladies at table 21 about the cute new servers, and they howled with laughter when I dropped their ice cream, instead of scowling at me. It was almost fun, screwing around and making people laugh and smile. The residents who liked to drink especially liked my sarcasm. I had a newfound respect for the elderly; they want nothing more than to talk to someone. They enjoyed giving me little life lessons, just as my own grandparents seem to do. Some residents lived with their spouses, but most partners had long passed away. I couldn't imagine being cooped up

all day, alone with my thoughts. How did they manage? Only a few families visited regularly; the rest I barely saw except on holidays, if that.

While seating one of our regulars, I asked if they would like something from the bar. The lady squished her nose and said, "What?" so I repeated myself. I was again met with a louder, "What?" This went back and forth for a moment or two until I was finally yelling my question. She glanced over to her husband, who gently whispered it into her good ear, and all at once she understood. A Merlot was requested and when I finally returned with a Merlot in hand, she stared at me and exclaimed she had never ordered that. Her husband grimaced and looked down, "She can't remember much." How painful that must be for him, I thought, to watch his significant other slowly wither away physically and mentally. And all he could do is endure it – he couldn't help her in any way except to whisper translations of the world around her. Did she realize she was losing her mind?

It took time to look beyond my own selfish thoughts and realize these residents, or the elderly in general, faced a much more dire situation, and sooner or later we're all going to be there. People think they know everything at their current age, and then our eyes are opened to so much more. The seniors had been there and done that, and they must have done something right if they're still here. These residents showed me how not to take life for granted. I want to be able to look back as they do and smile at what I've accomplished. I want to have so many stories for people I can't remember half of them. Right now don't have to deal with the shakes or remembering my husband's name, but someday I might. And some snot-faced kid will be taking my order.

Evaluation: *Colleen has done an excellent job using detail effectively to show, not just tell. Her conclusion retouches her beginning in a meaningful circular structure.*

“Together But Also Separated”

Christina Bergquist

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

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

“...precisely where the land touched water at high-tide, where things came together but also separated” (O’Brien 1418).

This quote, taken from the story “The Things They Carried,” by Tim O’Brien, could be considered a reflection of various elements not only for this story, but also the story “Guests of the Nation” by Frank O’Connor. “The Things They Carried” takes place in a grittier setting, and is the story of soldiers in the Vietnam War, telling their tale by describing their baggage, both literal and figurative. The story focuses mainly on Lieutenant Jimmy Cross, an obsessed and withdrawn figure who can only focus on his love back at home, refusing to live in the reality of the war. “Guests of the Nation” is a more thought-provoking story, set in Ireland during a time of strife between Ireland and England. This story has many interesting characters and is told by an Irishman named Bonaparte, a thoughtful, dubious but slightly undecided character, somewhat unsure of his views. Both stories encompass feelings of tension due to the war, and an air of the soldiers both being present but also outside of what is going on around them. Both stories question morality and humanity, depicting a variety of characters torn by choices they need to make because of duty.

In “The Things They Carried,” we see the very detailed list of what men carry, which in turn becomes

a sort of list of a man’s character, of where he finds his identity. The burdens that the men carry are both literal and figurative, and extend from war necessities to superstitious charms to worry and regret, from ammunition and first aid supplies to photographs and dope. “They carried all they could bear, and then some, including a silent awe for the terrible power of the things they carried” (O’Brien 1418). Our main character, First Lieutenant Jimmy Cross, is completely obsessed with Martha, a girl back at home, during the tumultuous times of the Vietnam War. The things that he carries are important, so important that what Lorrie N. Smith classifies as “Jimmy Cross’s most precious cargo” (240) are the first things mentioned in the story. “First Lieutenant Jimmy Cross carried letters from a girl named Martha, a junior.... They were not love letters, but Lieutenant Cross was hoping, so he kept them folded in plastic at the bottom of his rucksack” (O’Brien 1415). He treated these letters very tenderly, cherished them. They were the most important things to him; we can see by the placement in his bag that they needed the most protection. Through this, and in other ways, we see the vulnerability of the soldiers in the war. Often when thinking of wars, we picture hardened older men with guns, fighting on the front lines. However, in O’Brien’s story, we see young men. Jimmy Cross was just twenty-two. The things that they carried reflected the lives they lead, displayed their weaknesses and personalities. As Elisabeth Piedmont-Marton states: “The things they carry also hold the group together. Each man depends on the other to share the load. But they are also defined as men....The objects that comfort them individually may also alienate them from the others” (par. 2). This is an example of the quality of being “together but also separated,” as the men of Vietnam are together literally but separated by their individuality. This is especially true in the case of Jimmy Cross, as what he carries separates him in a very dramatic way and eventually brings him to a near-breaking point. The narrator makes an important point when he says “...and for all the ambiguities of Vietnam, all the mysteries and unknowns, there was at least the single abiding certainty that they would never be at a loss for things to carry” (O’Brien 1422).

Though they fought and carried and lived in that setting, a part of them was withdrawn and unsure. At

onchpoint, we see one of the characters expressing this feeling of loss of purpose, when cutting off the thumb of a VC corpse and keeping it for a trophy: “Henry Dobbins thought about it. ‘Yeah, well, he finally said. I don’t see no moral.’ [And Mitchell Sanders replies:] ‘There it is, man’” (O’Brien 1421). The moral is that there is no moral. No purpose. In the story we see the careful documentation of what each man carries, and what the soldiers carry as a whole, but thoughts on the war are limited. Ergo, this quote stands out as a main view on the war, on the general thoughts of the war, because there is a lack of opinion, a lack of caring about what it means. As Steven Kaplan says while summarizing another study: “The main question that Beidler’s study raises is how, in light of the overwhelming ambiguity that characterized the Vietnam experience, could any sense or meaning be derived from what happened?” (par. 2) Tim O’Brien struggled to convey this meaning in his own way with this story, and in an interview he stated that he liked “the cadences of the story, the sounds and rhythms...the physical items that form the story’s structural backbone...the absences of much of a plot in the thing” (qtd. in “The Weight of War” par. 10). His idea on how to tell a war story was to portray the uncertainty and play off of the physical aspects as well. Along with these things, the story tends to “demonstrate a preoccupation with the sense of displacement and alienation” (Chen par. 6). It’s apparent that the soldiers were out of place in Vietnam, alienated both from home and even from their fellow soldiers, and uncertain about why they were fighting, and what for. When talking about why men joined the war and why they stayed and fought, the narrator of “The Things They Carried” states “Men killed, and died, because they were embarrassed not to” (O’Brien 1425). Though indirect, it’s apparent that the reason that men joined the war was because they didn’t want to suffer dishonor, not because of any call or passion, any higher idea, or they were drafted. They were disconnected from the real idea of the war. Again, this is seen most clearly in Jimmy, as he is so disconnected in the story that he has trouble functioning when thinking of Martha: “Lieutenant Cross gazed at the tunnel. But he was not there. He was buried with Martha under the white sand at the Jersey shore” (O’Brien 1420)

Martha is an interesting character in this story, because in drawing Cross out of the war she in some ways also reflects his disconnection to the war by being outside of it herself. However, she is seen as unable to understand

or comprehend the war, and as the narrator states, she never writes about the war in her letters to Jimmy. Steven Kaplan states: “In ‘The Things They Carried,’ Tim O’Brien desperately struggles to make his readers believe that what they are reading is true because he wants them to step outside their everyday reality and participate in the events that he is portraying” (par. 16). This is important to note, because if we do not put ourselves in the story, we are then like Martha, uninterested and distant. As Lorrie N. Smith observes: “Martha is represented as aloof and untouchable,” and also that “Martha’s words are never presented directly, but are paraphrased by the narrator, who reminds us twice that she never mentions the war in her letters...she represents all those back home who will never understand the warrior’s trauma” (240). It serves as an admonition of sorts to the reader, to connect with the soldiers and not be seen as detached as Martha is. In the end, Jimmy is forced to be rid of her letters and tokens: “As atonement and as prevention, Jimmy must burn her letters and photographs, physical symbols of his destructive love” (Korb par. 3).

In “Guests of the Nation” we are confronted with more tangible, familiar war situations. Older men in a hostage situation is a scenario that has been seen often. This particular setting is in troubled Ireland during the Troubles, or “revolutionary period between the Easter Rising in 1916 and the signing of the Home Rule treaty at the end of 1921” (Peterson par. 1). We are met with soldiers from two opposing sides, the Irish soldiers and English soldiers, and the latter are the hostages in this case and eventually are killed for reprisal for the killing of four English soldiers. This story deals greatly with the ideal of the human experience, and calls into question morals and certain pre-conceived notions of the war, and behavior of the soldiers. We are led throughout the story by our narrator, Bonaparte, one of the Irishmen. The opening of this story, as with “The Things They Carried” is important because it establishes the tone for the rest of the story. We begin with seeing the two sides playing cards together. If we stopped after these first lines, we would never assume that they were in fact enemies as well: “At dusk the big Englishman, Belcher, would shift his long legs out of the ashes and say ‘Well, chums, what about it?’ and Noble or me would say ‘All right, chum’ (for we had picked up some of their curious expressions), and the little Englishman, Hawkins, would light the lamp and bring out the cards” (O’Connor 1056). We see that

there is a common ground here; the men are soldiers, the men enjoying playing cards. They treat their hostages fairly, like humans, recognizing decency. In this light, all characters of the story have become “human.” We are receiving the story from the eyes of the Irish, but also see the genuine, unbiased side of the English. We become connected to all sides. Stanley Renner puts it as this:

Commentators have been virtually unanimous in approving what they take to be O’Connor’s condemnation of ‘the evil of murderous duty which lies at the center of the story.’ O’Connor strongly invites this response by humanizing the two English soldiers, engaging the reader’s sympathy for them in order to maximize the shock of their execution in the end. But he also heightens the story’s disturbing effect through an extended figurative questioning of where responsibility for such evils lies – within the individuals or in forces beyond their control (par. 1).

Other characters in the story seem to be outside of human emotion and response. Donovan, the man who initially orders the killing, seems uncaring and distant, incapable of feeling remorse or sorrow, or even apprehension for the killings before they happen. Murray Prosky observes that “unlike the other characters in the story, Donovan is repressed and anti-social” (375). He, just like Martha in “The Things They Carried,” appears to be outside of the human experience. Again, Prosky states: “Where sympathy fails, so does human certainty and as a consequence of the resulting sense of isolation, man seems an insignificant speck of dust” (374).

In both of the stories we see the struggle with the idea of duty, though much more strongly in “Guests of the Nation.” In “The Things They Carried,” duty is just often mistaken for avoiding embarrassment, the men too young or inexperienced or uncertain to be able to ascertain the meaning of duty. However, in “Guests of the Nation,” the struggle is obvious and heavy. As aforesaid in Stanley Renner’s quote, sometimes in this story we are forced to look at forces beyond the control of those involved. If so, where does duty lie, and where lies the obligation of one human to another? Where does fate (or the elusive idea of duty) end and responsibility and morals begin? The uncertainty is distinct at various points in the story. Bonaparte narrates, as the executions loom near, “‘It isn’t a joke,’ says Donovan. ‘I’m sorry Hawkins, but it’s

truc,’ and begins on the usual rigmarole about duty and how unpleasant it is. I never noticed that people who talk a lot about duty find it much of a trouble to them” (O’Connor 1064). The reader begins to question duty, if duty is what makes you kill your friends, and is never fully explained. Donovan tends to throw the word out as an excuse, some elusive reason for decisions made in the war. This appears a bit later, after killing Hawkins: “‘You understand that we’re only doing our duty?’ says Donovan. ‘I never could make out what duty was myself,’ [Belcher] said” (O’Connor 1064). Again, the reader questions duty along with the Englishman Belcher, wondering what its meaning truly is when connected with the war. We come to the conclusion when looking at both stories that perhaps the idea of duty is often muddled in the war, perhaps there is confusion about what exactly men are fighting and dying for. Stanley Renner brings the responsibility back onto the humans when he says “For not all the evil that happens to human beings is dealt out by forces beyond their control. Some of it they do to each other” (par. 4). Donovan’s actions, and the actions of the other men, are not excused simply because they lean onto the word “duty” when making decisions. There is a certain conflict between duty and humanity, and Bonaparte and the other Irishman, Noble, feel that the situation they are in is beyond their control. Their actions, then, are almost not their responsibility, but dealt to them by fate. They recognize that what is going to happen is inhumane and immoral, but they are passive and hope that fate, which dealt this situation, will also provide a way out of it without them having to endanger their lives or positions (Renner par. 7). However, Renner also states that the reader feels “that the power of fate which helped to contrive the situation need not have been allowed to dictate its brutal outcome” (par. 9).

We also realize the huge amount of remorse that Bonaparte and Noble feel at the end, after the killings. Noble, who holds to a moral code that is rooted in his belief in God and the Bible, begins to pray. He recognizes what he has done is wrong, and seeks forgiveness and peace. Bonaparte, however, who holds himself to no religion, is not grounded in anything in particular and so finds himself “very small and very lost and lonely like a child astray in the snow” (O’Connor 1064). He does not know where he stands, and his whole world has been shaken. Bonaparte’s questioning and uncertainty is what finishes the story, in what Richard J. Thompson calls “a

perfect exemplar of O'Connor's view of the short story as a permanently shaping moment in a character's life" (382). All of this sacrificed for a notion of duty, for some idea that no one can define. Murray Prosky puts it as, "Every denial of sympathy and compassion for the sake of some vague, abstract code of justice or nation honor creates those infinite and terrifying spaces" (375).

One of the main points of these two stories is the psychological aspect, of the choices that the men make and why they make them. Their past and background all come into play, and though some things may not be clear, we can look and see with the given information why certain choices are or were made by certain characters. From the beginning of Jimmy Cross' story, we can see his motivations clearly. His choices reflect that his mind is constantly on Martha. This obsession becomes so intense that he can't take his mind off of her for an instant, not even to check on the safety of his men. He ends up blaming himself for the death of one of his men when he realizes his obsession with Martha. But each man is different; each man finds his own identity in things. While Jimmy carried the pebble that Martha sent to him, "Dave Jensen carried a rabbit's foot" (O'Brien 1421). All of these represent the men individually, and represent something about them – they are different. They choose different things, have different personalities. This is obvious, but also fundamental. The men in the war all looked the same, carried most of the same things. It's crucial to note the things that set them apart in order to perceive why they did what they did. At the end of the story, Cross realizes that his neglect of the men needs to stop, that he needs to let go of Martha, and the narrator states: "Briefly, in the rain, Lieutenant Cross saw Martha's gray eyes gazing back at him. He understood. It was very sad, he thought. The things men carried inside. The things men did or felt they had to do" (O'Brien 1421). This quote sums up perfectly the idea of the choices that men make, and the reasons they did it. Ted Lavender made certain choices because he carried fear with him, Jimmy Cross made certain choices because he carried his love for Martha, and most soldiers in Vietnam probably made a certain amount of choices based on their undying uncertainty, which is probably why Tim O'Brien tried so desperately to get that point across. As Steven Kaplan says when discussing the author's need to show this uncertainty, O'Brien was: "Conveying the average soldier's sense of

uncertainty about what actually happened in Vietnam by presenting the what-ifs and maybes as if they were facts, and then calling these facts back into question again..." (par. 9). That is what Tim O'Brien was trying to portray, and displays a fundamental point of why certain choices were made – this uncertainty. In "Guests of the Nation," we encounter the same focus on choices, though we find the interesting divide between the choices the characters make and also the views that the readers hold on those choices, more so than in Tim O'Brien's story. The reader makes certain choices on how to look at the events that happen, to agree or disagree, to understand or separate ourselves from the events.

In "Guests of the Nation," Donovan acts as the head of the other Irishmen; obviously he is the one getting the orders. "'The enemy have prisoners belonging to us,' he says, 'and now they're talking of shooting them. If they shoot our prisoners, we'll shoot theirs'" (O'Connor 1059). As the head, he is the one who leads, who shows by example. His choices are especially significant. Even though Hawkins, the Englishman, is pleading for his life and swearing that he would never kill as Donovan is about to kill, Donovan still brushes him off. He shows no compassion or hesitation: "It was Jeremiah Donovan who did the answering. For the twentieth time, as though it was haunting his mind, Hawkins asked if anybody thought he'd shoot Noble.

'Yes, you would,' says Jeremiah Donovan.

'No, I wouldn't, damn you!'

'You would, because you'd know you'd be shot for not doing it.'

'I wouldn't, not if I was to be shot twenty times over. I wouldn't shoot a pal'" (O'Connor 1062).

We see the sides of morality and humanity very prominently, and question the decisions being made. Hawkins continues to plead for his life as he cries: "'Hear what I'm saying?' he says. 'I'm through with it. I'm a deserter or anything else you like. I don't believe in your stuff, but it's no worse than mine. That satisfy you?'" (O'Connor 1063) He's ready to leave everything he believes in and stands for if only just to live, but he is not the only one who is abandoning what he believes in. As Stanley Renner puts it:

The moral judgment of "Guests of the Nation" comes down mainly on Bonaparte and Noble – not that the deliberate inhumanity of Donovan and Feeney [another Irishman] is excused by O'Connor but that Bonaparte and Noble, who still entertain human feelings, allow themselves to contribute to the remediable brutality in the world in the mistaken impression that they have no choice (par. 14).

It appears that O'Connor intentionally has such a moralistic point of view, because as Murray Prosky states, "The characteristic shape of his short stories, what I call a pattern of diminishing certitude, enables O'Connor to focus on the antecedents and consequences of human action in a manner that is inherently dramatic. His stories suggest that human conduct can either brutalize or humanize the universe" (374). The choices that Bonaparte and Noble make seem to simply be based off the blind belief in the duty that their leader, Donovan, speaks of, and also from the fear that they themselves could potentially be killed if they don't follow through with orders. However, as quoted by Stanley Renner, E. M. Forster comments on where human duty lies: "I hate the idea of causes, and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country" (par. 15).

Religion was also a main point seen in both of the stories. Again, religion was a bit more subtle in "The Things They Carried," but it did appear that the men in the war needed something bigger and more powerful to believe in, something outside of themselves and the war. We see an Indian, Kiowa, who pulls out his Old Testament to sleep on after Ted Lavender died, and doesn't want to feel certain things for fear of them being "un-christian" (O'Brien 1423). This story also states that the men "dreamed of freedom birds" (O'Brien 1425). It was more of a daydream than a sort of religion and belief, but nevertheless was something outside of the war that represented values that people find in religion: freedom, peace, and comfort. It was also just something to hold onto, and in that sense, it was a belief of sorts. Rena Korb expresses it as this: "Only in these fantasies can they free themselves of their many burdens; instead of carrying the weight of the war, they are now carried by a creature that is larger, more powerful, and more mystical than themselves" (par. 6). In "Guests of the Nation," Noble and Hawkins are the two main speakers on the subject of

religion. Immediately we are aware that Noble believes in God and the Bible, Hawkins sharply disagrees, and there are several arguments on this topic. A person's religion or lack of speaks volumes for their character, and what kind of choices they will make in the future. At one point in the story they are arguing, and Hawkins lashes out against Noble's beliefs:

'Oh they did, did they?' he says with a sneer. 'They believe all the things you believe, isn't that what you mean? And you believe that God created Adam, and Adam created Shem, and Shem created Jehoshaphat. You believe all that silly old fairytale about Eve and Eden and the apple. Well, listen to me, chum. If you're entitled to hold a silly belief – like that, I'm entitled to hold my silly belief which is that the first things your God created was a bleeding capitalist, with morality and Rolls-Royce complete (O'Connor 1058).

At this point in the story, Hawkins seems so assured and confident in his cynicism, but later on when faced with death, he redacts everything that he has said, ready to sacrifice his beliefs to live. Perhaps this is because he has nothing really to stand on, it's his own opinion and he finds his truth in his own head while Noble believes in something outside of himself, something bigger than him or the war or anything else. But did he abandon his beliefs when killing, only to come back at the end and begin to pray? And Bonaparte, who doesn't really believe in anything much, where does he stand at the end? Stanley Renner classifies the difference between Noble and Bonaparte when he says "In Noble's geocentric Christian world view, the human scene is predominant: 'he saw everything ten times the size...' But he has failed to fulfill his Christian duty: to love, extend hospitality, and sacrifice oneself for others and especially for strangers and enemies. With Bonaparte, it is just the reverse. In his mechanistic sense of the universe, human doings seem insignificant, 'as if the patch of bog where the Englishmen were was a million miles away'" (par. 14). Obviously there is a stark difference, and O'Connor didn't seem to favor either one. Murray Prosky clarifies this feeling when he states "Clearly, O'Connor is not particularly concerned with the claims of one belief over another, but with their effects on human conduct" (375).

The idea of "together but also separated" can be seen

many times thus far. It is something that we can see in both of the stories, in many of the issues mentioned. In religion we see it, in the relationship between God and man that they are together in spirit, but are not literally together. We see evidence in the basic idea of the war, men fighting for something they don't know or understand, present but not committed. This is especially seen in the case of Jimmy Cross, that while he is in Vietnam in body, in his mind he is constantly back with Martha: “He should've risked it. Whenever he looked at the photographs, he thought of new things he should've done” (O'Brien 1417). Not only does he spend time in the past, he ponders over regrets and things he would have done differently. Even in the idea of death, we see evidence of the idea of “together but also separated.” When Ted Lavender died in “The Things They Carried,” his body was there, but he was dead, not really with them. In “Guests of the Nation” Belcher, the Englishman, speaks just after Hawkins' execution: “‘Poor bugger,’ he said quietly. ‘And last night he was so curious about it all. It's very queer, chums, I always think. Now he knows as much about it as they'll ever let him know, and last night he was all in the dark’” (O'Connor 1063). Belcher is reflecting on the sudden death, probably thinking of his own soon to come, and there Hawkins is lying, present in body but not in mind or spirit.

In conclusion, the concept of “together but also separated” is manifested many times in both of the stories, and is well to be considered a key element in both of the stories because of all the characteristics that tie in that idea. Perhaps because of the nature of the short story, and the importance of the short story to both of the authors, one of the most basic ties to that main theme is the relationship between both the writer and the reader. Even as we are not directly part of the events, they have the opportunity to affect us if we allow ourselves to become involved in the lives of the soldiers, allow ourselves to experience and echo the same emotions. I suppose, then, that this instance of “together but separated” is the one that we should begin and end with, the most fundamental example. Our participation in the story is, in a sense, part of the story, because what is a story with no one to tell, and no one to listen?

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Evaluation: *Christina's comparison of these stories nicely ties together their subtleties and themes, in mature prose. This essay was a pleasure to read.*

The Power of Palmolive

Deanna Brightwell

Course: Speech 101

(Fundamentals of Speech Communication)

Instructor: Cheryl Golemo

Assignment: In this narrative speech, the goal is to share a significant event with your audience in such a way that they will be able to come close to understanding your experience from your point of view. The event should be a personal experience that changed you in some way.

I would like to share with you a story about a profound moment in my life. This is a story about growing up. It was my very first adult moment of being consciously aware that I – without a doubt – had just become “something more” than what I was. This didn’t happen at the point of contact in a car accident, nor did it happen during any of the other tragedies I’ve experienced. Certainly, moments like those affected me. But this moment I am referring to occurred when I was elbow deep in my third sink of dishes, looking at a mountain of baked-on-caked-on pots and pans still waiting for me. I’m here today to speak about a life-altering awareness that was facilitated by the power of Palmolive. In order for you to understand, I need to start at the beginning.

It was Christmas. I had just broken up with another boyfriend, although this time for sure I knew he was “the one.” I had had another fight with my mother. I was broke and couldn’t afford presents. Right then and there, all I wanted to do was to escape. I have always been a

believer in fate. So, when the phone rang and it was my cousin telling me she couldn’t afford to go home on break, and asked me to come and visit her at her apartment in Wisconsin, I figured the universe was giving me a sign. I started packing.

I got there late in the evening on the 23rd. I was always a little envious of my cousin. She was almost done with school, and had figured out how to have a job and get free rent. She managed a group home for four mentally challenged adults and her apartment – on the side of the house – came for free with the job. Over the holiday season, her staff of students would go home, and the four residents would go to a state institution for a few days until the staff returned.

When I woke up the next morning on Christmas Eve, my cousin wasn’t in the apartment. I got dressed and opened the connecting door to the group home in search of my cousin, and that desperately needed first cup of morning coffee. I stuck my head into the kitchen. Instead of a quiet, unobtrusive entrance, one of the residents saw me and started screaming, “Who’s that? Who’s that? Who’s that?” This of course upset the other residents sitting at the kitchen table, and my cousin and I spent the next thirty minutes calming them down.

I eventually got my cup of coffee and slowly realized that my cousin and I were the only “normal” people in the room. I casually asked about the location of the rest of the staff, and my cousin told me that they had already left. Alright. Then I calmly asked what time the residents would be leaving to go the state facility. My cousin stopped what she was doing, looked me in the eye and said, “They’re not leaving.”

She went on to say, “I’ve decided to give the residents a Christmas. They’ve never had one. They’ve always been shipped off to an institution. No one comes to visit, no one brings them presents, and they don’t have a great big holiday meal. But [and I knew there was trouble when I heard her say ‘but’] I need a staff of two or, by law, they’ll have to go to the institution. There isn’t anybody else. I need you to help me. They need you. I promise you won’t have to do anything except wash dishes. I’ll do everything else. Please will you help me?”

Needless to say, I was a little bent. Who was she to corner me into this situation? I had never worked with the

handicapped – and I never wanted to, either. All I really wanted was to hang out with my cousin, whine about my fractured heart, have a mom-bashing session, and ditch all of my responsibilities for a few days. Working did not gel with my self-centered holiday plans. Truthfully, my cousin knew me well enough, that had she told me the truth, I probably wouldn't have come. She manipulated me. If I accepted, I would have to work and I knew that meant more than just washing dishes. One person couldn't handle everything. If I refused, not only would I be disappointing my cousin, but I would be letting down the four residents who were overjoyed at the prospect of finally getting a visit from Santa. So I stayed. But I wasn't happy about it.

I didn't have much time to be crabby, because I was deluged with washing hands, refilling coffee, buttering toast, and answering the same questions over and over and over again. "Who are you? When is Santa coming? Who are you?"

I don't know where my patience came from that day, but I do remember not stopping until after my cousin put the residents to bed. When I finally went to bed exhausted, my mind wouldn't quiet down. I felt resentful and inadequate and irritated that I hadn't had any attention for my problems: my broken heart, my irritating mother, my, my, my.

And yet, this grand gesture I was forced to make meant *nothing*. The truth was: I didn't care. I still didn't care when the residents were frantically opening their presents and squealing with joy. I wasn't going to notice their happy faces when my cousin put the roasted turkey on the table. And I wouldn't give into their bliss when they couldn't take the smiles off of their faces long enough to chew with their mouths closed and I had to spend my entire Christmas meal wiping chins. I really was not going to acknowledge the magic of the moment as it got silent, and one by one my cousin put the very sleepy residents to bed.

I was into my third sink full of dishes. I couldn't feel my finger tips because they were way beyond the prune stage. I was washing the turkey pan, hoping that there was another SOS pad somewhere in that god forsaken kitchen, when I heard something. It was then that I noticed I was alone with the last resident, waiting her turn

to get tucked in. I can't remember her name. She was physically, as well as mentally, deficient. Her only means of communication was a board with words and pictures that she could tap on and indicate what she was saying.

What I had heard was her tapping. I ignored her for a minute. That tap, tap, tapping kept right on going, just like the energizer bunny. I shook the suds from my hands and went to see what she was tapping on.

I crossed the room (tap, tap, tap) and as I looked over her (tap, tap) her twisted and palsied hand was tapping on the sign for thank you. Thank you (tap), thank you (tap, tap, tap).

I couldn't breathe. I sank down on the floor by her chair and I held her free hand and cried. She didn't stop tapping until my cousin put her to bed.

Left alone in the kitchen, I washed the remaining pots, occasionally stopping to wipe my eyes. I don't know how long it took to finish, or how much Palmolive I used. I didn't care. Because I only knew I had to finish. It was the way I had just learned how to say "you're welcome."

Evaluation: *In this speech, Deanna's unique voice draws the audience into her cathartic experience with humor, pathos, dialogue, and rhythm that make the words and sounds a wonderful, aural journey for her audience.*

Resigned to Faith

Alissa Brunet

Courses: English 101 (Composition) and
Philosophy 105 (Introduction to Philosophy)
Instructors: Kurt Hemmer and Herb Hartman

Assignment: *What was the most controversial idea in Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling?*

Perhaps the image of your parents standing over you with a knife is not the first one that comes to mind when you hear the word "faith." Yet according to Søren Kierkegaard, this scene as found in the Bible is an amazing display of faith. In his book *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard examines the story of Abraham and Isaac and discusses the difference between mere resignation and true faith. He concludes that Abraham, by being prepared to kill his son at the word of God and still expecting to have his son returned to him, demonstrates the latter. Despite the complete disagreement many likely feel toward Kierkegaard's philosophy, his refusal to be scared out of contemplating whether Abraham's actions are in any way commendable is likely beneficial to readers regardless of their opinion of Kierkegaard's final stance. While triggering controversy over his idea of placing personal faith before the good of the community, Kierkegaard encourages readers to take a closer look at the struggles of Abraham.

Although he endorses Abraham's faith as a great thing, Kierkegaard does not simply excuse Abraham's intent to murder in the name of faith and sing his praises. Instead, he insists on debating whether this act could be acceptable under any circumstances, and on analyzing many different mind sets in which this sacrifice could

be performed. He examines the stage which he calls "infinite resignation," which involves action itself more than the way one thinks about it, and which must come before actual faith. Kierkegaard says that the movement of infinite resignation can be reached by anyone, and with only human powers: "I for my part would not think twice about pronouncing anyone a coward who thinks he can't" (80). But when it comes to faith, he admits that he simply cannot get his mind around the idea of Abraham's faith, yet he acknowledges deep admiration for it.

Kierkegaard does not fail to consider that what Abraham was prepared to do may be grounds for turning away from the story, and from Abraham as a hero; in fact he rebukes Christians for accepting Abraham's act of faith too willingly, and without really grasping the horror of it. Kierkegaard questions spiritual leaders who would preach about Abraham's faith yet condemn those who felt compelled to act as Abraham did (58-59), and he is not afraid to consider the possibility that Abraham is no more than a murderer. This is reassuring because Kierkegaard seems to be weighing all sides of the issue, not merely accepting that we should revere Abraham because we are told to.

On the contrary, Kierkegaard urges readers to question the sanity and morality of Abraham's resolution despite the gravity of the issue, countering his own question, "should one perhaps not dare to speak about Abraham?" with "I think one should" (81). Kierkegaard recognizes a need for Christians to face the contradiction they make when praising Abraham, and chides those who do not with "if one wants to market a cut-price version of Abraham and then still admonish people not to do what Abraham did, then that's just laughable" (82).

Yet even after examining the story from different perspectives, Kierkegaard concludes that Abraham is to be admired for the extent of his faith. In fact, he goes so far as to say that had Abraham doubted and hesitated at the time of the sacrifice, even if he saw the ram that God had sent and God had spared Isaac, "his future [would be] perhaps damnation" (55-56). And while he speaks of many Christians holding Abraham up as a hero, he goes further, insisting that they actually realize the lengths to which Abraham would have gone, and how unacceptable they would probably find this.

Although many people may disagree with Kierkegaard's ultimate endorsement of the manner in which Abraham exhibited his faith, his determination to deeply examine the story must be admired by all who want to understand whether or not this particular Bible story can be reconciled with the idea of a loving God. He insists on facing this dilemma, stating, "Let us either forget all about Abraham or learn how to be horrified at the monstrous paradox which is the significance of his life" (81).

While Kierkegaard says that having faith is so difficult that he "can indeed describe the movements of faith, but cannot perform them" (67), this faith does not necessarily require more action than infinite resignation does. Rather, it requires a different attitude. In a state of infinite resignation, Abraham might still complete the sacrifice. Kierkegaard says that the reason Abraham may be said to have had faith is that he believed that, by God's power, he would be allowed to keep Isaac or get him back in *this* life, whereas the person without faith would simply accept the loss. "The person who loves God in faith reflects on God" (66), says Kierkegaard. Perhaps true faith, then, is being able to focus in on who God is and what He is like. And Abraham, believing that his God was loving, hoped that God would let him keep Isaac. In this way, Kierkegaard does put a somewhat optimistic light on faith, or the results of it.

However, Kierkegaard does point out that true faith is not simply an optimistic attitude. He states that arriving at a point of faith requires first reaching the point of resignation and recognizing that one's hopes cannot be met in any possible earthly way. There are no shortcuts to faith, and, Kierkegaard says, "If one imagines one can be moved to faith by considering the outcome of this story, one deceives oneself, and is out to cheat God of faith's first movement" (66). Happily thinking that God would not let anything bad happen does not reflect faith of Abraham.

While Kierkegaard certainly expresses his opinions on faith and what it entails, he does not pretend to know all the answers. Rather, he admits that faith remains a paradox and endeavors to help people realize how hard it would be to accept the idea of Abraham's sacrifice, and how much of a struggle the idea of the sacrifice was for

Abraham. Although there may be conflict over the issue of whether such a sacrifice would ever be acceptable, Kierkegaard does not avoid this, but encourages honest reflection on the issue.

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Evaluation: *Alissa's close reading of Kierkegaard's analysis of Abraham's trials sheds light on the importance of faith in Kierkegaard's philosophy.*

Faust, Part I: Striving for Romanticism

Will Delea

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Teresa Chung

Assignment: *Write a research paper in which you offer a thesis about a theme in Goethe's Faust, Part I, supporting it with textual analysis of the play and situating your own analysis with regard to at least four other analyses of the play.*

"O for a life of Sensation rather than of Thoughts!"
- John Keats, letter; 11/22/1817

Faust, Part I is a play whose theme is notoriously difficult to interpret. The decided lack of unity throughout the work is one factor in this, as are the inconsistencies that turn up in the work. The ambiguous conclusion for Faust adds to the complexity, and because of this the play does not supply simple answers, and can be interpreted many ways. Does Faust progress, from a frumpy, suicidal academic to a man capable of giving love and being loved? This could mean that Goethe, embracing Romanticism, views striving as a worthy pursuit, and feeling and experience as paramount. Does he regress, from a learned man with many achievements to a murderous, immoral rogue? Then Faust's deal with Mephisto and the subsequent events represent an attack on immorality. Or does he remain static, evil enough in the beginning to deal with the devil, evil enough at the end to abandon his love to execution? An amoral Faust, consumed by the Self, would not require any transformation in what amounts to a purely descriptive work.

J.M. van der Laan, in his article "Faust's Divided Self and Moral Inertia," argues "that Faust neither ascends

nor descends, neither progresses nor regresses, but that he instead changes without changing, develops without developing, that he is at the close of the play no better or worse, no wiser or more ignorant than when he first began" (452). He goes on to claim that Faust "eschews, if not abhors, the constraints of a traditional moral order and instead embraces a morality of the self, a morality where the Other does not matter, where the self only relates to the Other in terms of power" (461). These arguments ignore or misinterpret the Gretchen tragedy, and the affect that Gretchen's love – and Faust's love for her – has on Faust. To van der Laan, Faust's two souls do not merely cause him conflict, but they make him immoral (458). By stating that Faust "seduces [Gretchen], loves her, and leaves her, abandoning her to terrible ruination" (453), he ignores Mephisto's part in spiriting Faust away, implies some knowledge on Faust's part of Gretchen's pregnancy, and ignores Faust's impassioned return. An immoral man would not have become incensed by Gretchen's fate and Mephisto's part in hiding it, nor would he have risked all (or anything) in a futile rescue attempt. While he does kill Valentin, this action – and Faust's hand – is directed by Mephisto. Faust's actions and emotions show that he was neither immoral nor unchanged at the end of the play.

Similarly, Jane K. Brown also recognizes moral issues in *Faust*. She states "Goethe confronts us in *Faust* with a morally indifferent natural order within which Faust must attempt to live as a civilized moral being. But if nature is not moral, man cannot both fulfill his natural vocation to strive and still live morally...this is what makes *Faust* a tragedy" (33). However, since striving is man's vocation, God will forgive sins committed while striving (Brown 33). This view may seem to excuse any action committed while striving, but Brown condemns those who interpret *Faust* in this distorted manner (16). Therefore, the tragedy is that Faust wishes to live a moral life, but cannot because he must strive. This view presumes that nature and Faust are necessarily immoral. But Faust, while not the most moral of protagonists, is not immoral. Traveling with Mephisto as a companion and guide, Faust does suffer from lapses in morality. However, his love for Gretchen, if not pure, is true and decidedly romantic, and he does not desire the deaths that occur. And nature, being amoral, does not prevent a moral

purpose behind striving even if does not require it. By claiming that nature prevents Faust from acting morally, this view forgives the outcome of Faust's actions; this was not Goethe's intention. While traditional Christian morals are not Goethe's primary concern, it is important that Faust learns from the consequences of his actions and is devastated by Gretchen's fate. Brown also states that *Faust* "identifies how our own ambitions to make constructive use of our knowledge drive us unwittingly to ever more destructive acts" (9). This contention argues against making use of intelligence lest unintended, negative consequences occur; as the alternative is to do nothing, or act through ignorance, this would seem to be antithetical to Goethe's views. Moving away from her discussion of morals, Brown does point out that "in all respects...from style to its significance for its culture, *Faust* embodies the conflicts of its period" (6).

The artistic and cultural conflict of that period was between the Enlightenment and Romanticism. The Romantic Era was in most ways not only a reaction to, but also a direct rejection of, the Age of Enlightenment, which held that the human condition was characterized by reason. The Romantics believed that reason did not suffice to define the human condition. To be human meant having feelings, experiencing life, and always striving, and the arts of the time reflected this belief. Ronald Peacock, an authority on drama who has written several studies of the form, believes that the "great new expressive idea [of the Romantic Era], backed by powerful feeling, is that life itself, as life, is the desirable thing, the value, the ultimate, the precious meaning; man as man, experience as experience" (165-166). In the beginning of *Faust, Part I*, Faust embodies the Enlightenment: he is studious, learned, and venerates reason. Any striving he may do is toward greater knowledge, involving neither experience nor the outside world. He is ruled by reason, but he is beginning to believe there is a greater, but unrecognized, purpose to life; he knows what he is tired of, but not in definite terms what it is he wants" (Peacock 164). This has brought him to the depths of despair.

The spirit of Romanticism is represented in very different ways by two very disparate characters: Mephisto and Gretchen. Mephisto is, like Faust, very knowledgeable, but he is also well experienced in the

pleasures of the flesh. His exact nature is hard to delineate, as he represents different things at different points in the play. At first, he strives for nothingness; believing that "better if nothing ever came to life" (1341), he is upset that the world and humanity, opposing nothingness, has resisted all his attempts to destroy it (1363-1376). While that attitude is not indicative of the Romantic mind, neither does he hold the human use of reason in high regard, stating that man "uses it / Only to be more bestial than any beast" (285-286). His Romantic spirit is shown when he asks Marthe and Gretchen: "What greater gift of heaven than / The sweet embrace of man and woman?" (2947-1948). When Faust has fallen in love, Mephisto, mocking and crude, questions Faust's love, but then ensures that Faust returns to her, taunting: "You flooded love into her heart / And now your little brook's gone shallow" (3309-3310). Gretchen may seem at first not representative of a Romantic: striving and experiencing life are not within her. Instead, she is innocent; she is without sin, is not well educated and does not even recognize her own beauty. Her connection to Romanticism is that she lacks the self-awareness of reason. Also, she is an ideal, an object to be strived for and pursued by Faust; "she is the perfect embodiment of woman's love for man, sublimely simple, strong, and true" (Peacock 189). Faust only lives after first meeting Mephisto, then loving Gretchen. Goethe, as a Romantic, shows us that to live, one must recognize that human nature cannot be defined solely by reason, but that one must strive, and feel, and experience life. Faust requires both the addition of the worldliness of Mephisto, and to interact with, and strive for, Gretchen and her innocence to complete his humanity.

Faust suffers from despair at the start of the play. As a personification of the Enlightenment, he is more knowledgeable "than all the dimwits, / The doctors, masters, clerks and prelates" (366-367). Unlike Marlowe's *Faustus*, this wealth of knowledge has done him little good: he has "neither goods nor gold and neither / Honour in the world nor any splendour" (374-375). He recognizes that however much he learns, he will still know nothing. Knowing this, he is unhappy; he considers leaving academics, and reaches the conclusion that "a dog wouldn't live like this" (376). Even studying necromancy cannot assuage his depression. He considers his office

a dungeon, where he is confined with muddy light, amongst dusty, worn-eaten books and sooty papers (398-405). Immersed in academia his entire life, he “feels that his orientation to endless pools of words has somehow deprived him of the reality of the world of process” (Maas 22h). He yearns to breathe the air outside, but is trapped by his responsibilities.

Despairing, he turns to magic, and views the Sign of the Macrocosm and the Sign of the Earth Spirit. The Macrocosm he perceives as nothing but theatre, which cannot be grasped (454-455). When he views the Earth Spirit, he “feel[s] the nerve to broach the world now” (464) and summons the spirit. The Earth Spirit represents the totality of life, and Faust feels a kinship to the spirit. However, the spirit recognizes Faust’s limitations, and tells him: “You are like the spirit you can comprehend, / not me” (512-513). Faust cannot be like the Earth Spirit, as his devotion to knowledge and reason have kept him from experiencing life.

This revelation only increases Faust’s despair. His feelings are dead, his imagination shriveled, and happiness has gone (638-643). His attempt at suicide fails only because he is interrupted by bells and choirs singing for the Easter festival. The Christian celebration of rebirth has interrupted his despair, and reminded him of his happier youth. The music he hears “started [his] boyhood’s cheerful play, / The happiness set forth in the festival of spring” (778-779). As a youth, before he spent his life acquiring knowledge in a dusty, murky office, he was innocent and he was happy. As the memory of innocence and happiness keeps Faust alive here, so will Gretchen, representing innocence and joy, keep Faust living later.

His suicide attempt interrupted and in a better mood, he brings his *famulus* Wagner outside to experience the Easter festival. As all manner of people prepare to celebrate, Faust regards them, and experiences some rebirth of his own with nature. He is invigorated by “the associations and memories it evokes in his mind, as he moves about conscious of being a man amongst men, sharing common feelings, and especially the sense of the awakening to new life that the spring brings” (Peacock 162-163). Having reached the nadir of despair and recovered, Faust is desirous of experience. Although

he is not like the revelers, Faust understands why they celebrate.

Wagner does not. He feels that “they rampage as if ridden by the devil / and call it being joyful, call it singing” (947-948). Unlike Faust, Wagner still embraces the Enlightenment, and views reason as the totality of the human experience, believing “the flight / From page to page and tome to tome / On the wings of the mind is [his] delight” (1103-1105). Wagner seeks to emulate Faust as Faust was, even though “Faust has in a sense already been a Wagner and would now be more” (Cottrell 246). “Goethe feels that inspiration cannot be derived from reading other people’s manuscripts, but must be generated anew, as the artist...becomes inspired with actual events” (Maas 222) and Faust is developing this attitude towards life, experiencing life as Wagner cannot do. Just as Wagner represents how Faust was prior to the start of the play, a student who speaks to Mephisto, who is disguised as Faust, represents Faust as he was years before. The student, like Faust, feels “cramped and cabined. [He] never see[s] / Anything green and never a tree” (1884-1885). Because of this separation from nature, he “sit[s] in lecture rooms and feel[s] / [his] hearing, sight and thinking fail” (1886-1887). Without a connection to nature and feelings, even the process of thinking is inhibited. Differing from Wagner, the student desires – as well as the entirety of knowledge – freedom to relax, enjoy nature, and enjoy his holidays (1901-1907). Mephisto, purportedly representing the academic mindset, describes to him the various fields of study. Philosophy describes things without understanding them; jurisprudence is nonsense, and laws are “handed on / like an eternal malady” (1972-1973); divinity puts too much importance in words; and medicine cannot change God’s will. But it is Mephisto’s advice regarding women that interests the student most of all, showing that reason has not yet overcome emotion in this young man. By minimizing the importance of knowledge and touting earthly pleasures, Mephisto “turns the student away from book learning and toward experience in the world, just as he will lead Faust out into the real world” (Brown 50).

This student, Wagner, and Faust represent three stages of the same being. Faust has lived most of his life, devoted his life to learning, and believes he has wasted

his life. Wagner has begun this path, and believes it to be the correct manner in which to live his life. The student may still avoid locking himself away in an academic dungeon and choose to live, if he actually listens to and parses Mephisto's words. This scene emphasizes Goethe's belief that one characteristic needed to be fully human is feelings. Reason is not intrinsically bad, and Mephisto believes that Faust's driving spirit, which has been solely turned towards learning, "overleaps the joys of earthly living" (1859). It is Faust's aspiration toward greater knowledge at the expense of living that caused his despair. And Mephisto explains to the student that life is more interesting, more beautiful, than knowledge: "All theory, my friend, is grey. / Life's golden tree is green" (2038-2039). Enthralment to reason alone cannot help but keep one from enjoying life.

After viewing the Easter festival, Faust is momentarily happier: "heavenly harmonies / [are] taking possession of all [his] soul" (1203-1204). The moment passes as, back at his study, he feels his "spring of satisfaction fail" (1211b). As soon as Faust experiences hope, it leaves him, as he has immediately turned away from nature, and returned to his studies. For revelation, Faust undertakes to translate the Bible into German. In translating "In the beginning was the Word," Faust "cannot rate the *word* so highly" (1226). After several permutations, he changes "Word" to "Deed." Faust's translation of this passage parallels his own desire to change. This scene highlights what Maas believes to be one of the themes of *Faust*: "the clash between a verbal orientation as opposed to a fact, event, or happening orientation" (220). Faust wants to escape his "intensional orientation – or the tendency to become absorbed with the words used and to subsequently neglect the real world which the words describe" (Maas 219), and replace it with an extensional orientation, or "life facts before words" (Maas 221b). Deeds, or experiences, must replace the words and reason that have been the totality of Faust's existence.

Having escaped despair, but now miserable, Faust is receptive to the machinations of Mephisto, who can help with his desire to enter the real world. Although Mephisto is the devil, he is "not so much evil...but rather everything that destroys faith and is contrary to the higher human ideals" (Peacock 178). He will be

Faust's companion, servant, even slave (1646-1648), and will "give [him] things not seen by any human" (1674). No better guide could be found to introduce Faust to the world of experience. When he promises Faust that his "senses will enjoy... / In this one hour far more / Than in a humdrum year entire" (1436-1438), it foreshadows the delights he will promise to show Faust due to their wager. His appeal to Faust is easy to understand, as Mephisto is "courteous and gallant, but heartless, materialistic, intriguing, cynical, lewd, mocking, wholly selfish and hostile to the virtues" (Peacock 178). Few of these adjectives, and certainly not the best of them – courteous, gallant and intriguing – are attributes easily assigned to Faust. Faust is no fool, and recognizes the true nature of Mephisto, but his despair and his desire for experience do not allow this to sway him. The contrast to Faust that Mephisto represents is required if Faust is to progress to be a more complete human being.

Despite having suppressed his desires in his cloistered existence, Faust tells Mephisto that he is "too old to do nothing but play, / Too young to be without desire" (1546-1547). The world denies him any pleasure, and his days are filled with terror, his sleep with nightmares (1548-1565). His "existence is burdensome, / Death to be wished, life loathsome" (1570-1571). He curses all things in the world that may bring him joy, such as love, faith, or hope, or physical pleasure, such as money or wine (1591-1606). Cursing patience most of all, he is open to a wager with Mephisto, the terms of which are decided by Faust. If he is content, or if Mephisto can satisfy him, or if Faust "ever...shall tell the moment: / Bide here, you are so beautiful!" (1699-1700) then Faust will suffer damnation, and serve Mephisto in hell. There are three reasons why Faust may make a wager that at first glance he cannot profit by: pessimism, discontent, and striving. First, so certain is Faust that he cannot enjoy life, he is willing to wager his soul to prove that he is miserable. By making the wager, he "seems to make an obstinate and defiant gesture to Mephistopheles, meaning that his pessimism is justified, that *nothing*, least of all pleasure, can prove life worthwhile" (Peacock 168). Second, he "sickened of all science long ago. / So in the deep of sensuality / [he'll] quench [his] passions' heat" (1749-1751). He understands that there is a difference between physical

pleasure and virtuous joy, and Mephisto can only satisfy his baser desires. Faust will never be content, because he “knows intuitively that at best Mephistopheles can offer only temporary representations of [transcendence], because that is all that can be offered in the world” (Brown 48). The final possibility is that Faust desires a life of eternal striving, endlessly seeking the next experience, leaving behind the world of words for the world of deeds. It is not that he does not think he can find pleasure, or even joy, but that he believes he will not be satisfied, nor does he wish to be.

The wager serves to differentiate this play from *Doctor Faustus*, and other previous Faust stories, and also differentiates Faust from Doctor Faustus. The sale of one’s soul to the devil is inarguably an immoral act. Faustus, by doing so, has set himself on a path from which redemption is difficult. However, a wager with the devil can easily be seen as, at worst, amoral rather than immoral. If Faust believes he cannot lose, for he must always strive and will not be satisfied, then he has risked nothing. Faustus, by contracting with Mephistopheles, throws in his lot with the devil, and turns his back on God. Faust, on the other hand, sets himself apart from, and above, Mephisto, by his confidence that nothing Mephisto may do can satisfy him.

Mephisto advises Faust that instead of the usual way of looking at things, they “need a cleverer way than that / before life’s pleasures end” (1816-1819). He knows that Faust will be miserable as long as he maintains the same outlook, as long as he is mired in the world of reason. Faust must begin to feel, so that he can live. He tells Faust: “You’ll learn to live when you believe you might” (2062). Until Faust can open himself to new experience, he will never even find pleasure, and certainly not joy, and will never truly be alive. Despite Mephisto’s attempts to introduce Faust to some of life’s pleasures in the following scenes, Peacock argues that after the wager, “Mephistopheles is reduced from Tempter to Servant, to a mere instrument for admitting Faust to the extended realms of life” (Peacock 169). Although he promised “to serve [Faust] here / And non-stop do his bidding” (1656-1657), this reduction denigrates Mephisto’s essential role. The scenes in Auerbach’s Cellar and Walpurgis Night, which show “Faust brought into contact with

representative aspects of life” (Peacock 170) would not be possible without Mephistopheles, and Faust would not be able to progress despite his rejection of these pleasures. Mephisto is more than a mere mechanism moving the play forward; he is an integral part of the story. Their travels, at Mephisto’s direction, also prevent Faust from learning of Gretchen’s troubles until too late. As Brown points out, Mephisto often “directs Faust’s actions: he prescribes the lie about Martha’s husband, he provides the sleeping potion for Margarete’s mother, he prompts Faust stroke by stroke in the fatal duel with Margarete’s brother Valentin” (52). Mephisto remains a driving force in the play following the wager.

Simply being shown pleasurable pursuits will not affect Faust; like the Easter festival, his happiness will be fleeting. He needs bliss, and it is only when Faust meets Gretchen that he begins to live. He has drunk a witch’s potion that rejuvenates him, and also will cause him to view all women as beautiful (2603-2604). Although Gretchen is acknowledged to be beautiful, Faust’s reaction is hyperbolic:

Heavens, the child is beautiful!
I never saw anything comparable.
So proper and so virtuous
And yet with a touch of sauciness.
Her cheeks so bright, her lips so red,
I’ll not forget her till I am dead. (2609-2614)

However, it is not her beauty that prevents Mephisto from immediately retrieving her. She represents the other aspect of life that Faust lacks: innocence. His sheltered existence kept him from experience, but not desire. Even desire is foreign to her; without sin, she had “nothing at all in her confessions” (2625), and therefore Mephisto has “no power over her” (2626). She appeals to Faust because she is naive, not knowledgeable, and incapable of sinning. She is his opposite in every way. Her reaction to Faust maintains this innocence: “she responds directly, without wiles or affectation, to Faust’s advances, and yields to him with a naïve readiness...[that is] the most innocent acceptance of the burden of love” (Peacock 189). This innocent acceptance makes her amenable to Faust’s desires; she admits that she will do anything for his sake (3514), and that she is driven by his will (3518).

This allows her to maintain her innocence after having sex with Faust and giving birth to a child. Her "constancy to her love, to herself, and finally to the moral code by which she was brought up are all admirable and demand our sympathy" (Brown 67). Her innocence is an essential example in the process to save Faust. It is only when he begins to truly love her that he begins to experience joy: "To give the self up utterly and feel / Bliss that must last for ever" (3191-3192).

Despite his abject awe of her beauty, Faust's initial feelings are not of love, but of lust. He wants to sleep with her that very night, but cannot. Her innocence will not allow her to give herself to Faust; rather, she must be courted and tricked (2657-2658). Faust's emotions are mercurial now, and he agrees that he will "swear / [his] soul's entire love for her" (3053-3054). He recognizes – while attempting to deny – the impermanence of feelings, and declares his love to Gretchen in the Garden (3185-3194). However, "if Faust reads his love for Margarete as striving for the highest purity and truth, Mephistopheles constantly reminds him that it is seduction of the most cynical sort, for Faust has no intention of marrying her" (Brown 64). While it is hard to know what Faust ultimately wants at this point, as even he seems unsure, it is certain that Mephisto is closer to the truth than is Faust. Still, Faust celebrates his love for Gretchen, and "the joys that bring / [him] nearer and nearer to the gods" (3241-3242). His love for her makes him tired of "stagger[ing] from lusting after to enjoyment / And in the enjoyment parch[ing] for the lusting after" (3249-3250). Faust is near to bidding the moment to stay, and losing his wager and his soul to Mephisto.

It is Mephisto who explains that Gretchen "sits / drearily at home and frets" (3303-3304) because of the depth of her love for Faust. Even as he declares: "I will have what I want" (3325), Mephisto ensures that Faust will not end the wager at this point, calling into question Mephisto's motives. Mephisto will benefit by allowing Faust to live longer, believing that Faust will foment misery once he discovers the fate that is in store for Gretchen. Mephisto, desiring the void, would be aided more by a miserable Faust than by one more soul in hell. Having told him of Gretchen's plight, Mephisto belittles Faust's feelings, claiming them to be purely lust. This

has the desired reaction, enflaming Faust's passions. Faust vacillates between love and lust, "the hungering thought of her sweet body / Back on [his] flesh that is half crazed already" (3328-3329). But, experiencing the Romantic view of love and disgusted by Mephisto, Faust will "in her arms...know the joys of heaven / And warm [himself] against her heart" (3345-3346). One of the reasons Faust despaired was the inevitability of loss, so Faust will not allow Gretchen to lose love so quickly. Although he cannot end impermanence altogether, he can ameliorate its effects by not leaving Gretchen to stand by her window, singing sad songs, and thinking of Faust (3306-3318). Even if it means her damnation as well as his, (3365) she will do better to experience love than to be so quickly deprived of it.

Finally experiencing life due to the ministrations of Mephisto and Gretchen, Faust is tested by Gretchen's fate. Her mother and brother are dead, both at Faust's hand. Gretchen has drowned the illegitimate son Faust fathered. She is in jail awaiting execution, "given over to evil demons and the judgement of unfeeling human beings" (Field 158). When Mephisto, uncaring about her suffering, tells Faust: "She's not the first," (158) Faust is overcome with "grief, beyond the comprehension of any human soul, that more than one creature should ever have sunk into such deep misery" (158). Important though it is that he is now able to mourn for the plight of nameless souls, he is most stricken because "she, that one, invades the very marrow of [his] soul" (159). And Faust curses Mephisto because, in contrast, he can "grin calmly over the fate of thousands" (159). Now able to recognize the baseness of an unfeeling nature, Faust demands that Mephisto help to free her. Faust enters her cell, and she, not recognizing him, demands that "if [he is] human, feel the pain I feel" (4425). He is finally able to appreciate her suffering, because he has embraced experience, rejected reason as the entirety of human existence. Unable to rescue her because she is unwilling to be rescued, Faust must leave without her, cursing the day he was born (4596). Her fate, although the cause of much grief for Faust, is the moral cost of Faust's striving. When Mephisto earlier distracted Faust from his near-contentment, Faust stated: "Let her fate break around my head, / Let her come to perdition as I do" (3364-3365).

She will not suffer damnation, but her earthly punishment is a parallel in Faust's eyes. Yet this fate is necessary so that Faust will continue to strive, and to experience life. If Gretchen had escaped with Faust, he would have been content, and his wager – and soul – would have been lost.

Faust may seem to end the play in much the same state as when it began. In fact, van der Laan makes that point explicitly, that he has not progressed or developed (452). However, there is a monumental difference, and Faust has progressed. At the beginning of the play, he was in despair and suicidal because he had wasted his life, and he was afraid to want, knowing he would eventually lose the object of his desire. His despair was centered on his Self, an inward pointing emotion that involved no other person. At the end, his despondency is caused by the fate of Gretchen. He has evolved, and has learned to feel, and to care for another person; he wanted Gretchen despite the certainty that he would eventually lose her. He has turned away from the belief that reason is all, and embraced the Romantic view that feeling is more important. He has learned that “to embrace life is to embrace its characteristics and consequences, which include good *and* evil, right *and* wrong, inextricably mixed up together” (Peacock 174). Pain is as much a part of life as pleasure, misery is as important as joy, and he has opened himself up to, and experienced, all of these. The moral cost of his striving was high, but necessary, and Faust has progressed. Because of the worldliness of Mephisto and the innocence of Gretchen, Faust was able to leave the sterility of his studies, and the Enlightenment, and embrace the Romantic ideal of a life of emotion, experience, and striving.

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Evaluation: *Will offers a thoughtful analysis of a difficult text, highlighting the Protean nature of Romanticism in the process, and makes astute use of the analyses of others, drawing on their insights or taking issue with them as warranted.*

The Imperative Need for Animal Experimentation

Mikey Fricano

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Teresa Chung

Assignment: *Write a research paper in which you take a position on some issue in bioethics, employing at least five different types of sources and refuting the more common counterarguments.*

Envision a world without protection and prevention against future diseases, a world without hope for cures. That world is a world without animal experimentation. However, animal rights activists endanger the continuation of animal experimentation with their flawed philosophical arguments. This issue has received various labels, such as animal cruelty, animal testing, or animal rights. It is easy for animal rights activists to point their fingers and show how cruel humans may be to other animals and show disturbing videos of dying, bloody monkeys, when in fact only .03 percent of test subjects are primates (Paul 4). However, it is not easy to show everyone what will happen years from now if we have no prevention against disease. It is not easy to show people the pain and sickness that inevitably will occur without vaccines. Strikingly, opposing sides make use of the concept of utilitarianism, as well as other terms such as speciesism. The number of arguments made against animal experimentation is vast. However, most of the arguments opposing animal experimentation are based on emotion, much less on logic. To safeguard the health of the maximum number of human beings and animals, humanity must continue both medical and scientific animal experimentation.

Those who oppose animal experimentation must first understand what a world without animal experimentation would be like. In an ideal world, we would not have to experiment or inflict pain upon animals; however, in an ideal world, we would also not have diseases to begin with. Yet, much as we desire our world to be ideal, it is not. If animal experimentation would not exist, then both humans and animals would suffer. We would not have the medication to combat heart attacks, strokes, kidney failures, and high blood pressure; also, the vaccine for polio would not exist. It took 40 years of animal experimentation to develop the vaccine for polio ("Polio Vaccine Developed"). Nearly 133 human volunteers, 150 chimpanzees, and 9,000 monkeys were experimented on using different strains of the polio virus. Professor Albert Sabin in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, stated that "[these studies] were necessary to solve many problems before an oral polio vaccine could become a reality" (qtd. in "Polio Vaccine Developed"). Other important vaccines which have been developed as a result of animal research are smallpox, yellow fever, tetanus, rabies, Hib meningitis, influenza, typhoid, and cervical cancer vaccines ("Vaccines"). The cervical cancer vaccine is a relatively new one; its purpose is to combat HPV, which usually causes cervical cancer. The interval of time this vaccine took to develop occurred over 70 years of animal experimentation, which would be nearly impossible to develop similar vaccines if this type of research was restricted ("Vaccines"). The main specimens during the development of the cervical cancer vaccine were dogs and rabbits because of the similar cervical functions these species share with humans. The abundant discoveries found through animal experimentation not only benefit humans, but animals as well. In 1947, 6,949 dogs were confirmed to have rabies, but that number was tremendously reduced to 76 confirmed cases of rabies in the year 2005 due to the advanced medical technology accomplished by the use of animal experimentation (Sun 1). If it were not for animal experimentation, then the vaccines which protect humans from the most deadly of diseases would not exist, and innumerable deaths, pain, and agony would occur not only amongst humans, but with our beloved pets as well.

Some argue that animal experimentation served

a temporary purpose and that equality between man and animal should be enforced. However, animal experimentation should not solely be a solution limited to the past. There is much for science to discover. There entails much to unravel within the medical mysteries that exist. In 2004, the United States recorded 553,888 deaths due to cancer, which trails behind the number one killer, heart disease ("Cancer Statistics Combined"). The cure for cancer indeed remains a mystery; however, because of animal research, the cure draws closer than ever. Professor Valter Longo once theorized, "turning off the growth hormone receptor could stop cancer from growing by blocking insulin growth factor, or IGF-1" (Koffman 3). For the past fifteen years, Longo has been attempting to prove his theory by experimenting on mice. He used a drug that suppressed a growth hormone and created a genetic mutation that increased the lifespan of mice by 50 percent and reduced the incidence of cancer by 50 percent (Koffman 3). Animal experimentation confirmed that cancer can be suppressed by the use of growth-suppressing drugs, but whether or not scientists can apply the method to humans remains a major question. Recently, Longo found another major clue to the cure of cancer. For 40 years, Ecuadorian scientists studied, analyzed, and attempted to cure a small population known as the Larons, who have a high incidence of dwarfism. The Larons are also known as "'little old people'" because they are short and "historically lived extraordinarily long lives" (Koffman 2). Astonishingly, Ecuadorian scientists discovered a genetic mutation in the Larons that offered an explanation regarding their longevity (Koffman 2). With further interpretations by Professor Longo, they recognized that for the past 40 years, not one incidence of cancer or diabetes occurred amongst the Larons (Koffman 3). Longo realized the dwarfism disease shared a distinctive connection with his mice, which is an increased lifespan and decreased rate of cancer due to a genetic mutation. It is reasonable to conclude this miraculous connection would never have been discovered if animal experimentation had been outlawed. Moreover, Longo concludes, "the studies of Laron could, in theory, accelerate our research by many years, maybe 20 years" (Koffman 3). For the next 20 years, there remains a colossal amount of testing to complete. Therefore, scientists will

require an expansion of their experimentation methods by using other animals that share closer genetic similarities with humans. Without animal experimentation as a stepping stone, the paths which formulate the answers to the most perplexing medical mysteries will be closed. Animal experimentation has helped us in the past, and in the present, and it will do so in the future as well.

A multitude of alternatives regarding animal experimentation have been proposed, but they are inadequate in comparison to animal experimentation. The foremost alternative for animal experimentation is *in vitro* testing, which is the testing of cells, tissues, or organs. The next best alternatives behind animal testing are microorganism testing, computer model testing, and epidemiologic data analysis. However, the problem with these types of testing is that they do not measure the psychological effects upon humans or animals, and they are also inept at mimicking the full biochemical interactions that occur in a whole animal, which is absolutely required for experiment results (Breen 5). Moreover, members of the largest animal rights advocacy, PETA, argue that the psychological effects of an animal cannot be compared to that of a human ("Animals Used for Experimentation FAQs"); however, they cannot argue that the alternatives can, so animals still remain the next best source of experimentation. Lawrence Fisher, Director of MSU's Institute of Environmental Toxicology, explained that without knowing the damage that may occur to a whole animal after an experiment, the results cannot be applied to human beings (Breen 6). Since animal testing is the only type of credible testing that shows scientists the important psychological reactions and biochemical interactions of the test subject, it therefore becomes the most reliable type of experimentation because it provides data which is the most applicable to humans. However, some may argue that animal testing is not the most effective form of testing, and that the testing of humans is, and that it would be better to test humans instead. Although common sense leads to the obvious conclusion that the best way to predict the effect a drug will have upon a human is to test a human, ethical values outweigh this line of reasoning; clearly, using humans as test subjects is the least humane form of experimentation. Historic tragedies that occurred due to the testing of humans

support why such practices must not be revived. In 1904, the Federal Drug Administration used employees to test the toxicity of products, and evidently this decision led to problems. In 1937, a newly created antibacterial drug killed 107 people before it became marketed (Breen 3). Such tragedies led to new precautions, specifically with animal experimentation. John Dewey, a well-respected philosopher reinforced why experimentation must not be used upon humans and further mentioned why animals must be the test subjects instead:

When we speak of the moral right of competent persons to experiment upon animals in order to get the knowledge and the resources necessary to eliminate useless and harmful experimentation upon human beings and to take better care of their health, we understate the case. Such experimentation is more than a right; it is a duty.... (43)

With the exclusion of human experimentation, until the alternatives of animal experimentation surpass the precision and reliability of animal experimentation, then it would be reasonable for scientists to consider the use of those alternatives. Until that day comes, animal experimentation remains the most adequate type of experimentation, and the duty to utilize this right belongs to humanity in order to safeguard the health of all.

Although animal experimentation results in a safer, healthier world, animal rights activists endanger the existence of its future. A convincing argument against animal experimentation regards animal rights. Tom Regan, a reputable philosopher supporting animal rights, said, "If individuals have equal inherent value, then any principle that declares what treatment is due them as a matter of justice must take their equal value into account" (Regan 248). With this concept, he claims all "subject-of-life criterion" possess inherent values, and must be respected, further claiming all subject-of-life, "normal mammalians" older than 12 months feel pain and have emotions, and are equal to each other (Regan 247). Regan admits there are difficulties when determining which individuals qualify as a subject-of-life (normal mammalian). Moreover, Regan's definition of an individual backfires on him. If one were to define the noun "individual" as he uses it, then it is defined as,

"a single human being, as distinguished from a group" ("Individual", def.1). So, according to Regan's logic, if a human (an individual) possesses inherent value, then his or her value is equal to another human. Therefore, his premise pertains only to humans. Thus, to conclude that animals are equal to humans with Regan's philosophy is guilty of a contradictory premise fallacy. However, if one were to ignore his contradictions and recognize the purpose of his concept, then one may become aware of more flaws. The main connection he desires to draw is that animals or more specifically mammals are equal to humans; however, as stated, he claims all subjects-of-life that are greater than or equal to 12 months old possess inherent value; therefore, those below 12 months old do not possess inherent value and need not be respected. This concept ignores human babies, puppies, kittens, and other animal newborns. Certainly, many of those who oppose abortion would not support this claim, as well as those who are in opposition to infanticide. Moreover, to apply a theoretical, fixed value on all animals based on age is naive. For example, a small dog that is one year of age is considered 15 in human years, but a larger dog that is one year old is considered 12 in human years ("Dog Age Calculator"). Tom Regan's philosophy ignores the psychological and physical rates of development amongst animals. According to his logic, a large dog can have "inherent value" at an earlier age than a small dog. If animal rights activists argue about animal equality, then they should avoid contradicting themselves with unequal beliefs that discriminate against certain species of animals, or in this case certain breeds of a species. To assume all animals psychologically or physically develop at the same rate demonstrates ignorance; thus, Tom Regan's theory to determine when and how a being develops inherent value consists of flawed logic, and it cannot be applied as a basis to determine absolute respect, and equal treatment for all animals. In spite of the contradictions within Regan's concept, it remains possible that one could establish a presentable reason that animals or mammalians are equal to humans. If that were the case, then the most logical reasoning would be that a human is a mammal; a mammal is an animal; therefore, a human is an animal. However, these are extremely difficult premises to support. For example, if the opposing side could prove that a human

is an animal, then from a mathematical perspective, they could claim an animal is a human because if A equals B, then B equals A; therefore, animals deserve equal rights to humans. To conclude that an animal equals a human is absurd. Various philosophers who oppose animal experimentation often make this incompatible error by switching from logical to mathematical reasoning; if one were to sketch a logical diagram, then it would be evident that it is impossible for an animal to equal a human. Regarding civil rights, when comparing human rights to animal rights, it becomes an absolute mess. In most cases an animal equals an animal; a mammal equals a mammal, but unsurprisingly a human, does not equal a human, which negates the idea that animals should be equal to humans. Moreover, if humans were equal to humans, then the 14th Amendment would not have been established to safeguard the rights of everyone. If humans were equal to humans, then racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudices would not exist. Furthermore, if all humans were equal to all humans, then law enforcement officers would not be the only beings who possess the right to arrest, restrain, or justifiably commit homicide. If all of humanity were equal, then all of humanity would possess those rights. Lastly, if all humans were equal to all humans, then upper, middle, and lower classes would not exist. Nevertheless, one could argue that all humans are born equal; surely everyone comes from a mother's womb, but to assume all humans are raised equally is rather illogical. Humans may be born equal, but as soon as they are integrated into society, the perception of equality is diminished. When concerning civil rights, if humans are not equal to humans, then it would be illogical to conclude animals, or even mammals, are equal to humans; therefore, it is irrational to grant animals equal rights to humans.

A well-known opponent of animal experimentation is Peter Singer. In his philosophical book *Animal Liberation*, he tries to explain that all animals are equal. His arguments revolve around a term he invented, which he calls "speciesism." He admits, "the word is not an attractive one, but I can think of no better term" (Singer 6). With this term he attempts to draw comparisons between animal experimentation and black slavery, further mentioning racism and sexism. He utilizes these controversies, racism and sexism, and claims speciesism

is no different, and it must be put to an end. He states:

Racists violate the principle of equality by giving greater weight to the interests of members of their own race when there is a clash between their interests and the interests of those of another race. Sexists violate the principle of equality by favoring the interests of their own sex. Similarly, speciesists allow the interests of their own species to override the greater interests of members of other species. The pattern is identical in each case. (Singer 8)

However, his logic and definitions are false. Sexists do not "violate the principle of equality by favoring the interests of their *own* sex." A sexist may favor the interests of any particular gender he or she may desire, and to claim males will only favor males, or females will only favor females, is a provincial, simple-minded remark. Making use of false terms and false logic will result in false conclusions, as he concludes "The pattern is identical in each case." Despite the false reasoning to relate speciesism to sexism, there exists a somewhat decent tie between racism and speciesism. However, the difference between these two concepts is that racism involves only humans, and speciesism does not. The main problem with applying speciesism as the backbone of an argument to support animal rights and equality is that speciesism is too broad. The definition of species is "Organisms that reproduce sexually and belong to the same species interbreed and produce fertile offspring" ("Species," def.1). The key word "organisms" generalizes any "form of life considered as an entity; an animal, plant, fungus, protistan, or moneran" ("Organism," def.2). So, according to Peter Singer, if racism and sexism is bad, then we must eliminate speciesism, because all species must be treated equally, and just like racism and sexism, speciesism "must be also condemned" (Singer 6). Consequently, if we were to eliminate speciesism, then according to the logic of Singer, we must not brush our teeth because every time we do so, we kill millions of organisms. We also cannot mow our lawns because it would be equally as cruel to butcher the species of grass as it would be to butcher an animal in an experiment. If humans were anti-speciesists, then not only those who are carnivores would be extinct, but herbivores, also

known as vegetarians, would be extinct as well. There are two possibilities humans can be truly fair to other species concerning our means of consumption. Either we improbably develop photosynthesis to consume energy without consuming other species, or we eat every species, including humans. Both choices offer equality, but both are extremely improbable. If humans were to develop photosynthesis, then we would require animal experimentation to develop that genetic mutation. As ridiculous as these arguments are, they are the most logical response to speciesism. If other authors support Singer's speciesism, then they should drop it, and maybe instead create a new term called "animalism." Obviously, the current argument of speciesism does not logically support animal rights.

Although Singer's definition of speciesism fails, he utilizes other concepts to support his philosophies. As previously mentioned, the opposing side makes use of the utilitarian concept, although Singer confuses his philosophical stance. He claims the good of humans does not exceed the good of any other being, specifically animals. To support this claim, he quotes utilitarian philosopher Henry Sidgwick: "The good of any one individual is of no more importance, from the point of view (if I may say so) of the Universe, than the good of any other" (qtd. in Singer 5). The author of *Animal Rights and Moral Philosophy*, Julian Franklin, identifies Singer's utilitarianism as "rule utilitarianism" (7). Rule-utilitarianism sets a standard for moral correctness, and applies the same standard to every individual situation that may occur to ensure benefit. This line of thought differs from its counterpart, act-utilitarianism. According to Roger Crisp and Tim Chappell, "Utilitarianism has usually focused on actions. The most common form is act-utilitarianism, according to which, what makes an action right is its maximizing total or average utility." The difference is that rule-utilitarianism recognizes the consequences of a general practice while act-utilitarianism recognizes the consequences of each act separately (Mackinnon 59). Regarding the final outcomes of these two concepts, act-utilitarianism seeks the maximum benefit for each specific situation, and rule-utilitarianism seeks the most beneficial generalized rule; however, rule utilitarianism ignores the maximum benefit

of specific situations. Peter Singer believes animals should possess rights equal to humans, and to support this claim he applies rule-utilitarianism. However, by exposing the rare occurrences and brutalities of animal experimentation, he actually is using a few unique cases to formulate a generalized solution. This first appears to relate mostly to act-utilitarianism; however, Singer's concept obviously does not offer maximum benefit; consequently, his philosophy is a rule-act-utilitarianism, one obviously harnessing contradictions. Peter Singer's philosophy only benefits a minor population, that being experimental animals. However, utilitarianism is "a consequentialist moral theory in which we judge whether an action is better than its actual or expected results or consequences; actions are classically judged in terms of the promotion of human happiness" (Mackinnon 11). When Singer claims animals belong to the population deserving happiness, then for this claim to agree with any utilitarian perspective, it should in some way benefit all humans, and non-tested and tested animals. Singer twisted the premises of rule-utilitarianism and twisted its conclusion from a generalized solution, to a specific outcome. The line of reasoning in Singer's argument that uses the utilitarian perspective does not logically or credibly support his argument. As mentioned, if animal experimentation were illegal, then the expansion of humanity's medical knowledge would be reduced, which could cause much harm to the future of the human race. Moreover, one must also recognize the benefits of continuing animal experimentation. Obviously, there will be more opportunities to solve medical mysteries if animal experimentation remains legal. As a result, the quality of life for individuals will be higher, and the opportunities to save lives as well. Presently, at the expense of a minimal number of animals, act-utilitarianism is being applied, and a maximum benefit of the human race and animals is being applied. Once again, if opposing authors could prove that animal experimentation is ineffective or insufficient, and if they could present a viable solution, then it should be considered. Until that day, animal experimentation remains the best answer.

As said before, in an ideal world, we would not have to experiment upon animals, but in an ideal world, we would not have diseases to begin with, so our only choice

is to respond with what science can or cannot do. We need animal experimentation to ensure a safe, protected future for the human race because no alternative is more effective. We need not to think about a few hopeless monkeys, but we need to recognize what is important, the maximum benefit of all. Animal experimentation has proven reliable in the past and in the present and will solve the medical mysteries bestowed upon the future.

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Evaluation: *While many students glance only briefly, if at all, at opposing arguments, Mikey lays out and then dismantles at some length and with ingenuity the opposing arguments made by two well-known animal rights philosophers.*

You Are What You Eat: Food, Fluid Identity, and Success in Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* and Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*

Keith Gabler

Course: Literature 221 (American Literature:
Colonial Days to the Civil War)
Instructor: Richard Middleton-Kaplan

Assignment: *Use Franklin and Thoreau to explore the theme of the development or discovery of the self. What standard of measure or value system is used to determine successful self-development?*

In Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* and Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, both authors offer the reader a recipe for success. Yet they view success very differently from one another; Franklin views it monetarily, and Thoreau views it spiritually. While they have separate ideas as to what constitutes success, they oftentimes share an avenue in how they suggest one gets there. This is due to a shared belief that one's identity ought to be mutable. For the monetary success Franklin instructs us toward, one must constantly adapt one's identity toward making it as useful as possible to the situation at hand; one changes with one's environment in order to best exploit that environment to further one's personal gain. Thoreau, in advising to be awake to every moment, instructs the reader to invite change from his constantly evolving environment; one doesn't look to exploit one's environment, but instead looks toward it to help further define one's identity. The

two authors' similar approaches to these different ends can be observed by focusing on the way they advise the reader to approach his or her diet.

Franklin's attitude toward food has its roots in his early childhood when his father would invite over neighborhood friends for dinner and conversation. The conversation would be the main focus of the evening and "little or no Notice was ever taken of what related to the Victuals of the Table" (833). Here Franklin learns (and in turn teaches the reader the value of) not only the art of conversation but how to use food as a tool to bring it about. By not concentrating on or even remotely caring about what the food tastes like or how it is presented, Franklin is not only able to deftly converse with his revolving cast of dining companions, but he is able to gracefully adapt to whatever might be on the menu. His lack of a refined palette acts as a sort of chameleon skin for the dining room. This would prove helpful in both business and politics as it would keep him from offending any potential partners or allies, give him the appearance of being worldly, and afford him greater flexibility as he traveled over great distances. Franklin acknowledges this advantage in writing: "This has been a Convenience to me in traveling, where my Companions have been sometimes very unhappy for want of a suitable Gratification of their more delicate because better instructed Tastes and Appetites" (833). Essentially, Franklin is teaching his audience that solidly formed preferences lead to solidly formed personalities. In keeping from forming such preferences, one is able to keep a fluid identity, making it easier to adapt to any given environment, and therefore making it easier to succeed.

It is the need to save some money that leads Franklin to a vegetarian diet. One's public identity tends to change upon taking up vegetarianism, and it is no different for Franklin as he "was frequently chid for [his] singularity" (837) due to his diet. His decision to forgo eating meat occurs while reading a book by Tyron "recommending a Vegetable Diet" (837), and Franklin quickly adopts it when he realizes that the money he would save would be "an additional Fund for buying Books" (837). Further advantages are discovered when he finds himself with more time to work than his meat-eating coworkers, who take leave of the printing house for their

meals, as well as “greater Clearness of Head and quicker Apprehension which usually attend Temperance in Eating and Drinking” (837). So by taking on a persona that is decidedly against the grain, Franklin takes advantage of the situation by exploiting a shared weakness in his peers. This can be seen in the way Franklin deals with his then-employer and future-business-rival, Samuel Keimer, when Keimer “proposed [Franklin’s] being his Colleague in a Project he had of setting up a new Sect” (850). Franklin insists that a vegetarian diet be one of the nascent sect’s doctrines and then sits back and enjoys watching his boss, who “was usually a great Glutton” (850), struggle with adapting to it; Keimer bows out by “order[ing] a roast Pig...[and eating] it all up” before the other dinner guests arrive (850). As Keimer would go on to be driven out of business by Franklin, this anecdote can be read as Franklin instructing his readers that an inability to adapt to one’s environment will lead to an inability to succeed in the world of business.

The vegetarian diet is abandoned when “b’calmed off Block Island” (849), Franklin’s traveling companions catch a large amount of cod, and he is tempted by the smell of the frying fish. Franklin states that his view of eating fish as being “a kind of unprovok’d Murder” (849) is swayed when he sees that the fish’s stomachs are filled with smaller fish, and he concludes that “if [the fish] eat one another, [Franklin doesn’t] see any reason why we mayn’t eat you” (849). This is a convenient time for Franklin to have a sudden change in philosophy. Surely he had been tempted before to break his vegetarian diet before, but never would it have been in a situation like this where adherence to the diet would not be advantageous. There is no use in turning down a plateful of fried cod when it is of no cost and other food may be scarce. Franklin would return to a vegetarian diet in the future, when the situation called for it.

Franklin condemns the drinking of alcohol because it hinders one’s mutability, whether it be deterred by the drunkard’s inherent laziness or the public’s insistence on branding him with the scarlet letter “D.” Franklin illustrates a case of the former in relating the story of the ending of his friendship with John Collins. While returning home one night in a boat on the Delaware, Collins in his drunken stubbornness refuses to take his

turn rowing, and Franklin tosses him into the river. When Franklin and the others onboard offer to let Collins back on board if he agrees to row, Collins “was ready to die with Vexation, and obstinately would not promise to row” (848). Franklin gives this example to show how alcohol can turn a even an intelligent man into a pighcaded, lazy drunk, one unwilling to (or perhaps more likely, unable to) alter his “fractious” (848) behavior even to avoid drowning. As to Collins’s ultimate fate, Franklin’s assertion that he “never heard of him after” (848) suggests that it was lacking in accomplishment. His inability to adapt to his situation has led directly to his failure. As for an example of the scarlet letter “D,” Franklin ends his business partnership with Simon Meredith because Meredith was “often seen drunk in the Streets, and playing low Games in Alehouses, much to [Franklin’s] discredit” (868). Franklin (with the assistance of two of his friends) buys Meredith out of the partnership. He then “advertis[es] that the Partnership was dissolved” (869), after which the business flourishes. Hence, drunken behavior can ruin one’s public image, thereby ruining one’s business; it takes getting rid of the drunkard to get rid of the damaging label.

Perhaps Franklin’s attitude is best summed up in his reaction to seeing the old woman who lives in the garret of his landlady’s house. Attempting to “lead the Life of a Nun as near as might be done” outside of a nunnery, she has “given all her Estate to charitable uses” and subsists on “Water-gruel only, and using no Fire but to boil it” (858). Seeing that she “look’d pale, but was never sick,” Franklin counts her existence “as another Instance on how small an Income Life and Health may be supported” (858). Franklin notes the meagerness of her life instead of her charity. The lesson he imparts with is that one would be able to adapt even to an environment as barren as the one the old lady has created for herself, and success in Franklin’s terms often depends upon how inhospitable an environment one is willing and able to adapt to.

While Franklin is concerned with feeding himself to the extent that his pocketbook gets fat, Thoreau “want[s] to live deep and suck the marrow out of life” (1758). It is the soul that Thoreau is looking to feed, as his usage of metaphor involving food and hunger makes

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clear. He writes of the poet putting the farm into verse that, "[the poet] has milked it, skimmed it, and got all the cream, and left the farmer only the skimmed milk" (1754). Franklin would have probably been on the farmer's side in suggesting that all the poet had gotten were "a few wild apples only" (1754), but to Thoreau it is the pure experience of observing and relating with the nature around him that is important. When he writes that, "We are determined to be starved before we are hungry" (1759), he is insisting that the reader take the time to fully live in and experience his current environment without rushing to get to the next one. It is with this attention to his environment that Thoreau observes "the thawing sand and clay...flowing down the sides of a deep cut on the railroad" and remarks that "the overhanging leaf sees here its prototype" (1772). Such minute detail is food for Thoreau's spirit, and in feeding on it he, like the overhanging leaf, learns something about his ever-changing identity.

While he advises the reader to spiritually feast on his environment, Thoreau warns against overfeeding one's physical body. "The gross feeder is a man in the larva state" (1765) he writes. In making the comparison to larvae, he is emphasizing the mutability of identity necessary in order to succeed. One must learn to evolve from this state in order to become successfully in tune with one's environment. To Thoreau, the vice of overfeeding causes an impurity of the spirit. He writes that "[m]an flows at once to God when the channel of purity is open" (1767); therefore, any impurity would impair man's relationship with God. As Thoreau believes that God communicates to us through the natural world He surrounds us in, he is telling his readers that this impurity restricts their view of their environment. The result would then be the starving of one's spirit, and the crippling of one's identity. Thoreau compares overfeeding to consumption of alcohol and other drugs in arguing that "[i]t is the same appetite" (1768). Both have the affect of ruining one's ability to fully take part in nature. He writes: "Of all ebriosity, who does not prefer to be intoxicated by the air he breathes?" (1766). Like drugs and alcohol, Thoreau feels that his environment has the ability to affect the makeup of his spiritual being. Yet he "prefer[s] the natural sky to the opium-cater's heaven" (1766) because it is pure; it is real.

The opium-cater in allowing himself to be changed by his false surroundings will only wind up with an impurity of spirit. One must be able to clearly see the environment surrounding oneself in order to reach the spiritual purity towards which Thoreau guides his reader.

Like Franklin, Thoreau practices a vegetarian diet. He states: "there is something unclean about this diet and all flesh" (1765). This is not simply a physical cleanliness he is referring to, but a moral and a spiritual cleanliness as well. Much as it is difficult to move around in a room full of clutter, it is difficult for the spirit to make any progress if it is encumbered with a messy diet that was "not agreeable to [his] imagination" (1765). This is similar to the clearness of mind that Franklin finds beneficial, yet the two men use their clarity for different purposes: Franklin to improve the state of his business (to be fair, Franklin does make an attempt to improve his spiritual state, however, his stated goal of "[i]mitat[ing] Jesus and Socrates" (881) suggests that he sees it as something of a lost cause), and Thoreau to improve the purity and the cleanness of his spirit. "An unclean person is universally a slothful one," (1768) writes Thoreau, and this slothfulness is another way one's mutability can be hindered since a person "who sits by a stove, whom the sun shines on prostrate, who reposes with out being fatigued" (1768) will be mired in his laziness.

Even while advocating a vegetarian diet, Thoreau recommends that youths take up the hobby of hunting as a way to introduce them to their natural world. This is because he sees hunting as the first stage in one's development toward becoming an environmentalist. As the youth better becomes acquainted with nature, thereby becoming more familiar with himself, he will eventually come to the decision that he must not "wantonly murder any creature, which holds its life by the same tenure that he does" (1764). The decision to no longer hunt is one of the first identity changes one will go through on the path to spiritual success according to Thoreau, and it comes from an awareness of one's environment. Yet Thoreau, like Franklin with the cod, is tempted to break away from his vegetable diet when he comes across a woodchuck and feels "a strange thrill of savage delight, and [is] strongly tempted to seize and devour him raw" (1762). Although it is unappealing, he accepts this savagery as a part

of his complete self. It is through acknowledgement of his environment that he comes to this conclusion, and it allows him to switch his identity between wild and good, hunter and vegetarian, without betraying the purity of his spirit.

In the different ways they instruct their readers to relate with their environments, both Franklin and Thoreau would suggest that their readers drink water; Franklin sets the example by outperforming his beer-swilling coworkers at the print house, as Thoreau does in drinking from Walden Pond. Similarly, their identities take on the properties of water as well. Thoreau is a river flowing into a great body of water; and Franklin is water in a pitcher, perfectly able to fit into whatever shaped glass you happen to have sitting around.

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Evaluation: *Mr. Gabler's use of food as a metaphor for illustrating Franklin and Thoreau's views of the mutable self proves to be more than just an inspired flash or an ingenious stroke of cleverness; it proves truly revealing, as Mr. Gabler uses the metaphor to discover what is implicit.*

The Evolution of Michael Corleone

T.J. Garms

Course: Literature 112 (Literature and Film)

Instructor: Kurt Hemmer

Assignment: *Choose a character portrayed in the novel and the movie The Godfather and analyze the difference in the depictions.*

Don Vito Corleone, in Francis Ford Coppola's film *The Godfather*, says to his son Michael, "I refused to be a fool dancing on the strings held by all of those big shots." This line illustrates Vito's reflection on his life and his actions. Vito is explaining to Michael that every man has his own destiny, and Vito chose to follow the path that would lead him to be Godfather. However, in this same scene of the film, Vito expresses that he never wanted the same life for Michael, but would have rather had Michael grow up to be one of those big shots holding the strings. However, Michael did eventually follow in his father's foot-steps, even though it was something he had convinced himself he would not do. A closer look at the transformation of Michael highlights some of the differences between Coppola's film and Mario Puzo's novel. The scene where Michael explains to Kay how Vito got Johnny Fontane out of his initial contract, the scene where Michael decides to kill Sollozzo and McCluskey, and the scene where Michael denies ordering the death of Carlo Rizzi highlight these differences between the novel and the film, while also demonstrating Michael's transformation into the new Godfather.

Both Coppola's film and Puzo's novel feature Connie Corleone's wedding as an initial scene in the story, and, as such, it is an appropriate place to begin. Throughout this scene, both the reader and the viewer are given insight into the major players of the story. From this scene, both audiences learn details ranging from the size of Sonny Corleone's equipment to the kind of power and respect that Don Vito commands. However, the most important characterization that occurs at the wedding is that of Michael's character. In this scene, Michael has recently returned from fighting in World War II, and he is considered a war hero. He appears at the wedding dressed

in his full military uniform. However, when the date he has brought with him, Ms. Kay Adams, recognizes Johnny Fontane as one of the guests at the wedding, the audiences are given crucial information about Michael. Michael recounts the story of how Vito went to visit the man who held Johnny under contract. Michael tells Kay that Vito assured the man by use of a pistol that either his brains or his signature would be on the contract. This is where the novel and the film begin to differ, though. In Coppola's film, Michael explicitly says to a horrified Kay, "That's my father, Kay. It's not me." Michael does this in an effort to assure the woman he is with that he will not follow in the family business. In Puzo's novel, though, this assertion is not made as explicitly. Instead, Puzo employs a more indirect characterization of Michael by having Michael reluctantly describe the event, and do so with no humor or joy. Also, upon hearing this story, Kay does not have the repulsed reaction that she does in Coppola's film. Instead, she seems to laugh it off and suggest that Michael is jealous of his father even though "his methods are not exactly constitutional" (37). While this difference does seem slight, it is still important as it serves to characterize both Michael's desire to be an up-standing citizen and Michael's relationship with Kay.

The relationship between Michael and Kay turns out to be tested heavily by Michael's first step toward the family business. As is mentioned several times in Puzo's novel, members of the family business all need to "make their bones" to advance in the family. Following the shooting of Michael's father and the ensuing fracture of Michael's jaw caused by Captain McCluskey at the hospital, Michael decides it is his time to make his bones. The scene in which Michael announces that he will kill both Sollozzo and McCluskey is a turning point in the story, as it will be the first time in which Michael will be directly involving himself in the family business. This scene is quite a bit different between the novel and the film, though. In Coppola's film, Sonny's reaction to Michael's decision is one of disbelief. Sonny laughs off Michael's announcement by saying that Michael is taking things way too personally because the police captain roughed him up a little bit. Michael counters, however, by saying, "It's not personal, Sonny. It's strictly business." Puzo wrote this scene differently. Instead of Sonny laughing off Michael's proposition with disbelief, Sonny laughs at the irony of the situation. Sonny declares that he always knew Michael was the toughest in the family, and that Michael would eventually come around to working for

the family (126). Michael goes on to discuss the situation with Tom Hagen shortly before Michael is about to undertake his mission. Michael says, "Tom, don't let anybody kid you. It's all personal, every bit of business. Every piece of shit every man has to eat every day of his life is personal" (137). This difference between the act being purely business in the film and personal in the novel is key. By having Michael declare that it is purely business in the film, Coppola is highlighting the change in Michael in this one choice that Michael is making. Michael in this one instant is becoming a cold and calculating Don. Puzo's approach, though, argues that taking things personally is the proper way for a Don to act. Michael goes on to say to Tom that "accidents don't happen to people who take accidents as personal insults" (138). In using this dialogue, Puzo has had Michael turn the corner and defend his family.

Michael will continue to handle his business personally in both the film and the novel, and this is illustrated by his order to have his sister's husband Carlo killed, and Michael's ensuing denial. Because Carlo had betrayed the Corleone family and "fingered" Sonny, he had to be killed. In both film and novel, Carlo is killed immediately after being interrogated by Michael in what would seem to be a personal vendetta against Carlo for his acts against the family. Michael handles the confrontation about the murder with Kay differently in the film, as he repeatedly tells Kay not to ask him about his business. When she persists, he shows a slight release of his temper, a rare occurrence, and shouts "Enough!" He then takes a moment to calm himself and relents by saying, "This one time, this one time I'll let you ask me about my affairs." Kay asks if it is true that he had Carlo murdered, and Michael responds with a cold and convincing "No." This is not the case in Puzo's novel. Instead, Kay asks Michael just the one time to say it is not true. Michael does not deny her multiple times before he finally concedes. Instead, he says, "Of course it's not [true]. Just believe me, this one time I'm letting you ask about my affairs, and I'm giving you an answer. It's not true" (419). Puzo notes that Michael had never been more convincing. However, after Michael denies that he had anything to do with Carlo's death, Kay witnesses the "caporegimes" pledge their allegiance to Michael, and she realizes that Michael was lying. This difference again seems to characterize the relationship between Kay and Michael. In the film, the audience is led to believe that Kay believes Michael's

denial, while the novel notes that she does not. It would seem that Michael's slight loss of temper in the film version is the most convincing part of his denial. Because Michael is a man who is supposed to be in control of his temper at all times, this loss, however slight, is jolting and even a bit frightening. In this way, the audience could view Kay as being frightened into believing Michael. It could also be seen as this accusation against Michael is so disdainful that it causes Michael to lose his temper, and it makes his denial that much more believable. It would seem that because the novel does not include this loss of temper and has Michael volunteering the information that his denial lacks just slightly in its credibility. This is why Kay cannot believe Michael.

In the end, Michael is a different man than he was at the onset of the stories in the film and the novel. At the beginning of each, Michael was a war veteran and a student at Dartmouth, and by the end of each he has morphed into a ruthless Mafia Don willing to eliminate anyone who goes against his family. His transformation hinged on the actions Sollozzo took against his father, and in that moment it was clear to Michael that Vito's philosophy was correct: every man has his own destiny. The shooting of his father and the assault against Michael at the hospital that followed put into motion the events that would lead Michael to follow his destiny to be the next Don Corleone. Because this had been chosen as his fate, everything else was illusory. Michael's relationship with Kay and his immediate family could never be the same. Everything would be sacrificed in order for Michael to ultimately fulfill his destiny as The Godfather.

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Evaluation: *T.J.* was able to do what most students have great difficulty accomplishing: *fleshing out the key distinctions between a character from a novel and a character from a film who seem the same but are actually quite different.*

Cultural Displacement

Anna Gueorguieva

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *Write a literary research paper comparing two short stories and incorporating effective use of at least seven secondary sources.*

“It is hard to have parents who consider another place ‘home’ – even after living abroad for 30 years; India is home for them.... We were always looking back so I never felt fully at home here. There’s no body in the whole country that we’re related to. India was different – our extended family offered real connections,” said Jhumpa Lahiri in an interview with *Newsweek* just after winning the Pulitzer Prize (qtd. in Jha 107). Being a child of immigrants, Jhumpa Lahiri has seen the significance of family bonds that connected her parents to their homeland. Growing up as a child of immigrants, she has struggled to “find her identity in a world where she could never have a sense of belongingness” (Jha 107). This experience has allowed her to see a different world that children of American families are not aware of. Lahiri’s literary work is deeply influenced by her own experience, and that helps her to look deep into the emotional depths of her characters and reveal their inner world in a captivating yet comparably simple style.

“Mrs. Sen’s,” from the collection *Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri, describes the life and experience of an Indian woman who unhappily immigrates to the United States because of her husband’s career as a university professor. While her husband advances in his profession and assimilates into the American culture, Mrs. Sen lives a very simple and isolating life of a housekeeper. In order to overcome her loneliness, she finds a part time

job as a babysitter of a young boy whom she keeps in her house after he finishes school until the time his mother picks him up after work. Even though she has absolutely no desire to do so, Mrs. Sen is forced by her husband to learn how to drive in order to be more independent and develop a social life. However, she is painfully attached to her native culture and her family in India, which makes her assimilation impossible.

“Mrs. Sen’s” was inspired by the life of Lahiri’s own mother, who used to babysit in their house. The author’s intention in writing this story was to demonstrate the dislocation and difficulties faced by many immigrant Indian wives in an alien culture, whose life in their native country was composed of being good housewives and participating in the community. For them, “Everything is there” (Lahiri, “Mrs. Sen’s,” 113), and they have an extremely difficult time assimilating into the new American style of living where people try to stay away from the lives of even their extended family members. In an interview, Lahiri pointed out that there were many “women like her [Mrs. Sen] who were basically living in the United States because of their husbands and didn’t have an identity or purpose of their own here [in the United States]” (qtd. in Williams 74).

It is obvious that Mrs. Sen has no desire to assimilate into an entirely new lifestyle. In addition, she is not able to operate a vehicle, which completely restrains her from doing her daily chores and turns her into a prisoner in her own house. She never accepts her new place to be her home. When talking to Eliot, the young boy she babysits, Mrs. Sen asks him if somebody will come if she starts screaming for help; then she explains, “At home that is all you need to do.” In his article “Jhumpa Lahiri: *Interpreter of Maladies*,” Paul Brians shows the contrast between the American and Indian cultures. According to him, children in the United States who live with their parents after they become adults are looked at as failures, while in India, a successful family is considered one that stays together, one in which everybody participates in the life of others and “the rewards of individualism are replaced by the rewards of belonging” (par. 27). This difference deepens our understanding of Mrs. Sen’s dislocation and her refusal to accept a life where the neighbors will only call “to complain about the noise you are making” (Brians par. 28).

Another critic, Noelle Brada-Williams, also adds that “the American model of polite behavior depicted in Lahiri’s work is to be wholly in one’s own world and to maintain the smells, sounds, and emotions of that world so that they do not encroach upon another individual’s life” (166). However, Mrs. Sen’s understanding of community is the exact opposite. According to Jennifer Bess in “Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies*,” she is “longing for the home, where anyone who raised her voice to ‘express grief or joy of any kind’ would find the ‘whole neighborhood’ at her doorstep” (par. 2). This is one of the reasons Mrs. Sen insists Eliot’s mother come inside and have something to eat every night when she comes to pick up her son. This act does not make a lot of sense for the American woman who believes she only shares an obligatory connection with Mrs. Sen, but it does feel natural for the Indian housewife accustomed to maintain friendly relationship with everybody in the community.

Another illustration of her isolation is the scene where she picks up the boy from the school bus station. The narrator let us know that, “Eliot always sensed that Mrs. Sen had been waiting for some time, as if eager to greet a person she hadn’t seen in years” (119). Eliot is her only connection with the world besides her husband, who is always busy and entirely dedicated to his work. This passage suggests that she is eager to meet Eliot and spend the rest of the afternoon with him as he is also a good listener with whom she can share all her nostalgic memories from India.

Mrs. Sen’s attachment to her culture is very strong. It appears that she is trying to build a little India in her house. The narrator does a good job describing the residence in detail:

Mismatched remnants of other carpets were positioned in front of the sofa and chairs, like individual welcome mats anticipating where a person’s feet would contact the floor. White drum-shaped lampshades flanking the sofa were still wrapped in the manufacturer’s plastic. The TV and the telephone were covered by pieces of yellow fabric with scalloped edges. (112)

The reader also notices that Lahiri has drawn special attention to the food and meals prepared by Mrs. Sen in the

story. She not only cooks delicious Indian meals for her husband as the women in her country do, but she follows the special Indian tradition of chopping vegetables with the special blade, brought from India, for an hour every day. According to many critics, the food and its preparation represent a leitmotif in the story. Since Mrs. Sen is often introduced as being a professor’s wife, she lacks her own identity. However, as the story continues and we learn more about the meals and the special preparation, Mrs. Sen is able to build up her own identity and subjectivity (Williams 74). Furthermore, Williams believes that the food preparation not only represents her distinctiveness but is also her only way of establishing connection with other people. An example is her communication with the employees in the fish store. Another critic, Dr. Asha Choubey, states that even though Lahiri uses food as a metaphor in many of her stories, in “Mrs. Sen’s,” food actually acquires a character. According to her, Mrs. Sen becomes obsessed with fish, and her survival in the United States depends almost entirely on this specific food item. Choubey explains, “For Mrs. Sen, fish becomes her home, her state, her neighborhood, her friend and her family” (par. 13). However, in addition to being a symbol of her identity, the fish also leads to the minor tragedy at the end of the story, when tempted to obtain the fresh halibut from the store, she decides to take the dangerous step and drive the car on busy streets without having a driver’s license.

Another example of her powerful relationship to her family is the practice of listening to the tape with all her relatives’ voices, given to her as a farewell present before leaving. Through the eyes of Eliot, we learn how she goes through all kinds of emotions every time she hears a new member of her family speaking. Also, when she is reading an arogram from her relatives, “Eliot had the sensation that Mrs. Sen was no longer present in the room with the pear-colored carpet” (122). This is a perfect instance of how she is only physically present in the United States but mentally continues her life in Bengal, speaking her native language and following her Indian traditions. For her, “Everything is there [India]” (113), including her home. In “Immigrant Experience in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies*,” Ashutosh Dubey points out a very interesting view. According to Dubey, Mrs. Sen is seeking protection from the new surroundings in her past, and she finds it

very accommodating because it doesn't change in her memories (25). For her, life in India stopped when she left, as suggested in her listening to the tape recording of the day of her departure. Deep in her soul, she hopes she will be back one day and she would continue her life from where it stopped. However, Dubey suggests that if "she were to go back in search of her original home, she would have been in for terrible shock" (25). The author thinks that Mrs. Sen's memories become an illusion at one point since the society progresses and everything changes with time.

The story "Mrs. Sen's" also reveals that Mrs. Sen's loneliness and alienation is based on her relocation to a place where she does not belong, while the reader comes to understand that Eliot feels the same way in his own country. Mrs. Sen's constant stories about India and how people there interact with each other make him think and compare the way life is set up in America. He realizes that he has never spoken with his neighbors, and that besides his mother, he has nobody in the world, and he doesn't get to spend a lot of time with her, either. Ashutosh Dubey notes that "when Mrs. Sen asks whether he misses his mother in the afternoons, he finds that the thought has never even occurred to him." Dubey believes that at that moment, Mrs. Sen realizes that Eliot is wiser than she is as he is already accustomed to the pain she is going through (23).

Mrs. Sen's inability to drive deepens her isolation. Driving is the main way of transportation in the United States. Even though she is practicing, she is slow and seems reluctant to learn how to drive, as slow and reluctant as she is to accept America as her home. Ashutosh Dubey suggests that "Mrs. Sen's stubborn refusal to learn driving can be seen as a subconscious way of her resistance to the dictated terms of this new world" (24). Madhuparna Mitra agrees with this and adds that the special Indian blade and the car can be both considered tools. The first one Mrs. Sen brings across the ocean to establish a bit of Bengal in America, while refusing to learn to operate a vehicle puts her in a position of isolated Bengali in the United States and makes her unable to create a successful identity (par. 5).

Despite the fact that Mrs. Sen's marriage to Mr. Sen is not the center of attention in the story, it does play

an important role for her homesickness and inability to assimilate to the new culture. In the beginning of the story, the narrator says, "'Mr. Sen teaches mathematics at the university,' Mrs. Sen had said by way of introduction, as if they were only distantly acquainted" (112). Even though we witness some kind of peaceful relationship between them, we can easily determine that Mrs. Sen lives in the shadow of her husband. She plays the role of an obedient housewife who depends entirely on her spouse. Laura Anh Williams states that Mr. Sen does not appear to think about what his wife has given up to join him in the United States. She believes, "Mr. Sen cannot seem to conceive of the existential importance of fresh fish, or the ways cooking helps his wife shape her identity in the United States" (74).

In the same collection, Lahiri included "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine," a story about a Pakistani man who has been awarded a grant from the government of his country to spend a year in the United States and study the foliage of New England. Mr. Pirzada's visit to America falls on a very bad time for his family when East Pakistan, where his wife and seven daughters reside, begins a fight for independence. After a while, he loses connection with them as the postal system in Dacca, the capital of East Pakistan, along with almost everything else in the city collapses. During this extremely difficult time for Mr. Pirzada, he is mentally and emotionally supported by an immigrant Indian family who lives in the same town. He spends most of his evenings as a guest in their house. As the inevitable war approaches, they become closer, sharing the same fear and praying for the same development.

"When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" was also composed as a result of Lahiri's own experience. When she was four years old, a man from East Pakistan used to come to their house during the Pakistani war in 1971, and they still keep his photographs in the family album. Paul Brians believes that even though Lilia, the narrator of this story, is older than Lahiri herself would have been at the time of the war, she probably experienced the news from Pakistan and India in the same confused way (par. 111).

In the story "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine," we realize that Pirzada's decision to come to America, whether temporary or permanent, was completely voluntary. Mr.

Pirzada was awarded a grant to reside in America for a period of one year to do a study of the foliage of New England. Upon his departure, he probably did not realize that after he had left, his country would begin a fight for independence, and his wife and seven daughters would have to withstand the difficulties of the war violence, lacking his support. This voluntary decision to live in the United States for a year, along with his strong personality, are the main reasons he is able to remain calm during the period of war in his homeland where his closest family resides. His temporary immigration to America is not only hard because of the acceptance of new surroundings, but also because of the inability to be there for his family during war time. Lilia's family's immigration to the United States also suggests that it was voluntary. Lilia's mother seems proud of the fact that they have assured a safe and easy life, a fine education, and every opportunity for their daughter. However, along with receiving the chance of having a better quality of life, they do sacrifice the type of social life they were used to in India. As Lilia observes, "The supermarket did not carry mustard oil, doctors did not make house calls, neighbors never dropped by without an invitation, and of these things, every so often, my parents complained" (Lahiri, "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine," 24). The reader witnesses how minor things seem to be important for her parents because they grew up with them. Judith Caesar in "Beyond Cultural Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's 'When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine,'" also observes that Lilia's parents obviously feel isolated and lonely since they go through the university faculty directory every year and look for people with Indian names to invite to their house (par 2).

In this story, we also observe the way the main characters are attached to their native culture and country. As Lilia's father explains to her, Mr. Pirzada is not Indian as they are. She is trying to make sense of it since according to her, "They ate pickled mangoes with their meals, ate rice every night for supper with their hands. Like my parents, Mr. Pirzada took off his shoes before entering a room, chewed fennel seeds after meals as a digestive, drank no alcohol, for dessert dipped austere biscuits into successive cups of tea" (25). Even though they now live in a different country with different eating habits, Lilia's mother continues cooking their traditional

meals and they continue to follow Indian rituals before and after dinner. Judith Caesar suggests that "Lilia's home is a version of the best her parents remember of India – the food, the customs, the warm family life" (par. 2). Another critic, Asha Choubey, adds that the food for Mr. Pirzada represents a "fistful of soil from the motherland." According to Choubey, in addition to being a fresh "slice of native life" for the man, it also serves as a strong bond between the protagonists in the story: Mr. Pirzada and Lilia's family (par. 9). Further, the narrator points out "the peculiar eating habits of my [Lilia's] mother's American coworkers at the bank" (34). This distinction makes it clear that even though America is now their country of residence, they are not willing to give up their culture and tradition. Even more, they think the way Americans follow their traditions is strange.

To keep closer connection to his country, Mr. Pirzada even keeps a watch, which, "Unlike the watch on his wrist, the pocket watch, he had explained to me [Lilia], was set to the local time in Dacca, eleven hours ahead. For the duration of the meal, the watch rested on his folded paper napkin on the coffee table" (30). Judith Caesar comments that the time on the watch is the time in which he actually lives. She suggests, "It is almost as if a shadow Mr. Pirzada is trapped there in New England, while the true Mr. Pirzada goes about his life in East Pakistan" (par.5).

While reading "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine," the reader notices that Lilia's family and even the temporary immigrant Mr. Pirzada have a strong desire to interact with other people. Regardless of the fact that they search mainly for friends of their culture, they do expand their list of social contacts, which helps them to bear the difficulty of immigration and assimilation in an easier way. In fact, the support they all give each other facilitates the disconnection with their native culture, relatives, and friends. The main reason Mr. Pirzada is able to hold through this difficult time is the support he receives from Lilia's family in the United States. The narrator describes how, with the forthcoming war, Mr. Pirzada and her parents become closer and closer. He now even stays at their house for the night. Lilia also remembers, "the three of them operating during that time as if they were a single person, sharing a single meal,

a single body, a single silence, and a single fear” (41). This statement draws a strong and colorful picture of how important it is for all of them to stay side by side in such critical moments. In “Beyond Cultural Identity,” Judith Caesar discusses another important point many of her students brought up. They were scandalized with the fact that a Hindu family could invite a Muslim into their house without a second thought. However, according to the author, religion is no longer identity to them, and what is really important is that they share the same culture with the man, which they do not share with their American neighbors and colleagues (par.9).

In Gita Rajan’s essay “Lahiri’s ‘When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine,’” the author reveals an interesting topic about the response to war in the story. Rajan believes that offering monetary or moral help to people is a common response to war. However, in “Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine,” Lahiri is appealing to two different kinds of readers. The first type is the one who has never actually been closely endangered by war, and his response is only out of generosity. Lilia appears to represent the first kind as we discover from her own words, “they discussed intrigues I did not know, a catastrophe I could not comprehend. ‘See, children your age, what they do to survive,’ my father said as he served me another piece of fish” (31). Rajan infers that obligation of help in this case arises from the sense of safety in the face of others’ danger (181). Lilia’s parents, however, represent the second group who have suffered the fear of close danger as we see in Lilia’s comment about her mother’s words, “I was assured of a safe life, an easy life” (26). Rajan sees their response to Mr. Pirzada’s situation as “gratitude and guilt based upon gifts received and sacrifices made in her life in the United States” (181).

In “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine,” the reader also examines another interesting topic – the gap between immigrant parents and their children born in the United States. When she is sent to her room to do her homework, Lilia “would hear them, anticipating the birth of a nation on the other side of the world” (34), and we observe the difference between her and her parents. For Lilia, India and Pakistan are considered the “other side of the world,” something very distant and unknown. She is a born American, and she can fill up the names of the first

thirteen state capitals with her “eyes closed,” but she is completely unfamiliar with Partition and the history of her parents’ native country. Furthermore, Halloween and other American holidays are very important to her. She wants, “to carve it [the pumpkin] properly like others I [she] had noticed in the neighborhood” as opposed to her parents who suggested having it “decorated with markers” only (35). In “Beyond Cultural Identity,” Judith Caesar writes:

He [Mr. Pirzada] lives in that world, the world where his family lives, and every night as they watch the war on television, Lilia’s family lives in that world too. But Lilia lives much of her life in a world where neither of these other worlds exists, an American world of Halloween and history lessons about the American Revolutionary War and unhyphenated American friends whose parents don’t watch the news or think much about the world outside their own neighborhood. (par. 2)

In her work, Caesar also observes that Lilia’s American world runs against her Indian world without even realizing that it exists. The author believes that only Lilia “sees the collision,” but she is too young to fully understand and, therefore, presents it without any comment. An example of this collision is the scene in the library when Lilia is caught and rebuked by her teacher about reading about Pakistan, a book she is not supposed to be interested in. For her teacher, she is American and the world outside America should not exist. Another instance is the scene with Dora on Halloween when Lilia is trying to explain the reason Mr. Pirzada wants to go trick-or-treating with them. Living in America, Dora is unable to imagine a world where “children could be war refugees,” and it is difficult to comprehend why a “family friend would offer to go trick or treating with other people’s children” (Caesar par. 12).

At the end of the story “Mrs. Sen’s,” the Indian woman’s desperate desire to obtain fresh fish from the store ends in a car accident, when she undertakes an unsafe trip to the store with Eliot in the car. She is unable to merge with the main traffic the same way she is unable to merge with the American lifestyle. Although the accident causes very little physical damage to Eliot

or Mrs. Sen, it puts an end to the even minimal form of communication they have shared, thus causing colossal emotional damage (Brada-Williams 166). The reader comes to understand that Mrs. Sen will no longer take care of Eliot, and he will now spend his afternoons alone in his house. The Indian woman will most likely continue her isolated life as a housewife without being able to even share her homesickness with anybody, or obtain the dreadfully desired fish, the only thing that has brought her a glow of happiness in the United States.

Conversely, in the story "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine," there is no tragedy at the end. Mr. Pirzada finally goes back to Pakistan, now Bangladesh, to discover that his wife and kids are all alive, and Lilia's family goes to spend Christmas with friends in Philadelphia. Later, Mr. Pirzada sends a letter to them to express his gratitude for all they have done for him. He has finally understood the meaning of the words "thank you," by realizing what an extraordinary thing Lilia's family has done for him. They have not only treated him as a part of their own family, despite the fact that he was a stranger of another religion, but they have "acted without any expectation of repayment or even of a continued relationship" (Caesar par. 13). After learning the news that Mr. Pirzada's family is safe, Lilia throws all of her candies, used as a form of prayers, away. She continues her life as before, with the difference that now she has grown to understand a world that many kids of her age do not know exist.

In almost her entire body of work as a writer, Lahiri portrays Indians outside their mother country who face dislocation and adhere to their native culture. They desperately attempt to preserve their Indian identity while struggling to cope with the new surroundings and integrate themselves into the adapted homeland. Lahiri describes in detail the emotional and moral issues they go through by looking deep into their psychology and revealing their interior world with ease.

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Evaluation: *This well-written paper carefully dissects the immigrant experience in America, as revealed in two stories by Indian author Jhumpa Lahiri. Anna's analysis and discussion of these stories is exact and nicely supplemented with secondary sources.*

A Measured Response to "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"

Marcos F. Hernandez

Course: Literature 221 (American Literature:
Colonial Days to Civil War)
Instructor: Richard Middleton-Kaplan

Assignment: Imagine yourself as a member of the congregation addressed during Jonathan Edwards' delivery of "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Write your response to the sermon, making sure to engage Edwards' key points.

Having just now returned from Rev. Edwards' sermon to the congregation at Enfield, I find myself conflicted when appraising the necessity of Rev. Edwards' shift from usual grace to outright condemnation of the community. While the changes that have taken place amongst the colonies since they have been established have caused a great deal of concern, I worry that bold recriminations meant to induce panic and fear may not be the best course of action in teaching our young how to take control of their moral responsibilities. For a time now, the intellectuals among us have been questioning the necessity of public displays of commitment to the church as a solution to the moral dilemmas of the community, though we would never say so publicly against the authority of a man like Rev. Edwards. However, it has become clear among us that to live a good life, a man must do more than pledge his renewed faith and submission to God, he must understand how his actions will affect his fellow man and, when taking this into account, be

willing to understand that absolutes have a greater place in scripture than they do in our daily lives.

In his sermon's depiction of a vengeful God, filled with wrath at the deplorable state of men, Edwards, no doubt, has tapped into a common fear of the congregation regarding our communal adherence to the intrinsic rules of our community. In recent times, the successes we have all shared in have given rise to complacency among many of us. There is a certain sentiment that Edwards addresses that, "Almost every natural man that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it" (Edwards 669). While Edwards' aim is not necessarily to extend this admonition to the realm of metaphor, scrutinizing the implied hubris of such men might identify how the principles of these men warrant rebuke. Not for lack of more reserved means, Edwards appears intent on implicating every last man, woman, and child in the congregation by entangling their social shortcomings with their sin. Yet the sin most apparent among the members of the congregation seems to be little more than a sense of uncertainty about what the future holds. That is to say that the schism between the values of the past, that emboldened the earliest settlers with a sense of divine providence, and the values of the youngest generations, who often seem to seek out success as the measure of their worth, have reached a point at which a transformation in philosophy is the only natural result. The ideological bearing of our community is changing, and in order to maintain authority, men like Jonathan Edwards must reawaken the fear of God in men.

Throughout his sermon, Edwards makes repeated reference to God's "arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation" (667). As Edwards sees it, all men who have not yet confirmed their faith "are already under a sentence of condemnation to hell" (668). Furthermore, he goes on to say that the wicked principles that men live by would cause them to "presently kindle and flame out in the hell fire, if it were not for God's restraints" (668). Though Edwards' claims are immersed in Biblical defense, his caution in revealing the exact nature of the congregation's sins reveals his own hidden motives. The emotional despair and spiritual terror that Edwards creates through his sermon demand a release from the burden of damnation that he has placed on the parishioners. He makes clear that even the wisest amongst us cannot hope to escape the

threat of imminent doom, thereby leaving only one safe measure, given God's fickle attitude toward our sinful lives. Edwards offers spiritual redemption, salvation, if only a person will publicly decry their past wrongs and pledge their regenerate faith to his congregation. Edwards' sermon is a masterstroke in selling consumer goods by fabricating a need for them. By compelling the congregation to see themselves as the heart of the problem, Edwards leaves them no choice but to confirm their faith and allay their dread.

However effective this sermon may be, it begs the serious question, what good shall be sustained from simply frightening this congregation into public displays of faith? While I maintain a great degree of respect for Rev. Edwards, I cannot help but wonder if the revivals that have been sweeping through New England will have a lasting impact on the way in which we live. I hesitate in saying something that God may find ill informed, but I fear that the trend to entice converts through emotional manipulation has less to do with Biblical teaching than it has to do with religious leaders attempting to reign in a generation that they fear they have lost. While Edwards' observations accurately reveal the way in which men's confidences lead them astray, he offers no alternative route except for that of the church. In an age such as this, when many men and women alike are finding that God seems to speak without distinction for status through the Bible, the urgency with which Edwards demands our conversion may reveal more about Edwards' fears of failure than the failures of the community. In the future, I would hope to see Edwards and other men of his persuasion focus less on the faults of men, and more on the measures that a man can take, with the help of God, to be a better man in action and faith alike.

For fear of prosecution as a voice of the devil, I find myself compelled to defend my faith, as it were, in an effort to make clear that neither moral rectitude nor spiritual righteousness should ever be viewed in mutually exclusive terms. Rather, I would argue that the duty of the common man, whether in practice or mind, is to commit oneself to a life in which actions toward fellow men demonstrate the measure of faith and reverence that are held for the social responsibilities we have all agreed upon under a common God. In this way, I should hope

Rev. Edwards would agree, we might assuage God's anger and act in greater accord with the teachings of the Bible to fulfill our reasonable duties to one another and ourselves.

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Evaluation: *In this eloquently written essay, Mr. Hernandez offers incisive criticisms of Edwards' sermon without ahistorically leaping outside the bounds set by the assigned task. His reasoning is as sure as his word choice.*

Fake Sparkle or Golden Dust

Kelly Ichinose

Course: Philosophy 232 (Modern Philosophy)
Instructor: John Garcia

Assignment: Think about a question or issue that arose in your mind as a result of our course. Craft an original thesis based on this issue and write a seven- to ten-page paper on this thesis, making sure to treat one thinker or text from our course in depth within the paper.

The world today is a brown paper package of distress and misery tied up with strings of excuses. It seems that there is an excuse for everything. Jane is miserable because her job stresses her out immensely, Billy failed a class because his older sister wouldn't help him with his homework, and Dan can never see his friends because his girlfriend will not let him. Such excuses are made up by people who feel that the decisions they made do not properly fit into the positive "norms" of society. Most people believe that there is a "right way" to be human, so when their actions do not reflect this, they feel ashamed or embarrassed. Descartes believed that the human mind was something that transcends the physical body and exists with concepts that have been predetermined without one's physical awareness. This can be seen in the fact that he determines, through meditating on his own, that humans are "thinking things" and knowledge can only be gained through reason and rationality. Since he believes that the

mind and body are separate, he believes that the mind has a quality of its own that possesses knowledge gained from something other than the physical. The belief that all humans are born with a fixed pool of knowledge, that came from something more perfect than a human, implies that there is a right way to be human, and therefore, people who live very different (but not necessarily lesser) lives are in the wrong and must conform to the "normal" way of being. The likes of Descartes would believe that "man has a human nature; this human nature, which is the concept of the human, is found in all men, which means that each man is a particular example of a universal concept, man" and that this is a good thing to strive for (Sartre 85). While Descartes' ideas at times seem like a positive outlook on the human existence, the prominent existentialist Jean Paul Sartre's ideas are more respectful to the individual. Sartre found this and many other calls for conformity to be repugnant, and he believed that those who claim to not endorse what they have done in action are in "bad faith." He did not believe in Descartes' "self" that transcends the human boundaries, but instead, in the individual and the individual's ability to create her or his own meaning in life through her or his own actions. By placing all responsibility on the individual and denying "human nature," he implies that any given individual has the power to create meaning instead of being assigned meaning by a higher power. There is no right way to be human, so Sartre rejects Descartes' stifling belief in human nature and that humans are "thinking things" because thinking is just an action, and while we are what we do, we are much more than an action. Though at times Sartre's beliefs are extreme and hard to grasp, his philosophy – despite seeming morbid – is a rather positive outlook on the capacity of the individual.

Most people think of existentialists as gloomy nihilists who believe in a life of quiet inaction. According to Sartre, that couldn't be further from the case: "By existentialism we mean a doctrine which makes human life possible" (83). The main reason that Sartre claims existentialism encourages action opposed to idleness is the base belief that "existence precedes essence" or that a human is born before her or his life has a purpose or meaning (84). In order to explain this, he uses the example of a paper cutter, though nearly any object will

do. He explains that for a paper cutter, rather than a human being, essence precedes existence because someone thought that they could design a tool that would cut paper and used prior knowledge of design and manufacturing techniques in order to produce it. These steps are always thoroughly planned out, so there was an idea of a paper cutter (essence) before the first paper cutter was actually created in a physical form (existence). The same is true for mostly any material object, but “If God does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being who exists before he can be defined by any concept, and that being is man, or, as Heidegger says, human reality” (Sartre 85).

Essentially, the idea that “existence precedes essence” in human beings means that we have the benefit and responsibility to determine the outcome of our lives, but it also makes religious people who believe that God created man (particularly Christians) apprehensive. Christians would believe that “the concept of man in the mind of God is comparable to the concept of the paper-cutter in the mind of the manufacturer, and, following certain techniques and a conception, God produces man, just as the artisan, following a definition and a technique, makes a paper-cutter. Thus, the individual man is the realization of a certain concept in the divine intelligence” (Sartre 85). Comparing humans to paper cutters is not flattering to humans, and believing that we are not in control of our lives because of the possibility of divine manufacturing is a crippling idea. Whether one is religious or not, she or he should still take responsibility for their own lives because we always have choices and our lives and futures are deeply influenced by our actions. By taking responsibility for our actions and making conscious decisions about them, we have freedom.

Sartre’s idea of freedom is not freedom in the Hollywood-Magic sense, but rather that by making decisions we are free to try to do anything we wish as we are free to wish to do anything. Sartre said in *Patterns of Bad Faith*, “‘to be free’ does not mean ‘to obtain what one has wished’ but rather ‘by oneself to determine oneself to wish’ (in the broad sense of choosing). In other words success is not important to freedom” (Sartre 240). In the same reading, he gives the example of a large boulder blocking a pathway. A person may not be free to make the

boulder disappear into thin air, but they have many other options that they are free to choose from. For instance, they are free to give up and turn around, to climb over the boulder, to take a different route around the boulder, to blow it up, and the list goes on. In addition to those options, if you wanted to climb over the boulder, but you were unable to accomplish the task because of a physical inability, you were still free in that you attempted to scale it, and that it was your choice to not train hard enough in order to have the strength and skill in order to do so. Because of the hindrances of our freedom (having to know what we will want later and preparing for it) and the opportunity provided by it, we are forced into action, instead of a passive lifestyle.

Many people think that Sartre’s atheistic existentialism is some sort of nihilism, but it is not, “for we mean that man first exists, that is, that man first of all is the being who hurls himself toward a future and who is aware of itself, rather than a patch of moss, a piece of garbage, or a cauliflower; nothing exists prior to this plan; there is nothing in heaven; man will be what he will have planned to be” (Sartre 85). The responsibility of the individual to create meaning in her or his own life is a rather empowering idea. Because one’s life is not automatically destined to be worse or better than anyone else’s, a person is able to act in whatever way they will and interpret events in her or his life in whatever way they choose to. To those who are lazy or unaccomplished, being completely responsible for the outcome of her or his own life may be a less comfortable way of thought because rather than being able to blame other people or various circumstances for failures, she or he is solely responsible and is probably extremely ashamed. On the other hand, because someone is not born destined to be something, “only afterwards will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be. Thus, there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it. Not only is man what [she or] he conceives himself to be, but [she or] he is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust toward existence” and she or he can take pride in their accomplishments and life (Sartre 85). Whether there is God or not, taking complete responsibility for your actions allows you to create meaning for yourself in your own life and encourage others to create meaningful lives

as well. Whether we like it or not, we are endorsing our actions by acting them out, so we should make conscious decisions about our actions and our lives.

Sartre believes that, by choosing, persons endorse the choice they make, because of the fact that we are completely responsible for the purpose and outcome of our lives based on our actions. Sartre stated, "I am responsible for myself and for everyone else. I am creating a certain image of man of my own choosing. In choosing myself, I choose man" (86). We are all very much like walking billboard advertisements because our actions define our lives. As we live, other people see what we have done and become and we get ideas from one another; therefore, we endorse everything we do and are responsible for any of the same actions by different people. Because we are responsible for endorsing certain actions and ways of life, each of us must live in a way that we believe to be "right" and perform actions that we would be able to encourage others to do as well because if we truly believe what we are doing is good or "right," then we can feel good about endorsing our lives. If you are living a life that you would not want to endorse, you must stop living that way to stop endorsing it. "The man who involves himself and who realizes that he is not only the person he chooses to be, but also a law-maker who is, at the same time, choosing all mankind as well as himself, can not help escape the feeling of his total and deep responsibility," (Sartre 86) so if ever someone is wondering whether to do something or not, they need only to analyze what would happen if everyone did the same. It is not uncommon for people to have what Sartre refers to as "anguish" because of the choices they must make, but "there is no question here of the kind of anguish which would lead to quietism, to inaction. It is a matter of a simple sort of anguish that anybody who has had responsibilities is familiar with.... All leaders know this anguish. That doesn't keep them from acting; on the contrary, it is the very condition of their action" (Sartre 87). For instance, if a person is an alcoholic who still drinks, yet instructs their child never to drink, they are in what Sartre refers to as "bad faith" because she or he says something different from how she or he is acting – by continuing drinking, an alcoholic endorses the fact that drinking is more important than her or his health and relationships with others.

Bad faith hinders us greatly because it is a tool that allows us to not see. According to Sartre, "We can see the use which bad faith can make of these judgments which all aim at establishing that I am not what I am. If I were only what I *am*, I could, for example, seriously consider an adverse criticism which someone makes of me, question myself scrupulously, and perhaps be compelled to recognize the truth in it. But thanks to transcendence, I am not subject to all that I am," which means, essentially, that being in bad faith is being in denial. While denial may make one's life seem easier or more "pleasant," the reality is that it is not a life at all, but merely false, meaningless existence without escaping any blame that may occur. For instance, Sartre talks about a young woman who displays "bad faith" by allowing her friend to hold her hand and immediately denying to herself any of the sexual or emotional connotations of it. Immediately, she recognizes the gesture and the implications of it (for to ignore the implications you must see them first), and she switches gears to an intellectual conversation rather than an emotional conversation, hoping that it will seem that she was just not noticing the hand holding. Her "bad faith" is damaging because even though she ignored the implications very well, it was still damaging to both parties, and it was still her fault. Sartre would argue that there is no "right" way of living and no "wrong" way of living, but because living in "bad faith" is so damaging, there certainly must be better and worse ways of living.

Not many people would argue that an alcoholic who is unhappy and drowning her or his sorrows has a life equal in meaning and quality to that of a happy, healthy mother of two healthy children who writes epic novels and loves her life, so it would be insane to say that no life is better than another. It is certain that every life has the ability to be as good as any other, but this is not to say that there is a "right" or "wrong" way to live one's life. It is a matter of whether a person is actively and consciously making decisions about her or his actions and life or if she or he are just lazily accepting whatever life they have run themselves into while despairing over the lack of God and God's morals to be imposed on her or him. If we use our freedom to the best of our ability, we can do great things with our lives, but if we ignore our freedom, our lives will go wherever they will on accident. Because it was

our free choice to do so, we must blame ourselves for the outcome of our lives whether we chose the outcome or not.

“If God does not exist, we find no values or commands to turn to which legitimize our conduct. So, in the bright realm of values, we have no excuse behind us, nor justification before us. We are alone, with no excuses,” so it is up to us to decide what is right and what is wrong and whether we are going to create and live our lives or just wait for our time to run out (Sartre 88). The atheistic existentialist is not a pessimist, but a fierce optimist in that she or he expects that humans have potential to choose a life and live it well, and that, short of certain born disabilities, we have the ability to work toward whatever we want to and live our lives in a meaningful way based on what we each individually choose to find meaningful. Sartre and other existentialists are trying to encourage people to go out and live their lives and not waste their time making excuses and dreaming. Sartre “prompts people to understand that reality alone is what counts, that dreams, expectations, and hopes warrant no more than to define a man as a disappointed dream, as miscarried hopes, as vain expectations.” so get up, get out, and get living! (92).

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Evaluation: *Kelly does perhaps the best job of any student in the course at connecting the ideas of the philosophers we studied to issues in society. She writes with a nice sense of humor and a sense of style.*

The Nature of Freedom

Lauren Kosrow

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment: *Write a literary research essay.*

Throughout history, almost every society has struggled with the conflict between freedom and security. Most notably, this issue is rooted deep in the heart of American society. The democratic republic that is the United States government precariously balances the indispensable freedoms of governed individuals and the role of government in protecting its people and their rights. Recently, this controversy emerged at the forefront of America's consciousness after the public disclosure of a government-sanctioned wire-tapping program in 2005. According to *The New York Times*, "the wiretapping program set off a fierce national debate over the balance between protecting the country from another terrorist strike and ensuring the civil liberties" of American citizens (Lichtblau and Stout). The debate raged among individuals who supported the government's actions and believed that the government was doing what it needed to ensure national security, while opponents accused the government of infringing on the privacy and rights of the citizens. The foundation of US political and ideological thought was created in an attempt to provide this balance between the liberties of a governed people and the security supplied for the people by their government, as in the current issue of national defense, while holding individual freedom at the pinnacle of importance.

Even as our political system fights to protect our proverbial rights as citizens, our pursuit of life, liberty,

and happiness can be socially inhibited when exercising our freedom contradicts societal norms. In his short story "Bartleby the Scrivener," Herman Melville critically examines this struggle between freedom and security, as well as the consequences of choosing security over liberty, through intellectual faculties. As Melville shows through the characters of Bartleby and the narrator, implementing our freedom, specifically intellectual freedom, can be difficult and sometimes dangerous; we as humans, when posed with the option, tend to opt for security, even when it means giving up some of our freedom. Nevertheless, Melville concludes with the classic American ideal that it is only by exercising our personal liberties through every faculty we possess, even in the face of adversity, that we become truly free.

In his short story, Melville portrays two extreme characters that, first, serve as foils for each other and, second, epitomize the central struggle of freedom versus security. To begin with, the narrator of the story embodies the value of security over freedom. As a lawyer on Wall Street who deals exclusively with legal documents, his entire lifestyle demands safety and security:

I am one of those unambitious lawyers who never addresses a jury, or in any way draws down public applause; but, in the cool tranquility of a snug retreat, do a snug business among rich men's bonds, and mortgages, and title-deeds. All who know me, consider me an eminently *safe* man. (Melville 125)

This brief autobiographical description of the narrator reveals the man's commitment to and acceptance of the secure life he has made for himself. William Dillingham states, "He is 'safe' because he takes no chances. Nevertheless, he prizes in others a sense of adventure and a vision of greatness" (18-19). Although timid himself, the narrator clearly wishes to be something or someone more, which becomes apparent by the heroes he admires and alludes to: Cicero the great Greek orator and rhetorician, whose bust is perched in his office; the outspoken poet Byron; and the self-made businessman John Jacob Astor (Dillingham 19). However, despite his admiration for men who have achieved greatness, he settles for the secure and profitable job of a desk lawyer.

He is willing to remain complacent in the tedious, suffocating demands of his job because he is “a man who, from his youth upwards, has been filled with a profound conviction that the easiest way of life is the best,” instead of taking the risk to pursue a higher standard of living (Melville 125).

To the narrator, the easiest way of life is one in which he complies with what is expected of him, never conflicting with an established social precedent or experiencing confrontation. According to Dillingham, the narrator “craves safety – physical, intellectual, and spiritual – and this supreme need of security will make him go to great lengths to avoid that slightest anger or displeasure of other people” (22). He would rather be constrained by his personal insecurity and conform to the tedious demands of a capitalistic economy than disrupt the status quo. Melville portrays this characteristic of the narrator through his constant desire for walls – walls that comfort him and envelop (and nurture) his insecurity. Literally, his office windows “command an unobstructed view of a lofty brick wall;” however, “life – its risks and dangers – is what this eminently safe man wants to wall out, to retreat from” (Melville 125, Dillingham 23). Leo Marx states that “walls are the controlling symbols of the story” because they represent the narrator’s desire to shield his fears and insecurities from any confrontation he might encounter in the world (603).

Furthermore, the narrator sees his wealth as a means by which to perpetuate his secure life. For example, Bartleby continually, throughout the story, refuses to do any work that makes him unhappy; however, the narrator cannot bring himself to confront Bartleby. Only when Bartleby’s antics begin to elicit “unsolicited and uncharitable remarks” from his “professional friends” that threaten the image of the law firm, and thus the monetary income that the narrator safely relies on, is the narrator even prompted to discuss the topic with Bartleby (Melville 142). Then, instead of actual confrontation with his employee, the narrator attempts to give Bartleby money as an incentive to leave. First, the narrator tells him he “must” leave and pays him twenty dollars above his salary, to which Bartleby simply turns his back. Next, the narrator moves his office after Bartleby refuses to leave the premise, but not before he attempts to “[slip]

something in his [Bartleby’s] hand” (144). His actions elicit another disinterested response from his unresponsive employee, who simply lets the money/bribe “[drop] to the floor” (144). Finally, at the end of the story, the narrator pays the grub-man to give Bartleby “special attention,” but this attempt too proves unsuccessful (Melville 147). It becomes clear throughout the story that, whenever faced with a difficult situation, the narrator attempts to buy his way out of it. He hides behind his money and prefers to buy a sort of counterfeit security instead of personally handling tough situations. R. Bruce Bickley claims, “The unnamed narrator comes to represent any man who, forced at last to question the assumptions and values he has always lived by... [and] pushed beyond the limits of his own understanding and humanity, rationalizes his failings” (34). To the narrator, this means rationalizing his insecurity and fear of confrontation with his wallet. He has kept his insecurities walled in behind his bank account; therefore, although Bartleby denies him any success, the narrator continues to attempt to ratify the situation by utilizing his financial resources instead of confronting Bartleby and risking the disruption of the placid pattern of his life.

On the other hand, Melville titles the story after Bartleby, the scrivener who passively resists against societal standards in his pursuit of freedom over security. Throughout the story, Bartleby persistently refuses to complete his job of copying legal documents; he repeatedly, despite consistent pressure to conform to the office environment, states that he “prefers not to” do the intellectually confining tasks of reading and writing more copies that the narrator asks him to perform (Melville 130+). For example, in one scene from the story, the narrator attempts to discover through interrogation a task that Bartleby would be willing to do. He offers Bartleby jobs of equal intellectual faculty, such as a clerk in a dry-goods store, a bartender, a tax collector, and even a companion to a traveling gentleman. Bartleby resiliently stands by his convictions and once again refuses to comply with the demands of a capitalistic society in which he is not allowed to freely and creatively express himself. “Freedom and independence for Bartleby are to be found inwardly, within the self,” Dillingham reveals. “Blind to Bartleby’s concept of independence, the lawyer

presents Bartleby with the prospect of increasing freedom in the shallow terms of the occupations that offer merely the chance to move about physically and be with more people" (42-43). This kind of external freedom, however, does not interest Bartleby; he is fixated on true, internal freedom. What Bartleby understands is "that one can be a prisoner and still be independent; and contrarily, one can be 'free' and still be a prisoner...if a man possesses that inner freedom, he is never truly confined" (Dillingham 43).

Because of this particular scene in the story, Bartleby is often characterized as representing artistic development in a capitalist society. Adams displays this critique of Bartleby when he claims "that Herman Melville's story is a parable of *the isolation of the artist* in a materialistic society." Bartleby clearly does not fit into the role of a scrivener who copies others' work; in fact, he refuses flatly to play out that role. And though the narrator offers him jobs that have increasingly less physical constraint, he refuses these as well, perhaps because these alternative jobs feature the same *intellectual* constrictions as the scrivener position does. Bartleby might have agreed to participate in tasks that allowed him to think freely for himself rather than monotonously copy deeds at a desk or pour drinks at a bar. By setting the story on Wall Street, the business capital of the world, Melville emphasizes the restrictive nature of capitalism on creative development. However, Melville also uses Bartleby's actions in the story to bring the issue of freedom away from solely physical freedom and towards intellectual freedom.

Throughout the story, Bartleby passively, yet openly, resists against societal expectations and is eventually imprisoned for his actions. Although he is physically constrained and has no tangible freedom, Bartleby gives up his physical liberties for intellectual freedom. Because his convictions would not allow him to comply with societal expectations and complete the intellectually constraining jobs his employer offers, Bartleby chooses to be sent to jail than compromise his beliefs. His actions reflect those of Martin Luther King Jr., who, in his "Letter to Birmingham Jail," states he would rather be in jail resisting social norms than physically free and complying with an unjust society. "There is no place in 'Bartleby' for reader sympathy toward a 'failed'

character," states Todd Giles. "no place for accusations of apathy...his existence persists" (89). Bartleby refuses to conform to society, but, like King, must also suffer the consequences for his nonconformist actions. Bartleby like "other great rebels...has to pay the terrible price of his humanity for being stronger, greater, and more honest than ordinary men" (Dillingham 49). The narrator, however, chooses to give up his intellectual freedom for security. Because of his fear of confrontation and his desire to fit into societal standards, the narrator, unlike Bartleby, is willing to remain complacent and compliant instead of taking the risk of pursuing a higher standard of living marked by intellectual liberty. He clearly desires to be someone more, as shown through his idolization of Cicero and his respect for Bartleby, but is, perhaps, afraid to risk the same shunning from society that Bartleby experiences. Throughout the story, the narrator "is free to come and go as he likes, but he is a slave to fear" (Dillingham 43). Although physically free, the narrator has given up his intellectual freedom to resist against societal constrictions for the security of his meticulous job.

Melville portrays this struggle between freedom and security through the two contrasting characters of Bartleby and the narrator; however, it is clearly Bartleby who effectively exercises his right to freedom. Bartleby passively resists against the intellectually constraining tasks, the societal expectations of a workplace environment, and he is eventually imprisoned for his actions. Even though he dies at the end of the story, his admirable actions unmistakably mirror those of American individuals, such as Martin Luther King Jr., who have given their lives in defense of the freedoms we enjoy. On the other hand, the narrator clings to the status quo of his secure life and emerges at the end of the story physically unscathed. Even though he is physically free at the end of the story, the narrator has given up his intellectual freedom for the security of wealth and position. Benjamin Franklin once said, "Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety," and this is the attitude towards the narrator that Melville critically exposes at the end of the story ("Liberty"). It is Bartleby who, through his passive resistance against societal norms that lands him in

jail, embodies the ideals upon which American political and ideological culture was founded. By exercising his intellectual freedom, even in the face of adversity, Bartleby is free in the word's fullest and truest sense.

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Evaluation: *This is a very well-written and sophisticated essay on Melville's story. This essay takes a somewhat unusual position, that Bartleby is actually more admirable than the narrator, and the position is well supported.*

Tasting Forbidden Fruit in “The Storm”

Muxiang Liu

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Greg Herriges

Assignment: *Students were to write a ten-page research paper on a literary work, adhering to MLA format guidelines.*

Kate Chopin’s short story “The Storm” was written on July 18, 1898 (Seyersted 164). At that time, society was “certainly accustomed to attacks against the status quo. Revealing oppressions imposed by class, by industrialization, by color, by sex was a fashionable and passionate subject,” and “the forbidden fruits of self-knowledge, self-determination, and self-satisfaction” attracted females (Andrews 29, 33). Kate Chopin was one of the people who first tasted the forbidden fruits, and her major female character in “The Storm” represents such people. “The Storm” is a story about two lovers having a sexual encounter while a storm hits. The topic of the story, the way Kate Chopin describes the love-making scene, and the way she ends the story were considered very immoral and unconventional at her time; even now, her explicit description of love-making can be considered relatively bold.

As Per Seyersted, who found the manuscript of “The Storm” and first published it in *The Complete Works of Kate Chopin* in 1969, writes, “‘The Storm’ shows Kate

Chopin’s completely detached attitude toward generally accepted moral ideas” (164). In this story, Kate Chopin defies the restrictive tradition and convention of the late nineteenth century and portrays how women pursue and fulfill their “needs for both love and autonomy” (Skaggs 113).

In the late nineteenth century, when “The Storm” was composed, women’s role in society was still inferior; women were entirely dependent on the men in their lives. Although women in marriage were not treated viciously, they were suppressed and controlled in many ways; sexuality was one of many restrained aspects of a woman’s life. Those controlled women, such as Edna Pontellier in the novel *The Awakening* and Mrs. Mallard in the short story “A Story of An Hour,” became Kate Chopin’s protagonists in her fiction which mainly focuses on those women’s sexual desire and “selfhood” (Simons 243).

The restraints on the major female character Calixta of “The Storm” reflect Kate Chopin’s own. Although her husband, Oscar Chopin, was dead when Kate Chopin composed “The Storm” and she had a relatively happy married life, she still could understand all kinds of lonely and restricted women’s feelings because she could feel the restraining atmosphere in her society throughout her literary career (Seyersted 40-5). People at the time were used to conventional writings; Chopin’s daring and direct style was far ahead of what was commonly acceptable to the average reader. When the novel *The Awakening*, her most well-known work and also about sex and an affair, was published in 1899, it provoked shocked reaction among newspaper reviewers (Bloom 7). The restraint placed on women in the old society could be the major reason that Kate Chopin did not attempt to publish “The Storm,” which is even more detached than *The Awakening*, during her lifetime. She might have believed that she and her literary career could not survive under the pressure of outraged critics had she published it.

According to Per Seyersted, this unconventional story was written in the aftermath of the acceptance for publication of both *The Awakening* and the third collection of Chopin’s stories (16). And according to Emily Toth, Kate Chopin wrote “The Storm” “just after peace was declared in Cuba” (3118). Both of those can be reasons

for the theme of "The Storm" and also can be the reasons why Kate Chopin expresses a sense of joy and a feeling of winning and achieving in the story. "On the one hand, the protest of *The Awakening* off her mind, and, on the other, literary success within her reach, here ("The Storm") gives the impression of having achieved true freedom and real peace" (Seyersted 169).

Kate Chopin's life experience produced her daring and detached style in "The Storm," provided her writings with organic topics, and enabled the characters under her pen to come alive. Her father died in a train accident when she was only five (Toth 31). Until her marriage, Kate O'Flaherty (her maiden name) grew up in "a world of women" (Boren and Davis 24). She spent much of her youth with her mother, her grandmother and her great-grandmother, all independent widows. She

understood that women could be as tough-minded and self-reliant as men, that gender roles had more to do with economic power than with biology, and that social institutions, such as marriage, often were at cross-purposes with natural impulses, including sexual passion. (Petry 2)

Her upbringing and the education she received from nuns in a school for girls made Kate Chopin less able to completely accept "the limitations on a woman's autonomy that have traditionally accompanied wifedom" (Skaggs 2), and she was very "aware of the social possibilities for women and makes exploration of those possibilities the subject of some of her most powerful fiction" (Koloski xii).

In 1870, Kate married Oscar Chopin, a cotton factor (Seyersted 37). During her marriage, "Whenever she could, she slipped away, enjoying her liberty to go where she wanted. At a time when women's freedom of movement was still severely restricted, she developed a walking habit" (Seyersted 40-1). However, her life was not "free from anxiety," because Oscar was never strong (Seyersted 45). Oscar died in January 1883, when Kate Chopin was only thirty-three years old (Seyersted 45). As a married woman, she was considered quite wild and active and had a desire for liberty. This fact can be the best explanation why her female major character

Calixta can make such a surprising move of adulterous sex without guilt. At the same time, Calixta's quiet and humble husband Bobinot reflects Kate Chopin's husband, Oscar.

After her husband's death, Kate Chopin had to raise six children on her own. Her success in the business which her husband had left and in her writing career proved that women could be as independent and capable as men, and her achievements enhanced her opinion about woman's self-rule and autonomy. Her mother died in June 1885 (Seyersted 45). It left Kate Chopin more lonely and helpless, which forced her to be even more independent. Kate Chopin wrote in her diary that the deaths of her husband and her mother had freed her for her "real growth" (Boren and Davis 17).

"The Storm" focuses on women's autonomy and their need for love and sexual freedom. When a storm rages, Calixta and Alcée renew their romantic feelings for each other and have passionate sex, full of joy, without "guile and trickery" (Chopin 337). As the storm finishes, their sex ends, and Alcée departs. Calixta welcomes Bobinot and Bibi home in a joyful and satisfied mood. Alcée writes a loving letter to his wife Clarisse, who is having a vacation with their babies. In the end, everyone is happy.

Unlike her previous fictions, the tone in "The Storm" is very neutral and positive; it can be the reflection of Chopin's strong, independent, and objective personality. "Tone is impartial and unbiased and suggests deep self-assurance" (Evans 264). "The man-woman relationship of 'The Storm' – The most intimate possible – is a crucial touchstone for objectivity" (Seyersted 169). The story is greatly unusual for its time in its neutral moral tone and in its emphasis on the joys and attractiveness of sex. When Calixta and Alcée kiss, caress each other and make love to each other, the tone of the description is so neutral that it conveys a sense of equality between the two lovers. In this moment, a woman is equal to a man; both of them possess the same rights to enjoy their equal birthright – sex. "Now – well, now – her lips seemed in a manner free to be tasted, as well as her round, white throat and her whiter breasts." Calixta's breasts "gave themselves up in quivering ecstacy, inviting his lips." "With one hand she clasped his head, her lips lightly touching his

forehead. The other hand stroked with a soothing rhythm his muscular shoulders" (Chopin 337). Calixta's role is not passive but active and equal to Alc  c at that moment. The feeling of the entire story is healthy, positive, and joyful, though a storm itself normally represents negative feelings. After their love-making is over, they laugh and smile at each other. This shows man's and woman's common desires and emotions and the happiness of free, passionate sex. Kate Chopin is "a woman author who could write on the two sexes with a large degree of detachment and objectivity," and she is "not consciously speaking as a woman, but as an individual" (Seyersted 169). "The tone greatly contributes to the artistic impact: detached and unsentimental, yet warm, and serenely free" (Seyersted 168).

In order to avoid any misunderstanding about her positive position about women's sexuality and autonomy in "The Storm," Kate Chopin provides a lot of evidence to indicate that the sex between the two major characters is pure. Alc  c just rides by Calixta's house, as Calixta opens her door to collect clothes outside. They formally greet each other, and "His voice and her own startled her as if from a trance" (Chopin 336). Alc  c intends to remain outside, but the rain forces him to get in the house. They don't seem to have a plan to meet each other or to harm anyone. Hence, all what happens is because of the natural, irresistible, beautiful, and pure human emotion, passion, and love. Calixta's white and monumental bed, white neck, white throat, and her white breasts, and the "creamy lily" all symbolize the purity of human love and sex (Chopin 336-7). The dim and mysterious shutters and the open bedroom door and adjoining bed room symbolize the temptation of autonomy to women and the inevitability that women will possess autonomy. In Kate Chopin's point of view, possessing passion, love, and autonomy is the most attractive moment in a woman's life and is also the ultimate goal to women at the time.

Compared to her other works and the contemporary writings of other writers, in "The Storm," Kate Chopin describes the love-making scene in a much more daring, vivid, detailed, and realistic way with both visual and sensuous impact. This has also become the most sparkling and breathtaking part in the story:

When he touched her breasts they gave themselves up in quivering ecstasy, inviting his lips. Her mouth was a fountain of delight. And when he possessed her, they seemed to swoon together at the very borderland of life's mystery...The other hand stroked with a soothing rhythm his muscular shoulders. (Chopin 337)

All this description clearly and directly presents a vibrant image in front of the readers and indicates how devoted and immersed the characters are and how tempting the love, sex, and freedom is. The "imagery implies the mutuality and equality of the united lovers" (Evans 265), and "Chopin brilliantly evokes sexuality through images and details" (Showalter 72). Kate Chopin uses imagery not only here, but also when Alc  c is attracted by Calixta: "Her lips were as red and moist as pomegranate seed. Her white neck and a glimpse of her full, firm bosom disturbed him powerfully" (Chopin 336). Realistic imagery is the most powerful literary device Kate Chopin uses in the story to create a story with blood, a scene with a life. The images appearing in the entire story fully illustrate an attractive, passionate woman with a hunger for autonomy in sex and in her life and emphasize the beauty of sex and love. Chopin does not only use open sex and physical union as her subject, but she also emphasizes its "happy," "healthy," "organic quality." Its "crotic elation, and its frankness" is very impressive in fiction history (Seyersted 168-9).

The storm is the natural background of the story. It also symbolizes the development of Calixta's feeling and emotion and the development of the story itself.

Kate Chopin was not interested in the immoral in itself, but in life as it comes, in what she saw as natural – or certainly inevitable expression of universal Eros, inside or outside of marriage. She focuses here on sexuality as such, and to her, it is neither frantic nor base, but as 'healthy' and beautiful as life itself. (Seyersted 168)

As the storm approaches, Calixta feels hot and unfastens her white saccue at the throat (Chopin 335). Calixta is nervous about her lover Alc  c's presence and her own wild and inflamed emotion, as the rain beats upon

the "roof with a force" (Chopin 336). Their emotion and passion reach a climax, as the rain comes in "sheets" and the "playing of the lightning is incessant" (Chopin 336). Their sex is over, as the storm is over. Just like a storm is a natural and inevitable event, Calixta and Alcée's unplanned affair is natural and inevitable. The storm implies that Kate Chopin believes that women's pursuit of autonomy and the victory of the women's movement are inevitable.

Just as the setting in "The Storm" is simple, so there are also only a few distinctive characters. Calixta is a new woman featured at the time when "women began to 'think their way out' of that systematic subordination" (Lerner). The sewing machine symbolizes her new ideas and innovation, but the action of sewing indicates that she is a housewife who is restricted by the tradition and convention as other ordinary women. This kind of conflict is also demonstrated when she worries about Bibi, as her emotion and passion for Alcée are aroused. Alcée is a gentleman with good manners, and he also is romantic and assertive. He doesn't fear expressing his love and making love to Calixta, as opposed to their past romance when he stopped himself from having sex with Calixta in Assumption. According to Per Seyersted, Kate Chopin gave "The Storm" a subtitle "A Sequence to 'The 'Cadian Ball,'" the story in which the planter Alcée Laballiere is on the verge of running away with Calixta, a Spanish vixen, when Clarisse claims him for herself (Seyersted 169). From this point, the relationship between Calixta and Alcée is more clear and understood. Both major characters are more mature and daring than when they were young and single. "There is no antagonism or competition between Alcée and Calixta, no willful domination in his manner or subservience in hers, even though he is higher up in society than she" (Seyersted 169). Calixta presents a passionate creature and is eager for the right to govern herself here.

In the story, Bobinot represents the potential incentive for women to seek a change in their position in society. Bobinot is a caring and responsible father and a careful and nice husband. However, it doesn't mean his niceness can make Calixta content, free, and comfortable in her life. He "was accustomed to converse on terms of perfect equality with his little son," "called the child's

attention to certain somber clouds," and "responded reassuringly" to Bibi (Chopin 335). He "purchased a can of shrimps, of which Calixta was very fond" (Chopin 335). When Bobinot and Bibi return home after the storm, Bobinot worries about the consequences of having some mud on their legs and feet, and this may not bother anyone else, especially other men at that time. Bobinot is a simplistic man, who may not have a sense of humor, romance, or passion and who cannot add passion to their life, including their sex life.

Because of the role of women in the society, Calixta, a capable woman, cannot require what she wants from her husband, especially sexually. Nevertheless, while life can limit her actions, it cannot diminish her desire and expectation for autonomy in life and sexuality. Therefore, when her former lover Alcée, with passion, love, and obvious impulsiveness, appears in front of her after they hide from the storm in the house, with the door closed and a piece of bagging thrust beneath the crack, symbolizing that all the restraints of convention and religion are kept away from them, she can release her repressed passion and desire for sex and spiritually and physically free herself in her independent and private world.

At the time when the story takes place, religion was one of the sources of female repression. In a leadership position, the female was an "enslaving" force, while the male was deemed both ordained and free (Andrews 4). "Ethical self-rule is forbidden fruit; the female must not contemplate her nature because it is through her nature that humanity suffered its fall" (Andrew 6). In "The Storm," "Bobinot's Sunday clothes" indicates that Bobinot goes to Church on Sundays and that Calixta lives in a society with religious restrictions (Chopin 336). As a result, Calixta suffers hidden loneliness and repression and then naturally yearns for freedom and autonomy.

Pleasurable sex like the stormy weather is a powerful natural force that is disruptive but perhaps also beneficial (Evans 263-4). In this story, "a woman's sexual experience is not condemned but celebrated" (Harris). After their sexual encounter, both Calixta and Alcée give increased passion to their own spouses. Bobinot and Bibi receive kisses and hugs instead of complaint about the mud from Calixta. Clarisse receives Alcée's letter and is happy to be able to have a longer break. "The Storm" optimistically

suggests that "sexual desire is a profound, deeply rooted, and enduring human motive" and that "a liberated view of sex liberates very major character of the work," and it shows "how liberty renews all human relations" (Evans 265-6). A short sentence--"So the storm passed and every one was happy"--ends the story extraordinarily and suggests the supposed benefits of humans', especially womens', autonomy (Chopin 338). The happy ending implies Kate Chopin's positive perspective on feminism and womens' autonomy.

"The Storm" essentially represents Kate Chopin's "courage to treat the forbidden" and her stylistic daring in describing sex with the unreserved directness and supreme authenticity of truth (Seyersted 166). Kate Chopin's bravery, directness, and independence reflected in her female protagonist have impressed and inspired both her contemporary and modern readers.

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Evaluation: Muxiang demonstrates a high level of critical thinking as she seeks to place in historical and societal context the motives and actions of Chopin's characters. Most enlightening is her discussion of the relationship between Calixta and Alcee in a story previous to "The Storm," which allows readers to view and understand the depth and complexities of their intertwined lives.

Bartleby, the Yogi

Lauren Lykke

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment: *Write a literary research essay.*

When most people envision a free man, they see him riding down the highway on his motorcycle, the sun on his face, leather fringes waving in the wind behind him. Or perhaps they see the free man walking around the city, talking to whomever he wants, buying whatever he sees fit, because he's free and can do as he pleases. Yet to the title character in Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener," freedom holds a different meaning. To Bartleby, freedom has much more to do with freedom of the mind than freedom of the flesh. Bartleby may seem to be confined, or even trapped to some, but I see him as the complete opposite. In fact, I see the narrator of the story, who could fit the above description of a free man, as the one who is confined or trapped. While Bartleby's "pallidly neat, pitiably respectable, incurably forlorn" (Melville 129) body may stand in one place all day, outwardly imprisoned, his mind is anything but. Just as the Yogis of India are liberated within their own minds, so is Bartleby.

To the untrained eye, Bartleby appears extremely constricted. He stays in a small office all night and day, doing nothing but staring at walls: "The next day I noticed that Bartleby did nothing but stand at his window in his dead-wall reverie. Upon asking him why he did not write, he said that he had decided upon doing no more writing" (1138). He is surrounded by others who are annoying, to say the least. There is Turkey, who after lunch time (where he had been sipping on a drink or two) would be loud, crude, and generally overwhelming:

Indeed, not only would he be reckless, and sadly given to making blots in the afternoon, but, some days, he went further, and was rather noisy...He made an unpleasant racket with his chair, spilled his sand box; in mending his pens, impatiently split them all to pieces, and threw them on the floor in a sudden passion. (126)

And then there is Nippers, who due to indigestion is testy and irritable. Any normal man would begin to feel a little trapped after spending a few hours with these people, and Bartleby has to be around them all day, every day! But it seems that Bartleby doesn't want anything else; he's content sitting in his little corner. The narrator even offers Bartleby other jobs he could do: "'Would you like a clerkship in a dry goods store?' ... 'How would a bartender's business suit you?' ... 'Well, then, would you like to travel through the country collecting bills for the merchants?'" (145). As he goes on, the jobs get physically more free and less mindful. But Bartleby can't be satisfied by such worldly and materialistic things – he doesn't want to be free in that way.

Bartleby is also not doing what he was hired to do if he's just staring at the wall all day. And he doesn't only do that; he also refuses his boss's requests: "when I called to him, rapidly stating what it was I wanted him to do – namely, to examine a small paper with me. Imagine my surprise, nay, my consternation, when, without moving from his privacy, Bartleby, in a singularly mild, firm voice, replied, 'I would prefer not to'" (130). Some would say Bartleby is a frightened and timid man, until they realize he is the very opposite of timid. What normal man would refuse his boss like that? Or tell his boss, with no hesitation, that he wasn't going to do his work anymore? Only someone with no fear could. I believe that Bartleby is fearless because he has no dreams of financial success. In fact, he has no dreams of any type of "normal" success or happiness. While a "normal" man might dream of spending his days in his mansion in the hills, Bartleby's dream is to be infinitely free in his mind – no worldly thing like a mansion could satisfy him. He says no to his boss because he's not afraid of being fired. It doesn't matter to him, because nothing can affect his mindset.

And this is how Bartleby and the narrator of the story differ. While Bartleby appears to have no fear, the narrator seems to be filled with it. As I mentioned above, the narrator offers Bartleby many different jobs in hopes of getting him to leave the premises. Bartleby declines all offers. I think a normal person would be rather disgruntled by this, but instead of annoyance, the narrator feels a great sense of fear: "I answered nothing; but, effectually dodging every one by the suddenness and rapidity of my flight, rushed from the building, ran up Wall Street...and was soon removed from pursuit.... So fearful was I of

being again hunted out by the incensed landlord...for a few days, I drove about the upper part of the town and through the suburbs" (146). This is definitely a man who is afraid.

Also, while Bartleby's mindset and mood can't be affected by others, the narrator's most definitely can. When Bartleby first comes to the narrator's office, he (Bartleby) does his work. There is obviously no problem with him, yet the narrator is already being affected by him: "I should have been quite delighted with his application, had he been cheerfully industrious. But he wrote on silently, palely, mechanically" (129). As the days go on, the narrator lets himself be more and more affected by Bartleby's ways. His emotions are a rollercoaster – one day he's livid, the next he's melancholic, and then within that same day he's disgusted and disgruntled.

So why should the narrator be so afraid of and affected by Bartleby? To most it would make no sense, seeing as he has theoretical authority over him, and he most likely is bigger in stature than Bartleby. The thing is, the narrator's lack of control over his emotions and mind allow him to be "owned" by Bartleby, while it should be the other way around. The narrator should be the master, seeing as he is Bartleby's boss, yet this isn't the case. The narrator is "owned" by Bartleby because he is completely enthralled, affected, and fearful of him. He sees that Bartleby doesn't care what others think of him, and he just doesn't know how to understand that at all, because he (the narrator) cares so much. This causes the narrator to have very little self esteem. In Dillingham's book, *Melville's Short Fiction: 1853-1856*, he writes, "Melville recognized that self-esteem is the one indispensable possession of the truly noble man and a much sought-after possession of nearly all men whether they are conscious of the fact or not. The lawyer would like to act in such a way as to create real self-approval, but his all encompassing fear prevents it" (Dillingham 32). On the surface, the narrator seems as though he likes who he is. He tells the reader that he is a successful man, a kind man, an important man. But these exclamations are just thinly veiled insecurities: "The lawyer must have walls; they are necessary for his fragile security" (Dillingham 23). While the narrator lets himself be controlled by others by way of emotions and fears, Bartleby has completely freed himself from that.

The narrator has no control over his emotions because his mind is not free; it is confined by his insecurities, doubts, and uncertainties. The narrator lets these things have power over him, and because of this,

he can't live fearlessly like Bartleby can. It appears that Bartleby has absolutely no insecurities or doubts, and therefore, no fear. And with no fear comes a free mind, because fear is just a manifestation of the ego, and the ego is what keeps a person from having a free mind. This is an idea I've learned from my yoga practice. In yoga, we try to free ourselves from our egos, which means only doing things because they make our true selves feel full and free, not doing things because we're trying to impress or hurt others – that would be feeding our egos. (To put it in simple terms, the ego is basically everything that is needy, untrue, and bad about a person. Our egos grow when we are the above listed things, and shrink when we free ourselves from them.) While Bartleby seems to have no ego, the narrator definitely does. I know this because he's always trying to label and identify himself, and that is exactly what the ego is all about: "The primary function of the ego is to identify itself with this and that. The ego cannot help it" (Shradhdhananda 29). The ego can be a very powerful thing. In Eckhart Tolle's book *A New Earth*, he states, "the ego...takes over you. It's an imposter pretending to be you" (Tolle 8). It must be noted, though, that the status quo is having an ego; almost everyone does. Bartleby is the exception, and in my opinion, it is a wonderful exception because Bartleby has no ego to get in his way. Because of this, Bartleby definitely tries to impress no one:

Going up stairs to my old haunt, there was Bartleby silently sitting upon the banister at the landing.

"What are you doing here, Bartleby?" said I.

"Sitting upon the banister," he mildly replied (145)

That is not a very impressive answer, surely not one you would give your boss. But we can see from this quote that he's not trying to be impressive; he's just *being*. Bartleby lives for no one but himself. While some may see that as selfish or peculiar, I don't think it's either. He just doesn't need others to feed his ego, and he's just so incredibly free in his mind that living for others isn't possible.

But of course, there's always another side to an argument. While Bartleby can be seen as a Yogi, a man so free of ego that he can just be, it could also be said that Bartleby is nothing but a sad, lonely, pale specimen of a man. Bartleby sits in his office all day, and eventually all night: "I surmised that for an indefinite period Bartleby must have ate, dressed, and slept in my office.... Yes, thought I, it is evident enough that Bartleby has been

making his home here, keeping bachelor's hall all by himself" (135). Another view of how Bartleby might not be the Yogi I think he is comes from Patrick's "Melville's 'Bartleby' and the Doctrine of Necessity": "While on the surface Bartleby's dogged assertion of preferences seems to provide evidence that he is a 'willful' or even 'free-willed' individual, the necessitarian approach suggests to the contrary that he is 'programmed' by his fixed disposition and unchanging viewpoint to will as he wills and that he has no more control of the direction of his 'preferences' than a machine would have" (Walton 42). If this author were correct, Bartleby would be nothing more than one of H.G. Wells' Morlocks (creatures who mindlessly manned machines and slunk around in the dark all day and night).

Another key issue with Bartleby is that he has no friends or family, which means no one to confide in, which is something that most people find vital. Another thing that strikes me about Bartleby is that he never smiles. While a smile can be forced, it can't be hidden. The fact that Bartleby never smiles could possibly be the one reason why he might not be the Yogi that I imagine him as. Walton R. Patrick states the following:

First, as the attorney tells the reader, Bartleby is not only a person 'by nature and misfortune prone to a pallid hopelessness,' but also the victim of 'an innate and incurable disorder.' Since the reader has only as much information about Bartleby as Melville chose to have the attorney reveal, it is not clear whether the 'innate disorder' was the 'hopelessness' Bartleby was prone to or, on the other hand, whether the hopelessness was an attitude resulting from the 'disorder.' (Patrick 44)

In my opinion, a Yogi feels joy, not hopelessness. It's a joy that comes from inside, not that comes from the outside world. And it doesn't seem that Bartleby feels any joy. He ends his life curled up in the fetal position against a wall: "Strangely huddled at the base of the wall, his knees drawn up, and lying on his side, his head touching the cold stones, I saw the wasted Bartleby" (148). His last moments alive were spent in the least joyful position a person could be in: crouched, huddled, and cold.

Yet the fact of the matter is that *he* ends his life; no one else is the cause, and that shows me that even though he might not have had joy in his life, he had freedom. Christopher W. Sten, in his article "Bartleby the Transcendentalist: Melville's Dead Letter to Emerson,"

says that "It is not necessary, nor is it adequate to fill the void of Bartleby's divine potential. Spiritual ripeness is all, the scrivener thinks, and so he materially wastes away" (Sten 33). He has the potential for divinity, exceptionally rare in a human being. Perhaps that potential becomes realized. More likely, it does not; but simply having the potential at all counts him as a Yogi, or at least as a Yogi-like character. So while others will try to argue that Bartleby is imprisoned by his lifestyle and mindset, in my opinion it is clear that he holds more freedom than his judges. Bartleby definitely holds more freedom than the narrator. While the narrator is imprisoned by his ego – meaning his insecurities, fears and emotions – Bartleby's ego has been shrunken down to nothing, and therefore he is free. Bartleby could even be called a highly enlightened man, not unlike a Yogi. He isn't concerned with what any one else thinks; his mind and his life are his, and he can do with them what he wants. Some might say that his death is the climax of his sad life, but I think just the opposite, that his death is the ultimate declaration of freedom.

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Evaluation: *This essay examines a unique thesis, and there is a clean, simple writing style here. I love what Lauren does with Melville's famous character.*

If It Ain't Broke— Stone It

Vanessa Mensie

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

Instructors: Andrew Wilson and John Garcia

Assignment: In a research paper, connect one of the works of literature from our course to one or more of the philosophers from the course.

On the morning of June 28, 1948, people in the city of New York awoke to fog; it wasn't a particularly hot day, but for some, what they were about to read in the Monday morning *New Yorker* was enough to make them feel as if the temperature inside the safety of their cookie-cutter homes had risen from a pleasant 72 to a whopping 100 degrees (*Old Farmer's Almanac*, n. pag.). The heat sparked from a short story written by Shirley Jackson was enough to stir a "response that no *New Yorker* had ever received: hundreds of letters poured in that were characterized by 'bewilderment, speculation, and old fashioned abuse'" (Koscenko 192), and after reading the story, it is easy to see why. Jackson's piece entitled "The Lottery" deals with the controversial subject of stoning a woman to death in order to yield better crops. Although such an action is obviously wrong, the villagers don't even flinch as they pick up their stones to collectively murder a mother, a friend, and positive force within their community; to them, the ritual of the lottery, a custom to which most (I would argue all) of the villagers have lost sight of, outweighs the life of any individual, and because of this, they see nothing wrong with their actions. The stoning of Tessie Hutchinson in most societies today is something that would be considered an immoral practice, but to those in Jackson's story, their actions are justified because of the values concerning tradition that are upheld within that society. The issue of cultural relativism, the

deadliness of conformity, and the obligation of members of society have to question our culture are the driving forces and issues touched upon by Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery."

One of the driving plot forces in the "The Lottery" centers around the mindlessness of doing something because it is tradition and what has been done in the past, but by acting out of tradition "we commit the gross error of assuming that what is traditional is necessarily morally justifiable" (Brannigan 38). For the people in the lottery, this may not even apply to them, because they do not seem aware that their annual lottery is tradition; rather, it is just something that happens every summer. Much like children go back to school every August, they just do it because they don't know of any other way. This justification may explain why no one in the story questions the rightness of the lottery. Regardless of the obviously immoral actions taken against "The Lottery's" protagonist, we as people cannot rely on relativism as a means to justify any and every action; that is, we can't criticize or judge the actions/customs/traditions of one culture even if what they have done clearly violates the set values within our own society; even though an outsider may see a ritual as wrong or unethical because they do not understand the customs and folkways of that particular society, it would be "arrogant for [them] to try and judge the conduct of other peoples" (Rachels 55). In other words, "[d]ifferent societies have different moral codes" (Rachels 53); therefore, there is no correct or incorrect set of values. The problem with this rationale is because of this, we can use those cultural differences as an excuse to justify clearly unethical behavior; to fall back on that excuse of 'to each his own,' would lead to a lack of discussion and questioning of tradition, which is exactly the idea about which Jackson wrote "The Lottery."

The plot of "The Lottery" revolves around a pending murder of one of its citizens. Because of this fact, I would like to focus on one part of the spectrum of cultural relativism: morality. One could easily fall back on the reasoning that Tessie Hutchinson's murder is morally justifiable, by that society's terms, so any critique of their actions would be one society's values critiquing the values of another, therefore breaking the vow of moral relativism, but that is not the case. It is true that in the

village Jackson has created for her story, they have justified the annual sacrifice of one of its citizens, but using any moral compass, this action is clearly wrong. There truly is no controversy over this issue, because it is wrong when it is examined through any moral perspective, and one cannot fall back onto the excuse that lotteries are justified within one culture but not another due to cultural relativism, and that this justifies the fact that the seemingly average people in Jackson's story could commit such a tremendously immoral action. If we are to examine the murder of Tessie Hutchinson, there really is no argument whether her death is morally justifiable; the answer is clearly no. From a Kantian perspective, the villagers use the annual sacrifice as a means to achieve a good crop yield, and actions such as this clearly go against Kant's categorical imperative. If the lottery is to be examined under a utilitarian perspective, and utilitarian calculus is to be applied, the annual tradition of the lottery is still wrong. It is true that one person's suffering is trumped by the benefit of everyone else in the community strictly from a numbers standpoint, but other factors must be considered in a utilitarian calculus other than just quantity. Things like intensity and the duration of consequences (positive or negative) must be taken into account as well, and although the sacrifice of one person will, in theory, benefit a large amount of other people, the amount of suffering caused to bring about that happiness is much greater than the minimal amount of happiness brought to all the villagers. It is clear then, that under any ethical lens, sacrifices like that in "The Lottery" are always wrong regardless of any sort of cultural bias. Although lotteries may be horrendous acts of organized violence, there truly is no controversy over them: they are always wrong and are understood to be so by many people, yet after Shirley Jackson's story was published, the response she got was not one based in the disgust over such a moral injustice; rather, their outrage stemmed from a place of horror and accusation that seemingly "'average' citizens [could] engage in a deadly rite" (Kosenko 192).

To fully understand why Jackson's story caused such an outrage, we need to examine what was happening culturally within American society at the time Jackson's controversial story was published. "The Lottery" was published in the post-WWII era, and in many ways,

Jackson's story was a reaction to just that. Most notably, the world had just gained knowledge of the tragedy of the Holocaust: "[a] number of Americans responded with horrors and concern that communities could have stood by and silently allowed... [genocide] to occur (Moss 236). From a local standpoint, the war had provided people with a "period of apparent [financial] stability" (Moss 236), which they welcomed graciously. Because of this, there was a "pull [in American culture] toward domestic comfort, a coinciding trend [that] drew the public toward general social conformity... [E]ncouraging this conformity was the spread of television" (Moss 236) and other forms of mass media. Another parallel to "The Lottery" that was occurring in American history was the beginnings of the Cold War; "[u]nder President Truman's notably repressive 1947 loyalty program, any federal employee found with so much as a book on Marxism risked being fired" (Moss 236). That is not to mention the development of the HUAC committee, whose policies enforced the "chilling violation of the right of free speech" (Moss 236). The movement toward conformity both socially and politically that occurred and was occurring at the time Jackson was writing her story left "little room for differences of opinion... [in] the postwar era" (Moss 236). In the wake of all these historical events, it is no wonder why Jackson's fictional story provoked such strong response. Because although it was fictional, the values of the fictional community in Jackson's story were not that far off the ones that America was striving to attain at the time.

Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" opens on a "clear, sunny... summer day" (Jackson 693). Jackson does a good job throughout the story to keep the ominous conclusion hidden by saying things like, "there were only about three hundred people, [so] the whole lottery took less than two hours... and [would] allow the villagers [time] to get home for noon dinner" (Jackson 693). The very flat tone, in the way Jackson writes her piece, adds to the horror of the ending of her story. Once the townspeople gather, the story "introduces [us] to three boys from the village... [who] fill their pockets with stones and make a great pile in the corner of the square" (Bloom, n. pag.). The lottery is hosted by Mr. Summers, "the official of the lottery" (Bloom, n. pag.). As Jackson writes to describe Mr. Summers and his

obligations as the lottery's host, she "consistently relates back to the way events had been run, referring to the forgotten rituals of the past" (Bloom, n. pag.). Just as the lottery is about to start, Tessie Hutchinson "hurries into the town square and slides into the crowd" (Bloom, n. pag.), but not before making cheery conversation with Mr. Summers, her husband, and her best friend in the town, Mrs. Delacroix. After this brief interruption, the business of the lottery gets on its way: "each head of the household is sent up... [to draw lots]. As they approach Mr. Summers they grin 'humorously and nervously'" (Bloom, n. pag.). As this occurs, the story shifts to a conversation between the Adams family and Old Man Warner: Mr. Adams says "that over in the north village they're talking of giving up the lottery" (Jackson 697). After all have drawn their lots, the townspeople open their slips of paper, and "[i]t is revealed that Bill Hutchinson had the pertinent [one]" (Bloom, n. pag.). Tessie, after learning this news, "starts to yell at Mr. Summers, claiming the proceedings weren't conducted fairly" (Bloom, n. pag.). The next round of drawings is for the Hutchinson households, but because Bill is the only one, they move to the next round, which is the nuclear family (Jackson 698). Tessie protests this as well, saying, "[Her daughter's family should] take their chance!" (Jackson 697). In the final round, Bill's nuclear family draws once again, and Tessie get the piece of paper with the black dot. "Bill Hutchinson has to force the slip of paper out of his wife's hands....The focus shifts to the pile of stones that the boys [of the town had made] earlier" (Bloom, n. pag.). "Tessie Hutchinson... held her hands out desperately as the villagers moved in on her" (Jackson 699). Tessie's last words are, "It isn't fair, it isn't right [!]" (699). But her words of protest come too late because "they were upon her" (699).

The subtle details that Jackson intertwines throughout her story tremendously add to the power of "The Lottery." Just within the character's names and social statuses, Jackson has incorporated a commentary on the types of people within any given society. The names Jackson gives to the characters in her story "work to convey a meaning that is even more disturbing than the shock created by its well-known ending" (Yarmove 233). The first character that serves as metaphor in her story is Old Man Warner. Warner is the oldest man in town and has survived

seventy-seven lotteries (Jackson 697); his purpose in the story is to "warn us about the primordial function of the lottery" (Yarmove 234). He is the only one in town who still has some notion of why the lottery is carried out each year, and when he says, "Used to be a saying about 'Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon'" (Jackson 697), he serves as a reminder to the townspeople of the purposes of the lottery, and in response it seems as though no one is listening to him, which in my mind reinforces the fact that the people in the community not only don't know why they are having a lottery, but also don't care to know. Old Man Warner's presence and actions in "The Lottery" are added to warn not only the readers of the wrongness of the customs of the past and ironically the absence of knowing the roots of tradition, but to warn the villagers in the story as well.

Another family that has a symbolic last name is Adams. Before the Lottery begins, the Adams murmur to each other, "some places have already quit lotteries" (Jackson 697). Old Man Warner takes great offense to this and sees it as an attack on himself and his beliefs, so he replies, "Pack of crazy fools....Listening to the young folks, nothing's good enough for *them*" (Jackson 697). In Hebrew, the name "Adam" means "man" (Yarmove 234); when they say that other towns have given up the lottery, this may or may not be a gentle suggestion on their part that their town should do the same. This could be an allusion on Jackson's part to show the inherent individual goodness of man, and how that changes when people start having a herd mentality. Not only that, but their free thought is immediately shot down by Old Man Warner, who, for this story, is the personification of tradition and societal customs of the past.

Some other names Jackson gave her characters that are of meaning are Mr. Graves, the city's postmaster (Jackson 694); his names symbolizes "a somber forewarning note of what will happen to Tessie" (Yarmove 234), or rather the gravity of the lottery. Also, there is Tessie's friend in the story, Mrs. Delacroix: her name refers to the "pseudo-crucifixion of Tessie" (Yarmove 234). If the Delacroix family represents the crucifixion of Tessie, then it is obvious that Tessie's death is symbolically not an act of chance, but rather she is a martyr, even if the value of her death are unknown to everyone except the

reader. To justify Tessie's death, Jackson references two women in the character's name. The first woman Jackson references is "Anne Hutchinson, who having been exiled from the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1638 because of her religious beliefs, emigrated to Rhode Island where she established her own church" (Yarmove 234). Not only does Tessie's last name carry a symbolic meaning, but her first name does as well. "'Tessie' parodies the most famous Tess in Literature, Tess Durbeyfield, the protagonist of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, who...dies ignominiously" (Yarmove 234) in the story. Considering the metaphoric weight of martyrdom that Tessie Hutchinson's name carries, it is very obvious not only why Jackson selected her for sacrifice, but also that she had to be the one used for the lottery in order for the story to have the tremendous impact that it did.

In order for Jackson to make the point of what can happen if people adhere to tradition blindly, Tessie Hutchinson has to die. In the few details Jackson subtly provides, she makes it obvious that Tessie Hutchinson has upset the social order of things, and because of this, the lottery has selected her for sacrifice to keep the status quo. Tessie's mild acts of rebellion can be found in the details of Jackson's story. And although there are several, there are a few rebellions that Tessie Hutchinson has that make her the perfect sacrifice for this year's lottery. The first "rebellion [Tessie Hutchinson makes is] with her late arrival to the lottery" (Kosenko 195); even though it may be unconscious, her tardiness shows defiance of the community's traditions. Her next challenge to the community's values is the way she addresses her husband and excuses her lateness. Mrs. Hutchinson says innocently and jokingly to Mr. Summers, attempting to excuse herself, "'Wouldn't have me leave m' dishes in the sink, now, would you Joe?'" (Jackson 695), and later when lots are being drawn, she tells her husband, "'Get up there Bill'" (Jackson 696). If statements like this had been said today in our society, they would not be thought of twice, but in the fictional village that Jackson created for the lottery, she provides evidence that "women...have a distinctly subordinate position in the socio-economic hierarchy of the village" (Kosenko 194). This is evident just in the way the townspeople talk about women. Jackson sprinkles her story with commentary

from various townspeople with things like, "Here comes your Missus, Hutchinson" (Jackson 695), and "Daughters draw for their husband's families...you know that as well as anyone else'" (Jackson 697). Once the cultural values of this microcosmic society are taken into account, it is easy to see how Mrs. Hutchinson's comment falls more along the lines of rebellion than it does witty banter. Not only that, but after she jokes around with Mr. Summers, "a soft laughter can be heard" (Jackson 695), which indicates the tension and uneasiness of the townspeople about her response to Mr. Summers and the remark she made to her husband. The final subconscious defiance of social order is the very last words she utters, "'[i]t's not fair'" (Jackson 699).

Although she says this several times before she is stoned to death by her friends and family, she is in no way consciously opposing the tradition of the lottery, but rather how the lottery is run (which, from a statistical standpoint *is not* fair); only indirectly do her actions challenge the correctness of the status quo. Yet, they are enough for the "literary forces that be" (Jackson) to select her for sacrifice. In many ways, by the end of the story, Tessie's actions have made her a martyr on a subconscious level, at least to someone reading the story, but for the characters living the fictitious town, Tessie has become "a symbol to others of the perils of disobedience" (Kosenko 196) and non-conformity. When the lottery is thought of with this in mind, it is not just random chance that anyone will be sacrificed, but rather it is metaphoric selection of who is most likely to disrupt and challenge the traditions of the past. Although the stoning of a woman might be an overexaggeration, the principle of not having someone to stand up for social/moral injustices within a society is in many people's minds, including my own, the key theme behind "The Lottery." According to the response *The New Yorker* received regarding Jackson's story, she definitely struck a nerve among its readers.

The reason Jackson's story got the response it did was because the village portrayed in Jackson's fictional story in many ways resembled the average town in Anywhere, USA. It touched a nerve with so many people because they saw themselves, or parts of their own town, within the one Jackson describes. And to them, the action of murdering a neighbor, a friend, a family member, was

something no one could even fathom, yet the villagers in "The Lottery" are doing just that. On top of this, the other upsetting part of Jackson's story is that no one opposes the ritual; yes, the Adams do bring up the topic of stopping the lottery, but even then it is not made clear their own personal view of the matter; rather they are just stating a fact that "[s]ome places have quit lotteries" (Jackson 697). The true horror of Jackson's story comes from the absence of certain presences or actions; none of the villagers see any problem with the annual ritual of the lottery, nor do they have a connection to the lottery itself; their only motive for participating in it is because it is what has been done in years past. Another mysterious absence is the fact there are no authority figures in the story; true, there are people like Mr. Summers and Mr. Graves who are among the social elite of the town (Kosenko 193), but there is no police officer or public figure whose duty it is to keep social order and punish social injustices. The most upsetting and in some ways the most frightening absence in the story comes from the things that are not thought of by the characters, namely the pseudo-martyr of the story: Tessie Hutchinson. The townspeople seem to be on good standing with one another, and it is really a community where everyone knows everyone. Yet none of them have an emotional or moral objection to the sacrifice of someone they seem to have a strong relationship with. There is plenty of evidence that the village Jackson describes is a very close-knit community. In one instance, Mr. Summers asks Mrs. Dunbar, who will be drawing for her family because her husband is not able to draw this year due to a broken leg, but due to the "business of the lottery," he has to ask, even though "[he] knew the answer perfectly well" (Jackson 695).

Another example of the sense of community is at the end when the Hutchinsons are unfolding their piece of paper. "A general sigh [of relief travels] though the crowd as [Mr. Graves shows] everyone [Davy's paper] is blank" (Jackson 698). Also, voices from friends can be heard interjecting their hopes that their friends do not get the paper with the "black spot on it [that] Mr. Summers had made the night before with a heavy pencil from the coal-company office" (Jackson 699). There is clearly a sense of compassion and caring for the members of the community, yet when it comes time to stone Tessie, they

do so without thinking twice, even her best friend in the town: "Mrs. Delacroix select[s] a stone so large, she had to pick it up with both hands" (Jackson 699). Someone in the town even has the courtesy to hand Tessie's youngest son Dave a few pebbles so he too can participate in the stoning of his mother (Jackson 699). When Jackson writes, "Although they may have forgotten the ritual and lost the original black box, they still remembered to use stones" (Jackson 699); perhaps she could add compassion and the question, "Why?" to the list of the things the villagers forgot. Even Tessie herself, although very concerned with her own survival, does not object to the lottery's tradition but rather the fact that she is the one who must die. Even though she obviously wants to live, the thought of opposition, defiance, or rebellion never once crosses her mind. This lack of social defiance or even opposing views within "The Lottery" is what Jackson so brilliantly warns her readers about, and through that absence of questioning authority within "The Lottery," Jackson reminds her readers that we, as members of society, have the obligation to do just that.

While the ritual in "The Lottery" depicts a possible consequence of tolerance toward tradition, Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" is a powerful example of someone who saw the danger and the need to stand up against such tolerances. Aside from approaching the concept of questioning authority from two completely different angles, King writes about the concept in the context of an issue that is tangible and present: civil rights. Much like Jackson's "The Lottery" was a response to the cultural trends and historical events that were currently predominant in most Americans' minds, King's letter was written in response to "eight clergymen who feared [peaceful protests would breed] violence...and urged him to wait [to protest]" (King 389). King very clearly argues that as members of society, we each have the obligation to right the wrongs within it; therefore, it is our duty to protest the injustices of our society. To sit idly by and do nothing is tantamount to taking direct negative action and creating the injustice itself. King writes things like, "[one] cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham" (King 390); "[that] [i]njustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" (391). His letter talks in great detail about the importance

of his protests, and that civil disobedience is necessary to "bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive" (King 369). For the cause of civil rights, there is no greater hindrance than the white moderate: "[one] who know[s] that colored people will receive equal rights eventually" (King 396), but do not take action against this injustice they know to be morally wrong. That knowing the right thing, and doing the right thing, yield very different results. The absence of the latter with the presence of the first "become[s] the dangerously structured [dam] that block[s] the flow of social progress" (King 396). It is true that King in his letter is strictly talking about race, but that does not mean that his ethics and justification for his civil disobedience solely apply to race. In fact, the principle he speaks of can be applied to any society in history, in any area there is/was/will be a social injustice. Without people who can question and challenge the status quo, social injustices continue to occur, and those who are oppressed by them continue to be the victims of immoral treatment because people do not discuss the ways to better and change their society. Although King does not say anything about the stoning of a woman, the same principles apply to his motive for writing "Letter from Birmingham Jail" and Jackson's motive for writing "The Lottery."

That is not to say, however, that things done because they are tradition are inherently evil or immoral. In fact, there are some traditions that serve great cultural purposes in different societies. It is only when people lose sight of the motive behind their action do we put ourselves at risk for occurrences like the one Jackson depicts in "The Lottery." Although the stoning of an innocent woman may be a bit extreme, that does not mean the purpose behind "The Lottery" should be diminished. In fact, the purpose is very significant; Jackson's story warns its readers about what can happen if everyone in a society either blindly follows tradition or is too afraid to speak up that rituals or social customs that were performed in the past are no longer valid or necessary. In fact, there are many injustices that have happened throughout history because people did not speak up, and to remedy them, it takes courage and a free-thinking mind, which were qualities that no one in Jackson's "The Lottery" seemed to have. It truly is only fitting that the outrage and shock came in floods in response to Jackson's story because having the

ability to voice that difference of opinion and opposition to something within a social institution (in this case the media) reaffirms that a horror such as the one depicted in "The Lottery" would never happen within a culture where people are able to critique them.

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Evaluation: *Vanessa does more than connect one philosopher to a work of literature. She deftly works with a few different themes and ties them together in a seamless way.*

Some Say We Live in a Toilet, But It Is Up to Us to Wear the Water Wings

Rodrigo Narbona

Course: Ancient Philosophy (Philosophy 231)

Instructor: John Garcia

Assignment: *In a four- to six-page paper, examine Epictetus' advice for dealing with a world that seems imperfect and cruel. Explain some of the main themes that emerge in his writings, and assess the value of his ideas.*

You read it in the headlines: “Blast kills 8 mourners at Pakistani funeral”; “China: 19,000 dead identified since quake”; “Aid workers: Hungry kids dying in Haiti.” You see it on TV, people losing their homes and families to hurricanes and foreclosures. Children struggling with leukemia, millions of people going hungry overseas—it seems that everywhere we look—a constant reminder that the world is unpredictable and cruel. Every day we are faced with new frustration and setbacks; we see our hopes and dreams constantly hindered by a society of ignorant and hostile people. Furthermore, we fall victim to disease, we lose our jobs, and our families are torn apart by poverty and politics. It would seem that happiness is for the most part constantly out of reach. Epictetus argues that the suffering we experience is not due to these events

themselves, but rather due to unreasonable expectations and false beliefs we hold about the world we live in. Epictetus tells us that in order to avoid suffering and lead a truly happy life, we need not to wish the world was different, but rather learn to understand the real nature of things, and focus on those things that are within our power to control.

Epictetus believes that the reason we experience suffering or unhappiness is because of false beliefs. At first glance, this claim is hard to swallow. It seems reasonable to suppose that everyone has at some point experienced suffering—be it the loss of a loved one, falling victim to disease, losing your job a week before rent is due, or having your pet dog run over by an ice cream truck on your 6th birthday party—and to say that the reason we suffered on these occasions is not because of the events themselves, but rather, because of the beliefs we hold, seems counterintuitive. Normally, we think that all the above examples are what in fact cause suffering, and not what we think of them. But in order to understand what Epictetus is trying to say, it may be beneficial to briefly discuss happiness and the nature of human desire.

It is my belief that all of us, as a matter of human nature, desire real happiness. And whenever we take any kind of action, we act according to our innate desire for happiness, coupled with our beliefs as to what happiness is and how we go about obtaining it. For example, if we believe money is what brings about happiness, then we will do everything in our power to acquire money. What is important to keep in mind is that, although we may all have conflicting views as to what happiness is—some argue that it is wealth, power, and prestige—there is a truth to the matter. Think of happiness in the same terms you would think of health. It simply isn't the case that we can eat Krispy Cream Donuts every day and be healthy, regardless of whether we think so or not. There are truths as to how to obtain health that are independent of our beliefs about them. Happiness works the same way; there are truths independent from our beliefs, and the way we achieve happiness, or health, is by having knowledge of those truths. This being said, suffering or unhappiness arises out of false beliefs we have about the world and ourselves. The only way to achieve happiness is through

knowledge, through reevaluating our beliefs in order to rid ourselves from misconceptions about the world.

In order to rid ourselves of the sources of suffering, false beliefs, Epictetus urges us to make a distinction between those things that are up to us, and those things that are not:

●f all existing things some are in our power, and others are not in our power. In our power are thought, impulse, the will to get and the will to avoid—in a word, everything that is our own doing. Things not in our power include the body, property, reputation, office—in a word, everything that is not our own doing. (Epictetus 31)

Epictetus is trying to point out that the only things in our power are those matters that are up to us entirely, namely our own characters: the opinions we hold, the beliefs we have, the things we value and those we avoid. Generally speaking, he is writing about the way we choose to approach the world. Everything other than this belongs to the outside world and is not dependent upon us; that is to say, the outcomes are not entirely up to us. In other words, we can't choose the body we are born with, we can't force people to like us, and whether or not you get that job is, ultimately, not up to you. Epictetus believes that if you can distinguish between those things that are in your power and those things that are not, "no one will ever put compulsion or hindrance on you, you will blame none, you will accuse none, you will do nothing against your will, no one will harm you, you will have no enemy, for no harm can touch you" (Epictetus 31). When trying to understand what is meant by harm, it is important to remember that for Epictetus, happiness lies in having true beliefs about the world, and developing our characters—things that are within our power to accomplish. When we fail to see which things are within our power, and we wrongly think that those things that aren't up to us are in fact up to us, we are bound to make mistakes, and as a consequence experience suffering.

It is at this point that some people might be inclined to say: "well, although it makes sense to suppose that our false beliefs and judgments *add* suffering to any particular event, it doesn't seem true that all of the suffering we

experience when we lose a loved one is due to false belief. There is something about the very event itself—losing a loved one that causes suffering." To answer this, Epictetus would have us consider the real nature of things, and to consider whether we hold false beliefs with regard to this, too:

When anything, from the meanest thing upward, is attractive or serviceable or an object of affection, remember to say to yourself, "What is its nature?" If you are fond of a jug, say you are fond of a jug; then you will not be disturbed if it be broken. If you kiss your child or your wife, say to yourself that you are kissing a human being, for then if death strikes it you will not be disturbed. (Epictetus 44)

This may sound extremely cold at first, but the truth is that to be human is to be mortal and die. To think otherwise is to have false beliefs as to what it is to be human. Wishing we could control when people pass away is wishing something out of our control to be in our control—which is what causes suffering—and we are miserable and mourn. It is not up to us when people will die, all that is up to us is how we handle the situation. It is not up to us whether or not we get cancer, but it is up to us whether we will mourn, and blame the skies when we are faced with cancer, or whether we, after being dealt a bad hand, do everything in our power to make the best out of the situation.

Epictetus encourages us to question our own natures, and to realize which things are in our power to decide. He encourages us to question the nature of things, and to approach every situation with clear and reasonable expectations—to not let our false judgments carry us away:

In everything you do, consider what comes first and what follows, and approach it in light of this. ●therwise you will come to it enthusiastically at first because you have not reflected on any of the consequences, and afterward, when difficulties appear, you will give up disgracefully. Do you wish to win at the Olympic games? So do I, by the gods, for it is a fine thing. But consider the first steps to it,

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and the consequences, and then undertake the work. (Epictetus 110)

For Epictetus, the key is to carefully consider the situation not for what it appears to us, but for what it actually is. It is unreasonable to wish that we may live forever, and to get carried by emotions and to curse the skies and wish it didn't happen is to have unrealistic expectations as to what being human really is. To wish to win the Olympics without putting forward any effort is unrealistic since everything comes at a price; we need to set realistic expectations that are based not on what is out of our control, but within our power to achieve.

The lesson to take away from Epictetus is that being alive means eventually dying, that being alive means we are bound to fall victim to disease—that we cannot control the world or others, but only ourselves. To blame others, and to wish the world were different, is to wish something outside of our control were up to us, and it is ultimately a futile and misguided effort. In order to be happy, we need to focus on developing those things that are in our control—our characters, and our beliefs—and rid ourselves of misconceptions that affect the way we perceive the world. The world is not imperfect or cruel, but rather the world just is—there is nothing innately bad about it, there are things we love and things we avoid in this world, but the key lies in realizing it all comes in one package, and that it is ultimately up to us to make this life worth living—it is up to us to wear the water wings.

Works Cited

Epictetus' *Handbook* and *The Tablet of Cebes*: Guides to Stoic Living. Trans. Keith Seddon. Taylor and Francis, 2005. Print.

Evaluation: *Rodrigo writes in a clear manner that is accessible to a reader unfamiliar with the works and thinkers he discusses, yet his discussions are thoughtful and provide genuine insights.*

Dearest Sethe

Eunice Oh

Course: Literature 223
(Minority Literature in America)
Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment: *I asked the students to write a letter to one of the characters we'd met during the course of the semester. Each letter was supposed to make references to the text from which the character comes. Eunice chose to write to Toni Morrison's Sethe, from the novel Beloved.*

Dearest Sethe,

I believe real, true letters are carriers of the soul. The person to whom the letter is sent, the recipient, possesses exclusive access to its contents. It is rare for me to do such a thing—write a letter—for exposing something so sacred is only done under special circumstances. My soul and the things it longs to say are the only things I can call my own. But I feel like your whole life, you have been stripped of everything imaginable. Even things that are intangible have been taken away from you. So this letter is written to and for you: my heart and soul to a woman that has nothing but these same things to offer. It is the least I can do. Maybe this letter can be put right next to the tiniest star you picked out. Then maybe you can have one more thing to call your own.

I love my ma. She's a single parent. She supports three growing kids all on her own. We live in a humble home, and we don't really need much. She works till her

bones ache and till her three babies are satisfied to their hearts' content. She never says no to our crazy dreams and goals. Even though she is the provider for our family, we don't give her enough credit for it. In fact, the way we show appreciation is by goofing off and making trouble. It's not intentional, but we're kids. She always says that she loves us so much, and that she does everything for our sakes. Then she claims that she raised us wrong and that we wouldn't be doing such foolish things if she were raising us correctly. She blames everything on herself and concludes that it is all her fault.

You see, I feel my mother is a little narrow-minded in this situation. She tries so hard to give us a perfect life full of abundant love and uninterrupted happiness. She wants to give us the things she never had when she was a child. She gives up her own pleasures so that we can enjoy ours. And when any one of us gets caught with a pack of cigarettes, or she hears another one of us stumble in smelling of alcohol, she cries silent tears only God can hear.

But here's the thing that mothers can't seem to understand: it is not their faults; it is no one's fault. Life is all about making decisions and learning and growing from them, even if they're bad ones. No matter how hard she tries to make us out to be perfect angels, life isn't that simple. If anything, she's doing her job perfectly. I wish she knew this. As kids, we learn through our mistakes. And because she's raised us to be strong, we've learned to become better people from those experiences. Sure, there have been ugly decisions, but when it comes down to it, we always end up okay, alright, in one piece. And is that not what all mothers wish for their children?

So am I saying that your "thick" love (Morrison 164)—your act of cutting your own baby's throat to spare her the life of a female slave—was too cruel or wrong? In a way. But it has put my own mother's love in a different perspective: would my mother really go beyond extremes if it meant that her children wouldn't live a life she had? No. So maybe she doesn't have the thick love you have, but she does have love. The way I see it, my mother already goes beyond her limits to provide a prosperous life. And even though we do things that kill her softly inside, we have two feet so that we stand taller

and stronger when we learn from the things we do that hurt her. With four feet, there is no visible change. But with two feet, there is a subtle but prominent change that is seen with her children. And when my mother witnesses such growth in her kids, it's as if all the pain we've caused her is washed away. Then, at least briefly, she trusts that what she went through was worth it, just so she can see her babies develop and become beautiful people. I think it's something every mother lives and hopes to see in her children. And now she'll realize that she is a good mother after all.

But who am I to say all this? I'm not a mother, and honestly I never aspire to be one. But you are. And so is my mother. And mothers come in different sizes, shapes, colors, races, and mindsets. Over and over, you say that you don't care about you, that you cut your baby's throat out of love, and I believe you. You did what you did for your child, your "beautiful, magical best thing" (Morrison 251). But like Paul D said, "'You your best thing, Sethe. You are'" (273; emphasis mine). My mother is her "best thing," too. And I feel mothers have the best stories to tell. They are the kinds of stories that are told right before the kids go to bed. And as her baby falls asleep in her arms as she continues to tell her softly powerful story, it still lives on in her baby's dreams. The stories live on and are passed on. That's something no one can take from you either. It's your own to share.

Sincerely,

Eunice

Works Cited

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. New York: Knopf, 1987.

Evaluation: This letter is a bulwark against the worry some parents have that they're not getting through to their kids, and that their kids have not noticed how hard they (the parents) continue to try. More than that, the letter is truly sensitive to the plight of Morrison's Sethe, a one-time fugitive slave who, after escaping and being hunted and found by her former master, chooses to slit the throat of her baby daughter rather than send her back to a life of hell on earth.

A Small Business Proposal

Roman Pakhlevanians Jr.

Course: Networking 299 (Networking Capstone Course)

Instructor: Dave Braunschweig

Assignment:

The goal of this course is to bring together all of the student's networking experience at Harper College and apply it to a simulated small business environment. During this course, students have an opportunity to design the network; select hardware and software; establish business-critical services; set up workstations and login scripts; configure routing, remote access, and security; and define backup, recovery, and monitoring activities. As each student completes the course sessions, he or she builds a document that will become a project proposal and implementation guide for the small business network. The project proposal is presented to the small business owner and business partners (the instructor and classmates) at the end of the course.

Evaluation: Success in the computer field requires a combination of detailed technical knowledge and effective communication. Roman's proposal is an excellent example of these combined attributes. It is reproduced on the following pages, as the student submitted it, in a page layout suitable for an effective small business proposal.

SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

NET299-240

Multi-Section proposal, for small business, outlining the detailed design and implementation of hardware, software and business-critical services such as data security, file archiving as well as remote access and network router and workstation setup and configuration.

Roman Pakhlevaniants Jr.

5/16/2008

SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

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SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The following proposal outlines the plans for designing, deploying, configuring and testing a small business network for Medical Professionals Inc. Great care must be taken to follow the doctor's requests as closely as possible. This proposal outlines the details of how the network will be designed as well as a detailed explanation of configuration and setup of equipment, services and software applications.

The new office will require a mixture of wireless and wired connectivity on the network. The wireless portion will be divided into 2 or possibly more subnets, allowing wireless Internet access to patients in the waiting room, as requested, while allowing office staff to use their services without interruption or safety concerns.

The users of this network will mostly be limited to three doctors, one manager, three nurses, one receptionist and an unknown number of patients. The doctors have also requested that physical network connections be available in the following locations around the office, one network port in each of the three doctor's offices, the manager's office, the reception desk, and two ports at the nurse's station, and one in each of the five patient rooms, bringing the total physical network ports to twelve. In addition to the physical network connections the doctors have requested public wireless Internet access for the waiting room and private wireless network access covering the lounge, and all doctor and patient rooms.

A wiring closet will be available on the premises for all network related wiring and hardware. A false ceiling exists in the office and allows for routing of wires in all directions above the ceiling.

Furthermore, this proposal will describe in detail the selection of hardware and software based on the office requirements, and will cover installation, and configuration of office services and applications such as email, file storage, login scripts, authentication and security, as well as backup and data recovery.

A test environment will be setup using physical machines to configure and test all aspects of the network prior to deployment. Microsoft Visio™ will be used to diagram the office layout, network installation points and wire paths.

SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

PHYSICAL NETWORK DESIGN

The overall physical design of this network will be based on the Star topology, using Category 5e cable. The network will feature a firewall, filtering all unwanted traffic from the Internet, a switch to allow for network components to communicate and provide data transfer to the server. The network will also feature two wireless access points to provide public and private Wi-Fi access. The goal of this particular layout will be to provide maximum flexibility as well as maximum security, keeping unauthorized users out of the private network, while allowing internal users to freely access files and the Internet. To accomplish this task, the network will require several pieces of networking hardware as stated above.

First, to provide security to the local network a firewall will be used to filter viruses, SPAM, Spyware, Malware and unauthorized users trying to gain access to the network. The firewall will provide a connection to the Internet through its Wide Area Network (WAN) port, and also provide the required De-militarized Zone (DMZ) port required to connect the public wireless network to the Internet. The firewall will also allow up to two Local Area Network (LAN) connections.

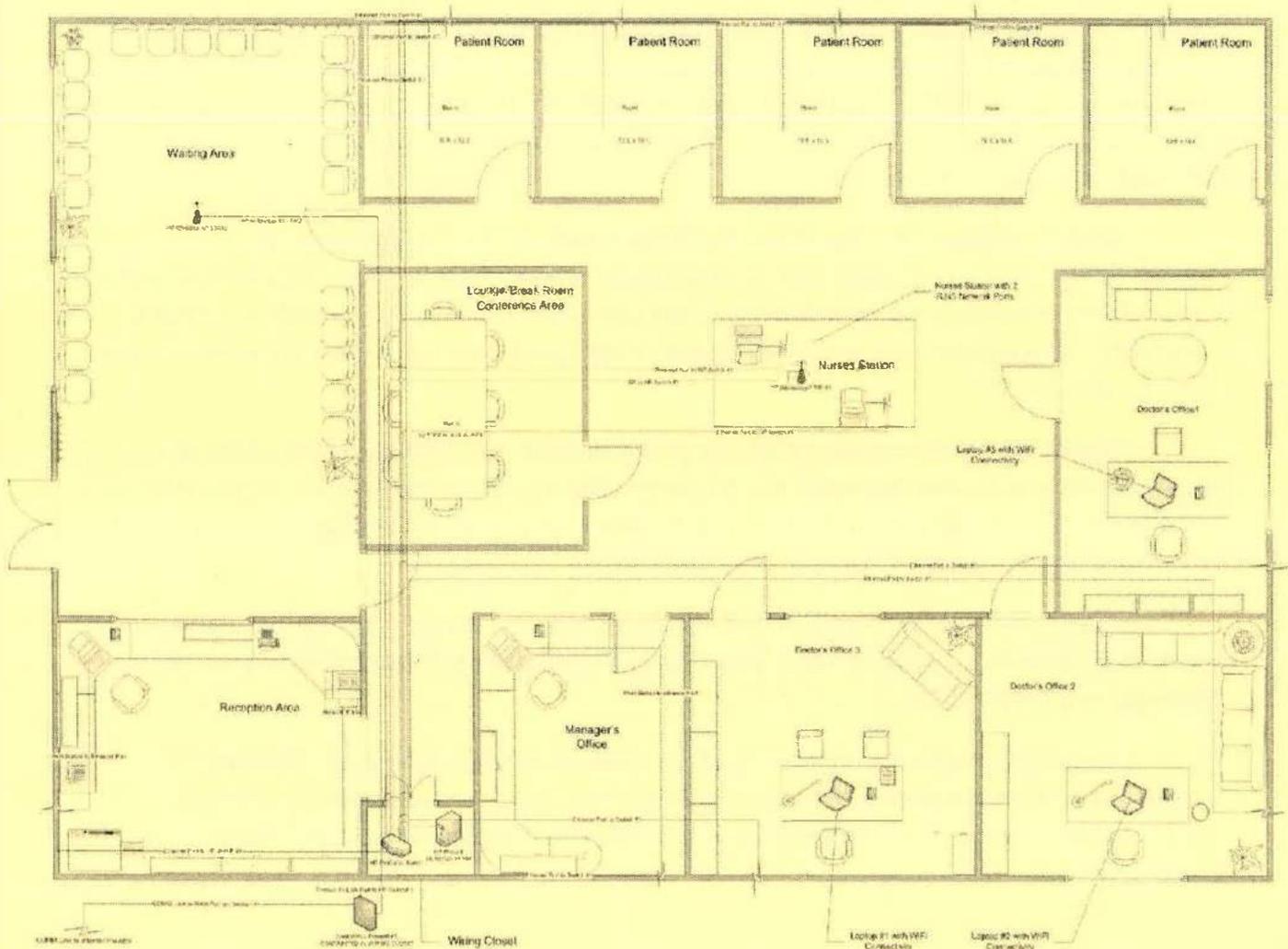
Second, connected to the firewall will be a switch which will feature 22 - 10/100/1000 auto-sensing ports and two additional Gigabit uplink ports. This switch will be a cost effective solution which will provide the necessary connectivity as well as upgrade capability. All workstations, network printer, server, and wireless access points will connect through this switch.

To provide wireless network access to the waiting area and the office alike, the network will require two managed access points. One will be configured to connect the unsecured network directly to the Internet while the other will be configured to connect the office staff to the internal network.

Finally, all data and applications will be stored on a server. This server will be configured for DHCP, DNS, Domain Services, E-Mail Services, File/Application and Print Sharing, and Remote Access.

Data backup services and the Internet connection will be provided by third party companies. Off-Site backup will be used to keep data secure and available at all times, while business Internet services will be used to provide the Internet connection for the entire office.

Component	Vendor	Brand	Description	Price
Firewall	PROVANTAGE	SonicWALL	Antivirus, Anti-spyware Intrusion Prevention	\$1,171.77
Switch	PROVANTAGE	HP ProCurve	24 Port 10/100/1000 switch	\$357.34
Access Points	PROVANTAGE	HP ProCurve	HP Wireless Access Points	\$523.84/ea
Server	BEST BUY	HP Proliant	HP Proliant DL 160 G5 Servers	\$2,914.00
Category 5e Cable	CablesToGo.com	Cables To Go	5e Patch Cables and Wall Jacks	\$650.00
Patch Panel	CablesToGo.com	Cables To Go	19" Blank Patch Panel	\$42.00
Server Rack	PROVANTAGE	StarTech.com	19" 10Unit Server Rack	\$250.00



SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

LOGICAL NETWORK DESIGN

The logical breakdown of the network will be centered around the firewall which in this case will act as a router. We will be using a SonicWALL PRO firewall in place of a standard router. This is being done for several major reasons.

First, the network load will be rather light even at peak times. The firewall will be able to handle even the maximum number of users that the network will have. Second, the firewall will serve a dual purpose I will not only block out unwanted and potentially dangerous Internet traffic, but will also provide the needed DMZ or De-Militarized Zone for the public access point to connect to. This will provide physical separation between the public and private networks. Users of the public Wi-Fi will not be able to, in any way, access the intranet from that network. Finally, the firewall will be used as a router for cost efficiency. The function of the SonicWALL firewall eliminates the necessity for using a standard router, which helps save money on such hardware.

In greater detail the specifications for the office network will be as follows. Internet service will be provided by Comcast Business Internet, which offers an 8Mbps cable download speed and a 1Mbps upload speed. These speeds can reach upwards of 16Mbps download and 2Mbps upload with the use of Comcast's PowerBoost technology which is included with the service. Comcast also provides free McAfee anti-virus and spyware protection software with any business Internet package and also includes free 24 hour technical support with the service. This entire package comes at a price of around ninety dollars per month.

In regards to the technical specifications of the network we plan to install a SonicWALL Firewall in combination with an HP ProCurve switch. We will configure two IP pools, on the firewall, for the private and public networks. The public network, which will be active on the DMZ only, will have an IP address range of 192.168.2.100 – 192.168.2.254, which should provide the required amount of IP addresses for any given time. The lease for this pool of addresses will not exceed 24 hours. The private network or intranet will be configured with an address pool range of 192.168.10.10 – 192.168.10.50. This is done to limit the number of available IP addresses in the case that intruders attempt to connect to the network. The logic behind this is that if you have a smaller address pool the harder it will be for attackers to guess an available IP address. The subnet masks for both network portions will be 255.255.255.0, and the default gateway for the network will be assigned an IP address of 192.168.10.1 with the same subnet mask.

SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

HARDWARE SELECTION

Hardware for the network was carefully screened and priced, to ensure that all components would perform to the best of their ability, while providing stability and dependability.

As requested, doctors will receive the HP tc4400 tablet PC's. They provide outstanding performance and mobility and feature built-in wireless network cards for use with the Wi-Fi network being installed. They also provide all of the features available on standard laptop computers, but with the added bonus of extreme mobility and ease of use. The tablets also include a variety of security software and biometrics for added protection of valuable medical information. Each tablet PC retails for \$1,649*.

The manager's office, nursing station, and reception area will be equipped with HP XW4550 workstations. These workstations offer great performance and are cost effective solutions for on the go computing. They feature all the connectivity and processing power required by the users in these areas. Each workstation retails for approximately \$600*.

Servers come in many shapes and sizes. Our recommendation for a server is the HP DL160 G5. This small yet powerful server features an Intel Quad-Core CPU, 4GB of Fully Buffered RAM, and two 250GB hard drives for storing data. This server will be able to handle any and all tasks that will be assigned to it. The chosen operating system is Windows Server 2003 R2. This particular server and stated configuration retails for \$2,914*.

The access points which will be used on the network will be HP ProCurve AP 530's. They offer the required connectivity and configuration options. Furthermore, the network printer in the reception area will also come from HP. The LaserJet 2605dn printer is a network attached printer with prints up to 12 pages per minute in black toner and up to 10 pages per minute in color. This printers recommended monthly print volume ranges from 500-1,500 pages, and up to 15,000 if need be. The cost of the network printer will be \$499*.

Reasons for choosing HP over any other manufacturer include HP's great technical support and ease of purchasing. They offer many great features and allow customers to configure they own computer hardware to suit their needs. Also HP offers the variety of hardware we are looking for, as well as dependable and functional equipment.

*Prices do not include tax or delivery charges.

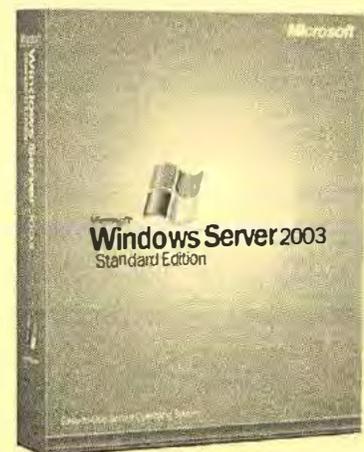
SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

SERVER SOFTWARE SELECTION

Server software is a critical part of the network architecture. Although it may not seem this way, the operating system running on the server has a tremendous effect on overall productivity, efficiency and scalability of the network.

For this network design we recommend using Windows 2003 Server standard. This newer and greatly improved version of the classic Windows Server operating system provides us with all of the required connectivity and configuration options that we will need to successfully install and configure the small business network.

Other alternatives to this include using a Linux based server operating system such as SUSE or Red Hat Linux. These operating systems, although may be a bit cheaper to deploy, require greater knowledge and higher experience level to administer and maintain. This yields an increased cost of ownership in the future. Furthermore, using Linux instead of Windows, poses a question regarding technical support and compatibility. Although newer versions of Linux are built to be compatible with practically any platform, the configuration and implementation of such servers is still difficult. As for technical support, the issue becomes, whether or not the network administrator has the knowledge to configure and maintain such a system.



Windows Server 2003 is the best choice for this project, not just because of its productivity, but also cost effectiveness. This operating system is included in the price of the server. Included with it are 5 user licenses which can be increased at any time to include more users.

SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

DHCP AND DNS CONFIGURATION

The correct configuration of DHCP or Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol and DNS or Domain Name System is critical to the functionality of the office network. DHCP assigns IP addresses to client computers, and DNS allows you to enter the name of computer rather than the IP address. DNS uses the computer name and compares it to a table of known IP addresses and names. If it does not find this name in its own table, it will attempt to query other servers on the network for the IP address that belongs to that name.

For this configuration we have chosen to assign a unique domain name to the network. This name will be OFFICE-NET.com. This name will be used across the network as the name of the domain. Usernames will be assigned based on job function. (Doctor1, Doctor2, Nurse1, Manager, etc.)

For the private intranet, DHCP will be configured in the following manner. IP address 192.168.10.1 will be assigned to the SonicWALL firewall. IP address 192.168.10.2 will be assigned to the server itself. These IP addresses need to be configured manually. The remaining client computers will be issued IP addresses by the DHCP server. These addresses will be distributed as needed and will range from 192.168.10.10 – 192.168.10.50.

Configuration of the test user has already been performed. The IP address is assigned to the computer via DHCP and the computer can access the domain with no problems.



SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

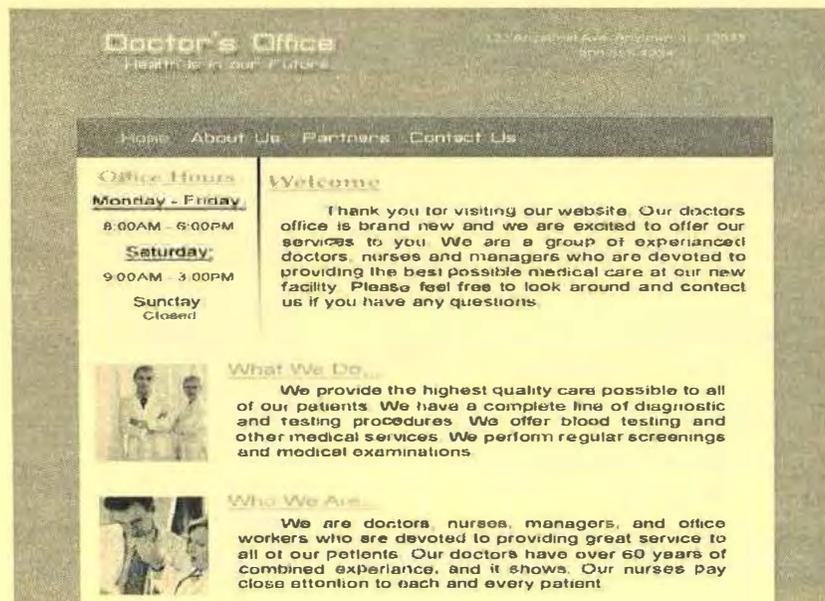
WEB SERVICES

Web sites for small businesses are becoming more and more popular every day. It is vital for small businesses to be able to post information on their web site. Web sites offer information such as office hours and the procedures that are offered, as well as contact information and many other useful pieces of information. Potential customers now turn to the web for their primary source of information. Customers search for the information they need on the company's web site first and only if they do not find it will they attempt to call the office.

For this project we have created a simple web page which will aid potential customers in retrieving information about the office, its doctors and other important information, without the hassle of coming to the office or making phone calls.

The web site will be configured as the default main page for each computers web browser. To access the information, simply load the web browser and the web site will be available once the user enters their username and password to authenticate the machine to the server.

The homepage has already been created and launched through the web server. Site maintenance can be performed using any HTML editor, such as Adobe Dreamweaver. FTP transfers can be conducted by accessing the server through an FTP client such as SmartFTP, and using the assigned public IP address. The site files are located in C:\Documents and Settings\All Users\Documents\Web Site. The file name is index.html, and a folder called images contains all of the required images for the site.



SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

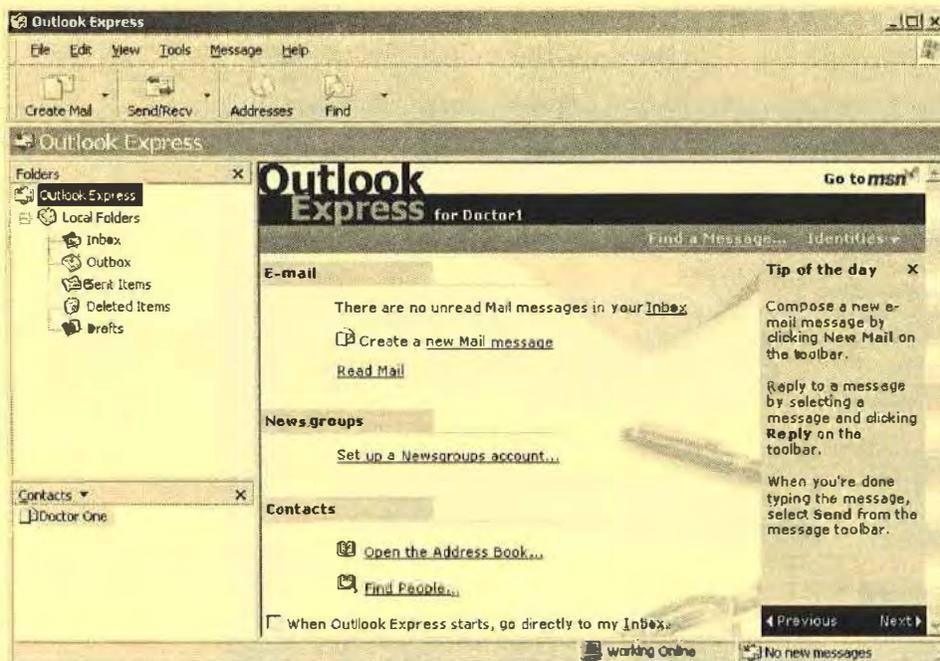
E-MAIL SERVICES

One of the most critical server functions is email control. The users on this given network will be assigned a unique e-mail address and password. The email client on each computer will be Microsoft Outlook Express. This will help cut costs when it comes to installing additional mail clients, because Microsoft's Outlook Express comes preinstalled on all Windows based computers.

As illustrated in these images, the first logon attempt to the mail server will require a username and password to be entered by the user.



Once logged in the user can then send and receive email through the company email server, without any issues. The main content page of the Microsoft Outlook Express application is seen here.



Email clients will be able to send and receive email from office personnel as well as email from external sources.

Each user on the network including the three doctors, receptionist, nurses, and office manager will all have an email address assigned to them. Receipt of emails will look similar to the screen below.



Figure 1 If you notice, the email was sent from doctor2 to doctor1.

Methods of sending and receiving emails are similar to any third party email service. You must enter the email of the recipient in the "TO:" portion, and the subject of the email in the "Subject:" portion, and click send.

When first setting up your email account. The user must enter a display name for the account, next the user must enter the email address which will be used on the server. Once this is complete, the server settings must be configured. The settings will be configured to use a POP3 server.

The servers that will be used for the incoming and outgoing email will both be configured as *OfficeServ.Office-Net.com*. seeing as the office server controls both incoming and outgoing messages.

Access to email from home can be done in a few different ways. The first option is to use a remote desktop application that will allow the user to log onto their office computer from home. The other option is to configure VPN to be used on the server and on the clients' home computer. This will allow a virtual connection between the two machines, that way a user at home can use their computer and configure the same settings as stated above for email, without the remote desktop software.

SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

FILE AND PRINT SERVICES

File and print services allow network users to share files and print documents, across the network. To accomplish this task we will create user groups on the server. Doctors will have their own user group, nurses will have their own, and office staff will have their own as well. Using these groups we will be able to create shared directories on the server, for each group.

Because each group has to have different privileges, one group will not be able to access the files of another group. Doctors, for example, will have access to their group folders on the server, as well as their individual user folders, but not to other group folders or other user's folders. This is done for several reasons, one of which is security. If an attacker gains access to a computer located on the "OfficeStaff" group, the attacker will not be able to access the files of the "Doctors" group, and steal potentially private information.

The initial requirements for the network illustrated that the need for a networked printer did exist. For the network printer to function correctly, a print server needed to be configured. The print server allows users to print to one printer from different points on the network.

When a user logs onto their computer, using the network username and password, their computer will be automatically configured to use the networked printer. To print to it, one would follow the same steps as with any other print job. Click FILE in the application → Click PRINT → "Select the printer name in the dropdown menu, if it is not the default printer → click Print

The image below shows that the file and print server functions have been configured on the office server.

Users will be able to access their group folders once they log on. They can do this in one of two ways. The first would be to access the folder using a browser, by entering the path in this syntax:
 \\Servername\Sharename\Foldername or
 the user can access their folder by mapping a network drive in to *My Computer* this process will be automated with the use of login scripts. Login scripts are explained in the next section.

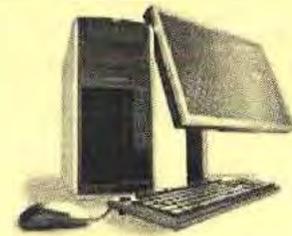


SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

CLIENT WORKSTATION SETUP

The correct configuration of each workstation and laptop is very important in the proper functionality of the network. Each user must maintain control over their account, and yet be allowed certain services that other users are not.

The use of HP XW4550 workstations benefits us in multiple ways. First, the workstations allow for plenty of storage space, and processing power. The workstations as pictured will be configured on a Windows XP Professional SP3 platform. Second, the use of the Windows operating system will make configuration of advanced services, such as permissions easier than on other operating systems.



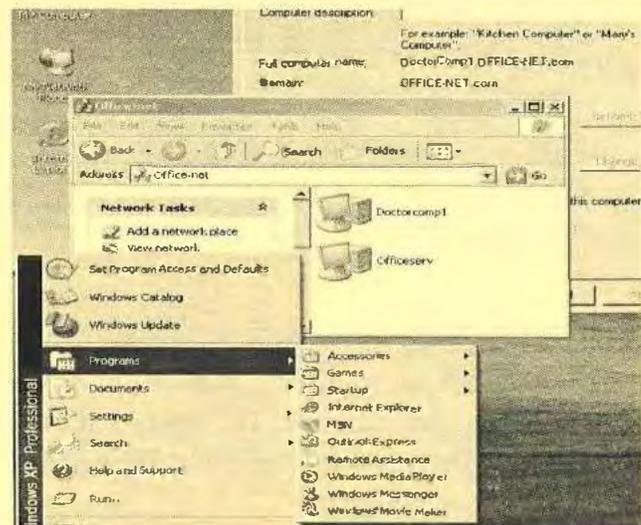
Doctors will have TC4400 Tablet PC's, as described once again in the original request. The benefit to tablet PC's is obviously their light weight and extreme mobility. The recommended tablet PC's are pictured below.

The use of the tablets will allow doctors to carry out their duties on the go. They provide the same great functionality as the larger workstations, but in a much lighter and easier to carry package.



For ensuring correct network setup and functionality, we used a workstation to configure and test the network settings and functions. The workstation was first assigned the name *DoctorComp1*.

The workstation was then assigned the *DoctorOne* username and password which would allow it to access the Office-Net.com domain, and hence provide all required services to said user. We were able to perform functions such as printing, file sharing, email, and web access through this machine. All other machines will be configured in a similar manner.

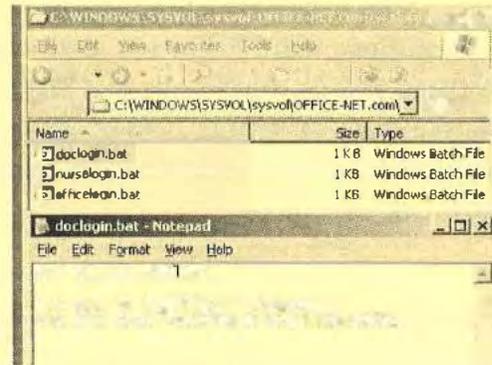


SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

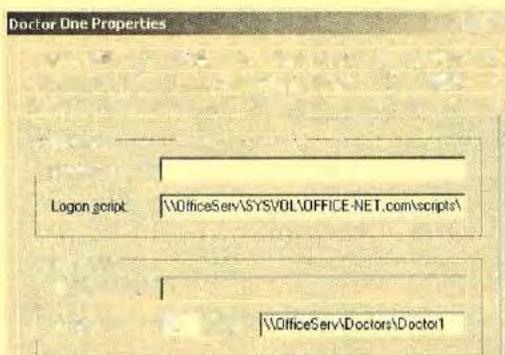
LOGIN SCRIPTS

Login scripts make the use and administration of network resources easier and less time consuming, allowing for more overall efficiency.

The scripts which we plan to use on this project will perform two major functions. The first will be to automatically map the "Home" folder for each user, and secondly, to map the group folder based on the group that the user belongs to. Another task that the login scripts will perform for users will be to connect to and set the network printer as the default printer at logon. Automating these tasks is greatly recommended, due to the fact that it saves time for the user and makes accessing files more efficient.

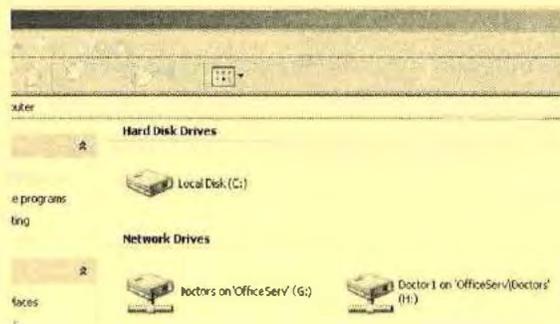


We will use three individual login scripts, one for each group. The scripts are located in the *C:\WINDOWS\SYSVOL\sysvol\OFFICE-NET.com\scripts* directory on the office server. Each of the scripts uses a slightly different implementation of the *NET USE* command. Editing these scripts can be done very easily, by right clicking on the script and selecting *EDIT* on the menu, an administrator will be able to modify the general script to add and remove commands, or to connect the users to other network resources.



The automatic mapping of the home folder for each user was configured using the profile tab in the user properties dialog box, through Active Directory. Each user was assigned a Home folder, which only the user and the Administrator has access to. The access to the group folder of drive G: in My Computer, as well as the connection to the printer was performed by the login script itself.

The image to the right shows the networked drives and folders as soon as the user logs onto the machine. The group folder is used with the letter G: and the home folder is used with the letter H:.

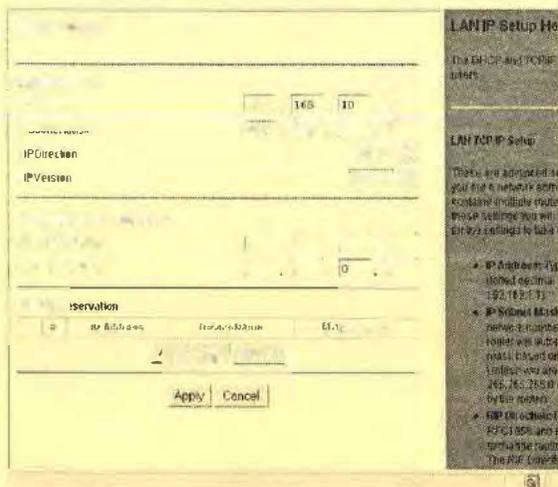


SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

ROUTING CONFIGURATION

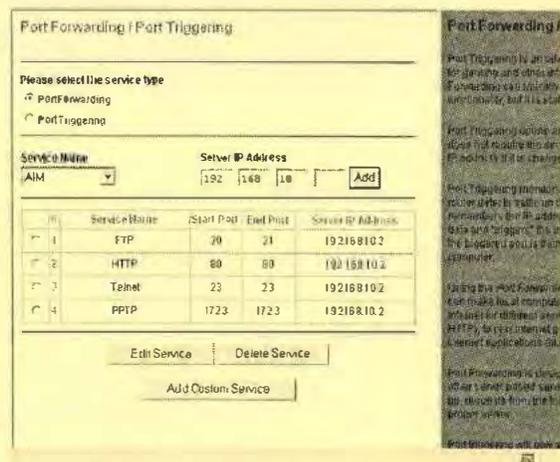
In the given network scenario, the SonicWALL PRO firewall will act as our firewall and router. For all intents and purposes, we will refer to the firewall as our router in this section. Proper configuration of our router allows us to perform many of the functions that we are required to perform outside of the office network. Things such as Internet access, VPNs, and email will be done through the use of the router.

At the beginning of this project we delegated the 192.168.10.1 IP address to be used for the router. A second address will be used on the Internet side. The Internet IP address will be provided by the ISP. The router used to configure the test network is a bit different than what will actually be seen on the SonicWALL configuration page, but the general idea remains the same. Below is how we set the IP address on the router.



As seen here, we have set the IP address of the router to 192.168.10.1, and the Subnet mask to 255.255.255.0. And finally we chose to disable RIP, due to the fact that we are only using one router. Also, the test router that we used had the option to use the router as a DHCP server. This option must be disabled to prevent connection errors. Since our office server functions as our default DHCP server we do not need to use this feature.

Next we configured the individual protocols that will be running on the router. These protocols allow for remote connections, and Internet, data, and ftp transfers from the web. Since the router is also a firewall, it features a physically separate DMZ port, which physically separates the public and private networks. This port will be configured to connect the wireless access points from the waiting area. The third IP address would be assigned to the DMZ interface. This IP will be 192.168.2.1.



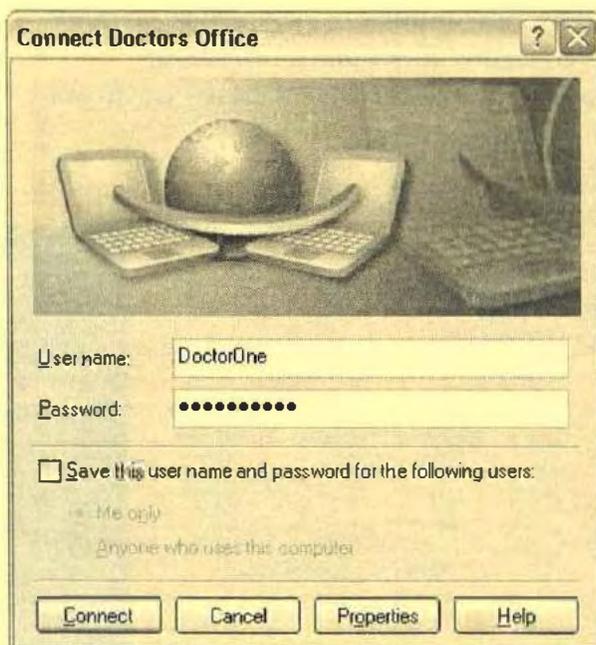
SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

REMOTE ACCESS

A service which greatly increases efficiency of employees, especially ones working from other locations, such as their homes or other offices, is Remote Access. In this case we are talking about VPN or Virtual Private Network, remote access. VPN allows a user to create a virtual, yet secure connection over the Internet, to the office server.

To accomplish this task we need to configure the office server to use remote access. We need to use two connections to the server. One NIC will be outfitted with an Internet connection, and the other will be used for the private network. Also, we need to ensure that we enter the server IP address in the DHCP Relay Agent configuration dialog box.

Once the server is configured, the users which will be allowed VPN access must be configured. To do this, enter the user's properties in active directory, click on the Dial-In tab then click *allow access* under remote access permissions.



On the user's end, you must create a new connection in the Network Connections menu. Select the VPN method of access, enter the IP address of the VPN connection, in this case it was 192.168.2.4, or vpn.office-net.com, and then complete the wizard. Once the wizard finishes, you can access the office network by simply logging on, using the client's username and password.

Once the connection is established we can see that the remote computer is connected to the server, and even get the status of the current connections, such as the one below.

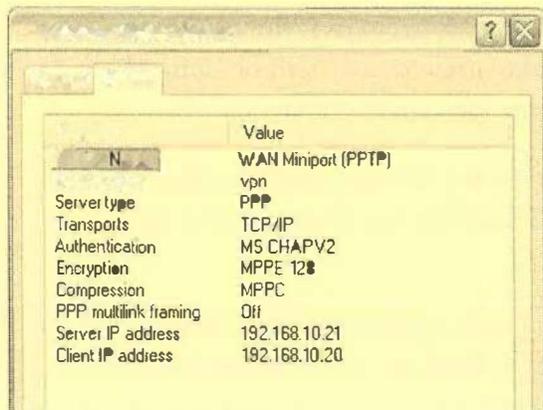


Figure 2 VPN Status box.

To verify that the connection was created on the server, we can access the remote access server properties and check the connection status, to locate our currently active VPN connection.

Once our connection is established and verified we can continue to access the server, and the delegated folders on that server.

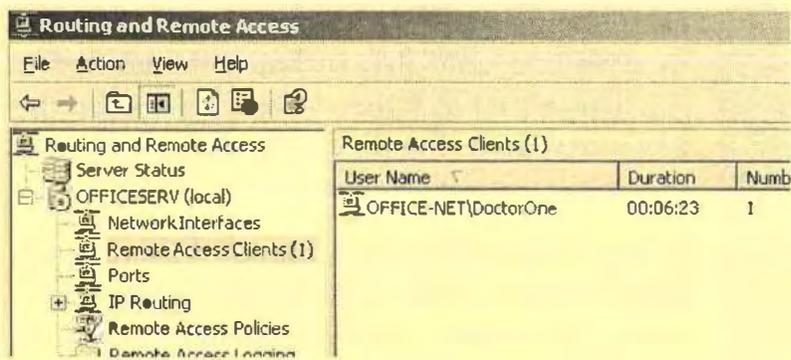
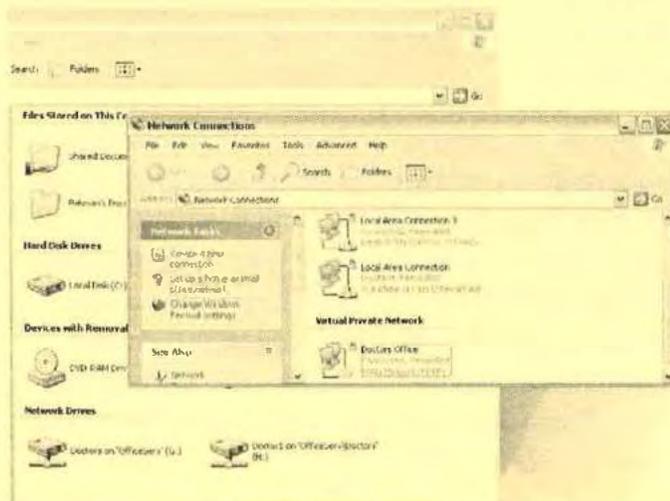


Figure 3 Verifying VPN connection on the server



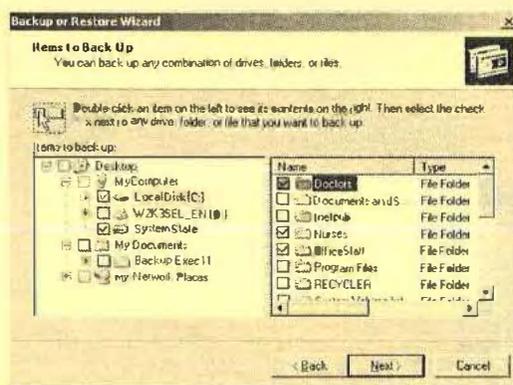
In this example you can see that the user has established the VPN connection, from their home computer, accessed the server, and has been able to map the network drives, and connect to them with not conflicts.

SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

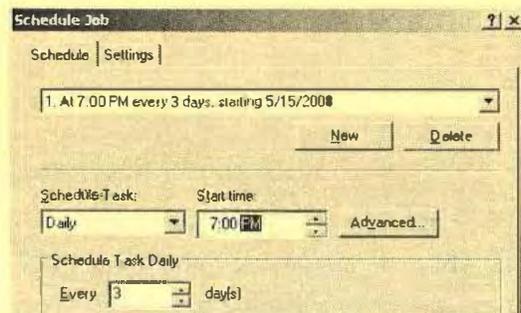
DATA BACKUP

Data backup and restoration is essential in protecting important data from being lost or corrupted. Data loss occurs in many forms, such as hardware failures, natural disasters, and viruses. Data backup and storage for the office server will be done off-site by U.S. Data Trust Inc. They provide 100GB of storage for around \$800 per month.

Seeing as the office has between 8-10 employees, we feel that data backup must be performed once every day at 7:00PM. We recommend backing up all group files and their contents, as well as the system state.



DataVault software allows us to select the files we need to backup, it allows us to perform backups incrementally as well, and also allows us to set a regular backup schedule. There are differences however. Their backup method allows us to perform a complete backup of the server files one time, after which their software continuously backs up only the files that have changed, over a secure Internet connection.



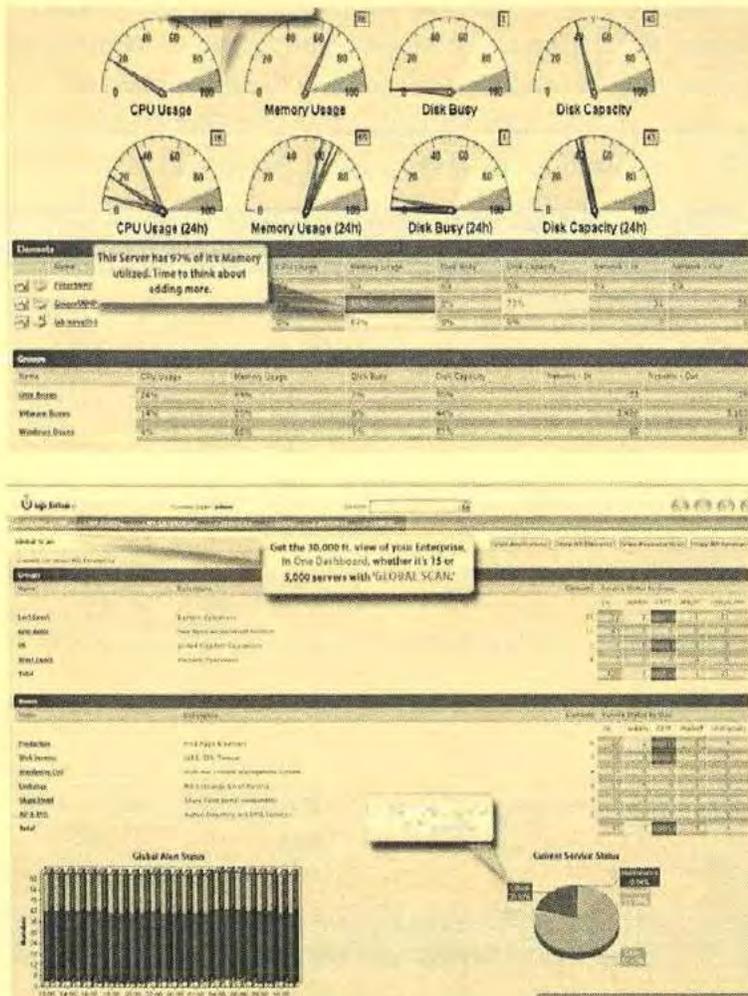
Backup and recovery can be initiated through the DataVault site. If files need to be restored to the server, the network administrator can login to the site from any computer, even from home, and initiate the restore process without physically being present at the office. Should problems arise, technical support and backup monitoring is available 24x7.

For testing purposes, backups were set to be performed once every three days, at 7:00PM to an external hard drive attached to a remote computer on the network. Since the office will have a much higher rate of data change, backups must be performed more frequently. The above images are from the test backups we performed. When restored, the new restoration files replace the existing files and settings on the machine. System state backups also back up the registry and active directory settings, which is a must for the office server. This will prevent configuration problems, should the server ever need to be restored. More information regarding U.S. Data Trust Inc. and their services can be found at www.usdatatrust.com.

SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

SERVER MONITORING

Server monitoring allows the administrator of the network to ensure proper function and availability for that server. Monitoring servers, includes not just monitoring resources and their usage, but also monitoring the overall security, usage, updates, and maintenance of the server system, and the computers attached to it.



To properly monitor a server, several software components are needed. First, to monitor activity and usage of hardware resources, a server needs monitoring software such as *Up Time 4 Server Monitor*. As seen below, this program allows for a wide range of process and resource monitoring, all from one central location.

This software not only allows us to monitor physical resources, but also allows us to monitor our services as, well as the services and resources of remote servers which can be located across the country. It can send emergency emails to selected users, if critical situations occur. It can map and monitor user's processes and create daily reports of bottlenecks, hardware I/O, and overall usage statistics for the server.

In addition to hardware and resource monitoring, we feel that security and maintenance monitoring is also a critical part of maintaining overall health of the network. For this we require an array of tools, which will help diagnose, and monitor potential security breaches, and maintenance issues.

First, we would recommend using a software based security suite for all clients, as well as the server. We recommend the Norton Internet Security suite with anti-virus

protection. This suite is designed to protect all of the clients on the network and not just the server, from dangerous Internet based viruses, SPAM, adware and malware.

Additional monitoring tools which we suggest to use on the server include Ethereal network protocol analyzer. This tool assists network administrators in detecting unwanted sources of network traffic, whether it is an attacker attempting to access the network, or another unwanted source, this protocol analyzer can help prevent security breaches and determine the origin and destination of network traffic.

Furthermore, we suggest using Microsoft's Baseline Security Analyzer 2.3 to scan and establish a security baseline and identify existing weaknesses in the server or network, if any exist. This software allows the administrator to scan any or all computers attached to the network, and determine open ports and other general security issues. This software also identified which patches are available based on the weaknesses found. To stay informed regarding the latest security and virus news, we recommend installing and RSS feed from pluck.com. With real time updates, RSS feeds provide the fastest news sources available.



General maintenance of the server as well as updates, security patches and further monitoring will be the responsibility of the network administrator. The administrator must establish a baseline of performance and security on the server and workstations using these tools. Once a baseline is established by performing the all scans and patches with these tools, the administrator must continue monitoring the systems to ensure that their operation is at the level of the baseline or better.

SMALL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

COST ANALYSIS

The tables below outline all costs related to hardware, software, consultation and implementation. Prices indicated to not include taxes or shipping charges, should they apply. Furthermore, this is a general estimate of costs. Actual costs may vary up to 10% from quoted costs. Training of employees will incorporate 5 business days of training for all employees at their designated stations. Subjects covered will include, logging in and out, accessing shared folders and files. The network administrator will be trained in performing backups, disaster recovery, active directory administration, and general maintenance and usage.

Hardware

Component	Vendor	Brand	Price	Quantity	Total
Firewall / Router	PROVANTAGE	SonicWall	\$1,171.77	1	\$1,171.77
Switch	PROVANTAGE	HP ProCurve	\$357.34	1	\$357.34
Access Points	PROVANTAGE	HP ProCurve	\$523.84	2	\$1,047.68
Server	BEST BUY	HP Proliant	\$2,914.00	1	\$2,914.00
Network Cables	CablesToGo.com	Cables To Go	\$650.00	N/A	\$650.00
Patch Panel	CablesToGo.com	Cables To Go	\$42.00	1	\$42.00
Server Rack	PROVANTAGE	StarTech.com	\$250.00	1	\$250.00
Workstations	HP.com	HP	\$599.00	3	\$1,797.00
Tablet PC's	HP.com	HP	\$1,649.00	3	\$4,947.00
LaserJet Printer	HP.com	HP	\$499.00	1	\$499.00

Total Hardware Costs:

\$13,675.79*

Software¹

Title	Vendor	License	Price	Quantity	Total
Endpoint Protection 11.0	Symantec	10	\$738.00	1	\$738.00
Server Monitoring Tool 4	Up.Time Software	N/A	\$855.00	1	\$855.00

Total Software Costs:

\$1,593.00*

Services

Service	Provider	Price	Duration	Yearly Cost	Total
Remote Data Backup	U.S. Data Trust Inc.	\$800	1 Month	\$9,600.00	\$738.00

Total Service Costs:

\$738.00*

Implementation and Training

Service	Days to Implement	Price/Day	Total
Consultation and Testing Fees	N/A	N/A	\$2,000.00
Implement and Configure	6	\$1441.00	\$5,088.00
5 Day Employee Training	5	\$300.00	\$1,500.00

Total Software Costs: \$8,588.00*

TOTAL FINAL COST: \$24,594.79

*Indicate prices without taxes or delivery charges.

† Other software titles discussed earlier can be obtained free of charge.

*This document was created and compiled by
Custom IT Consultants*

A Journey West

Jason Paszek

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Trygve Thoreson

Assignment: *Respond to E.B. White in "Once More to the Lake" with a narrative of your own in which you learned something you did not know before.*

As far back as I can remember, I have always felt alone in this world. Since there is not much I can recall before my parents divorced when I was eleven years old, I feel there may be an obvious connection. Their divorce shattered my notions at the time that married adults were impervious to separation, something of a super power that they were bestowed at the altar. It became clear to me at a very young age, however, that there was nothing heroic or powerful about my parents' marriage. In fact, there was nothing heroic or powerful about anything in the world anymore. The people who said they loved you, friends or family, would break promises as if promises truly *were* made to be broken.

When I was fifteen years old, a sophomore in high school, I met my first girlfriend, Nichole. We were together on and off for two years. When I think of the predominant feeling I felt throughout those two years, I think of fear. My fear was the fear of being alone, of her leaving me for someone else. It was a feeling that could often leave me incapacitated, at times unable to breathe or speak. This is probably where the attacks started. They certainly didn't end there, though. In April, hardly four months after I had last spoke to Nichole, I met Nancy. We began dating almost immediately and stayed together

for two years. Fear again was omnipresent. But unlike my first relationship, Nancy and I continued speaking and spending time with one another for another two years following the break-up. Ironically, the fear I felt of her leaving during our relationship was even more pronounced after we separated. I find that odd now.

I had been planning a road trip to Portland since December of 2007 to get my left arm tattooed. It was March now, and I would be leaving in a couple months. Ever since I began making plans in December, I'd been back and forth with deciding who I would ask to embark on this adventure with me. I wanted my brother, Ryan, and my good friend, Jonathan, to go with me. However, with complications aplenty and schedules conflicting, it wasn't looking very promising. Finally, I asked Nancy if she'd want to come with, as friends of course, to kick back and relax for a week or so on the west coast with me. She happily accepted my invitation, and soon after that, we began making plans together.

It was nearing the end of April. The weather here in Chicago was starting to warm up. I felt the familiar buzzing of rebirth, new beginnings; I smelled the familiar scent of new life burgeoning all around me. I have infinite appreciation for the optimism that the transition of winter into spring brings. Nancy picked me up at my house in her champagne-colored Nissan Altima. It was nighttime, and the temperature had dropped significantly. Nancy's car had leather seats; I've always hated leather seats. I could feel the cold leather piercing through the layers of clothing I had on. We were going to finalize lodging plans that night, but not before she satisfied her taste for French onion soup. There was a restaurant not far from my house that served a decent bowl of it, so we headed there.

Something she said during the car ride was agitating me, or was it the cold leather seats? It's all a blur now, but I can say with absolute certainty that there was something bothering me. It was like the faint buzzing of a table saw accelerating, amplifying, antagonizing me to no end. Maddening reverberations of obnoxious opinions bounced off the walls between my ears. Her voice and the sting of cold leather merged together to form a whole new way of feeling uncomfortable.

I had only been to that same restaurant once before. Oddly enough, it was with Nancy just a week or so before

I asked her to be my girlfriend. I had the French onion soup.

We sat down and ordered. She ordered her soup, and I had a pint of raspberry flavored ale. Conversation between the two of us was dull, mostly reminiscing on the relationship we had when she was still in high school and I was out living on my own. I could still hear the agonizing squeal of the saw ripping in my head; I still couldn't put my finger on it, though. Then, something she said silenced the ghostly machine and caused the muscles in my face to contort, sculpting a confused look of disgust.

"Sponzel was hot." Sponzel was the last name of her gym teacher her junior year. She used to talk about that class all the time while we were dating. My brother happened to be in the same class. I never met the teacher who went by the name Sponzel, but I've heard the name enough times to think twice about whether I knew him or not.

My reaction was less than rational, but in some ways I believe it was involuntary, physiological at first, then psychological. It shot a pain right up from my gut into my chest, where it rattled my rib cage, causing stinging sensations before it succumbed to gravity and plummeted back down from whence it came. I felt nauseous. I wanted to scream. I said things to her that you wouldn't say to a friend that you intended on keeping—hurtful things. I could already feel the onset of regret, like a familiar drug, inducing effects you had forgotten until you came around to taking it again. What a terrible drug.

Though guilt coursed through my veins, making me dizzy, I committed to my reaction, at least temporarily. I stood my ground by uttering words like *unbelievable* and *disgusting* in reference to the gym teacher who was nearly twice her age as she impatiently glanced around the restaurant, looking for the waitress to get our check. We both had things to say, things to yell, really. But the explosion waited.

"Good luck finding a way home," she uttered as her knee bounced up and down, occasionally bumping into the table as her foot rhythmically tapped the floor. She was angry, but the oncoming storm still waited for a little more privacy, too many people here enjoying their meals, having regular conversations. Oh, how I envied them now. As the waitress handed us our check, I began

to brace for impact. What laid in store for me was not unfamiliar; I knew exactly what awaited me.

That fear I'd always felt was suddenly turned up a notch or two as I followed her out of the restaurant. I could feel the typical symptoms of an anxiety attack coming on. She quickly hopped into her car and locked the doors. I was five miles away from my house, with no cell phone and no jacket. No matter how much I fought the feelings, I could not find calm. I lost all control.

I slammed my palm against her window to cause a loud thud. The sound shook her, but it only fueled her anger, giving her even more reason to leave me there in the cold. There's that drug again, hitting me terribly hard.

"Please just drive me home," I pleaded with her, "and you never have to talk to me again." I repeated this several times until she resentfully complied by unlocking the door. I opened the door and again felt the cold embrace of that dreadful leather. I should have tried harder to keep calm. I should have stuck out the five-mile car ride. I should have apologized sooner. I didn't do any of those things. My psychological response to my physiological condition had evolved into a habitual behavior from years of suffering through this type of scenario. I simply gave into my fear, my anxiety, and lost control. The intensity of my panicking was something I hadn't felt in years. It overtook me like a strong tide; there was no use fighting it.

My breathing was fast and deep. It led to dry heaves, which gave way to nausea. We soon pulled up to my house. I was a wreck, shaking and breathing heavily, screaming nonsense.

"Get out of my car. Now!" I pleaded with her to help me calm down. I begged her to forgive me enough to help me, in my out of control state. She would have none of it. "Get out now!" I continued my attempts at persuading her through my sniffing and heaving, but it wasn't enough. All of a sudden, a calm washed over me. A strength filled me. My legs found the motivation to move my body from the car and accept the damage that had been done. Just like that, my breathing slowed, my extremities were made still, and I became quiet as I removed myself from her car. I think this shocked her because she didn't leave right away. I walked toward my house and sat on the stoop of my front door for a

few moments. I was out of her view, as was she from mine, but I could still see the light emanating from her headlights. They hung there motionless for a few minutes until I heard the car shift into drive and saw her barrel down the dark road away from my house.

It was in that moment that I truly discovered, I mean truly *felt*, the strength that is needed to go through a life alone. Couples break up and get divorced, friends betray you at the darkest times, and your idols will let you down. This can destroy some people. It can shatter a world of ideals that helped form the foundation of a person's values, morals, behaviors, and dreams. But in that moment, in that car with Nancy, it became so clear to me—I would still go on the two-thousand-mile journey west for my dream tattoo, and I would go it alone. An overwhelming feeling of joy overcame me, followed by a smile.

Works Cited

- White, E.B. "Once More to the Lake" From *One Man's Meat*. Gardiner, Maine: Tilbury House, 1941. Rpt. in *The Freshman Essay: A College Writer's Companion*. Ed. Trygve Thorseon. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006.

Evaluation: *This difficult personal event is described in a lucid and fluid prose style. Jason is especially adept at the creative use of figurative language and exact turns of phrase. His anxieties—and his triumph—come through vividly.*

Hidden Depths of a False Friendship

Sylvia Patraszka

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Nancy Davis

Assignment: *Write a six-page essay of analysis of one or more fictional elements of a short story, to advance a discussion of a theme in the story.*

Friendship can be defined as a mutual relationship built upon absolute trust, sheer respect, and genuine support. But what happens when a hint of distrust and suspicion enters the unified circle of companionship? Even a secretly hidden surface of one's character can be easily revealed, taking a misguided turn into an inevitable crisis. Perhaps, the unpredictable circumstances accidentally reveal the acts of disloyalty, setting a tempestuous battle into motion. Nevertheless, only honesty and earnest intentions reflect the last hope for the troubled times of disbelief. In the story "Hunters in the Snow," by Tobias Wolff, the three main characters—Tub, Frank, and Kenny—are guided by deceiving lies and prevailing self-interest that shape the fragile foundation of their insincere friendship.

The first signs of deception pertain to a self-conscious character, Tub, who befalls a victim of his own personal weakness. Living in denial, Tub is imprisoned by his secret identity related to his eating habits and current weight. In the beginning of the story, Tub blames his glands for a weight problem. However, he later confesses, "When I said that about my glands, that wasn't true. The truth is I just shovel it in . . . Day and night" (161). In fact, he is forced to "lead a double life like a spy or a hit man," in order to conceal his compulsive overeating of food (161). Furthermore, Tub deludingly struggles to find a faithful friend and gain acceptance from his social group. In his attempt to build a true friendship, he has frequently tried to receive attention from others. For instance, when Frank remorsefully admits, "Tub, I've been thinking. What you said about me not paying attention, that's true . . . I guess I've just been a little too interested in old number one. I've had a lot on my mind. Not that that's any

excuse," Tub is put in an excessively joyful mood (159). He expresses how satisfied he feels from his conversation with Frank when he declares, "You know, what you told me back there, I appreciate it. Trusting me" (161). Tub is so determined to discover the meaning of friendship that he irrationally deceives himself and regards some merely friendly feedback as a devoted act of alliance and loyalty. Equally important is the question of Tub's false sense of security and motive behind firing his gun at Kenny. When Tub shoots his hunting companion, he justifies his action by explaining, "He was going to shoot me but I shot him first" (157). But is Tub's reaction an example of self-defense or his dark side of human nature? In reality, Kenny becomes the weak prey, shot by Tub as an act of revenge for the abusive jokes and overwhelming offensiveness. Tub reveals that he is a sensitive character when he reaches an emotional breakdown and impulsively bursts out, "No more talking to me like that. No more watching. No more laughing" (158). Yet, he tries to avoid the painful truth through self-inflicting lies and consoling denial.

Moreover, Frank is not only lured by his own falsehood; he is also capable of deceiving others, exposing his carefully masked character. Frank undeniably believes that he is in love with a fifteen-year-old babysitter as he keenly asserts, "She's opened up whole worlds to me that I never knew were there" (160). However, is it reasonable to assume that a married man with children is truly in love with a young girl? Rationally, Frank is physically attracted to an adolescent, and his illicit love closely resembles lust and infatuation. He is ready to leave his wife, indicating that he lacks long-term commitment, and he does not recognize the consequences affiliated with his actions. He convinces himself that "this little lady is something special," but such feelings may fade away as time goes by as a result of age difference, distinct values, or unreturned affection (160). Another example of Frank's devious intentions relates to his sudden friendship with Tub. When "Tub grabbed Frank by the collar and backed him hard up against the fence," warning him about teasing and name calling, Frank immediately decides to apologize (158). Evidently, he is afraid of erratic Tub, who has just shot Kenny. However, after the accident, Frank starts to defend Tub's actions and offers his empathy by insisting, "I should have been more sympathetic. I realize that. You were going through a lot. I just want you to know it

wasn't your fault. He [Kenny] was asking for it" (159). Not surprisingly, Frank learns to respect his "fat moron" friend and admits to his mistakes (158). What's more, he stops supporting Kenny's vicious jokes directed at Tub, and no longer sides with the "old number one" (159). But how much truth emerges from his reassurances? Perhaps, he is only trying to deceive Tub in order to obtain his conspicuous trust and assure his own safety. In addition, Frank's lies essentially place Kenny's survival at risk. Frank comforts Kenny by regularly repeating, "Now we're going to the hospital," yet he frequently stops to get warmed up and at the end takes a wrong turn away from the hospital (158). Although the text does not provide enough evidence to prove that Frank intentionally drives in the wrong direction, he appears to be heartlessly careless about his friend's deadly fate. Unquestionably, all three characters are taking a wrong turn in life, losing their way even before the trip has begun.

One of the characters who submerges himself in hopeless deceit is Kenny. Ironically, Kenny is late to pick up Tub, who "waited an hour" in the cold winter weather, while in the end Kenny himself is late to the hospital and dependent on Tub and Frank to arrive on time (153). However, against all odds, wounded Kenny expects to make it to the hospital as he barely mumbles, "I'm going to the hospital" (162). Sadly, his only chance for survival is in the hands of his thoughtless friends; yet he is certain that he will reach his destination. Nonetheless, the story foreshadows Kenny's fate through recurring symbolism. For example, the North Star "hanging between Kenny's toes in the direction of the hospital . . . staying always in his sight" represents the last hope for survival by pointing to the correct path where Kenny can receive help (162). Additionally, the fact that "Kenny lay with his arms folded over his stomach" illustrates the position of the dead in a coffin, foreshadowing Kenny's inevitable death.

Noticeably, not only deceptive lies but self-interest openly defines the frail relationship of the characters. Without a doubt, the dreadfully cold winter surroundings have a negative influence on the characters in the story. The concealing whiteness of the snow and harsh conditions evoke natural struggles of survival and unfold unconditional human egoism. Since "drifts were deep and hard to move through," Tub only "tried to keep up," and ignored the purpose of hunting, including deer tracks and careful observations (154). He also "had trouble getting

through the fences," indicating his physical struggles and desire to return (153). As the story unfolds, Tub is also blinded by his critical psychological problems and entirely focuses on his inner conflicts. Exhausted from the never-ending jokes and rejection from his peers, he explains that his life is filled with obstacles such as, "Always having to think about what you say and do. Always feeling like people are watching you, trying to catch you at something. Never able to just be yourself" (161).

By comparison, Tub is not the only one experiencing both physical and emotional struggles, resulting in his self-centered attitude. Even though Kenny is possibly dying and freezing in the truck, Frank is preoccupied with keeping warm. He naturally explains to Kenny, "It's no use whining about being cold if you're not going to try to keep warm . . . If me and Tub don't get warmed up we're going to freeze solid and then where will you be?" (159). Such a statement portrays pure selfishness and lack of consideration for another human being. Amazingly, Frank does not only stop once, but twice to drink hot coffee and eat. Certainly, he is not too concerned about Kenny's survival or slightly troubled by the unexpected emergency.

Likewise, Kenny appears to be an egoistic and reckless character. In the opening of the story, Kenny takes advantage of his divine authority and dictatorial manners. When Tub accidentally misses the deer tracks beneath his feet, Kenny harshly asks, "What do you think that is, Tub? Walnuts on vanilla icing?" (154). Kenny also appears to be the main decision maker, without wanting to hear any objections from his hunting crew. Even though "Tub was for trying someplace different" for hunting, Kenny inconsiderately demanded to hunt in the exact woods that he himself preferred (153). In addition, Kenny also offends and mocks both Frank and Tub. He amusingly describes Tub as "a beach ball with a hat on" and Frank "wearing a nightgown" or "selling flowers" (153). He is extremely ignorant of other people's feelings, showing lack of plain respect. He clearly declares, "I came out here to get me a deer, not listen to a bunch of hippie bullshit" (156). Ironically, all of Kenny's abusiveness and vulgarity turns against him when he must rely on others for help and crucial assistance.

As a consequence, the unfortunate events and nature of the characters obliterate the minor possibility of friendship. The story presents three men participating in a hunting trip, behaving in an unfriendly and aloof fashion.

Their resentful actions signal the tussle for superiority, betrayal, and hostility. Thus, the disrespectful dialogue filled with abusive jokes, mockery, and impudence only contributes to the weakening of the characters' amiable relations. For example, Kenny's presumptuous nature is shown when he persistently says, "I hate that post. . . I hate that dog. . . I hate you [Tub]" (156). The three characters lack respect by telling each other to "keep your mouth shut" or "stop bitching" (153). Moreover, their harmful actions lack the degree of support and sincerity. In the introduction of the story, Kenny's reckless driving almost kills Tub when, "A truck slid around the corner, horn blaring, rear end sashaying. . . The truck jumped the curb and kept coming, half on the street and half on the sidewalk. It wasn't slowing down at all" (152). Following the accident, Tub nervously responds to the humorless joke, "You almost ran me down. You could've killed me" (153). Furthermore, Kenny's "wound in his stomach . . . welling slowly with blood" as a result of the shooting accident, clearly emphasizes the tense atmosphere and impulsive violence existing within the group (157). However, the highest level of indifference occurs when Frank takes away Kenny's blankets and rationalizes, "They're not doing him any good. We might as well get some use out of them (162)." Shockingly, while driving with Kenny in the back, "He [Frank] laughed and so did Tub. Tub smiled out the back window," as if the two men have forgotten about Kenny's condition, putting him on the boundary of oblivion. In addition, when Frank requests "four orders of pancakes, plenty of butter and syrup" for Tub, he cruelly seems to enjoy Tub's uncontrollable indulgence in food (161). As he sees Tub's chin covered with syrup, he encourages him to finish by affirming, "Clean your plate" (162). Apparently, Frank is satisfied to bring out Tub's unmanageable weakness, hiding away his own equally improper issues associated with the babysitter.

Unquestionably, it is important to scrutinize the patterns of symbolism that explore the inner characterization of the men's friendship. For example, the surrounding snow conceals the surface of each character's hidden identity. But sooner or later, the pure layer of whiteness melts away, leaving behind only dirt and lucid falsehood. In fact, each man has a secret to conceal, but the hidden truth breaks through the thin surface, shattering the veiled façade into visible pieces. Another case of

symbolism relates to the concept of hunting. Such activity is often considered to be a manly sport. Therefore, the central idea behind hunting deals with Kenny's masculine dominance and Tub's emotional sensitivity. In the story, Tub appears to be the weakest of the group, yet he proves that he is strong by hunting down Kenny, who takes a form of a wounded, dying deer. Moreover, the fence that "Tub had trouble getting through," while Frank and Kenny "stood and watched" illustrates the isolation between the three men (153). Neither Frank nor Kenny offer help, suggesting the unreliable and unsupportive behavior of so-called friends that only divides the tenuous friendship with an unreachable fence. As a result, the bitter words, vividly cold imagery, and impudent actions foreshadow the vulnerable outcome for each character and their relationship.

Visibly, Tobias Wolff brings to light the question of raw deception by illustrating a puzzling relationship between three different men, appearing to be a group of friends. However, the notion of factual friendship does not exist. Reasonably, unceasing lies cannot provide a basis for a successful companionship, reinforcing the theme of the story. But what are the characters really trying to hide? Undeniably, the acceptance of truth appears to be harder than the tolerance of devious falsehood. Unfortunately, the three characters find more sense in caring about themselves, than discovering the benefits of altruistic relationships and willingness to make a sacrifice in the name of friendship. Ironically, not all human beings treat others the way they want to be treated, including complete respect and loyalty. Ultimately, the friendship between Tub, Kenny, and Frank takes an illusive path, reflecting the insecurities, lack of empathy, and mutual misunderstanding concealed beneath their disoriented identity.

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Evaluation: *Sylvia's character analysis is first-rate; she understands well the ruse of friendship first concealed, then revealed in this disturbing story of deception.*

Courage and Knowledge in Tim O'Brien's Memoirs

Peter Rapp

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Catherine Restovich

Assignment: *Write a literary research paper.*

Thirty-three years after the fall of Saigon, the bitter struggle of the Vietnam War still tears at the fabric of the American soul and echoes in the hearts of its citizens. Among these citizens is Tim O'Brien, a Vietnam veteran and memoirist of the tragic struggle in Indochina. O'Brien's novel *If I Die in a Combat Zone* is the achingly painful autobiography of his wartime service, and it provides keen insights into the war's impact on its soldiers, weaving together "simple, unprofound scraps of truth" into a tapestry of vibrant themes, despite O'Brien's own concession that war is not "the stuff for a morality lesson" (O'Brien, *If I Die* 23). Of central concern is the struggle to portray the moral dilemmas encountered by a soldier forced to fight an unjust war. The ambiguities "combine with tales of genuine courage and humanity to create viable art" (Smith 13).

If I Die often raises the question of how a soldier can display courage in a directionless war, and an effort to define courage in this context is naturally prominent. He writes, "It is hard to be brave. It is hard to know what bravery is" (O'Brien, *If I Die* 23). O'Brien also does a fair amount of soul-searching throughout the text, so much

so that it seems therapeutic (Herzog 50). He denies this, stating in a separate memoir, "I do not look on my work as therapy" (O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* 159). He nevertheless admits that for him, "telling [war] stories seem[s] a natural, inevitable process, like clearing the throat (*Carried* 158). Regardless of O'Brien's intentions in doing so, he presents a unique synthesis of courage and knowledge that is both moving and edifying.

Recognizing this synthesis requires that we first appreciate his views on war itself. He remarks in an opening chapter, "I was persuaded then, and I remain persuaded now, that the war was wrong. And since it was wrong and since people were dying as a result of it, it was evil" (*If I Die* 18). Several pages later we find the admission that he is "not a pacifist" (22). O'Brien is willing to grant that not all war is wrong; it may, in fact, be necessary at times. World War II "had to be fought" (13). Serving in a right war does not haunt O'Brien; rather, the central question is "whether to serve in what seem[s] a wrong one" (21).

This brings us to consider what constitutes a just war, a question that has serious import as it relates to the definition of courage, and also highlights the relevance of O'Brien's work to the war in Iraq. O'Brien is not America's only disillusioned soldier. According to one marine, "it is hard to answer why we are in Iraq. I see [innocent people] die and lots of collateral damage. I served in Iraq for two tours and patrolled the same streets both times. Nothing was getting accomplished but people were losing lives on both sides" (Jones, personal communication, November 12, 2008).

Certainly for O'Brien, the "gray war" fought by Lutherans and Baptists to bring home ex-POWs was just (13), but a broad spectrum of opinions existed on the Vietnam War itself. In many ways it was "America's ideological civil war" (Freedman 51). Politicians infected with the country's messianic complex saw the spread of communism as reason enough to spank the socialists, while Erik, O'Brien's friend and the novel's platonic interlocutor (Tegmark 94) argues that "life ought not to be forfeited unless certain and fundamental principles are at stake, and not unless those principles stand in certain danger" (36). This resonates strongly with the Christian theory of a just war, which sees it as a primarily defensive

mechanism (Bahnsen, radio interview). The problem with Vietnam was that, "certain blood was being shed for uncertain reasons... *you don't make war without knowing why*" (*Carried* 40). It is very significant that O'Brien here connects justice with *knowledge*. This knowledge may be incomplete, but it recognizes the value of every human life and acknowledges that dead people stay dead. We shall see that this knowledge is an essential component of O'Brien's idea of courage.

Belief that the Vietnam War is evil creates a strong tension between O'Brien's desire to flee and his desire to make his family proud. He describes this to us in plain terms, confessing that he feared censure. "I did not want to be a soldier, not even an observer of the war. But neither did I want to upset a peculiar balance between the order I knew, the people I knew, and my own private world" (*If I Die* 22). O'Brien's flee-or-flight quandary is presented to us in several contexts: his pondering a flight to Canada and his discussing desertion with Erik while in basic training (Herzog 47 – 50). He is afraid to admit that he is not Achilles and that to run from the war would be weakness, fearing that, as Erik puts it, "to avoid war is to avoid manhood" (38).

O'Brien may also fear war because "in war you lose your sense of the definite, hence your sense of truth itself" (*Carried* 82). War destroys your personhood, a fact that O'Brien skillfully communicates by weaving together two perspectives throughout *If I Die*. The first perspective is the "protagonist" soldier, the one who receives the draft notice and who experiences the horror of the war first hand. The second perspective is the disillusioned narrator who has already been through the war and is now remembering it with dread (Tegmark 78-81). These two perspectives – narrator and protagonist – remain intertwined until the end of the book. They merge when the protagonist leaves Vietnam as a resigned veteran who has lost part of himself. O'Brien is no longer the man who once joked with Barney about a politician's daughter. This is the story-time catching up with the discourse-time (Tegmark 82). Surprisingly, the only two chapters to furnish us any new details of O'Brien's life are *pre-Vietnam* ("Pro Patria" and "Beginning"). It is as if the war effaces his previous identity and diminishes his truer self (Heberle 51).

Several references are made to one of Horace's odes: *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori: mors et fugacem persequitur uirum*, or "it is sweet and fitting to die for the fatherland, and death pursues the soldier who flees" (Horace). The line has been turned on its head more than once, and O'Brien is no exception. "Horace's do-or-die aphorism... was just an epitaph for the insane" (*If I Die* 175). It is intriguing that O'Brien uses fragments of the dictum as titles for three of his chapters. According to Mark Heberle, "[the dictum's] applicability to Vietnam is thus obviously called into question" (Heberle 60). The chapter "Pro Patria" details O'Brien's childhood in Minnesota. Its mood is lonely, hinting at the narrator's apathy "for the fatherland," and it ends with the line "I went away to college, and the town did not miss me much" (15). In "Mori," Alpha Company has accidentally shot a female medic and is gathered around her dying body. This senseless death is in direct contrast to dying *pro patria*, an act that should have meaning. Ironically, at the end of "Dulce et Decorum," O'Brien receives a "rear job" where he will no longer be in harm's way. Perhaps this *is* sweet and fitting.

At first glance then, the flee-or-flight quandary is left unanswered by O'Brien, with either decision overshadowed by cowardice. Chaplain Edwards instructs him to have "faith" that "this country is a good country" (57), arguing that all great empires are built on armies and that America is no different. In order for America to remain a "helluva great country," O'Brien must have faith in the wars that she fights. This is faith in *patria*, the fatherland, faith with *polis* (the Greek city-state) as its object. Judging from O'Brien's treatment of Horace, he views such faith as unsatisfying.

This brings us to the fundamental question: if both courses of action involve some sort of cowardice, then how can a soldier be brave when faced with this dilemma? The answer lies in O'Brien's definition of courage, which, in true platonic fashion, has physical, moral, and intellectual dimensions. For O'Brien, courage is intimately connected to knowledge. "Men must *know* what they do is courageous, they must *know* it is right, and that kind of knowledge is wisdom and nothing else" (*If I Die* 140). This is the reason why he knows "few brave men" (140). One particular illustration makes this

link between courage and knowledge inseparable. "Some boys were herding cows in a free-fire zone...we fired at them, cows and boys together...the boys escaped, but one cow stood its ground." O'Brien poses the question, "was the cow, standing immobile and passive, more courageous than the Vietnamese boys who ran like rabbits from Alpha Company's barrage?" The answer is "hardly" because "cows are very stupid" (141).

O'Brien lends further credence to this point with a quote from Socrates. "Courage is a sort of endurance," but "[only] wise endurance is courage" (137). Captain Johansen, the leader of Alpha Company, exemplifies this wise courage, and O'Brien contrasts him with stupid Trojans who fought over a pretty woman most of them could never have. He quotes Book IV of *The Republic* where Plato remarks that courage is "the preserving of the opinion produced by law through education about what – and what sort of thing – is terrible" (190-191). Courage must *know* the difference between right and wrong and must choose to decide between them.

O'Brien presents us with two interesting caricatures of cowardice. Foolish endurance is exhibited during "the charge, the light brigade with only one man... It *seems* like courage, the charge" (134). But the charge, according to O'Brien, is not necessarily courageous because it can be without a purpose or plan. We sense that the entire war effort is a foolish charge, and that it is therefore not brave because "courage is more than the charge" (141). The second caricature is Major Callicles, who outlaws moustaches, burns down whorehouses, and hunts for Viet Cong with claymores while drunk. His definition of courage is abstract and repugnant (Smith 31), "not standing around passively hoping for things to happen right" but "going out and being tough and sharp-thinkin' and *making* things happen right" (200) even if it means killing "those so-called civilians" (196).

Yet Captain Johansen charges a Viet Cong soldier, killing him by "running flat out across a paddy, up to the Viet Cong's ditch, then shooting him to death" (184). O'Brien presents this to us as evidence that Johansen *is* brave. The charge is therefore cowardly only when it is done for the wrong reasons. Here it is helpful to distinguish between a somatic or broadly physical courage and a platonic courage that is more *scientia*,

spiritual, moral. A soldier who embodies *scientia* courage knows what is right and fights for it, regardless of societal pressure. Somatic courage is a function of *scientia*, an incarnation of truth, the flesh and blood of a soldier who knows, in mind and gut, what he is fighting for. Within this framework, Johansen is indeed brave. He *knows* that in order to protect his company, the Viet Cong soldier must die. He thus bravely charges "with the steady, blood-headed intensity of Sir Lancelot." However, a charge without *scientia*, without a knowledge that makes head and stomach believe, is not courageous at all.

The distinction between somatic and platonic courage helps us understand Norman Bowker, a character from *The Things They Carried*. Bowker and his company accidentally bunker down in a "shit field," a place where the Vietnamese have piled their excrement. They are attacked during a rainstorm, and Bowker's friend Kiowa slips and begins sinking into the mud. Bowker grabs Kiowa's boot but realizes that he cannot save his friend, so he lets go (*Carried* 137-49). His *scientia* that he cannot save himself prevents him from foolishly throwing his own life away. O'Brien tells us in the next chapter, "I want to make it clear that Norman Bowker was in no way responsible for what happened to Kiowa. Norman did not experience a failure of nerve that night. He did not freeze up or lose the Silver Star for valor" (*Carried* 161).

So what of the conscripted Nazi? To flee is to forsake country, and to fight is to risk your own life for an evil cause. According to Herzog, "this moral ambiguity seems to be the point of O'Brien's storytelling" (Herzog 50). The soldier must let reason and morals and *heart* guide his decision. Bravery in this dimension will lead to courage in the other three. This betrays the final point: the soldier has a *choice*, and no matter what he chooses to do, if that choice is guided by conscience, he need not doubt his courage. Beneath the veil of moral and philosophical complexity, the answer to O'Brien's question is simple. Die pro patria in a shit field or save your own life, but do it knowing that it is right. Then you will be brave. Context matters. There are times when the charge is unwise, even foolish. There are times when fleeing to Paris may be more brave than stepping lightly through a minefield. This is all expressed wonderfully in the book's epigraph, which is a quote from Dante's *Paradiso*: *lo maggior don che Dio*

per su larghezza / fesse creando .e./a. fu de la volonta la libertate. The translation is enlightening: "the greatest gift [God gave] as He created .../a. was the freedom of the will" (Dante 398). The soldier has the freedom to choose. He need only choose wisely.

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Evaluation: *Rapp ingeniously analyzes O'Brien's work by distinguishing between somatic (or physical) courage and platonic, more scientia, spiritual, and moral courage. The latter, Rapp argues, is the "stuff" O'Brien's stories are made of.*

Growing Up Mexican

Adriana Soto

Course: Literature 223
(Minority Literature in America)
Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment: *Students were asked to write a final essay on something we had read during the semester, and to discuss one or more of the themes we had addressed during the course.*

In an excerpt from Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger for Memory*, the author tells us what it was like to grow up as a dark-skinned Mexican-American, and he takes us on his very personal journey of self-discovery. Intimately, the author narrates the ways in which his insecurities and uncertainties pertaining to his skin color affected him. Rodriguez's story also touches upon economic status and racism, and we see how Rodriguez, all too aware of his body and especially his skin color, basically denied himself a "normal" childhood and adolescence.

Rodriguez, one of four children of Mexican-immigrant parents, grew up in California. Like any other parents would, the Rodriguez' worked hard to raise successful children. They did all they could to move their children away from the troubled (Mexican) side of town and into a better (white) neighborhood. They stressed the importance of education, and Rodriguez was thrown into Catholic school, knowing only a few words of English. The nuns at that school strongly encouraged Richard to speak English at all times, pushing the Spanish language and consequently his Mexican culture to the back burner. This brings forth issues very much like the ones we see in *No-No Boy*, by John Okada. Okada's main character, Ichiro, walks the very thin line between his intensely

Japanese parents on one side and, on the other, the American culture of Seattle, Washington. Like Ichiro, Rodriguez also struggles between his parents' culture and the American one. However, unlike in *No-No Boy*, in *Hunger for Memory*, we see not only a culture clash but also a sort of physical clash, a clash with oneself, as I will explain. Rodriguez goes more in detail with what it was like to be the son of immigrant parents, and especially what it was like to look very much the part—with his dark skin in comparison to the lighter ones all around him.

At the beginning of the excerpt, Rodriguez chooses to focus on what the color of his skin means now: "In such hotels it appears nowadays a mark of leisure and wealth to have a complexion like mine" (2817). Rodriguez mentions that when some people notice his dark complexion, they ask him if he has been skiing or vacationing in the Caribbean. He answers no, in a way insinuating that that is simply the natural color of his skin. He seems to find the introductory statement humorous in an ironic sort of way, and this is seen especially when he quickly transitions to his childhood. His mother used to tell him with a mix of frustration and contempt that he looked like a *negrito*, which was meant as an insult. She stressed that in America, with *los gringos*, looks were everything, and if he kept going out in the sun so much (consequently getting more tan), he would end up looking like a poor *bracero*. It is amazing to think that the color of one's skin could be seen as two completely different things.

On one hand, dark skin is seen as a symbol of wealth, of skiing and vacationing, and on the other, it is seen as a symbol of poverty. In the first quote in the previous paragraph, we see the key word "nowadays," meaning that it is *now* seen as a positive thing to have dark skin. American culture associates wealth with a tan, starting in adolescence. Consider the stereotypical high school movies, where the jocks and cheerleaders are tan, popular, and rich, while the outcast students are pale; the latter work part-time jobs and land a lower rank on the popularity scale. Today—or "nowadays," to borrow Rodriguez's word—dark skin is currently seen as a good quality; it indicates a healthy, active, and well-rounded lifestyle. It suggests that the person in question has enough time, money, and energy to spend

on her- or himself, in comparison to those people who don't have the resources and/or money to do the same. Also, "nowadays" we see that a certain fake tanning craze has infected Americans, especially teenaged girls and celebrities, another embodiment of wealth. This craze has proved addictive, as people interested in darkening their complexion spend hundreds and as much as thousands of dollars in various ways in order to get the look they want to achieve. Lastly, it is important to touch base once more with an aforementioned idea that tanning is seen as a symbol of wealth, because it is connected with vacation time, when one can afford to relax in the sun. Yet, on the opposite side of the spectrum of wealth is poverty, which is historically connected to dark skin.

There was a time before "nowadays" when dark skin was looked at as a negative quality, one linked clearly to hardship and poverty. We can trace those times back to when America was being founded. Then, slaves were people of color, and while not all whites were wealthy, not many were slaves (indentured servants excepted). America has a history of treating people of darker skin—Native Americans, African Americans, and Mexicans, for example—as lower class citizens, and needless to say being demoted to second-class status is tied in with the poverty these races continue to face. In the memoir, Rodriguez is constantly being reminded, by seeing the *braceros* with dark skin like his own on a daily basis, that the darker you are, the poorer you are. The *braceros* were "Those men who work with their *brazos*, their arms; Mexican nationals who were licensed to work for American farmers in the 1950s. They worked very hard for little money" (2818). Rodriguez's mother constantly mentions how his skin color matches the *braceros* and how he should make an effort not to end up like them: poor and therefore powerless. The physical labor the *braceros* do can also be tied in with the stereotypical, low-paying, physically laborious jobs that minorities, especially Mexicans, have held: being gardeners, construction workers, and maids. The fact that a lot of these jobs require being out in the sun and making oneself darker only strengthens the idea of how before "nowadays," when one saw a person with dark skin, she or he associated this individual with being poor, because of the likelihood that she or he worked low-paying, outdoor jobs such as the aforementioned.

Thankfully, however, time has passed, and we have seen that people of all races have different jobs in different industries, and now even those with hasty judgment can no longer assume that a person with dark skin is necessarily penniless.

For Rodriguez, that key word "nowadays" seems to unlock personal feelings. To begin with, it foreshadows the theme of the memoir, his dark skin and his problem with it growing up. But that word also invokes the possible feelings of racism he faced growing up, before being dark was considered attractive or *cool*. To be fair, in his memoir, Rodriguez does not touch much upon the idea of racism; he even says, "Nor did my complexion make me feel especially vulnerable to racial abuse" (2819). Nevertheless, I feel that the contrast between the two time periods insinuates or at least leaves open to interpretation the idea and/or theme of racism throughout the memoir. As Rodriguez says, he never felt "especially vulnerable to racial abuse," but perhaps he did feel *somewhat* vulnerable (emphasis mine).

When Rodriguez talks about his earliest memories as a child in the memoir, he seems very innocent and not personally bothered by his skin tone at all. He seems happy . . . that is, until his mother shouts at him one day at the pool to put a towel on over his shoulders. He doesn't ask why; he simply knows that it is because his mother does not want him to get any darker than he already is. Rodriguez says himself that "that incident anticipates the shame and sexual inferiority" (2818) he comes to feel later in life. Something else that contributes to his dislike of dark skin is hearing his own mother talking with her sisters about how dark children are *feo* children. In addition, he hears his mother and sister consider the effectiveness of lemon-juice solutions, which could possibly help those *feo* children get lighter. When a young boy hears that he is ugly from his own mother and family—and on top of that when he overhears ridiculous ways to "solve" his darkness—it would be unreal for trauma not to occur, and for Rodriguez, this trauma leads to anxiety over his skin color.

Rodriguez's anxiety is most evident in a symbolic act that he completes when he is around eleven years old. He tries to lighten his complexion by pressing a razor against his skin, and much to his disappointment it

remains dark: "Trapped" (28118). Rodriguez also shares with us the fact that although he had unfavorably crooked teeth and a long nose, the personal characteristic he found most distressing, by far, was the color of his skin. I find that interesting: perhaps he was, as a boy, only resigned to having badly aligned teeth and a long nose because these are characteristics that people of lighter skin can have, and thus, even with them, he can fit in. Yet, having dark skin was a problem that he felt was his own, and therefore he disliked it the most.

Rodriguez's dislike for his skin tone causes him to divorce himself from his body, so to speak, and to feel ashamed of it, and this is very sad. He avoids the sun as much as possible and therefore stops doing fun activities outside in order to avoid getting darker. His lack of freedom correlates with his lack of happiness, and Rodriguez grows envious, wanting to live the life of the *braceros*, even though they are considered part of the lower class. They are dark, yet they maintain freedom and even pride over their bodies, unlike Rodriguez. And of course, when one is divorced from his body, there is likely also to be a very lonely absence of romance. Rodriguez confesses that he never dated and that he wasn't even able to talk to a girl without stammering. As I mentioned above, Rodriguez, as a narrator looking backward, doesn't feel that racism played a significant role in his youth; however, I feel that it was a factor. The very idea that brownness is somehow less attractive comes from the idea of racism, whether or not a racist person ever directly bared his teeth at Rodriguez. And the fact that Rodriguez's own and otherwise loving mother was prone to make such a big deal out of her son's darkness shows the depth and power of that racism, which leaves young Richard separated from a healthy sexual awakening and separated, most tragically, from his own self.

Racism in America obviously has occurred for quite some time, and sadly it still exists. It is strange to think that just fifty years ago, segregation was considered acceptable in America, that it was okay to reject people just because their skin was darker. I don't see how Rodriguez, growing up in the 1950s and 60s, could have been unaffected by this. While African Americans have been the main target of racism, we have to remember that other minority groups with dark skin colors have

also been subjected to it, and this includes Rodriguez and other Latin Americans.

Stronger yet is the strangest brand of racism, racism against the self, hatred of the self, which occurs when a person. Rodriguez, for example, begins to view him or herself as inferior to everyone else because of dark skin color. In the memoir, he clearly evaluates himself harshly, "against some shadowy, mythical Mexican laborer—dark like me, yet very different" (2820). That harsh kind of self-judgment is something very related to Pauline, a Native American character from Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*. Both Rodriguez and Pauline are unhappy with themselves and both wish to be "white." Rising against her Chippewa roots, Pauline becomes a full-blown martyr for Christianity; meanwhile, Rodriguez restricts himself from an enjoyable life. However, the main difference between them is their ethnicity and what they think of it. In Pauline's case, the reason why she becomes a martyr is in order to push her Native American heritage out of her life and become white. In Rodriguez's case, he divorces himself from his body simply because he hates his skin color, not his entire heritage.

Nevertheless, Rodriguez is at least mildly guilty of being racist against his own race, and we can say the same of his mother. In the beginning, we see how she reacts to Rodriguez coming home after being outside all day and consequently getting darker; she hates it and compares him to an African American and *bracero*. These comparisons are clearly implied as negative associations, basically because both groups are thought of as poor and inferior in her eyes. Much like Ichiro's mother in *No-No Boy*, Rodriguez's mother always has her son's best interest in mind, even though her actions hurt him. Ichiro's mother fights for Ichiro to avoid the American culture, causing him a lot of trouble; meanwhile, Rodriguez's mother criticizes dark skin, making Rodriguez feel inferior. Despite their negative portrayals and their seemingly cruel natures, these mothers are only guilty of wanting what they feel is best for their sons. Rodriguez's mother knows that at that time looks are everything to the "superior" lighter-skinned Americans, and she doesn't want her son to face the negative consequences of being very dark, which is why we see her urging him to cover up or stay out of the sun. Ultimately, we can be no more judgmental of Mrs.

Rodriguez than of any minority in America, where the populace has, from day one, been instructed to celebrate whiteness and suspect darkness.

The way Rodriguez's mother acts in the story was and still is very typical of the Mexican mindset: the lighter your skin, the better off you are. However, I feel that those who hold that mindset and act upon it no longer do so just to protect those they love; sadly, it has become yet another way of negatively classifying other people. As the years have passed, and as I have already explained some paragraphs ago, dark skin is now more accepted in the larger American culture. However the mindset within some Mexican circles is, strangely, the lighter your skin, the better you are. As a Mexican with lighter skin, I haven't really been hit with any negative comments on the way I look; instead, I find myself complimented on having light skin. This is especially frequent on my trips to Mexico, where I am also complimented on having "soft hands" (which is something else that Rodriguez mentions in his memoir). Lighter skin and softer hands correlate with more education and therefore more opportunities and financial freedom. You no longer have to be a stereotypical Mexican doing hard labor outside, getting darker and hardening your hands. While it is not bad to work outside, in a labor-intensive job, some Mexicans seem to think it is. The word *Indio* seems to be one of the first insults you hear if you are Mexican and have dark skin. An *Indio* is a Mexican Native American, often having dark skin. It is a very strong word when used in a negative way, and I don't think I will ever forget the shocking experience of hearing my mother call one of my previous boyfriends an *Indio*. As soon as that word came out of her mouth, I felt that she might as well have hit me. To a degree, Rodriguez's *The Hunger of Memory* is actually my story as well, and perhaps it is the collective story of many Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Rodriguez wrote not only to share about his life but also to share about what it means to be Mexican.

At the end of the memoir, in a very simple way, the author reveals very casually that he has come to accept the qualities which ailed him when he was younger. The way the author has revealed the end of his journey is a reflection of the culture he grew up in. Growing up, dark skin was seen as a complicated bad quality. But years

later—"nowadays," after he has matured—he sees how his skin tone is casually accepted and even praised. The very important themes of wealth and race Rodriguez touches on show how American culture has grown over the years, but before we get too comfortable with ourselves, let's recall that there is more growing left to do.

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Evaluation: *This essay is a nice blend of good textual analysis and personal investment. Also, I wonder if the theme here—racism not against African Americans but against Latin American persons—is somewhat scarcely addressed in North American culture.*

The American Dream: Realism or False Hope?

Katy Spencer

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment: *Write a literary research essay.*

The American Dream. The term was first coined by James Truslow Adams in his 1931 book *The Epic of America*: the American Dream is “that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability and achievement...a dream of social order in which each man shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position” (Adams n. pag.). In modern-day America, the American dream has been advertised as money, success, perfection, wealth, opportunity, popularity, and even social status. The dream is supposed to be an opportunity for everyone all over the world—an opportunity to become something you’re not, an opportunity to make something big and worthwhile of yourself. However, isn’t it a possibility that this “dream” isn’t really a dream at all but, rather, an impossible standard that is simply made up? Maybe this “dream” is unrealistic and unattainable and yet just another American term coined to increase the status of American people. In Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*, the author clearly critiques capitalism in the West while illustrating the harsh realities of the American dream. Through the male character traits of Happy, Biff, and Willy, Miller questions the myth that in America all one has to do is work hard and get dirty, and success and wealth—or rather the benefits of “the American Dream”—are (allegedly) bound to follow.

First and foremost, Miller uses Willy Loman’s character to support the idea that perhaps the American

dream isn’t a dream at all but instead a never-ending nightmare. Willy Loman is the perfect depiction of an average hardworking American businessman. Willy begins his life and career with high hopes and the scent of opportunity. He has worked and worked his entire life, from sunrise to sunset, to support his family in an attempt to fulfill his dreams. However, as the story progresses, Willy is soon struck by the harsh reality of America. “Willy’s grandiose dreams of happiness and material success conflict with the reality of his failures as a salesman, as a husband to his wife Linda, and as a father to his two boys, Biff and Happy” (Lanier n. pag.). His hopes for the American Dream seem to be shot down by a competitive and selfish country. After a lifetime of hard work at a time consuming job, Willy is fired by a man half his age, a man whom Willy actually had the privilege to name. Sadly, the emotional attachment he has to his young boss is insignificant, as Willy is cut in the throat by the cutthroat world of business in American society. Willy’s hopes to become rich and obtain the American Dream are gradually crushed, and Willy is ripped apart by society. The same society that told Willy he had all the opportunity in the world, and could realize every fantasy, cut Willy’s entire dream apart after countless years of hard work. Miller suggests, through Willy, that that “dream” and those American standards aren’t even reachable.

Because society proved Willy a failure, Willy seems unable to face his own reality that he was in fact average at best. Willy, throughout the play, is clearly unable to face the harsh realities that he, in fact, is not living and is never going to live the life of the American Dream. He is unable to see his failures as a person and as a result, he betrays his family through his deception and lies about the reality of his accomplishments. Willy exhibits and even develops a character trait of dishonesty (to the point of delusion) throughout the play, as he shows his superficial attitude toward people and their social statuses. Willy believes that the most well-liked and physically attractive businessman will eventually obtain the privileges offered by American life. He truly believes that to be liked, one has to be attractive. For example, Willy looks down upon Bernard simply because he is a nerd and not as popular as Biff in high school. “[Willy’s] vision of reality is that simply being ‘well liked’ is the

key to all worldly and spiritual success" (Cardullo 30). Consider Willy's comment to his gloriously successful brother Ben: "[I]t's not what you do, Ben. It's who you know and the smile on your face! It's contacts, Ben, contacts!" (Miller 1410). Willy's view is twisted as he truly believes that "who you know" is more important than "what you do." "This is a remarkably cynical philosophy, glorifying personal contacts while scorning traditional values such as education or hard work" (Cardullo 30). Because Willy's ultimate goal in life is to attain this "dream" of success after all his hard work, he is unable to grasp his true personal understanding that he is simply one man in a business world, average at best. Toward the end of the play, Willy makes a comment to Charley that illustrates his inability to obtain the American Dream: "Funny, y'know? After all the highways, and the trains, and the appointments, and the years, you end up worth more dead than alive" (Miller 1416). In this statement, Willy, alas, is able for an instant to connect to the harsh realities of the American Dream. Again, in general, he is clouded with half-truths and delusion, but in a moment of clarity, he realizes that after all this hard work and late nights, his life, economically, is worth more dead than alive. Willy, before he commits suicide at the end of the play, has a small, hardly recognized revelation. Through his actions, he realizes that the product that he has been selling his entire life is actually himself. In a nation full of millions of hardworking men, Willy is just one simple man trying to find the dream. In the end, he sadly comes to the conclusion that through all his years, he was selling and even deteriorating himself, as he is unable to reach his ultimate dream.

Willy makes the ultimate sacrifice of suicide at the conclusion of the play. As a result, he knows that he is leaving his inheritance to Biff so that his son will hopefully and eventually be able to reach wealth and success. It would be a sad thing to think that in order for one man's family to reach the "dream," a father would have to commit suicide in order for the family to get there. Willy, unlike most tragic heroes, is unable to achieve self-realization at the end of his life. He cannot face the fact that he failed and did not become the businessman, or rather the overall man, that he had strived so hard to become. Willy's suicide is a moral struggle and shows his lack of ability to reach his dream. Ben states, "The jungle is dark but full of diamonds, Willy" (Miller 1434).

Ben is saying here that Willy's choice to end his life may be dark and scary but will in some ways help Willy reach his dream of wealth and success for his family. Willy, in the end, loses his battle with the American Dream. Willy worked his entire life by the capitalistic standards in society and was eventually chewed up and spit out. Critic Helge Normann Nilsen beautifully adds the following:

Miller's critique can be summed up as follows: In business, ruthless competition is the norm. People's moral character is threatened. They may become scoundrels, or rendered insane and suicidal. . . . Conformism rules, turning people into mere cogs in the machine of production, and genuine individualism and even enjoyment of life become hard to obtain. (146-147)

Willy's blind faith in the American Dream led to his psychotic downfall, where he eventually was unable to accept his own life and his own reality of what his dream had become.

Happy, another male figure in the play, also demonstrates the harsh results that capitalism has on society. Happy is basically a replica of Willy's worst traits. He, just like Willy, is the symbolization of the lie of the American Dream. His entire life, Happy lived in the shadow of his older brother, Biff. His expectations to live up to his brother and fulfill his potential are extremely significant to his father. Happy has almost no escape from the American Dream when his brother Biff is unable to grasp the American Dream himself. Because Biff is unable to reach this goal, Happy now, even if it means disillusionment and deceit, falls into the trap of living up to the standards of American society. Just like Willy, Happy shares the capacity for self-delusion and is unable to grasp reality. In the play, Biff calls Happy out and says, "We never told the truth for ten minutes in this house. . . . You big blow, are you the assistant buyer? You're one of the two assistants to the assistant, aren't you?" (Miller 1432). Happy, like Willy, has to lie to himself to make up for his own failures. To keep Willy happy, Happy goes along with the lies and deceptions just to keep his father emotionally steady and not embarrassed. Constantly moving from woman to woman, Happy is trying to find his way in life, while at the same time he thinks he is on the right track. Happy, from the start of the play to the Requiem, is a static character. In the beginning of the

play, he has no thirst for knowledge or truth, and at the end he still has no ambition to discover reality. At his father's funeral, Happy states, "Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It's the only dream you can have—to come out number-one man. He fought it out here, and this is where I'm gonna win it for him" (Miller 1436). Even after Willy's suicide, his failed attempt to reach the American Dream, Happy still is blinded by the American lies. He is destined to live another unfulfilling life, like Willy, trying for something that will never happen. He is another flawed character, destined to be swallowed up by the American Dream.

Biff is perhaps the most significant character in the play in illustrating the downfall of the American Dream. Biff, unlike Willy and Happy, is compelled to seek the truth about himself. He is the only character who is able to eventually acknowledge his failure and confront it. Sadly, Willy has forced Biff to be suffocated in the fantasies Willy has made for his future. Biff, however, is able to long for his true freedom and destiny and break out of Willy's trapped and false illusions. For thirty-plus years, Willy's skewed version of the American Dream holds Biff back from truly finding the person that he is. At the end of the play, though, Biff is able to break loose of Willy's chains and see the harsh reality of both his and his father's life. He is able to recognize that neither he nor Willy is anything exceptional in the business world: "Pop! I'm a dime a dozen and so are you. . . . I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you" (Miller 1433). Biff can see the reality that his father is an average man. Biff says to Willy, "You were never anything but a hard-working drummer who landed in the ash can like all the rest of them!" (1433). Unlike most typical men during this time, specifically unlike Willy, Biff in his heart would prefer to work with his hands in the outdoors, instead of being cornered by four walls and a desk in a business cubicle. Through Willy's belief that self worth comes from money, success, and materialistic goods, Miller is again critiquing capitalism in America.

Therefore, as clichéd as it may sound, perhaps finding true happiness does not come from materialism but rather the ability to follow personal desires. Because Biff's true desires stem from simplicity and "averageness," Miller is perhaps saying that to be happy, one does not need materialism but rather the will to follow the heart. Contrasting from Willy's structured lifestyle, Biff finds

true happiness and is at last content in the beautiful outdoors: "This farm I work on, it's spring there now, see? And they've got about fifteen new colts. There's nothing more inspiring or—beautiful than the sight of a mare and a new colt" (1378). Also, Biff finds himself and understands the person that he wants to be, even if it means not reaching that American Dream of success and wealth: "I'm one dollar an hour, Willy! I tried seven states and couldn't raise it. A buck an hour! Do you gather my meaning? I'm not bringing home any prizes anymore, and you're going to stop waiting for me to bring them home!" (1433). At last, someone in the play is able to see the harsh realities of the world and face his own (supposed) failure to be a standout. Biff is the one character in this play who actually realizes that this American Dream is almost unattainable. Free of chains, lies, and illusions, Biff finally has the chance to face the truth about American society and its impossible standards. In the Requiem, after Charley praises Willy at his funeral for all his many efforts in his life, Biff is again the only character able to see and declare the truth about Willy. He says, "Charley, the man didn't know who he was" (Miller 1436). Clearly, Biff sees Willy's skewed perception of American life.

The setting of where the Loman's tiny house is built is also crucial to the downfall of the American Dream. Towering buildings, sharp and angular shapes, a crowded city, harsh people, orange pollution in the air all surround one single, small, fragile home. Critic Terry W. Thompson of Georgia Southern University adds, "The small home of Willy and Linda Loman—once situated on the green fringes of suburbia and blessed with shade trees, a backyard garden, and plenty of open space for two rambunctious sons—has become palisaded by ruthless urban sprawl, so much so that the aging couple now live in the sterilizing shadows of high-rise apartment buildings, trapped, cornered, enveloped" (244). This setting is crucial to the play as it creates a bigger picture of what Willy Loman's life really is, how insignificant his life is in a world full of business and greed, and lastly how hard it actually is to obtain the American Dream. Miller creates a vivid description of what surrounds the Loman house: "We are aware of towering, angular shapes behind it [the house], surrounding it on all sides. Only the blue light of the sky falls upon the house and forestage; the surrounding area shows an angry glow of orange" (Miller 1373). Parallel to Willy's life, both Willy and the house

are small and insignificant to the rest of the world. Again, the setting creates an idea of what Willy's life really is and how unattainable his dreams are: "An air of the dream clings to the place, a dream rising out of reality" (1373). The idea that this dream is "rising out of reality" creates the illustration that this dream is not even real. It is not even reachable. Instead of being this big-shot salesman in a small world, Willy realistically is one single hard-working man in a huge business world. Willy's life is trapped psychologically by his career, just as the Loman house is trapped by towering buildings and a chaotic world. The setting also foreshadows Willy's failed attempt in capturing the American Dream: insignificant and unfulfilled. Miller makes it clear that the setting is crucial to supporting the downfall of the American Dream.

Although the Loman family is perfect support to the idea that attaining the American Dream is near impossible, it is a possibility, of course, that the dream may not be out of reach for all citizens. With Miller's inclusion of Charley in the play, he does in some slight ways support the other side that states the American Dream is not entirely absurd. Charley is solid proof that a man in working America can succeed to some extent and lead an acceptable lifestyle. Although Charley may not be the best businessman in the country, or rather the best businessman in his city, he is able to provide for his family and lead a happy life. Again, Miller is supporting the idea that average is not necessarily a bad thing. Charley led a rather average lifestyle and was able to reach happiness. He was not the wealthiest man in his society or the most well-liked man in his neighborhood, but he was doing the thing he loved and from that found success and peace of mind. The difference between Charley and Willy is Willy's misconception that to be happy and successful one needs to be wealthy and well liked. Critic David Johansson adds, "Willy's tragic flaw stems from the fact that he has misinterpreted the American Dream, the belief that one can rise from rags to riches. For Willy, the success of that dream hinges on appearance rather than on substance, on wearing a white collar rather than a blue one. It is this snobbery, combined with a lack of practical knowledge, that leads to his downfall" (n. pag.). This perhaps could draw the conclusion that Miller is overall saying that in order to reach happiness, not necessarily the American Dream, one must follow one's heart. Even more so, Miller could be saying that the American Dream is not

what people should be striving for because it does not necessarily provide happiness. At best, it could provide stability and wealth, which does not equate to happiness.

James Truslow Adams made an interesting addition to American society when he coined the term the "American Dream." Little did he know that this simple term could drive millions upon millions of American citizens into a desperate loss of twisted hope. Little did he know that both men and women would cry the tears of failed accomplishments and lost goals. Just like Willy, Happy, and Biff Loman, these same Americans are struggling to see the harsh reality that perhaps this dream is not a dream at all. Maybe it is just a nightmare that never ends. Maybe people can actually work their entire lives and in the end, not reach success, wealth, and happiness, just as Willy Loman never does.

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Evaluation: *Katy's essay shows the near-insanity that results, sometimes, from uncritical loyalty to capitalist fantasies. Particularly excellent is her discussion of the symbolism of the Lomans' humble little home, surrounded on all sides by threatening NYC skyscrapers (ie, the world of ruthless business).*

The U.S. Economy: A Rant in the Style of Dennis Miller

Julie Swenson

Course: English 201 (Advanced Composition)

Instructor: Josh Sunderbruch

Assignment: *Write an essay on a topic of the class's choosing, deliberately imitating the style of another author.*

Ah, the U.S. Economy...what a sorry state of affairs, almost a negation of terms, if you really think about it. It seems it's become one big campaign tool for presidential candidates, another issue to tout and use as a selling point, because, it is, after all, an election year, and we all know what that means! Anything goes, except pregnant daughters of notoriously conservative female vice presidential candidates, the race card, and, among other things, the economic bailout plan. However it's proposed or scrutinized, it seems the plan is mostly set up to benefit the corporate fat cats who stupidly screwed themselves, their employees, their customers, and their companies over. Corporate figureheads in question still get to keep their moneys, as per Enron directors, while their misguided minions reap the repercussions of their directors' idiocy in unemployment and possible, not as pleasurable, bankruptcy, foreclosure, etc. Way to go, peeps! The settling of crises by paying large sums of money, in the end, never really goes all that great. (*Cough* Enron suits. *Cough*). Now we, as a society, learn the negative

swing of trickle-down economics, starting with the least well-off being hit hardest first and foremost.

What in the world can save us? Wait, what's that in the sky? Is it more "economic stimulus" checks of borrowed money from China? That won't make us owe them more, will it? Where's the money coming from? Could it be new revenue in the form of new companies? Nah, it's just the proposed bailout plan, and the U.S. government's looking a little more locally for the money on this one... taxpayers' pockets. How much are we lookin' at here? Oh, nothing much... just a paltry, insignificant seven-hundred billion to one trillion dollars, though it's unlikely that it'll surpass seven-hundred billion without further legislation or modifications. It won't be missed much, 'cuz it's not like we couldn't use it to, oh, rebuild bridges, repave roads, lower property taxes, fund the Iraq war, make war veterans more comfortable, or buy costumes for inner-city elementary school students.

No offense to the economists who know loads more about the economy than me, but reselling what Wall Street and *The New York Times* call "troubled mortgages" and selling them off to potential investors seems contradictory, and unlikely to inspire much hope... Unless, of course, the hope that's being inspired is the same kind of blind hope that many people felt when they insisted to the cutthroat banks that they could pay off their adjustable-rate mortgages, confident that they could sell their homes while the real estate market was bursting and blooming. The homeowners wanted to savor the sweet kind of success that many felt in the past few years, but they didn't realize that such windows of opportunity, like windows in a house, don't stay open year-round. That naïveté bit them in a dark place when their rates skyrocketed, and the banks came calling, in hopes of some loans successfully being repaid. It turned many neighborhoods into a sea of brown lots, houses with boarded-up windows, as the banks foreclosed homes and evicted homeowners. In turn, that lowered the value of many peoples' homes, as the real estate market was flooded with houses. Oi vey. If this is the same kind of hope, it'll most likely end in further tears, faltering, and overall financial flailing. Idiots.

One of the best possibilities of the bailout, if there's any good to be found, may be the limiting of

corporate executives' pay. Not that I think the plan, even if it's passed, will stop any CEO from granting themselves a modest several-million-dollar raise, but it's somewhat nice to know it's being thought about legislation-wise. (But oh, what I wouldn't give to see the face of any CEO as their Board of Trustees tells them that they can't afford to go to Barbados and Jamaica for the third time this winter. If you're like me, that sweetness you may be tasting at the thought of this is the possibility the bailout plan provides.) I'm just hoping that with or without legislation, we can pull ourselves up by our boot straps to soldier on. Or, if we're looking to cut spending in a couple places, we can work on that withdrawal plan and soldier ourselves out of Iraq and back to American soil. Perhaps I'm naïve, but it seems these sorts of economics are cyclical, meaning, we ride them out as best we can, slowly work back up to prospering again, and then get dumped back down on our heels again if we, as a society, make the same mistakes. Humans make those mistakes, time and time again... we have yet to learn that history really *does* repeat itself, and yes, it can and probably will happen to you and everyone you know, at some point. What'll save you next time? Superman? His bizarro opposite form? Perhaps "stimulus packages" from Denmark this time? Unlikely, but I'm not sure. No one really is. Look to the sky.

Evaluation: *Julie does a remarkable job of managing both the tone and the tempo of her chosen author. The attention to detail is impressive.*

The Invisible Line Between War and Story: Drawing Parallels Between Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* and the Vietnam War

Nana Takahashi

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Nancy Davis

Assignment: Write a ten-page research paper of literary analysis.

Tim O'Brien's experience in Vietnam paved the way for a sudden transformation of his identity as one of the most powerful writers to have emerged out of his era. Due to the profound impact the war had on O'Brien, his body of work revolves around the life of a soldier in Vietnam. He has published many critically acclaimed novels such as *Going after Cacciato* and *The Nuclear Age*, but the one that caused the most stir in the literary world is *The Things They Carried*. While it received immediate praise, the work raised many questions, and it is still being analyzed to this day. One can see that the elements of war are woven into the novel. We become consumed by the stories, hanging onto every word when we begin to see that there is more to the stories than just depictions of war and the autobiographical sketches of Tim O'Brien. It becomes evident to readers that they are witnessing something new and original. The development of this new style of writing was largely influenced by O'Brien's experience as a soldier in the Vietnam War, and *The Things They Carried* is a defining piece that demonstrates the mirror-effect between his writing style and the war.

Being an American soldier in Vietnam, O'Brien

experienced the disorder of war where chaos led to a lost sense of time (Herzog 108). *The Things They Carried* is set up in this similar chaotic manner. The reader is often thrown into the middle of a story and forced to play catch-up. When one story ends, the reader is then magically taken to another place in time. This is possible because there are no numbered chapters; the book is simply a collection of stories, each with its separate title. Readers must piece together and make sense of the information as O'Brien leads them through his experience of war. This distortion of time in the stories is a statement of how the soldiers felt in the Vietnam War. Life as a soldier, especially for one in the Vietnam War, was in complete disorder, and the war did not seem to have an end in sight. What made this particular war extremely difficult for the American troops was the unfamiliar territory; they were in the midst of the jungle with unpredictable terrain and weather. Because of this, the troops faced constant threats of ambush, which left no time for the men to "get a grip" on their new life. Influenced by this lifestyle, *The Things They Carried* does not follow a traditional plot. In fact, there is no climax that typically leads to a sound resolution (Wesley 122).

O'Brien writes in a way that lacks typical structure, and much like war, one cannot anticipate what will happen next. In an interview with Ronald Baughman, O'Brien states "by and large, plot isn't much of importance in this book" (209). Here, O'Brien lets us know where this book stands. The readers are not supposed to visualize a stereotypical plot line in their minds. In fact, *The Things They Carried* is often regarded as a collection of short stories and not a novel. While this holds true for the most part, O'Brien does not blindly put together this collection. The placement of each story is taken with great care and has a purpose. This is one aspect of the book that may not seem to mirror the Vietnam experience because this seems "too orderly" to be a representation of this "chaotic" experience. However, when readers take a step back to wonder why O'Brien does this, they can see that he does this because it is the most effective way to get his point across. This order is a small price to pay to more successfully accentuate his intense feelings and emphasize the content of the stories. Donna Glee Williams states in a brief biography that, "out of the need to be faithful to

**The Invisible Line Between War and Story:
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They Carried* and the Vietnam War**

the deep truth about the Vietnam War experience, O'Brien developed his way of building a story like a jigsaw, out of a set of interlocking pieces" (1791). The idea that *The Things They Carried* is put together like a jigsaw is very accurate, however one quickly begins to be skeptical of this claim that he is telling us the "deep truth." In fact, this skepticism begins to take root before even getting to the first story.

The book gives a disclaimer on the copyright page that informs the reader that the book is a work of fiction and that the events and the characters are all imaginary except for a few minor details that may be true of the author's personal life. On that note, immediately following the copyright page is the dedication page, which "lovingly" dedicates the book to the men of Alpha Company and lists a few key names of men who served in that platoon. The reader soon learns that those are the names of the characters in the book. This strange prelude to the stories causes the readers to begin their journey with their guards up high.

The reader finds it difficult to draw a distinction between truth and fiction. As Kaplan boldly stated, "In *The Things They Carried*, O'Brien destroys the line dividing fact from fiction" (171). This may be true, but one cannot know for certain until further research. As briefly introduced earlier, the atmosphere of the Vietnam War was not an advantage to the American troops. This posed a great problem to them because on this confusing, foreign land, one could not be sure of the real enemy. This constant uncertainty that O'Brien experienced each and every day during his tour in Vietnam carries into his work. Not only does O'Brien give the reader a reason to question the reliability of the author, but he also forces the reader to question the reliability of the narrator.

In one story titled "How to Tell a True War Story," O'Brien begins with a short, definitive sentence: "This is true" (*Things* 67). Unfortunately, as soon as the reader begins to develop a bit of trust in the narrator, a few pages later, he warns that "in many cases a true war story cannot be believed" (71). Considering that each story in the collection is meant to be a war story, this skepticism lays the foundation for the remainder of the stories. However, in the same story, Norman Bowker, who narrates this "true war story," ironically admits that parts of the story

are fabricated (93). When a storyteller steps aside to admit that he lied somehow, it makes the rest of the story seem more credible. It is as if the mere illusion of truth is enough for the reader to feel a greater sense of confidence in what they see or hear. This is what creates a hopeful spark that possibly the story told within the story is true. However, that hope is shattered in "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong," in which Rat Kiley is the narrator.

Again, the reliability of this new narrator is heavily questioned when it says that it is "normal procedure to discount sixty or seventy percent of anything he had to say" (*Things* 89). O'Brien plays these games with the reader throughout the stories. In an interview by Eric James Schroeder, O'Brien was asked what separates non-fiction from fiction, to which he replied, "You tell lies to get to the truth" (174). Knowing this, the reader can begin to understandably but reluctantly settle on the notion that the stories are all fictional, but O'Brien once again throws in a curve ball. When asked about Rat and his attempt to tell the story "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong," O'Brien states that "Rat is fighting what I am fighting in this book—this whole problem of trying to make credible what to me was incredible" (Caffey 202). As the reader journeys through the collection of twenty-two pieces in *The Things They Carried*, he or she struggles to categorize which facets of the stories are possibly true and which are products of O'Brien's imagination. This unique and ambitious attempt to communicate his thoughts and feelings about the Vietnam experience leads to his creation of a new literary form in *The Things They Carried*.

One analysis of his work states that O'Brien "invented a new literary form that alternates objectivity with impressionism. What really happened becomes less important than what could have happened" (McCarthy n. pag.). This is an accurate description of the format of *The Things They Carried*. In an interview with Michael Caffey, O'Brien states that "I had never invented form before" (201), which he claims was not his intention. Although one thing is for certain, he states, "My goal was to write something utterly convincing but without any rules as to what's real and what's made up" (201). *The Things They Carried* does seem to be an "impressionist" piece of work because there are definite uncertainties that

the reader inevitably feels throughout the book. This can be considered as a crumbling of traditions in the context of war and stories, which is also a cause for broken social rules.

In the history of America, death has been a taboo subject. The men who were sent to Vietnam were raised in that very society where causing the death of another human being was absolutely forbidden. Once they arrived in Vietnam, their ideals of life were shattered. The Vietnamese people broke these "social rules" by constantly being on the hunt to kill U.S. soldiers. The soldiers witnessed the unnatural deaths of young American men who were killed in front of their very eyes. O'Brien essentially broke the social rules as well in *The Things They Carried*. In it, he boldly describes how young American men die at war. He attacks this socially forbidden subject head-on and tells the "honest truth" about war. Since the rules are already broken, O'Brien uses the stories as a tool for creating a world of his own.

Even children have the desire to create their own world where it is safe and comfortable if they see that the environment that they are in is not "suited to their liking." Soldiers at war regress back to this mind-set, but with more reasons as to why they create their own world. In war there is no control, which is a frightening concept. However, despite their tireless attempts to seek order, they do not get it, so they search elsewhere for comfort. Soldiers long for rules, as the new world has none. O'Brien shares a brief story of Norman Bowker and Henry Dobbins' nightly checkers game, which is a fine example of soldiers who have found something that satisfies their craving for control. A game of checkers is said to be "orderly," "reassuring" and most importantly the "enemy was visible, you could watch the tactics unfolding into large strategies. There was a winner and a loser. There were rules" (*Things* 32). Even with this controllable world, it does not protect the soldiers once they return home.

When a young man is sent to war, through experience, he is slowly stripped down and transformed into a raw, new form of a man. It can even be ugly and possibly a bit evil. O'Brien writes, "A true war story is never moral. It does not instruct, nor encourage virtue, not suggest models of proper human behavior....As a first

rule of thumb, therefore, you can tell a true war story by its absolute and uncompromising allegiance to obscenity and evil" (68-69). This passage from *The Things They Carried* clearly demonstrates the horrible effect the war can have on soldiers. Because of this, soldiers who come back are in a separate category of their own in the society. Also, because of what they have seen and done, their family and friends subconsciously and unintentionally outcast them. This outcasting is not to be taken in the literal sense. It was more along the lines of Vietnam veterans not being warmly welcomed back as soldiers were in the previous wars such as World War II. This "phenomenon" was due to the outcome of the war. Also at the time of the Vietnam War, the effects and intensity of post-traumatic stress disorder were not well known or understood among the American public, so this caused a greater sense of fear and uncertainty of soldiers that returned home from Vietnam (Smith 7). This is why they cannot casually intermingle with people who never had a brush with death. Knowing this as well as involuntarily being a part of the "soldier's universe," O'Brien's style of writing is a medium for which he can communicate his world with those who have never experienced it firsthand. This is actually in many ways a very important tool for a soldier because there is a strong need to share stories and experiences of war, especially if they are gory and disturbing. O'Brien has a healthy outlet to express his feelings and experiences with his family and attempt to get them to understand why or how he has become the man he is now. Unfortunately, not everyone has the benefit of having family members with open ears.

O'Brien mentions an instance where there is a failure or an inability to share war experiences as in the case of Norman Bowker in the story "Speaking of Courage," which leads to a devastating end. In this story, Bowker aimlessly drives his car in circles around a lake in his hometown once he returns from Vietnam. It is in a sense a representation of pointlessness that many veterans felt upon their return home. Bowker returns as a decently decorated soldier, but mentions that he almost won a Silver Star for valor if he had saved a fellow soldier from dying in a field. What he feels is more important than any medal that he had won is the need to talk. He wants to share the pain he feels from losing his friend. He wants to explain

**The Invisible Line Between War and Story:
Drawing Parallels Between Tim O'Brien's *The Things
They Carried* and the Vietnam War**

how scared he was each and every day. Unfortunately, as he drives around the lake and contemplates everyone who is around him, he realizes that no one is there to listen. He bottles up these painful memories and never has an opportunity to express himself and because of this, we later learn that he commits suicide. O'Brien emphasizes the sheer power of war and the stories that come with it. It is through this process of communicating thoughts to others that keeps the soldier sane once he is back home. As O'Brien is often quoted, "stories can save our lives" (Caffey 201).

O'Brien truly understands the "power and capability of a story" (Bonn 99). So even though many stories in *The Things They Carried* serve the purpose of saving O'Brien, he also includes stories such as "Spin" which "functions as a kind of mental R & R, during which the reader has time to temporarily distance him- or herself from the strong personal involvement which the other stories demand" (Tegmark 277). The humorous element is scattered throughout the book like it was in the daily lives of soldiers. In war, the men cannot maintain the state of seriousness and diligence at all times. Just as O'Brien inserts humor from time to time amongst heavy war stories, the real war requires the soldiers to have a mental release at times as well (Herzog 119). Worlds constantly evolve, and war and stories are no different.

Warfare is a constant shift of altering tactics and location. All through the book, between different stories, the same story gets told and retold in different versions, which is constantly evolving as well (Kaplan 188). When soldiers create their personal universe, they can control everything, and as soldiers, they develop and evolve through their course in war. O'Brien realizes this and applies this concept to his writing, and in an interview he is quoted, "Stylistic problems can be solved by writing better, by recognizing your own faults and getting rid of them" (McCaffery 157). So this changed soldier and writer shapes his own universe that becomes his craft, which evolves into art ("Magic" 137). This ironic combination of war and story is actually a very real concept in *The Things They Carried*.

"O'Brien 'shows' and does not 'tell'" (Williams 192). This is very much true in *The Things They Carried*. Writing allows him to "show-off" his craft and skill in

telling stories, as it is true in war, where men strive to show off their combat skills (Herzog 123). War is an ever-changing experience that can be thought of as a form of art requiring patience, diligence, and skill. It is important to note that war as art is not the traditional beauty that one expects as in the case of a painting by Monet or a statue by Michelangelo. The beauty of war is that it is constantly producing unique pieces, or as Mitchell Sanders, a character from *The Things They Carried* states, "Well, that's Nam's 'Garden of evil.' Over here, man, every sin's real fresh and original" (80). He makes this statement after witnessing a fellow soldier, Rat Kiley, cruelly kill a baby water buffalo. Kiley does this in a fit of pain and anger in response to his best friend, Curt Lemon, getting killed by a bomb. Another display of war in its artistic form is in the story, "How to Tell a True War Story," where it details Lemon's death. O'Brien's writing style calls for heavy doses of vivid imagery, which allows for his death to be depicted in a poetic manner.

"His face was suddenly brown and shining. A handsome kid, really. Sharp gray eyes, lean and narrow-waisted, and when he died it was almost beautiful, the way the sunlight came around him and lifted him up and sucked him high into a tree full of moss and vines and white blossoms (70).

As with art, the creator has the power to make the unbelievable occur. When in war, a soldier experiences everything in a first-person point of view. The vivid, frightening images of death are unimaginable for an innocent boy. He does not dare imagine cruelty because he was never exposed to such things. Then, war changes everything. The unbelievable does occur, and it is not just one time. It occurs over and over again. Technically, that is what they were sent to do—to kill—but in the process they see and come close to experiencing cruel death. However, this phenomenon is not confined to war.

In stories, O'Brien can recreate the events but also create the unbelievable. His stories can bring the dead back to life, such as in the case of Linda in "Lives of the Dead." Linda is the narrator's first love at a very young age, but sadly, she dies at the tender age of nine from a brain tumor. She is then "brought back to life" through the power of his stories. Here, O'Brien is showcasing his childhood passion and talent for magic

tricks as he performs this incredible feat ("Magic" 137). O'Brien can be regarded as an artist who excels at his craft. He is praised and well respected among readers, critics, and fellow authors, and one statement made of his incredible talent says, "through careful sensory detail, O'Brien attempts the impossible task of telling the true story of Vietnam so clearly that even those who were not there may stand in witness" (Williams 1792). Taking this observation to heart, it allows readers to better understand him as a writer.

Only after the thoughts behind O'Brien's writing are dissected and studied can one begin to make sense of the stories in *The Things They Carried*. When attempting to find the deeper meanings of the stories, we must first get a grasp on the chaos that was the Vietnam War. Once that is accomplished, one can see, as Tobey Herzog did in a study of O'Brien and his works, that *The Things They Carried* "mirrors the soldier's chaotic psychological landscape and the political, moral, and military disorder related to America's Vietnam experience" (79). Through his experience as a soldier, O'Brien even surprises himself by inventing a new style of writing. We can even consider O'Brien as a writer who "writes a war story as he examines the process of writing one" (Calloway 89). In his stories, he carefully explains what a war story is and is not and leaves it up to the reader to decide what to believe. We can see that this new style of writing draws much of its influences from the Vietnam War. He writes with a purpose, and the same concept should apply to war. He writes, in *The Things They Carried*, "you shouldn't make war without knowing why" (40). Tim O'Brien's intense personal experiences led to his contribution to the literary world and forced the world to reevaluate its mode of resolving the human conflict.

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Evaluation: *Nana uncovers new territory in her effort to understand O'Brien's unique approach to writing "war fiction."*

A Diagnosis

Kimberly Thompson

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Catherine Restovich

Assignment: *Write a literary research paper.*

In *Dutchman*, the audience members find themselves on a subway, where not even the characters are what the audience is led to believe. Baraka places his two main characters, Clay and Lula, on an underground train where they engage in a twisted and controversial dialogue of sex, race, and rage, which results in the brutal murder of Clay. Throughout the play, it becomes obvious that Clay and Lula are quite opposite. While Clay is a black male, Lula is a white female. Clay is an honest, working man, while Lula is constantly lying and seems rather compulsive, as it appears in the play that she works as a prostitute. In addition, Clay seems boring and dull, while Lula is random and exciting. Lula even states "... Dull, dull, dull. I bet you think I'm exciting" (Baraka 2508). Although being opposite is often paired with being separate, quite the contrary can be argued in relation to these characters. Clay and Lula are really two parts of the same person, and the whole play is a battle of self. Furthermore, in this one person, there are two characters who represent a battle in society as a whole.

First, it is important to address from where this theory of insanity within the characters came. Throughout "Dutchman," Baraka has inserted multiple references to the idea of insanity through both dialogue and the actions of the characters. Lula even refers to herself as "Lena/Lula the Hyena." The side note on this name explains that "Lena the Hyena" was one who drives people insane at the sight of her. Lula also refers to Clay as "Morris the

Hyena" (2510). Although between Clay and Lula, Clay may seem like the more stable character, Lula also tells Clay that he is "too serious to be psychoanalyzed," which often has an obvious connection to mental instabilities (2518). Later, Clay even states, "Crazy niggers turning their backs on sanity...I'd rather be a fool. Insane" (2523). It is obvious that there are many references to this idea of insanity throughout *Dutchman*. This would cause the reader to ask themselves, "Why is this theme present?" It can be suggested that Baraka placed this theme in the text to suggest that his character(s) suffer from a mental disorder.

In order to diagnose Clay, the symptoms that Clay exhibits must be paired with a syndrome. From the evidence throughout the play, it can be suggested that Clay is suffering from dissociative identity disorder (DID). This mental illness is a condition where "two or more distinct identities or personality states" interchange in controlling the victim's consciousness and behavior (Frey n. pag.). While Clay is the original and external personality, Lula is another part of him, his alter (Werner n. pag.).

The most distinctive feature of DID is the formation and emergence of alternate personality states, or "alters." Patients with DID experience their alters as distinctive individuals possessing different names, histories, and personality traits. It is not unusual for DID patients to have alters of different genders, sexual orientations, ages, or nationalities. (Frey n. pag.)

Thus, it would not be uncommon for Clay's alter to be a white woman, while Clay is a black man. It is quite usual for alters to express such differences, as alters display different perspectives of a patient's personality (Westen and Wilkinson-Ryan n. pag.). Therefore, this strange encounter between Clay and Lula that took place in "Dutchman" can be explained by the odd phenomenon of a split personality.

Evidence supporting this unusual argument appears early in the play, when Clay, a seemingly average, twenty-year-old black man, is found riding alone on the subway. All appears normal until at one of the subway's stops, he notices a face staring back at him through the

window. The face is of an attractive, thirty year old white female, Lula. It... When it realizes that the man has noticed the face, it begins very premeditatedly to smile. The man smiles too, for a moment, without a trace of self-consciousness. Almost an instinctive though undesirable response" (Baraka 2504). There is a strange exchange of awkward glances, and then the face seems to be left behind as the train continues on its journey. While this odd exchange between Clay and this white woman may be overlooked by the audience, this scene is more than a casual exchange between strangers. It is a moment of recognition. Although arguing that this image of Lula was really Clay's own reflection could seem far-fetched, for a person suffering from DID, this occurrence would not be outside of the ordinary. In this scene, Clay and Lula's smiles at each other are simultaneous, much like the way one would see himself in the mirror. Also, Baraka uses the pronoun "it" to describe Lula. Normally, the pronoun "she" is used in the place of a female's name. This "it" may be referring to Clay's alter-ego, rather than Lula, as a separate person. It is at least obvious from this scene that Lula recognizes Clay and goes on to seek him out.

After this odd occurrence, Clay is left feeling awkward and embarrassed, but as the train rolls away and he thinks he left the face behind, "he smiles then, more comfortably confident, hoping that perhaps that his memory of this brief encounter will be pleasant" (2505). After a short time, Lula enters the subway; she approaches Clay's seat but will not sit down until acknowledged by him. This is where the confrontation between the two personalities begins.

This confrontation that begins between Clay and Lula may be classified as an "identity disturbance." While each patient is different concerning their identities' awareness of one another (Frey n. pag.), it is not uncommon for the patient to exhibit co-consciousness. Co-consciousness deals with the personalities' "ability to know each other and their actions" (Robinson n. pag.). Although Clay seems quite ignorant, Lula plays the all-knowing personality. This is not unusual as "genuine DID persons conceal their awareness of the problem" (Robinson n. pag.).

Because Clay has found himself in this ignorant position, it is Lula, Clay's alter, who progressively begins

drawing out Clay's true feelings. "As Sherley Anne Williams has correctly observed, 'Lula...control[s] the situation. She picks Clay up. She encourages him. And it is she who goads him into revealing things which must have been carefully hidden deep in the most secret places of his heart'" (Piggford n. pag.). While Clay's consciousness does not understand Lula's amazing knowledge of him, this is easily explained by this theory of a split personality. After Lula attempts to provoke a response out of Clay throughout their conversation to her racist jeers, Lula becomes more and more frustrated as Clay repeatedly laughs them off or ignores them.

Lula: I don't even know you.

Clay: You said you knew my type.

Lula: [strangely irritated] Don't get smart with me, Buster. I know you like the palm of my hand. (Baraka 2512)

Because Clay is not responding to these discriminating remarks the way Lula thinks he should respond, her remarks and actions become increasingly more offensive and obnoxious until she gets her desired response.

Despite her efforts, it is not until the end of the play that Lula receives this response from Clay. This long period of time that elapses between when Lula began her attempt to provoke a response, and when Clay actually reacted, is also a piece of evidence that Clay is suffering from DID. "Many DID patients are misdiagnosed as depressed because the primary or 'core' personality is *subdued* and *withdrawn*" (Frey n. pag.). Because Clay is the "primary or 'core' personality," it is noticeable in the play that he *is* quite subdued and withdrawn. Lula has to break out in song and dance, which cruelly repeats her racist mockeries, to finally receive Clay's riposte. This withdrawn and subdued attitude is a symptom of DID, and it is Lula who attempts to break Clay out of this pattern.

Another symptom of DID is depersonalization. Depersonalization is a dissociative symptom in which some patients feel like they are outside their body or like they are watching a movie of themselves (Frey n. pag.). Clay experiences depersonalization as he is seeing his alter, Lula, as a separate person. Beyond this, he continues

to tell her she seems like an actress. He even has her tell him a detailed story of what they will do once they are off the train. Clay listens and anticipates her story like one would if he were watching a movie.

The last obvious symptom of DID that Clay seems to have is derealization. Derealization is another dissociative symptom "in which the patient perceives the external environment as unreal" (Frey n. pag.). Multiple things in the play cause this dreamlike feel. The first is the way the subway never seems to stop. This never-ending ride where there is no apparent destination causes this play to seem quite unreal. Beyond the fact that the subway seems to just keep going, there is also a continual addition of other passengers who seem to simply materialize, but no one appears to exit the train until the very end of the play. In addition, these other passengers seem mostly lifeless, as no one, except the drunk, responds to the situation between Clay and Lula until instructed to finally do so after Clay's murder. All these different signs signal that it is possible that the scene seems dream-like because it is being perceived from Clay's perspective. If Clay is suffering from DID, his odd surroundings could be understood based on his perceptions as a person suffering from this disorder.

While Clay seems to fit all the symptoms of DID, an interpretation of the ending of "Dutchman" may be necessary to help understand what took place between Clay and Lula, or more specifically, the personalities of Clay. First, it is necessary to understand that the relationship between Lula and Clay is really an internal conflict in Clay. All the happenings in "Dutchman" represent an "identity crisis within Clay's psyche...From this perspective, Lula and Clay become manifestations of Clay's split self" (Piggford n. pag.). Thus, it is important to see Clay and Lula both as one person, but also separate persons in that they have two distinct personalities.

The end of the play, which concludes with Clay being murdered by Lula, must be explained by the idea of "survival of the fittest." Only the strongest survive. This proves true with Clay's multiple personalities. Throughout the play, Lula continually and relentlessly attempts to provoke a response out of Clay. She's begging him to stand up to her and be a *man*:

Lula: About what? About your manhood, what do you think? What do you think we've been talking about this whole time?

Clay: Well, I didn't know it was that. That's for sure. Every other thing in the world but that...

Clay: Well go on. We were talking about my manhood.

Lula: We still are. All the time. (Baraka 2516)

Lula, or Clay's alter, is practically begging Clay to man up. She wants a rebellious response to her racist jabs. She wants him to be masculine and stand up to her by showing some strength, even if it becomes physical.

After more taunting, Clay finally is launched into a reaction. He responds with violent words and an explanation of black America that could challenge a revolution. It is this reaction that, for the first time, silences Lula. For a minute or so, while Clay is talking about murdering her and making his point, she is silent. She thinks she achieved her goal: to make Clay man up and be intolerant of the racism to which he had allowed himself to become a victim. For a moment, Lula thinks her job is done, but Clay says, "...When all it needs is a simple act. Murder. Just murder! Would make us all sane. [Suddenly weary] Ahhh. Shit. But who needs it? I'd rather be insane" (2523).

When Clay abandons his revolution, and makes no action, Lula *realizes* how weak he is. She knows that he will never be strong enough to stop changing for others and to stop being victimized by racism. This is when she murders Clay. She takes control and orders the others on the subway to drag his body out and leave. Once they have done this, she is left alone in the seat in which she had originally found Clay. This picture of Lula continuing on alone in the subway just as Clay had done in the beginning is the portrait of her continuing on in his place. Clay, the personality, is no more, because he was not strong enough.

While there is enough evidence both in and out of the text to support this theory, the question then becomes: why would Baraka make his character, Clay, someone who suffers from dissociative identity disorder? Why would he make two characters out of one to portray his story? Baraka made Clay and Lula part of one person to convey two major conflicts. One conflict is found internally in the

minds of African-American men, while the other conflict is found between Black America and White America as a whole.

The first conflict is the internal conflict of an African-American man. Every person from another culture in America is faced with a choice. They need to choose whether to conform and integrate into the overwhelmingly prevalent culture around them, or to remain separate and cling to their cultural lifestyle and traditions. Because choosing to remain separate would make them the minority, this decision is difficult and may be intimidating. For Clay, he attempted to conform. He was wearing the right clothes; he went to school to have the same education; and, he traveled on the subway like every other middle-class American. But unlike them, Clay was still battling himself, specifically Lula, regarding whether conforming was the right thing. He was battling a subconscious hatred of white America on behalf of his people's history in America and a feeling of inferiority to them in his present time, while concurrently wanting to be like them and viewed as an equal to white people. By ending the play with the antagonist, white Lula, killing black Clay, Baraka highlights the point that in this internal battle, an African-American man often loses himself. Baraka used this love/hate spat between his two-in-one character to represent this internal conflict, in order to stress an African-American man's battle within himself.

The second conflict that Baraka was showing by using these two opposite characters in one person was the more obvious conflict between races in America. Baraka stresses Black America's battle of integrating without losing their distinction. Baraka wanted to make clear through this play that Black America needs to fight to remain. They need to man up and stop racism in order to survive. Baraka used Clay's revolutionary talk to stress the need for change; however, Baraka stressed that words without action will only end in doom, and thus humiliation as a race. This humiliation was made manifest for Clay when he, a black man, was murdered and silenced by Lula, a white woman, the seemingly weaker personality. To draw a conclusion to his twisted tale, Baraka placed another black man, who was much like Clay, on the train with Lula. This man represented a cyclic pattern and how

the battle has not yet been won. This war will continue until someone takes action to stop it.

Though arguing that Clay suffers from dissociative identity disorder may seem implausible at a first glance, after reviewing Clay's symptoms, it seems clear that this diagnosis may in fact be credible. Besides the fact that the theme of insanity presents itself numerous times throughout the text, Clay also fits many of the symptoms of DID, such as depersonalization, derealization, and a possible identity disturbance. It is also conceivable that by putting this twist on the story, Baraka was able to portray two conflicts within his play instead of only one. Though the psychological diagnosis of Clay may be arguable, the statements that Baraka made through his characters were clear. Words with no action bring about no change, and until action is taken against racism, the continual cycle of racial discrimination will persist.

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Evaluation: *This is a brilliant diagnosis of Baraka's "patient," Clay/Lula, as one character rather than two, a split personality/psyche representing 1960s American society.*

Twisting in the Water

Vanessa Valenti

Course: English 098 (Composition)

Instructor: Sarah Lindsey

Assignment: *Using imagery to tell your story, write a personal narrative.*

The daylight was melting off the horizon, not a cloud in the approaching night sky. The breeze was warm and moist, getting my hair caught in my laughter. I kicked off my shoes on the warm pavement only to feel the cool water wash up around my ankles. We screamed at each other over the loud sounds of the waves and the cicadas between our sips of Slurpees and mouthfuls of Frito Lays. The stars slowly became visible, and the last of the sherbet colored sky sunk deep into the trees as we buried our feet in the sand, ready for our night to begin.

The night was young when Kelly, my best friend, and I hopped in her car. At the time Kelly drove an enormous conversion van with a large company insignia splayed at the top of the windshield. The insignia read "Primetime." As we drove, I let my arm hang out of the window, catching the air in the palm of my hand. I wanted to stuff it in my pocket so I could pull it out whenever I wanted to remember how it felt to be this alive. I assumed the role of DJ in the car, playing all of our favorite summer songs, to which we sang loudly and off key.

We wound down familiar streets, and I watched the fireflies flickering in the surrounding forests, like someone had sprinkled glitter in the trees. The smell of the lake floated in through the windows as the streets got closer. We entered through fifteen-foot-high wrought iron gates and coasted down the steep and narrow drive. Mammoth

trees covered the sides of the road, but as we got closer, the waves were pecking through the leaves and branches.

We emerged from the car pretending we were in The Lost Boys, like Santa Carla was a real place and this was it. Like I would never grow old and never die, just like they promised. We kicked up the sand and tested the waters, and then we took our spots at the very edge of the pier. We dangled our legs over the edge, and the aroma of the thick forest and sun baked sand crept up at our sides. Our faces became shadows as the sky completely blackened. Our raucous laughter was suddenly silenced as we all fixed our eyes on the eastern sky. Our full moon pulled itself up from the horizon and began its climb across the summer night.

Its rustic orange color cascaded across the black waves that made their way to the shore. It was a breathtaking sight that made it a rare moment. Neither of us spoke. Without a word, our hearts melted together and became one. In my mind, Morrissey was singing "There is a light that never goes out." Gazing to the sky, it meant more than ever. We were touched by a simple, often dismissed wonder of our world, more than anyone could ever understand. In that instant, I became certain I could live happily under the moonlight forever.

The symphony of night played on with crickets that echoed for miles. We sprawled out on a seemingly never ending shoreline and basked under the rusty moon. We wished on stars that were satellites and laughed louder and louder. I stopped and closed my eyes as I silently tucked the night deep in the cell of my heart. It was true love that can never be replicated and will be cherished for a lifetime.

Evaluation: *Vanessa's essay oozes with the stuff of adolescent summertimes. It is a lovely, true piece of writing.*

The Journey

Jacqueline Valentino

Course: Literature 219

(Children's Literature)

Instructor: Barbara Butler

Assignment: Analyze a work of children's fantasy.

The Wizard of Oz is a great film that exemplifies effective treatment of plot, theme, characters and other characteristics of classical children's literature that stand the test of time. Passed down from generation to generation, this movie provides important lessons, showing characters that overcome the obstacles of life. But what makes a work of children's literature a classic? In the movie, elements of plot take the reader on a quest to the Land of Oz with Dorothy, a classic heroine, who successfully attains her goals by overcoming the enemy and becoming a better person in the end. Classic literature also contains universal themes that teach important lessons regarding the human spirit and meaning of life. What could be more important than highlighting the family, friendship, and home? Classical children's literature also has characters that remind us of ourselves, with similar flaws and problems, yet they possess the skills and ability to overcome problems just like the characters in the movie. According to Zena Sutherland, the author of the text book *Children & Books*, there are certain criteria that distinguish one piece of literature from another, which makes the work a treasured classic that never grows old.

Therefore, the movie *The Wizard of Oz* has many essential ingredients that make it as relevant today as when it was created more than six decades ago.

Elements of plot take the reader on an important journey toward self-discovery. Dorothy is a great heroine who successfully attains her goals: she gets Toto back, makes friends, and returns home with an appreciation for what she has, which makes her a better person. The story begins at the Gale's farm, located in the middle of the desolate landscape of Kansas, portrayed in colorless (sepia) black and white rigidity. Life is hard, and the Gales are hard-working people. Auntie Em's face is lined and careworn; Uncle Henry is old, too, and young Dorothy doesn't even seem to fit in here. For example, she isn't dressed like a farm girl. She doesn't roll up her sleeves and pitch in to save the chicks when the incubator goes bad as Auntie Em and Uncle Henry do; disassociations like this seem to parallel the farmer in society who doesn't seem to fit within the changing fabric of America turning industrial. The film is made in 1939, a period in history when growing industry and technology are impacting the traditional farmer. Dorothy longs for a better life, as indicated by the song in the beginning of the movie, "Somewhere over the rainbow blue birds fly...why oh why can't I?" The words imply that there must be a place where joy and happiness abound, and the city of Oz is such a place. The minute she lands in Oz, the addition of color makes it a rainbow-like place, the opposite of colorless Kansas. Oz is that spectacular, futuristic, wizard-managed place full of gadgets and solutions for everyone: the location where Dorothy and her friends face trials like the Wicked Witch, reach goals as the Wizard fulfills their wishes, and return home all the wiser.

A classic tale with a new twist, *The Wizard of Oz* provides important lessons about life that remain as relevant today as they were seventy years ago. The visionary director, Victor Fleming, brought the film to new levels of cinematographic success. It won two Oscars and received nominations for Best Music, Best Art, Best Cinematography - Color, Best Effects - Special Effects, and Best Picture; the movie is still being recognized and won the Saturn Award in 2006. In black-and-white Kansas, everything is seen as right or wrong, but in the colorful Land of Oz, dreams come true. In Kansas,

Miss Gulch punishes Dorothy for letting Toto get in her garden – the woman also claims the dog bit her and now he must be destroyed! The farm hands gruffly address Dorothy's problems with finger-wagging advice that doesn't seem to help Dorothy at all – what's done is done. But when farmhands Hunk, Zeke, and Hickory become residents of Oz (the Scarecrow, Cowardly Lion, and Tin Woodman), they go along to encourage Dorothy toward her goal every step of the way. In Kansas, Dorothy's actions warrant punishment – sent to bed without supper – but in Oz, lessons are taught with inspiration. The company of Glinda, the good witch, assists everyone to oppose difficulties like enchanted trees with bad tempers, poisoned poppies, and evil witches. Dorothy survives the winged monkeys, destroys her enemy, the Wicked Witch, and acquires the broom so the Wizard of Oz will grant their requests. Lessons initiated in Kansas are reinforced on the journey back home from Oz with adventures and problems people can relate to as we all travel through life, looking for our hearts' desires, like friends, homecomings, and loved ones. The lessons in the movie address the needs of children and contain lessons of kindness and hope that give it a timeless quality characteristic of a classic.

What could be more important than universal themes that explore the meaning of life as it relates to family and friendships presented in the movie? Who can argue with the concept that “there is no place like home?” Is there anything sweeter than the joyous celebration of a child returning home to family and friends? The characters discover that they have everything they need for success, like the power to make things happen as Dorothy states, “My heart's desire is in my own backyard. Because, if it isn't there, I never really lost it to begin with.” The message encourages children to look inside themselves and tackle their own personal problems instead of running away from them. According to the author Sutherland, themes that cater to a child's basic needs are essential to great children's literature because they provide experiences and perspectives children can identify with. “If these books center on children's basic needs: if they give them increased insight into their own personal problems and social relationships; if they show that people are more alike than different, more akin to each other than alien; if they convince young readers that

they can do something about their lives – have fun and adventures and get things done... then they are worthwhile books” (Sutherland 318). As such, the journey to Oz and heartwarming homecoming successfully accomplishes this goal.

The characters in the movie have flaws and problems that remind us of ourselves at times, and when characters discover that they possess the ability to overcome their problems with help from friends, important concepts are shared with the viewer. Good friends stick together, and Dorothy and her companions stay close despite their fears and often difficult opposition. According to the online resource *Answers.com*, two periods in literature are represented in the movie through the characters and setting of *The Wizard of Oz*: the Realistic Period, dating from 1865 to 1900, which taught lessons in heavy-handed ways demonstrated by the characters in Kansas; then there is the Symbolistic Period, dating 1900 to 1930, where lessons are learned in positive or more amicable ways, as in Oz. For example, life in Kansas is hard; Dorothy Gale, Auntie Em, and Uncle Henry toil on the farm everyday, fitting into the gritty reality typical during the Realistic Period. When Toto trespasses on Miss Gulch's property, dire consequences occur, and the dog must be destroyed. The predicament of losing something you love, like Dorothy losing Toto, is a universal one; feelings of loneliness or not fitting in is something most children will experience, which makes Dorothy's situation relevant for children. Dorothy isn't the only one with problems in Kansas either. Hunk scolds her as if she didn't have any brains. His answer is that she should avoid Mrs. Gulch's place so Toto won't get into her garden, adding, “Your head isn't made of stuffing.” The Symbolistic Period portrays Hunk as a Scarecrow who can talk. He humbly admits he doesn't have a brain, but he is willing to go with Dorothy—and maybe find some brains for himself as well—and would face a whole matchbox of fire to help. In Kansas, Zeke scolds her and instructs Dorothy to just spit in Miss Gulch's eye, that she should have some courage; he can't live up to his own expectations as evidenced by his panic and fear when Dorothy accidentally falls into the pig pen. However, in Oz, he is the Cowardly Lion, who is just as afraid as everyone else. His lack of courage doesn't damage his reputation in the least. According

to the Wizard, the lion is just a victim of disorganized thinking, confusing courage with knowing when to run. Hickory, in Kansas, is the Tin Woodman in Oz, who has no heart, but his capacity to love is very apparent throughout the adventure. The lesson about facing our fears is presented and characters work to overcome their problems, they discover their gifts, and they reach their goals, which are essential ingredients for creating a great children's classic.

In Oz, Dorothy makes friends and fearlessly accomplishes difficult tasks, like getting the broomstick from the Wicked Witch. The plot and setting take the viewer on a journey over the rainbow, where important lessons are learned in an inspirational way. Dorothy is one of many characters who act bravely, overcome problems, and help others to reach their goals as well. Even the most powerful men in Oz, like the Wizard, take time to help a child find her way home. *The Wizard of Oz* is a wonderful, timeless classic that implements effective treatment of plot, theme, characters, and other characteristics found in classical children's literature that stand the test of time.

Evaluation: *Jacqueline's insightful analysis of the film The Wizard of Oz takes the reader "on a journey over the rainbow where important lessons are learned in an inspirational way"*

The Goddess of the Lodge

Nathan Van Opdorp

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Irygve Thoreson

Assignment: Respond to E.B. White's "Once More to the Lake" with a narrative of your own, in which you learned something you did not know before.

Dimari pushed her seat-back all the way down and covered her eyes with a sleeve of her sweatshirt. I kept driving through the green trees and fields and past countless distant farm houses. My eyes grew tired and began to close. I drank water silently as tiny snore noises came with Dimari's breaths. My eyelids drooped, and I let them close, counting to five-one-thousand and then prying them open for thirty seconds until they wanted to close again. I drank water and swished it around my mouth, trying to wake myself up. I tried to think of what could be making me so tired. I slept enough the night before; I wore my glasses instead of contacts because I didn't want my eyes to feel tired. There was no reason for me to feel drowsy. Dimari slept deeply. Was I feeling drowsy because of her? I did not wake up fully until my girlfriend sat up and told me that her sleep was good.

I pulled the Map-Quest directions up from between my seat and the armrest and unfolded them. Dimari grabbed them from me and recited the turns we would need to take. I asked her about the couple we were going to stay with. She told me that Angie was a cop and seemed more like a man than any woman she'd met before. She reminded me that Faith was a massage therapist with two children. We finally turned off the expressway, hours

later, speeding over the long rural streets that led to Faith and Angie's house.

We pulled up the gravel driveway toward their modular home. A few men several women and a group of kids and young adults were gathered to the right of the house. Out of the men, I immediately tried to pick out Johnny Moon Owl, the one my girlfriend had spoken about so much. For years before I met her, she took part in a group based in Ann Arbor. Johnny and his wife Paula (who preferred the name Ivy) were the leaders. Through the group's activities and talking over the phone, my girlfriend and Johnny had become so close that they went through a Sioux ceremony called the "Making of Relatives." After that, my girlfriend referred to him as "My brother Johnny."

A man with long thinning gray hair rounded the corner of the house and called to my girlfriend, "There she is. Hey sister."

"Hey you." Dimari beamed back. She introduced us, and we shook hands.

I squeaked, "It's an honor to meet you."

Johnny laughed and greeted me and eyed me suspiciously. After building a sweat-lodge for most of the day, we all went to the house to change. When we came back outside, darkness had fallen, and the chill air made our almost bare bodies cold. The women stood in one line and the men in another. Johnny and Angie signaled the women to enter the lodge. Angie entered first, bowing before crawling inside, then Ivy, then Dimari, and Faith's daughter with two of her friends. Johnny led the men to the door. Faith's son crawled in first and one of Angie's brothers next. I followed him, knelt before the doorway, bowed, touched my forehead to the ground and said, "All my relations."

I crawled left around the inside of the lodge until I heard the voice of the man in front of me get close. I sat on the rough ground and found the back edge of the lodge, feeling the poles and blankets with my hands. I could see the dim light of the fire through the door and the blurry forms of the last two men entering the lodge and crawling close to me. Johnny ducked in last and asked Faith, who remained outside, for antlers, four Grandfathers, the drum, cedar, and a water bucket with a ladle. Faith returned to the fire and one by one brought four hot stones to the door. Johnny picked them up with a pair of deer antlers and gently placed each in the pit in the center of the lodge. As

each stone rested in the pit my girlfriend, Ivy, Angie, and Johnny all said, "Welcome Grandfather."

By the third stone, the rest of us joined in. Faith handed in the cedar and the bucket of water and shut the door. Johnny spoke about the East, and we sang a song. During the song, Johnny ladled water onto the stones in the pit. The Grandfathers sizzled and spat as more water spilled from the ladle. We all chanted, "All my relations."

Faith brought two more Grandfathers to the door while the wind cooled the steamy air inside the lodge. Johnny talked about the South and splashed more water on the stones, making the lodge hot with steam. He drummed as we sang. After another door and two more Grandfathers, Johnny spoke of the West, pouring water over the stones. He said the song we would sing was meant to sound like a calm river that flowed into rapids. And as his drum went Wam Wuh Wuh Wam Wam Wuh Wuh Wuh we sang:

(quietly) Wi chi ta Doo Ya Doo Ya Doo Ya
Wi chi ta Doo Ya Doo Ya Hey
Wichida Doo Ya Doo Ya Doo Ya
Wichida Doo Ya Doo Ya Hey

(loudly) Wa Sha Ta Ne Ya Hey Ya Hey Ya
Wa Sha Ta Ne Ya Hey Ya Hey
Wa Sha Ta Ne Ya Hey Ya Hey Ya
Wa Sha Ta Ne Ya Hey Ya Hey.

We repeated the chorus over and over again.

There was a door for the North and then for the Earth. By that time, the intense air in the lodge seared my nostrils and lips with each breath. My nose ran, and my eyes watered; sweat poured, and moisture condensed on every surface of my body. I pressed my back against the frame of the lodge to get further away from the heat. Johnny poured water on the new stones, sending the temperature and the level of steam higher. Ivy and Angie began throwing cedar onto the stones, which smelled good as it burned, but made our throats itch. A few people coughed as Johnny talked about the Earth. Johnny drummed Wam Wuh Wuh Wam Wuh Wuh Wam Wam Wuh Wuh Wuh as we sang:

The Earth is a circle
Oh Ma ma ma

The Earth she is turning
Oh Ma ma ma
The Earth is our mother
Oh Ma ma ma
The Earth she is dancing
Oh Ma ma ma.
Oh Ma ma ma (loud) Hey!
Oh Ma ma ma
Oh Ma ma ma (loud) Hey!
Oh Ma ma ma.

Over and over again we sang.

During the song, I felt for the first time that I was in the womb of the Earth. The jubilation at having so large and constant a mother brought me to tears. I groaned the Oh Ma ma ma's of the song with new gratitude. I sang through my tears, which mixed with sweat and mucus and steam. Everything dripping into my mouth tasted salty as I breathed between verses of the song. A few doors after that, the heat and cedar smoke had completely exhausted me.

Johnny turned the lodge over to Angie and gave the drum to the man on my left. Then Johnny crawled out of the lodge. At the end of the third hour, the rest of us crawled clockwise through the dark to the door. I touched my forehead to the ground saying, "All my relations."

I stood up, faltering and then finding my balance in the cold air. The stars and blurred faces of people by the fire seemed bright as I walked toward the house. I did not think in those moments after the lodge. I only felt the warmth the clothes brought to my body. I tasted the delicious potatoes and carrots and pizza and hot dogs Faith had ready in her kitchen. I drank glasses and glasses of water. Dimari was there, but we were not together the way we usually were. She didn't look at me; I felt a vast distance between us; she seemed to be far away doing something important to her; she silently forbade any connection between us.

We spent the next day with Faith and Ivy, going to Faith's massage office and grocery shopping. Dimari and I prepared a strawberry salad topped with edible flowers for the post wedding dinner. She changed into a purple, black, and green tie-dye dress with tie-dyed spirals down the center and a long-sleeved shirt over it. Outside, the sun approached the horizon, and the moon was visible, glowing orange and yellow in the eastern

sky. As we stood waiting, I noticed Faith and Ivy were calling to Dimari, beckoning her to the circle where Faith and Angie's wedding would take place. I told her they were trying to get her attention, and she walked over to Faith and Ivy. They put their right hands together in the center and each said something I could not hear. After a few moments, they each went to a different part of the circle and faced the moon. They stood with their feet at shoulder's-width palms facing the moon. As they stood there, the wind picked up, and the trees around the yard swayed rhythmically. Everything in my head went silent, as it had the first moment I met Dimari. A little boy in the waiting crowd asked, "What are they doing, Mommy?"

His mother bent down to look at him and reluctantly replied, "They're...meditating, sweetheart."

I felt again as if there was an enormous distance between Dimari and me. This time, however, I was so awestruck by what was happening in front of me, by what she was doing, that I didn't feel she was forbidding me to connect with her. I understood that she was so intensely connected to everything, the moon, the Earth, the trees, and the wind, that I feared to connect with her at the same level. E.B. White writes in "Once More to the Lake" that he felt the "chill of death" as his son pulled his cold swim trunks on; he experienced a strong connection with his son (216). I feared the intensity of Dimari's emotion the way White feared his eventual demise, and I distanced myself from her because of it.

Works Cited

- White, E. B. "Once More to the Lake." *One Man's Meat*. Gardiner, Maine: Tilbury House, 1941. Rpt. in *The Freshman Essay: A College Writer's Companion*. Ed. Trygve Thoreson. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006. 212-216.

Evaluation: *Nathan renders the intensity of this experience quite well, and he offers a thought-provoking and somewhat surprising conclusion to his essay.*

Loss of Traditionalism and the Downfall of the African Man

Jessica Vonasch

Course: Literature 208 (non-Western Literature)
Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: One of the essay choices for African literature was to compare two modern African short stories and to discuss what they communicate.

Throughout history, and especially since the colonization of the continent by European settlers in the late 19th century, life in Africa has generally been characterized by great conflict and strife between the conquering nations and native people. The great upheaval caused by the carving up of Africa during the Congress of Berlin in the 1880s by the conquering British and Dutch resulted in many violent conflicts, such as the battle of Blood River between the Boers and Zulu of South Africa. Even after many countries gained independence, subsequent bloody civil wars, like the Biafran war of the late 1960s in Nigeria, resulted in horrendous death tolls and unrelenting strife as various original tribal groups clashed over land rights and political power. In the face of all this upheaval and change, African traditionalists have been forced to adjust to the wildly fluctuating times. Outside influence has resulted in the decline of traditional religions and values in many parts of Africa, and this cultural change has been the subject, or underlying theme, of many of the works of literature and poetry from that region of the world.

Examples of African literature with this common theme include the Zimbabwean work "A Wasted Land," by Daniel Mandishona, and "Sarzan" by Birago Diop, of Senegal. Both short stories feature characters whose downfalls are in some way caused by their loss of native traditions. Whether caused by an incapability to integrate old ways with the new as with Diop's madman "Sarzan,"

or by the encroachment of modern warfare and political strife on daily life, as with Mandishona's father and Uncle Nicholas in "A Wasted Land," the loss of traditional African values and traditions is characterized as having often disastrous results on the African people. Although these two stories are distinctly different, each author seems to lament in some way the turning away from these traditional values in modern times.

Loss of traditional values causing a character's downfall is perhaps most obliquely represented in the short story "Sarzan," by Birago Diop. Diop tells the story of a native son's return from a 115-year stint in the military as a world-traveling, fully westernized sergeant. Thiemokho Keita is sent back to his Senegalese village, Dougouba, by his local commandant with the order to "'civilize' them a bit" (30). The commandant says to Keita: "You who have traveled so much and seen so much, you can teach the others something about how white men live" (30). At first, Keita is committed to this task and certain that it is the "right" thing to do. For Keita, it seemed that: "It was necessary to break with tradition, to do away with beliefs upon which the village life, the existence of the families, the people's behavior had always rested. Superstition had to be eradicated" (36). Although the villagers treat Keita at first as a returning hero, convinced that the ancestors have brought him back to the fold, they soon realize, however, that he is not there to simply rejoin them, but to "correct" their "savage ways." Keita feels it is his duty to his new Western identity to do so: "Keita declared that if he had come home it was quite simply that he had had to, and that the ancestors had had nothing to do with it. 'Leave the dead be,' he had said. 'They can no longer do anything for the living'" (35). The superstitions he attacks include the sacrificing of chickens for a good harvest; the supposedly mind-opening ceremony of male and female circumcision; sacrificing to Dassiri, a sacred tree that protects the village; and the keeping of his own family's spirit in a pouch in his hut. He destroys many artifacts with vigor after his return to the village, smashing ceremonial pots and desecrating his own family's spirit pouch.

Although the story's narrator shares Keita's modern perspective, as he is a western-trained veterinarian and Keita's driver on his trip to Dougouba, he seems to

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appreciate the worth of certain village traditions, whereas Keita is wont to reject them completely. He expresses a use for the Koteba endurance test, for instance, where the youth of the village are beaten with whips to develop and prove their endurance of pain. As the narrator queries, "What had made Thiemokho Keita himself, and others like him, able to fight valiantly beneath skies where the sun itself is very often sickly, to labor with heavy packs on their backs, enduring cold, thirst, and hunger?" (32). He clearly is suggesting that this sort of test, though grueling, does seem to make the men more able to bear their tough existence. The narrator suggests that such character-building ceremonies among his own people have disappeared: "I was thinking that as far as I could see we had still gained nothing, that perhaps we had left these old ways behind without having caught up with the new ones" (32). He seems to be suggesting that the failure to replace these traditional rites of passage with new ones has been a great loss to his people.

In the end, Keita seems to pay for the destruction he rains down upon the old ways; he becomes possessed by the very spirits he is attempting to eradicate. At the narrator's return a year after leaving Keita behind in the village, the locals tell him that the spirits have "taken his mind" (37). Keita cries out constantly and chants day and night, supposedly in the voice of his dead ancestors. In his ranting, he reminds everyone that the spirits of the dead are everywhere in nature, and they are restless, fearful, and angry. He cries: "Fear lurks in the hut / In the smoking torch / In the orphaned river / In the weary, soulless forest / In the anxious, faded trees" (39). Although such bizarre behavior would certainly prod a western psychologist to commit the man to an institution, I find it interesting that in Diop's story, it is the villagers themselves who label Keita "Sarzan-the-Mad" (39), despite the fact that his words are supported by their belief system. Perhaps his crimes against their ways were simply too great to forgive, and that is why in the end they reject him as mad despite his complete—though extreme—return to the old ways.

We see another spiral into madness resulting from a native African turning against the traditions of his people in Daniel Mandishona's "A Wasted Land." This story shows us a more modernized Africa: Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) in the 1980s. In the story, we see the

effect of the eleven years of military conflict during the Zimbabwean independence movement that ended with the country's self-government in 1981. Mandishona's narrator Bernard is a young man whose uncle and father both ultimately commit suicide as a result of the war and its role in the destruction of their traditional way of life.

Uncle Nicholas is characterized as a brilliant man, a "gifted former herd-boy who wrote prize-winning essays" (59) and went on to be educated at the University of London after he was exiled from Rhodesia due to political activities in his youth. As his nephew points out, "It was an inescapable yet poignant irony that he had gone overseas to better himself, not to come back in disgrace to swell the ranks of burned-out, unhinged 'been-tos' with minds contaminated by too much learning" (57). Yet that was the result of his Westernization, according to the narrator. Although the exact cause of his madness is unresolved in the story, the observation that going overseas resulted in his disgrace certainly implies a disdain for those who abandon the old ways. Uncle Nicholas causes further heartache for the family during his absence by taking a British wife and fathering several half-white children. When his British daughter Michelle comes from Manchester for his funeral, she is made to feel unwelcome by Uncle Nicholas' African widow Emily, who her nephew then observes "shamelessly orchestrating a verbal boycott directed at her and her white boyfriend" because she feels that the girls' mother is "solely responsible for my uncle's fatal madness" (64). Bernard, the narrator, says that he feels guilty for this attack on his cousin, as he is cognizant of the fact that the circumstances of her own birth are beyond her control. He is alone in his remorse, though; the rest of the family plays along, being hostile and rude to the newcomer. This certainly indicates the level of disdain that Nicholas's family feels toward him for having committed this ultimate sin, creating this family that knows nothing of the old ways and fathering children who cannot even speak any of his native Shona tongue.

The world of "A Wasted Land" is certainly more westernized than that of "Sarzan," with Bernard's father as the owner of several small stores with which the family makes their living. Thus Bernard's father, who has presumably never left the country, still represents

a third figure in these stories that suffers for the effects of the West in his homeland. His choice of this Western occupation, a very capitalist one, seems to have happened in self-defense, a rare way to survive in a war-riddled land where the children hear the "thunder-roll of gun-battles raging" (62) when they press their ears to the walls at bedtime. Mandishona reconciles this modern job with old traditions when he describes Bernard's father as "a proud man...Perhaps it was this unfortunate tribal trait that fostered within his stubborn head a self-deluding and dangerous overestimation of his own capabilities" (63). This rare remaining tribal trait, his pride, ultimately causes him to engage in many poor financial decisions. That, combined with the omnipresent war which damages his ability to run his business at all, results in the ultimate impoverishment of his family. And in the end, rather than let the family know the extent of his failure, he kills himself. His son says: "Those debts accumulated during the war proved too much even for a man of his resilience. Like Uncle Nicholas and so many others, he survived the war only to die of its effects when the peace arrived" (66). So the war, a result of the colonization that destroyed the traditional ways of life in his land, is indirectly the cause of his father's downfall. As the doctor/coroner relates to Bernard, "Your father must have really wanted to die" (65). This observation is due to the fact that his father's death is the result of not only slitting his wrists but drinking alcohol and rat poison as well. Mandishona seems to be saying that in a male-dominated culture not so far removed from a lifestyle of hunting and gathering (the "old ways"), the war and its modern demands on the people are simply too much for a proud man like him to bear. The narrator Bernard says: "Wars claim their victims in many different ways. They have tentacles that reach beyond the definable violence of battlefields and muddy trenches. They continue to claim casualties long after the physical wounds of shrapnel and gunfire have healed" (59), and as illustrated by Bernard's uncle and father, this certainly seems to be true.

It is not only these individual men's lives, but a whole way of life that seems to have been destroyed by the constant war, as the narrator is reminded when he hears his mother's stories of her childhood: "Our mother told us stories of her own childhood, growing up in a country

that would perhaps be irrevocably lost to us" (62). This seems to be a rather melancholy idea to the author, who clearly feels that almost all has been lost, even the past, by this war raging through the land of his ancestors.

Thus it seems, according to Mandishona, that the encroachment of Western culture affects not only those who venture out and seek it, as in the cases of Keita/Sarzan and Uncle Nicholas. The rise of Western influence and the subsequent downfall of native traditions is so pandemic that even those who remain on their native lands, like Bernard's father, may suffer and die because of it. The war brings it in, as colonization did initially. Despite the independence from Europe won by these once proud African nations, I think both authors are trying to comment on the damage that westernization has inflicted on the native people, resulting in the death of their native traditions, as well as the insanity and/or death of an innumerable amount of native Africans themselves.

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- Mandishona, Daniel. "A Wasted Land." *The Heinemann Book of Contemporary African Short Stories*. Eds. Chinua Achebe and C.L. Innes. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992. 57-66.

Evaluation: *This paper is an excellent analysis of the conflict between Africa and the West, as it has played out in the twentieth century, and as it has been revealed in modern literature.*

Christopher Okigbo: The Full Measure of a Poet

Christine C. Welsh

Course: Literature 208 (non-Western Literature)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *Students could research and explore the life and poetry of Christopher Okigbo, a Nigerian poet of the 1960s, as one of the essay choices for African literature.*

Times of great upheaval have often brought out the voices of poets, whose works of commentary and protest chronicle the events of their time while speaking out for their people. One such poet was Christopher Okigbo, whose poetry reflected not only the political turbulence in Nigeria in the 1960's, but his deep love and commitment to both his historical roots and to the ideals he held for his country. This commitment would eventually lead Okigbo to the ultimate sacrifice, his own death in an unsuccessful battle for an independent Biafra. Although his death was untimely, Okigbo achieved a rare level of self-realization and vision in his relatively short lifetime, so much so that he remains a poet of inspiration even today.

Born in Ojoto, Nigeria in 1932, Christopher Ifeanyichukwu Okigbo was raised with both western and traditional influences. Raised in a family of Catholic converts, Okigbo was not only educated in westernized schools, but also exposed to the traditions of rural village life. Okigbo was an excellent student with achievements in classical studies, sports and music. After graduating with honors from the university in Ibadan, Okigbo worked in several fields, including business, as a secondary school

teacher, and as the university librarian in Nsukka. It was at Nsukka where Okigbo found a vibrant atmosphere in which to explore his creativity as a poet. Finally, he started a publishing company with his contemporary, author Chinua Achebe (Aiyejina n. pag.).

According to Funso Aiyejina, Okigbo viewed poetry as "a means of self-expression, for projecting the many moods of the inner self, and as a record of inner conflict within the context of rituals and myths" (585). This much is clear in his works "Four Canzones" and "Heavensgate" written in 1962. In one of the canzones, "Lament of the Lavender Mist," Okigbo writes,

And she led me by the water
Believing me a child-
Echoes of the waters of the beginning –
But the outstretched love
Dried as it reached me –
Shadows of the fires of the end.

These lines show Okigbo's modern influences—the formless waters of the biblical Genesis as well as the apocalyptic fires of the Revelation. However, Okigbo also meant for the canzones to be accompanied by drums and flute, as a testament to his traditional African heritage (Aiyejina n. pag.). In "Heavensgate," Okigbo shows his own evolution as a spiritual seeker, having inherited his grandfather's legacy as a priest of the river goddess, Idoto. When he writes "before you, Mother Idoto, naked I stand / Before your watery presence a prodigal," Okigbo gives himself over fully to the goddess as the prodigal son coming home to his roots. He further petitions the goddess, "Out of the depths my cry / give ear and hearken," in a plea for acceptance in a spiritual realm to which he would return after having been raised in the conflicting culture of Catholicism. This image of Okigbo offering himself for ritual cleansing reveals his growing awareness of things larger than the self, and of sacrificing one's self for something greater (Awonoor n. pag.).

Like many writers experiencing turmoil in their homelands, Okigbo was a keen observer of the political landscape. In 1965, while witnessing the escalation of the ongoing political crisis in Nigeria, Okigbo began his final set of poems, "Path of Thunder." In these poems, we hear the full measure of a poet returned completely

to his roots, with political connotations and prophetic warnings framed in the mythical language of a traditional storyteller (Aiyejina n. pag.). The themes of thunder, lightning, drums and miracles in the "Path of Thunder" poems resonate throughout, almost like the incantations of a griot, chanted repetitively as if to imprint their multiple layers of meaning onto the collective memory of the listeners.

In "Thunder Can Break," Okigbo writes of a "Fanfare of drums, wooden bells: iron chapter; / And our dividing airs are gathered home," describing the growing movement, the "miracle of thunder," of a people ready to fight for their independence. He calls out to the government, the "iron" that would cage this miracle,

Bring them out we say, bring them
out
Faces and hands and feet,
The stories behind the myth, the
plot
Which the ritual enacts,

showing the complete integration of the past and present within himself, the poet/priest bringing the potent wisdom of his spiritual heritage face to face with the current crisis. In the lines, "Thunder can break – earth bind me fast - / obduracy, the disease of elephants," he implies that the willfulness of a people in rebellion may yet break through the stubbornness of the opposing government, and Okigbo is willing to hold tight and see it through. However, the menace of such an uprising is all too clear to Okigbo who warns in "Come Thunder,"

And a great fearful thing already
tugs at the cables of the
open air,
A nebula immense and
immeasurable, a night of
deep waters –
An iron dream unnamed and
unprintable, a path of stone.

Indeed, "a great fearful thing" was brewing in January of 1966, when an attempted coup by mostly Igbo military officers resulted in retaliatory mass killings

of Igbo people living in northern Nigeria. The largely unsuccessful coup was the flashpoint of a civil war between the government of Nigeria and its eastern region, which would declare itself as an independent nation, the Republic of Biafra ("Biafra" n. pag.). In "Hurrah for Thunder," Okigbo seems to note this as a transient victory: "Alas the elephant has fallen - / Hurrah for thunder," all the while cautioning that a replacement government might not be an improvement. When he writes, "But already the hunters are talking about pumpkins: / If they share the meat let them remember thunder," he seems to be saying that those who would create an independent government in Biafra, should be wary of forgetting that the opposing forces still have their own formidable power. Nevertheless, Okigbo knows that, "If I don't learn to shut my mouth I'll soon go to hell, / I, Okigbo, town-crier, together with my iron bell," recognizing that the voice of a revolutionary is often in danger of being silenced, whether by the forces he would oppose, or from within the instability of a newly fledged nation (Obiechina n. pag.).

Although Okigbo died within weeks of the start of Nigeria's military action, his final poem, "Elegy for Alto" is eerily prophetic not only of his own death, but of the blockade that would last for nearly three years and the eventual collapse of Biafra, which received little to no recognition or support from other nations ("Biafra" n. pag.). Meant to be accompanied by drums, the lines intone a deadly march of destruction and corruption. In wave after wave, the forces of war bear down on them:

The eagles have come again,
The eagles rain down on us –
Politicians are back in giant hidden
steps of howitzers, of detonators –
The eagles descend on us,
Bayonets and cannons –
The robbers descend on us to strip
us of our laughter, of our thunder.

However, even against such hopelessness and chaos, Okigbo's willingness to give himself over to the cause is unwavering as he beseeches, "Earth, unbind me; let me be the prodigal; let this be the ram's ultimate prayer to the tether." Okigbo believed in the greater cause of independence enough that he was willing to die for it

(Awonoor n. pag.). Yet even as he would offer himself as a sacrificial ram, Okigbo writes that “the new star appears, foreshadows its going / Before a going and coming that goes on forever...” realizing that this conflict is only one of an endless succession of human discord (Obiechina n. pag.).

With the onset of military action in June of 1967, Okigbo immediately enlisted in the Biafran army. Two months later, he was killed in action while defending the town of Nsukka. There is a certain sense of irony that the place in which Okigbo began to find his voice as a poet would be the same place where that voice was stilled (Aiyejina n. pag.).

The poetry of Christopher Okigbo reveals to us a man of uncommon awareness and vision. According to Achebe, “his vibrancy and heightened sense of life touched everyone he came into contact with” (qtd. in Aiyejina 585). This generosity of spirit clearly shows through in his works and in the way he died, defending the people with whom he felt deeply connected. With his uncompromising ideals, he could hardly have done otherwise.

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Evaluation: *This is good analytical and expository writing. Christine acquaints us carefully with this author, who is unfamiliar to many, and she synthesizes his life, poetry, and purposes for writing into a very informative essay.*

Irrationality and Unreality as the Driving Forces in Faulkner's "Dry September"

Denis Yavorskiy

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

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

The short story "Dry September," by William Faulkner, depicts an apartheid southern community, Jefferson, several decades after the United States civil war ended legal slavery of African Americans. Although the institution of slavery had been officially abolished, African-Americans were still far from equal or free in southern society. The idea of a free trial for an African-American in the south during this period was preposterous, and as a result, multitudes of black men wound up in prisons for even the pettiest of crimes, serving unreasonable sentences and spending that time doing hard labor. But that wasn't even the beginning of the plight blacks faced. The plot of "Dry September" centers on an angry mob that lynches a black man named Will Mayes. He had been rumored to have assaulted a single woman in her upper thirties, named Minnie Cooper. The story is very complex, despite its simple plot. Faulkner employs many techniques that may even throw the reader off, but ultimately lead to the same thematic assertion. Jefferson community is plagued by irrationality and ignorance, and its African-American and female individuals are inevitably marginalized.

Jefferson community can be best described as racist and paranoid. The racism is apparent from the very beginning, when the men are sitting in the barber shop and all they can talk about is getting the black man for

what he did. It isn't even clear who the black man is, or even what he did, if anything at all. Hawkshaw, the barber, is ostracized for even defending a black man. It was not uncommon for white men to rally up a posse and police blacks themselves. "The absence of legal slavery seems to have increased the outrage with which the men view the possibility that a black may have failed to 'keep his place'" (Sutton 176). Many southerners (even until this day) heavily resent the outcome of the Civil War and take pride in the Confederacy, along with its practices and institutions. Since slavery was abolished by force and didn't end racism, blacks being free in the south only augmented the resentment whites had for them, along with the fears they already had, such as the widespread fear of black men violating white women. According to Sutton, this is because of an "overwhelming myth" (177) in which white women are pure and chaste and primitive black men don't know any better than to take advantage of them. This paranoia is what initiated the unwarranted lynching and probable murder of Will Mayes.

Will Mayes was beaten by a mob of white men because of a rumor that originated with Minnie Cooper. The rumor was very vague, and didn't clearly mention Will Mayes or even the exact act perpetrated. Sutton points out that Hawkshaw, Will Mayes' supposed friend, is the first one in the story who mentions his name to McLendon (175). This is a very subtle irony because Hawkshaw was the alleged voice of reason, trying at least at first to defend Will Mayes, but it may even have been his own big mouth that sealed Will Mayes' fate to begin with. The men, led by an irate McLendon, rounded up Willic, handcuffed him, beat him despite his cooperation, and drove him away to a secluded area. Ultimately, although it is never explicitly stated, it can be surmised that Will Mayes lost his life. There isn't any real reason to drive the victim far away, unless he will be left somewhere to die. A close read of Faulkner's chilling last mention of Will Mayes also reveals symbolism that might hint at this conclusion. "They went on: the dust swallowed them: the glare and the sound died away. The dust of them hung for a while, but soon the eternal dust absorbed it again" (344).

Whether it is the case that the angry mob took the life of Will Mayes or not, it is indisputable that they acted on irrationality and displaced aggression. There are

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several factors operating on the minds of the men that steer them all away from the rational choice of not lynching and possibly killing a man based on an unfounded assumption without a clear origin. A driving cause in this, obviously, was racism. It is made blatantly obvious that Jefferson community is a racist town in which it is accepted as principle that blacks are fundamentally inferior; however, there is more to this dynamic. Racism exists even in moderate communities and doesn't always evolve into violence. The climate had an impact on everybody in the town. There had been a drought for about two months prior to the day of the story, and it was very warm. "The scapegoat was sacrificed to prevent drought, thus assuring the continued prosperity of the community" (Towner and James 100). This sacrifice is not necessarily religious, like that of the Aztecs, but rather it is a misdirected measure of compensation. During troubling times, there is an aching need to take action. But most contradictory of all motives is the alleged protection of the women. The men are rallied because they think they're justified in their heinous act since it's a measure to prevent rape. "The white men of the town are more interested in maintaining the power structure in which they 'protect' women and terrorize blacks" (Roberts qtd. in Towner and James 99). Even the impression of this power structure is an outrage. It is an illusion that the men perpetuate to convince themselves and those around them that their hatred and resulting criminal acts are not just justified, but in fact noble and heroic. It's not exactly a lie they formulate to tell others; the men themselves are blinded.

McLendon can be seen as the most blinded one of all, especially at the end of the story. The leader of the pack, great protector of women, goes home after a hard day's work fighting for women's rights to find his wife still awake:

"Look at the clock" he said, lifting his arm, pointing. She stood before him, her face lowered, a magazine in her hands. Her face was pale, strained, and weary-looking...he released and half struck, half flung her across the chair, and she lay there and watched him quietly as he left the room. (345)

Most likely if McLendon had the intellectual

capacity to doubt the consistency of his actions, he would have put his doubts to rest by believing that he has a right to discipline his wife, since she is his through the name of the good lord. The description of McLendon's wife as weary at the sight of her husband hints to the consistently abusive relationship between them. Her face remains low, as if to avert his eyes, as if she's about to be punished. Ultimately, McLendon's actions are consistent. If he comes across an opportunity where he can assert himself by making someone defenseless suffer, he seizes it. This also shows the struggle women have to face in their marriages, as many women have no defense against this kind of abuse; it is in the fabric of the social community. Whereas a single woman is wronged and frowned upon by society, a married woman is wronged by her abusive sexist husband.

The unmarried woman referred to in the previous paragraph, of course, is Minnie Cooper. She is a great example of a woman being marginalized by society. First of all, women themselves are separated from men and typically congregate in their own circles. The men spend time in the barber shop, making common conversation of white supremacy, while the women remain in the stores and movie theatres. Set apart in this separate sphere of living, Minnie is cast out, because unlike other women, she has no husband. "She watched the girls with whom she had grown up as they married and got homes and children, but no man ever called on her steadily until the children of the other girls had been calling her 'auntie' for several years, all the while their mothers told them in bright voices about how popular aunt Minnie had been as a girl" (341). Here, women are portrayed as wives to be selected and bear children. The fact that nobody chose Minnie is what diminished her reputation, what sets her apart. That is the reason guys don't look at her; until, that is, that they learn that she was supposedly molested. A woman without a husband in this society is given an unspoken condemnation. This negative stereotype of unmarried women is shown when Minnie is revealed to have a drinking problem. "Usually by that hour there would be a scent of whiskey on her breath. It was supplied to her by a youth, a clerk at the soda fountain. 'Sure: I buy it for the old gal. I reckon she's entitled to have a little fun' (341). The youth who buys it for her says he

does it out of sympathy, as if living like her, a woman without a husband, is somehow pathetic. The society she lives in makes her feel sorry enough for herself that she would stoop that low. Many women in Faulkner's stories, in fact, end up crumbling under the heavy pressures of their society. According to Carothers, among many other female characters, Minnie Cooper and Emily Grierson from "A Rose for Emily" are both "driven to perverse or violent rebellion against the prevailing community standard" (49). Both of those characters were unfortunate enough to be single women.

Minnie Cooper's character is a fantastic example of a person being contorted by the various vectors of public opinion. She created a rumor out of a longing for attention, of which she has been deprived. Since nobody took her hand in marriage, she became like an undesired piece of furniture, gathering dust, as it remains unwanted on the shelf. It is perhaps bitterness or loneliness that drives the rumor. Then, since she had her hand in Will Mayes' death and had part of a scandalous tale, she was the center of attention. "She makes her claim and momentarily gains...a renewed sense of sex appeal" (Crane 413). Crane makes the same mistake Rogalus makes, in believing that Minnie Cooper originated the accusation against Will Mayes. Rogalus even goes on to say that Minnie Cooper, like McLendon, is "very desperate and dangerous" (212). Minnie Cooper was starved for attention and acceptance, and she made up a somewhat innocent rumor most likely to make herself be more interesting. Minnie never stated a name in the story. She was, however, overwhelmed and overjoyed by the attention she was getting.

A pinnacle scene for Minnie is at the movie theatre, where she has her hysterical breakdown and must be escorted out. According to Rogalus, Minnie attends the movies to disconnect from reality and be "oblivious to the world of the real and suffering" (212). For Minnie, a woman ostracized by society, there is little joy to be had from everyday living, and that joy usually needed to be washed down with whiskey. But in the movie theatre, Minnie can escape. Not only can she escape her own life, but the fact that she had participated in Will Mayes' unmerited death. "Only life 'caught' in lithographs and then animated on the silver screen brings a tingle to

Minnie's lips" (Mathews 24). As a woman, she feels powerless over the forces around her, and so her solutions to problems are all of a similar, isolated, kind. She either drinks alcohol to numb herself or averts herself from her unsettling emotions by placing a moving picture before her eyes. Ultimately, her propensity to escape reality is what sparked the mob's search for the probably innocent Will Mayes, and she may even share responsibility for what happened to him. Either way, as a result of her struggle with society, Minnie is fixated on what some critics of Faulkner refer to as unreality.

While in a literary analysis it is essential to examine a story's plot, characters, and tone in order to decipher the underlying themes particular to Faulkner's writing, due to the complexity and perplexity of his writing, there is an opportunity to analyze so much more than what is on the surface. First of all, Faulkner's amazing tact as a writer is exposed in his removal of fact from the story. It is never revealed whether Will Mayes was guilty, or if he survived. "By giving the reader the same information or the same lack of information, that the mob has, Faulkner dramatizes for the reader the mob's disregard for facts" (Sutton 176). What the original rumor even was is never made clear. The reader is prone to think that it was a rumor of rape, since that is what the men are discussing, but whether Minnie actually contended the notion that she was raped or even assaulted or not is unstated. Faulkner inserts the reader into the story this way. Rather than simply stating that the men were uninformed, he creates the atmosphere of ignorance in the very content of his story, leaving it up to the reader to experience and conclude. The purpose of this is to make the reader realize that he too is guilty of making assumptions, to unmask the reader's own pull to irrationality.

Another technique Faulkner skillfully employs is figurative language. Persistent hissing and dust imagery is used in the story to convey the meaning. When the mob is attacking Will Mayes, the narrator states, "The others expelled their breath in a dry hissing and struck him with random blows" (343). The fact that their breath is hissing and they are striking him with blows rather than simply punching or hitting creates the image of serpents out of these men. In the haze of Faulkner's constructed ignorance, these men appear as monsters, devoid of

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thought and human qualities, preying on a helpless bystander. Another persistent image is that of dust, as in the multiple mentions of dust during the scene with Will Mayes. "No one is left untouched by the dust or snake imagery. Dust is the only fitting substance for those who are the equivalents of serpents on earth" (Moore 48). Since the reference to dust and hissing are perpetual in the story, they are meaningful. Jefferson community is a desert, both literally and figuratively. During the drought, they lack not only water, but humanity, which seems to shrivel up without the proper climate.

According to Rogalus, "William Faulkner's 1930 short story "Dry September" exhibits much of the same technical craftsmanship as his classic novels" (21b). The story is very densely layered and definitely takes multiple reads in order to actually grasp the meaning. Much, however, will remain a constant mystery, even to Faulkner's most esteemed critics. Some assert that Minnie Cooper was a perpetrator in Will Mayes' death, while others claim that Hawkshaw was the fool who led the men to his own friend. Faulkner's writing style only helps to build the central theme, that the men in this story, the men who adhere to and act upon the racist agenda, the same men who objectify and marginalize their own white women that they are claiming to protect, are self-contradictory. If one would take the step of extrapolating the meaning of this story to Faulkner's perceptions of mankind in general, the story claims that man is ultimately, in his core, an irrational being. His actions, beliefs, and perceptions fall prey to public opinion as much as to myths and changes in the weather.

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Evaluation: *Denis' passion for Faulkner's "Dry September" is evident in this research paper. His writing is focused, energetic, and precise, and he integrates key passages and secondary sources into his text very effectively.*

Afterword: A Naked Rant

Kris Piepenburg

[What follows is an impromptu “rant” inspired by Julie Swenson’s paper, on pp 123-124 of this issue. There is a persona in this rant, probably suited for the actor Robert Downey Jr., so some of the writing is “for effect.” I considered editing it to make it less unsavory—but removing the unsavoriness would destroy the style and give it less impact. So, enjoy it (or not), and believe about 99% of what is here.]

Tonight, I drove naked after midnight up to Lake County to buy a pack of cigarettes, in below zero temperatures (what an idiot! I oughta just quit this!). I saved money on the cigarettes, but wasted gas and continued to put myself at risk, damaging my well-being. Wow, it was cold. The Sears Essentials store on Hicks Road was going out of business. The shopping center parking lot on Hicks Road just sat there, a vastness, salted and bleached, desolate under its bright white lights. Going out of business. I had put in 12 hours today, teaching the last classes of the semester and doing final page layouts of this *Anthology*. And I couldn’t rest. I had writing to do. I had writing to do. I tried to sleep but could not get this thought off of my mind. I had writing to do.

I am at the midpoint of my teaching career, and I often feel that I have lost my passion for written expression, that there is nothing new to say—and the resulting silence is not that of Zen wisdom. For this reason, I am grateful to be around so many students and faculty who value the art of expression. In the “Harper Students on Writing” section, Katy Spencer reminds us that writing can free the find, and that it can be anything we want it to be. This is a license I have forgotten that I carry. There is always something new to say, Ms. Spencer reminds me. And Julie Swenson’s paper, “A Rant in the Style of Dennis Miller,” reminds me of passion and style. Writing can be everything and anything. Why not speak? Why not write? Why not *scream*? Maybe *then*, Zen wisdom.

A cold midnight, at the end of another semester—what have I learned? This summer, in preparing for English 101, I read what I have always viewed as sort of a standard and predictable composition text: Buscemi and Smith’s *75 Readings*, now in its twelfth edition. I approached this with dread, as I expected to have my

intuitions confirmed, that this was a text of English 101 boiler-plate: a comparison of Generals Grant and Lee, a trip to the lake with E.B. White, experiences with racism as related by Richard Wright, how women and men communicate differently, etc, worthwhile writings, all, but so familiar in composition collections that when I encounter them, my mind shuts off. I always wonder, if the thought of having to read something doesn’t inspire *me*, what about my students? The book *was* a good read, though. I read Orwell’s “Shooting an Elephant” for the first time (yes, I really am a college professor), feeling the bind that Orwell was put in while stationed as a police officer in Burma, during the British colonial period; I read “Shattered Sudan,” and came away with a much clearer understanding of the difficulties plaguing this divided nation; I read about the bizarre marriage of China’s capitalist economy and communist government; and some enlightening accounts of biculturalism in the United States, by Indian, Japanese, and Native American authors. Many of these readings ended up on my new English 101 syllabus, and most of the students were interested in these perspectives.

So what? While I was unable to sleep this evening, I reflected on the study and discussion I’d shared with a hundred or so students this semester, and though this mid-career semester has been a challenging one, I felt more invigorated the more I reflected. A group of students in my English 101 class researched the country of Zimbabwe and developed some in-depth understanding of the problems plaguing this nation. They know a lot more than when they started. Another group researched the war in Iraq, the best they could, to try to get some sense of how things are and where they are headed. A third group tried to find out about al-Qaeda and Afghanistan. Other groups researched the AIG bailout and the home mortgage crisis plaguing the U.S. economy. These were not easy things to research and write about, due to their vast scope and the sense of helplessness that we all probably feel, at some level, when considering these extreme problems that characterize the 21st century. The world’s a mess, there is no doubt. But some courage in facing these gigantic topics led to a little bit of learning about them, which is a good thing. Where there is learning, there is hope. Maybe we ain’t quite out ‘o business, yet.

But...as I left campus today, I heard two people talking in the P Building hallway, about how “there is no way the government can pay off all this debt,” and I thought about what I’d heard on the radio this morning, that the

government is extending the TARP program, providing financial relief to the banking industry, until October of 2010. Then, I thought about websites I'd recently heard about, designed specifically for people to beg at; I think one of them was actually called "begslist." On the radio broadcast about this, there were interviews with people who had posted requests for cash and toys for their kids this Christmas. People weren't getting many "hits." I also reflected on a discussion I'd had with a music professor, on state funding to community colleges—it's been cut in half again because of Illinois' financial crisis, so Harper is now funded by the state at a rate of 3.5%, down from 7%, when the state is supposed to be providing one-third of Harper's funding. We're feeling the pinch and the sting of it all. Get this--and this is true--the third-shift custodial staff here is being told to cut down on use of supplies--no rubber gloves until after New Year's! And with H1N1 on every toilet seat! Or is it the morning-after-retch of Bacardi and Blaaaagojevichhhh? What a party! I told the music professor that Illinois needs to raise its income tax. That'll taste even better, in Stroger County. We've been Rodded and Todded. Screw the Purell from the pump dispenser...give me a Quinn and Tonic...a double!!

Now, at my basement computer on a below-zero night, in the bunker, as it were, with two pair of socks on, I am thinking, what is going to happen to this world and the people in it? What are all of these students at Harper, surrounded by a world falling apart, going to end up doing? How long will this whole un-Zen existence run on money that seems less and less real, every day? Will knowledge eventually pay off? Will my student who quit Auto Zone because of some stupid thing his manager said eventually circulate through Trak Auto and Pep Boys before returning to Auto Zone, with a few college classes under his belt but stuck with the same lousy retail opportunities, because it is too hard to afford college and life at the same time? And then have to face his idiotic manager again? God, I hope not. Uh-oh, here it is: *And that is the message I want to give to my students, I guess.* To hang in there, develop a talent and a knowledge base, get really good at something, become something special that "the world" cannot beat down or use, and never go back to Auto Zone. Developing some sort of personal ingenuity or expertise may be one way to stay off of "begslist" in this below-zero economy, and maybe even lead to some personal or spiritual fulfillment. I hope so, anyway. I hope this for all of my students.

And the other thing I hope, as I reflected on another video review of the Tiananmen Square demonstrations of 1989 (non-Western Literature), is that we will stop taking it. I don't know how a large part of the American public can remain sleepwalking, being "mostly ok" because they mostly have enough of what they need, when the government is printing money to bail out gigantic insurance companies and banks, and a "red light photo-enforced" company based in Australia makes millions off of complacent suburbanites who stop a little over the white line or make a harmless right turn on red. I mean, \$100 a pop for that little infraction. We may as well all have sensors intravenously implanted, so that we can be fined instantly at these intersections. Yes, *in this economy*, with people begging for financial help on line, these suburban communities rake in hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, at \$100 a pop, automatically, for virtually *nothing*, probably from plenty of people who really need that \$100. How long will this country be asleep? I think of the many, many things wrong, some far from home, some right here, and I wonder, will a mass movement ever begin to focus on them, as Solidarity addressed things in Poland, as sledgehammers addressed the Berlin Wall, as eventually a line of people four miles long marched spontaneously to Tiananmen Square in 1989? I don't know...maybe I am just out of the loop...haven't been to a "Tea Party" yet, never been on a "Million Man March," never lobbied down in Springfield. I haven't done nuthin'. "Begslist." A day full of car bombs exploding in Iraq and Pakistan. The TARP program. The AIG bailout. Red light photo-enforced. Community college funding cut in half again. Going out of business.

Well, now what? My mind is back in business, but I've dug a hole of negativity. I'm frozen to the basement office chair. I've got papers to grade, bills to pay, and Christmas shopping to do. I don't know how to sum it up, other than to say two very simple things: *I wish I knew more. I wish things were different.* Well, how about that—a really smooth advertising slogan for college education just *spilled out...there is potential here.h.* [Voice-over] "Do you find yourself saying, 'I wish I knew more?' 'I wish things were different?'" [Potential Student] "Yes!" [Voice-over] "Well, as everyone is saying these days, 'It is a good time to be in school,' and you know, knowledge is good, and things *really need* to be different. So, *let's just get this done*, here at Harper College."

I guess I'll get dressed, now. It's pretty cold. Can I get you anything? Purell and Coke? A Quinn and Tonic?

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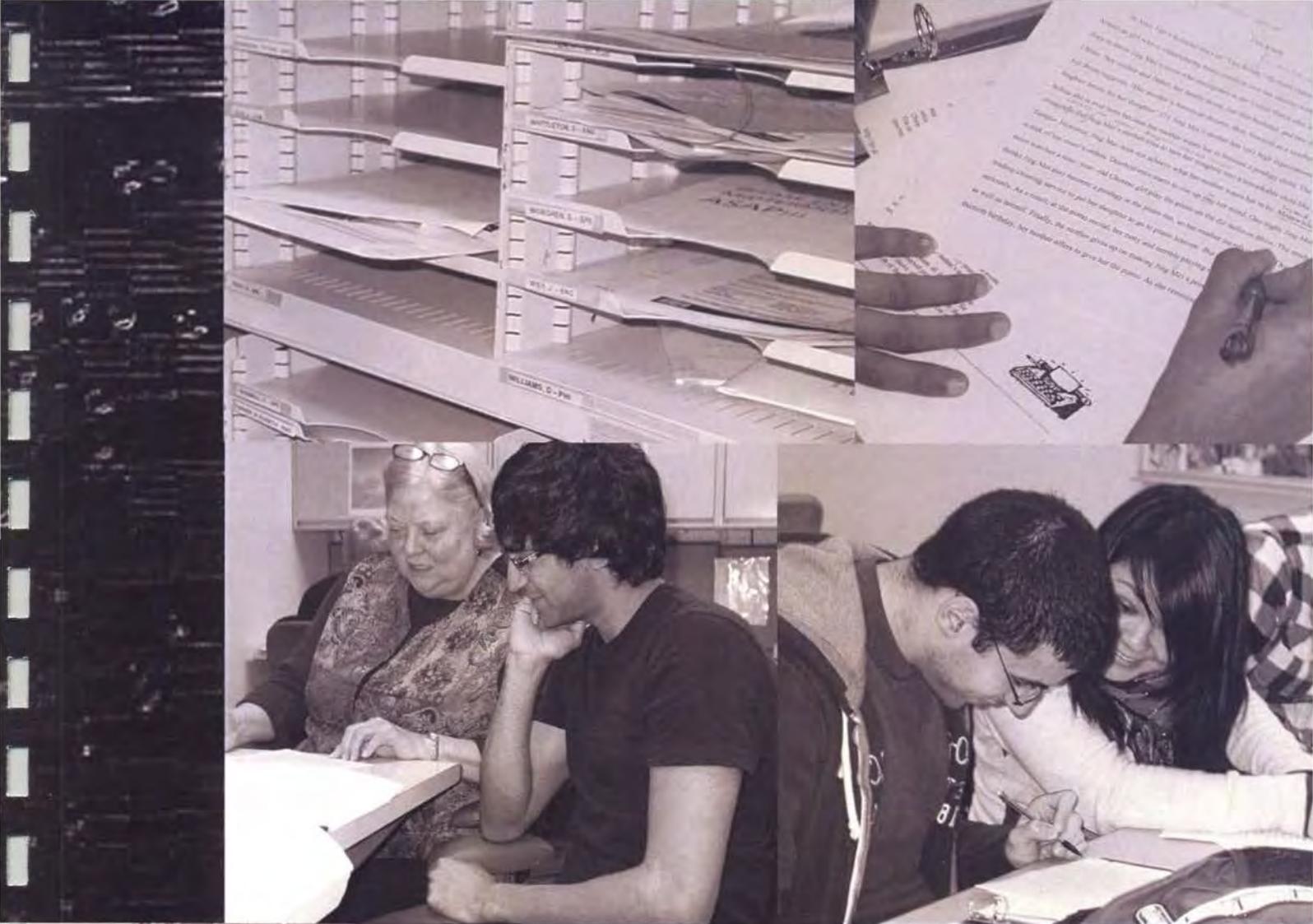
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Contributing Faculty

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Barbara Butler

Teresa Chung

Nancy Davis

John Garcia

Cheryl Golemo

Herbert Hartman

Kurt Hemmer

Greg Herriges

Leona Laouras

Sarah Lindsey

Richard Middleton-Kaplan

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