

3808

a journal of critical writing

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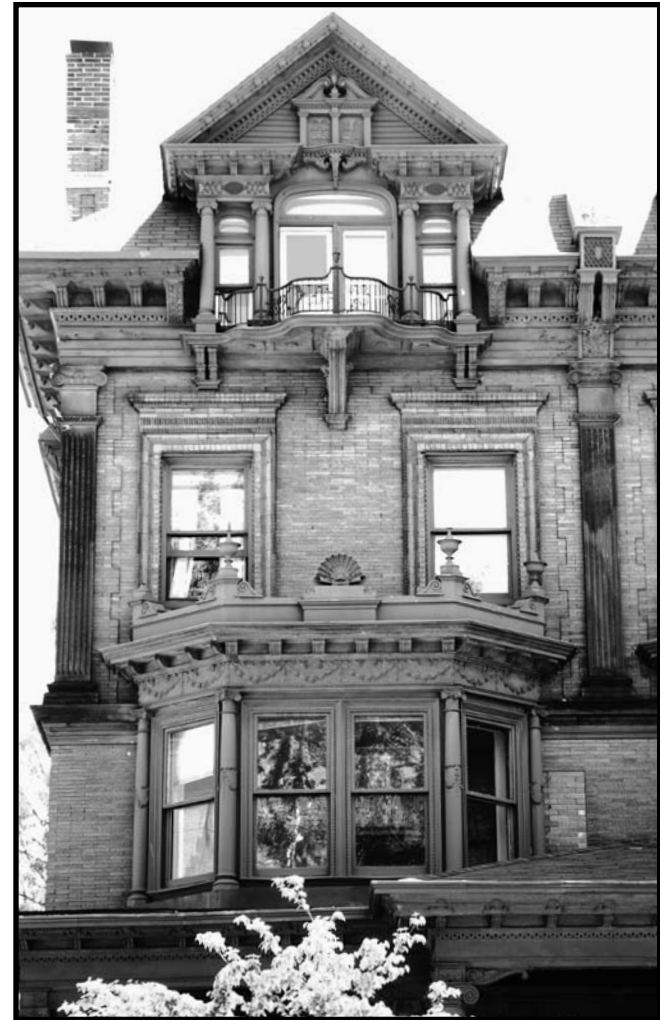
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From the editors

This third volume of *3808: A Journal of Critical Writing* offers another collection of outstanding writing by mainly first-year students enrolled in Critical Writing Seminars.

Penn has always been committed to undergraduate writing. Founder Benjamin Franklin, insisting upon a practical education, appears to have prompted Penn to become the first Ivy that required writing as part of its curriculum. That history, that presence of the pastness, as T. S. Eliot might say, is evidenced by the fact that writing has remained, throughout the years and in different forms, central to the Penn education and manifest in this volume. Students in our Critical Writing seminars focus on some tried and true approaches to writing that extend back to Franklin, even as they venture into new terrain. Clarity, organization, purpose, word choice—all fundamental to good writing, and applicable to the kinds of writing expected of one as a college student or graduate.

To be published in *3808*, our student writers undergo a rigorous selection process. Their essays must first be nominated by their peers or by their professor. Only two essays can be nominated from any one class. The nominations are subsequently reviewed by faculty and student editorial boards, whose members are drawn from across the disciplines. The 34 finalists gathered in this volume represent the four undergraduate schools and a diversity of backgrounds, interests, and topics. We hope that you will enjoy reading the work of these talented young writers as much as their colleagues, instructors, and editors have, and have a strong suspicion this won't be the last time we'll be seeing some of them in print.



About Our Title:

Penn created the Critical Writing Program in 2003 and, as part of the Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing, gave us splendid residence in an old Victorian at 3808 Walnut Street—from which this journal takes its name.

Amy Altemeyer

The Sensation of Language

“Only if words are felt, bodily presences, like echoes or waterfalls, can we understand the power of spoken language to influence, alter, and transform the perceptual world” (Abram 89).

Deep lines distinguish these beautiful words from a page of text. I stare at these words, feeling myself absorb them, and as they become a part of me, I notice how quiet it is all around me in the Fine Arts Library. The sun is filtered gently as it trickles through old, perfectly dusty windows; and as the sun escapes the shadows of a cloud, it pours a gentle golden haze over this page, illuminating the words before me. Highlighted by nature, I wonder: Is it redundant to say that these words speak to me, thunderously, boldly, as though an innate truth has been extracted from my mind through my lips? What is the word I’m looking for? Haunting. “Only if words are felt, bodily presences, like echoes or waterfalls...” These words, together, flowing so naturally, uninhibited, are haunting. Juxtaposed in a syntax guided by universal truth, they compose a greater meaning for the power we have to connect, to define, to transform the world that we are surrounded by, enveloped within. In these words I feel a cascade of peace, of truth, a washing of warmth like the steady pulsing of the afternoon sun that bathes the desks, old lamps, and these words that roll so silently off of my tongue, rhythmically, innately, like music. “The power of spoken language to influence, alter, and transform...”

I am dwelling in the lull of consciousness, the rhythm of voices running redundant through my head, a loss of physical coherence into states of remembrance: foreign language.

The sun beating down upon the red soil warms my shoulders through a thin t-shirt as I take in the moment, lost among ninety-five chanting, dancing Kenyan women of the Nandi tribe. Their stomping runs through the ground and up my legs, their voices run through my ears and down into the soil. I am planting their praises of nature with my feet; I am returning their language to its origin, to the earth, to nature. The ancient Swahili words swirl in the air, all around me. Consumed, these words, these presences around me, among these women, break the boundaries of cultures and time and take up residence within me. Red soil, dry brush—bleached by the sun—soaked in this language, movements of emotion, passion, and meaning that swirl into crevices of this untamed landscape. In the presence of lingual

song, the verses of their cries echoing back from that place, this place

Back into my wooden chair in the library, reoriented to my present state. I wonder...how is it that the language of the song so significantly transfixes me and fills me with an understanding of an unknown language? In his book, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, on his own consideration of this universal form of language, Abram says, “Ultimately, then, it is not the human body alone but rather the whole of the sensuous world that provides the deep structure of language” (85). Abram speaks here of a concept that is similar to his claim that words, when felt, have the power to transform our own perceptual world. Perhaps when we transform our perceptual world through language that is bodily given and received, we step into the realm of the sensuous. We find ourselves in a state guided by the deepest stirrings of emotion and, ironically, overwhelming innate wisdom; a state where we feel, taste, touch, see the reciprocity of our language with this world. Our minds

touch the origins

of lingual structure

in the sensuous world.

*Upon the red clay soil
 Kenya's words
 pulsing in my veins
 relinquished
 personal possession
 of language-
 grounded in the human mind.*

The challenge to be faced-the one we must always face-as if in sway of other realities: that we are rarely so blessed as to have moments in our busy Western lives when we sense the reciprocity-the origin-of language. Rarely does the opportunity arise to stand among the exotic wilderness of the African landscape, immersed in holistic tradition and tribal songs of praise. Rarely do we encounter moments with nature that call our bodies to respond, to communicate with a language that is orally given, poetically derived, and fully grounded in reciprocity of experience. How do you bring oral, organic, original language into this modern world that has such little context for nature? Even in the silence of the Fine Arts Library, deep in the heart of Philadelphia, I can hear the subtle rumble of delivery trucks, voices from outside the gothic walls, horns marking the impatience of this society. Although faint, it is the constant reminder that I am not standing in remote Kenya, I am not surrounded in the bodily given energy of language, and that I am not among nature, in the flow of solar warmth that calls me to reconnect with pure sensuality of language, mother tongue and father tongue, combining in the inadequacy of all communication...

Why do I say this? I say this because society has removed humans from our understanding of wild, living speech. In the context of grimy streets, concrete sidewalks littered with waste, and the occasional tree, we have allowed our minds to fall away from a living form of speech, from the sensation of language that is bodily given. We have slipped into the habits of a decaying form of communication that is marked by mundane words and overused clichés that cheapen the beautiful skill of language that we once

treasured and deemed meaningful, vital, self-defining.

We have forgotten that “[W]ild, living speech takes up, from within, the interconnected matrix of the languages and gestures with it,” and that a “living language is continually being made and remade, woven out of the silence by those who speak. . . And [that] this silence is that of our wordless participations, of our perceptual immersion in the depths of an animate, expressive world” (Abram 84). Perhaps, if nothing else, what is missing most from our communication in our urban, individualist society is the prevalence of a perceptual immersion into the depths of what Abram calls an “animate, expressive world.” What does this mean for the context of day-to-day lives? It means that we, as a society composed of individuals, have forgotten the significance of interactions with the animate, expressive world. In fact, we have, with our technological innovations, intentionally drawn boundaries, removing ourselves from the world that is guided by nature, by the depths of a language of reciprocity.

*We have forgotten
 to praise the earth
 as the women of the Nandi tribe
 with song.*

*We have forgotten
 to raise our cheeks to the sky
 accepting the invitation
 of an embrace.*

*We have forgotten our ancestors
 lost, blurred, blinded-*

our place on this earth-
our identity as humans.
We have forgotten
to praise the earth
as the women of the Nandi tribe
with song.

We have forgotten
to raise our cheeks to the sky
accepting the invitation
of an embrace.

We have forgotten our ancestors
lost, blurred, blinded-
our place on this earth-
our identity as humans.

I breathe the sweet fall air in. I want to know that the breath that swirls before me is connected to the trees that sway above my head. I want to feel language return to this space of nature, drip from my lips and ripple through nature, as a drop of rain into a dormant, sheltered pond.

... the echo of my words submerged in a sensuous world...

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Instructor: Andrew Mossin, Writing Seminar in English: Verbal Landscapes

Maureen Devenny

Affirmative Action Needs Positive Change

Affirmative action assumes that banning certain types of discrimination will create equal opportunity for everyone. Lyndon Johnson, a champion of affirmative action, asserted, “We seek ... not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result” (qtd. in Lemann 40). Stemming from efforts in the 1960s, affirmative action sought to rectify the psychological, economic, and social suffering inflicted upon African Americans by institutional discrimination. These efforts culminated in the passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned racial discrimination by the U. S. government. Since then, affirmative action has grown to protect women and “... to remedy practices that ... do not intentionally discriminate or have a disparate or adverse impact—that is, result in minorities or women being underrepresented” (Mills 3-8). Certainly, no one would quarrel with the theory behind affirmative action. But in practice, the policy may hurt its beneficiaries.

Especially in its early years, affirmative action allowed traditionally disadvantaged social groups to register real gains in areas as diverse as the work force, housing, and college admissions. For example, the number of African American police officers and electricians tripled as a result of affirmative action programs. During this same time, the percentage of African Americans in technical and managerial jobs doubled (Lemann Beckwith 52). Although affirmative action has dramatically helped disadvantaged groups, its proponents argue that the practice has not yet

achieved its goal of complete racial parity. This observation is especially true with regard to education, which is mired in apartheid. If SAT scores gauge quality of educational experience, then African Americans still face serious disadvantage: in 1992, only 1,493 African American students scored over 600 on the verbal section of the SAT, as compared to 55,224 of their white peers (43). Although the public school system cannot legally maintain “separate but equal” education, the educational system is both separate and unequal.

Affirmative action is wholly commendable for its role in reducing the evils caused by the systematic racial subordination. But now it has stagnated: affirmative action brings two types of unintended consequences to its beneficiaries. The first consequence is to create the stereotype that successful minorities reach their success through government mandate, as opposed to talent or accomplishments. For example, in college admissions, white students can believe that a nonwhite classmate gained admission because of his skin color, rather than his high school GPA or service trips to Honduras. Affirmative action policies similarly affect attitudes surrounding hiring practices and contract awarding. Affirmative action’s second consequence is to perpetuate racial stereotypes because such policies tend to assume that membership in a social group guarantees discrimination. This belittling, paternal attitude hurts all minorities: those without access to resources because they are consigned to “victimhood,” and those with resources because society assumes the absence of autonomy and ignores their accomplishments.

Affirmative action treats the symptoms of racism instead of the disease (28). If Americans want true racial equality, they should treat the source of problems that result in social inequality as opposed to their results. Until then, however, perhaps a better way to rectify social inequality would be to award benefits on the basis of socioeconomic status, which is objective and quantifiable. That way, anyone laboring under economic difficulty can receive benefits regardless of skin color. But most importantly, using socioeconomic status to grant preference makes race inconsequential, alleviating racism and leading to a tolerant, equal society.

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Instructor: Jane Kauer, Writing Seminar in Anthropology: Eating Culture

Danetsy Len

Missing White Woman Syndrome

Our nation's twenty-four-hour cable news channels have created a news culture in which certain news stories are glorified beyond necessity. In order to fill time, stations inundate the American public with stories that would be better left on local newscasts. As a result of the unbalanced mainstream media, the names Natalee Holloway and Laci Peterson resonate with many Americans, while Reyna Alvarado-Carrera and Tamika Huston are little more than random names. However, all four of these women have something in common: they were all kidnapping victims. These women all disappeared under mysterious circumstances, yet it was Laci and Natalee who received the constant national media attention. In 2005 and 2002, respectively, when these cases hit the mainstream media, major network news channels devoted significant amounts of time within their newscasts to update the American public on the status of the search. In cable news, newscasters such as Larry King and Nancy Grace devoted entire segments of their shows to these cases. However, because so much time was dedicated to these cases, there were hardly any new developments in the media; the newscasts basically repeated the same information. With all of that airtime, there was no word on the disappearances of Reyna and Tamika, young Latina and African American women whose families were also experiencing desperation and hopelessness. So what was the difference between these four women? Laci and Natalee were both beautiful, upper-middle-class, white women. There is an abysmal disparity within the national media concerning the coverage of

missing minority women compared to that of white women. In fact, the term "missing white woman syndrome" was coined to refer to this phenomenon (Foreman). The disproportionate coverage of missing white women within the mainstream media is an obvious example of racism, for it implies that the lives of missing minority women are not as important or valuable as those of white women.

Major media outlets, however, have argued that the disproportionate coverage is not an example of racism but rather simply a matter of news networks showing the news that sells. In an industry where advertising revenue reigns supreme when it comes to scheduling, judgments are quickly made as to what is considered "newsworthy." Similar to the abundance of pop culture and celebrity news, networks gauge what the American public wants to see and then provide that, in order to bring in the highest ratings. In the case of Fox News, the show *On the Record w/ Greta Van Susteren* saw a dramatic increase in ratings when entire shows were devoted to the happenings of the Natalee Holloway case. Therefore, unbalanced scheduling is not a reflection of racist news networks; they were merely showing the news that is demanded by the public. The news media will continue to run stories as long as there is an obvious demand for new developments. It is ultimately the American public's fault for showing more interest toward the cases of young, beautiful, upper-middle-class, white women, rather than toward the misfortunes of missing minority women.

There is validity in the claim that the mainstream media simply shows the news demanded by the public. However, the role of journalism and reporting should be to inform the public of the most pertinent news to the largest majority of people. The media has seemed to detract from that method and begun covering stories that appeal to people's emotions. The "damsel in distress" has become a popular story line over the last couple of years, causing the news media to sensationalize stories that in reality should be local news. If the media insists on continuing to cover these stories, then they must do a better job of making sure that all of America's diversity is represented, not just white women. When only stories of missing white women are broadcast on a national scale, it makes it seem as if only white people are victimized, which is obviously not true. In *Sister Outsider*, Audre Lorde writes, "Black women have on one hand always been highly visible, and so ... have been rendered invisible through the depersonalization of

racism” (42). The media has not only ignored the plight of black women through business strategies. On a more fundamental level, the lives, as well as the problems, of racial minorities have essentially been deemed invisible and unimportant. Therefore, their stories are not worthy of being televised as aggressively. Ultimately it is not that showing the stories of women such as Laci and Natalee is wrong; rather, the coverage is unbalanced. Though news networks may hide behind the ratings, their decision to focus on only one type of victim is inherently racist, even if they do so unintentionally. When news networks strive to achieve a balanced perspective within their coverage, only then will they cease to be seen as racist.

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Instructor: Adrian Khactu, Writing Seminar in English: Race Matters

Sarah A. Johnson

An Enigmatic Encounter

Carrying my bulky black violin case and my music folder with the catchphrase, “Abington School District: Excellence Is Our Standard” printed confidently on the cover, I walk up the bush-lined pathway to the front porch and pause tentatively at the entrance of an imposing stone house. Cobwebs blanket the surface of the thick door, which displays two rather unusual signs: “Do not disturb the spiders,” and “Kindly remove shoes in hallway.” These simple messages are scrawled in small, cursive black lettering on paper yellowed at the edges from prolonged exposure to the sun. I gaze in bewilderment at a gigantic, intricately carved magenta puppet theater. A languid long-haired cat is sprawled on the sun-bleached chaise lounge. I ring the doorbell.

A short, stocky woman in her late fifties, clad in solid black with a polychromatic woven hairnet, hurriedly opens the door and blandly accepts me into her abode. She asserts that the door is never locked, as such an action disrupts the lesson in progress. While this mysterious lady expounds her endless qualifications, such as that she trains students of the caliber required for acceptance to the prestigious Juilliard Conservatory and Curtis Institute of Music, I examine her intriguing living room.

I am instantly enthralled by an overpowering crystal chandelier appropriate for a grand ballroom. The dark wooden floor is covered with several authentic Oriental rugs. Three mahogany bookcases that extend to

the ceiling are teeming with texts of art history, music, classic literature, and dictionaries of foreign languages. Two chairs are placed in front of a sofa that is smothered by a large white sheet. On the table in front of these chairs are magazines of cooking and photography, along with the latest edition of *The New York Times* and a vase containing a withered bouquet of flowers. Several vibrant Asian puppets are mounted from a post on the back wall adjacent to a harpsichord. There is an eerie portrait of a young man bearing resemblance to a renowned violinist of the early twentieth century, Fritz Kreisler. I hear shouting in Chinese and some demonstrative singing in the background from a man upstairs, who apparently also gives lessons to young aspiring musicians. Pungent odors of exotic spices penetrate the atmosphere. At the back of the room is situated a matte-black baby grand Steinway piano littered with sheet music.

As this woman finally ceases her introduction, I recall the circumstances of my engagement, and I gingerly take my violin out of its case. She immediately chastises the inferior quality of my rosin and fiberglass bow. I am gestured toward the piano, the sturdy music stand is adjusted for my small frame, and, my bow slippery, I perform the first few measures of the piece I had so painstakingly practiced. The witchlike stranger sternly halts me, enlightening me that I have been playing completely incorrectly and that I must relearn all of the fundamentals; my playing thus far has amounted to absolutely nothing. I manage to contain my incredulity as I leave the house after this momentous first encounter with the legendary violin teacher.

Instructor: Fayyaz Vellani, Writing Seminar in English: Law, Environment, Identity

Jason Fiedler

Religion's Last Stand

The whistle blows and the coach flails his arms in disgust. "What are you—blind?" he barks at the referee. The coach is fuming. The players mutter expletives under their breath. An echoing cry of "BOO" reverberates throughout the crowd. The opponents stand and wait silently. They know they are the beneficiaries of a blown call, but will show no sign of it. This situation is commonplace in professional sports. Highly paid coaches and players constantly jab at the referees, while reckless fans yell clichéd insults. Competition is so fierce and winning is so highly valued that such displays of emotion are inevitable. But, in this situation, there are no professional athletes. There are no die-hard fans. The players are Jewish adolescents, the coaches and referees are volunteer adults, and the fans are devoted Jewish parents supporting their kids. Such alternatives to faith-based religious practices are becoming more and more popular among teenagers—and religions are fully aware.

Every year, young Jewish athletes from around the world compete in the Maccabi games. These so-called Jewish Olympics provide a competitive atmosphere for the top Jewish high school athletes. Vancouver one year, Barcelona another, Tel Aviv the next: the thousands of Jewish adolescents who make the trip every year share a Jewish heritage; however, they leave their religious baggage at home. They forget their prayer books and pack only their jerseys, ankle braces, and power bars. Once the games begin, competition takes over and Judaism fades to the background. It is almost

as if Judaism is one of the players, there and ready to play, but just sitting at the end of the bench never getting into the game. Sure, there is always the occasional “kippa” sighting. Some of the more religious players attend optional services. However, at the Maccabi games, Jewish faith is sidelined and competition takes center stage.

In fact, phenomena like the Maccabi games are not limited to Judaism. Christian Youth Basketball leagues (CYO) have become more popular than ever. Children as young as six-years-old begin playing for their church. Basketball, not Christianity, is the focal point of this league. I played CYO for eight years, and I am Jewish. Not once was there any mention of religious practice or faith. I was there as a basketball player, not as a Jew. The only ideological difference between the coach and me was whether to play zone or man-to-man on defense. The church and Christian faith had no function beyond gathering the players and funding the team. This disregard for faith-based religious practice is taking hold in both Judaism and Christianity. As new churches and synagogues are constructed, more and more contain basketball courts. Westchester Reform Temple in Scarsdale, New York, for example, is currently on a substantial fund-raising mission to renovate. My father is on the fund-raising committee, and he often receives questions regarding the advantages of such an enormous renovation. The sizeable portion of the money, he informs people, will go towards a state-of-the-art basketball gymnasium.

Why, one might ask, are Judaism and Christianity reaching out this way? Traditionally, teenagers attend services with their families. They sit together quietly, dressed in their most impressive clothing, and listen carefully to the sermon. They close their eyes in order to zone in closely and internalize the speaker's words. These services are a weekly ritual at the core of traditional Judeo-Christian religious practice. Contrast this with contemporary rituals like the Maccabi games and CYO: coaches, players, and spectators alike are embroiled in the competitive spirit. Coaches pace the sidelines, shouting expletives and preaching winning. Players spend Sunday mornings practicing or traveling to games. The parents pray not for health and happiness, but rather that their son scores 20 points or their JCC takes home the gold medal. This practice of religion diametrically opposes traditional faith-based religious practice and values.

The absence of faith in the Maccabi games and CYO seems detrimental

to traditional Judeo-Christian religious practice. Why, then, are temples and churches sponsoring such sporting events? Traditionally, parents pry their children out of bed and force them to attend Sunday school. Children try not to misbehave as they stare at the clock counting down the minutes and, in the process, learn something about religion. But what happens when kids become too old for Sunday school? What happens when they become too old to be forced out of bed by their parents? Judaism and Christianity today face the dilemma of keeping teenagers involved, and sports are the solution. They recognize the teenage years as a phase of growing apathy towards faith for many people. By building basketball courts and sponsoring athletic events, Judaism and Christianity provide an alternative to traditional faith-based religious practice. By replacing prayer books with basketballs, rabbis with coaches, and Shabbat dinners with pizza and soda, teens gain a more socially acceptable practice of religion. Today, it is acceptable- if not cool and convenient-for teens to *sport* religion. Judaism and Christianity tolerate this temporary loss of faith-based practice because it is, in fact, temporary. When the teenage phase passes, and individuals desire a more faith-based religious practice, they will always be able to look at the bold-lettered name of their temple or church on the front of their jersey and return to services.

Instructor: Jarrett Anthony, Writing Seminar in English: Hidden God in Popular Culture

Dara Kritzer-Cheren

Mesmerized Miniatures: A Transport to Paisley Petals

In a fit of absolute boredom, bordering insanity, I watch the waves flood the sand, back and forth, back and forth. White foamy bubbles appear, white foamy bubbles disintegrate into translucency. Floating into my vision, I discover a seemingly standard lost-at-sea artifact bobbing up and down atop the ever-changing opaque swallows and white reflecting peaks—or shall I dare to suggest this inspiration discovered me: A journal entry written by Henry David Thoreau, entitled *Topsell's Gesner*, dated February 16, 1860, coiled in an algae-massed black bottle, saved from an excess of moisture by a decaying olive-colored cork, rapidly devoured by my progressively deteriorating consciousness.

Thoreau's endorsement of Topsell and Gesner includes an instruction: when describing an animal, "be sure and give its character and spirit, for in that you have, without error, the sum and effect of all its parts, known and unknown." He then continues his journal entry in his greatly slanted cursive on brittle beige parchment with, "a name is at most a mere convenience and carries no information with it. ... To know the names of creatures is only a convenience to us at first, but so soon as we have learned to distinguish them, the sooner we forget their names the better, so far as any true appreciation of them is concerned." It is with these two notions that I can now entertain my atrophic mind by writing about an animal that inhabits this rarely frequented landscape of wheat-colored plains:

A twitching nose of asphalt, black bulbous blinking almonds, vertically pronounced hollows of two slate-gray cauliflowers protrude amidst a coarse mange of salt-and-pepper while the squeaking foot-long rodent temporarily heightens itself to a human state of evolution ... It stands on its hind feet, which resemble that of a kangaroo or a jackrabbit, to merrily nibble nectar from a bush of yellow paisley petals and dying gray limbs, representative of this arid wasteland I now live in. He knows that I observe him—he twitches out-of-sync—yet, he continues to suckle at his tantalizing source of survival. The sweet sap that bountifully seeps out of the flower and onto his tongue captivates every sensible instinct in his furry body and does not allow him to safely remove himself from my galvanized eyes. So soon will he become my paisley petal. Alas! Each drop of his nutritious nectar radiates over and through my swelling tongue and charts the rivers inside me, reformatting my strength, my weakened limbs solidified.

Oh how lucky we are! Surely death would have befallen us without this mysterious bottle and Thoreau's insightful instructions. Death by boredom or death by starvation—Thoreau makes us see, makes us perceive, and compels us to absorb the world around us. In observations of mesmerized miniatures, we find our means of survival: among squirrels who are so preoccupied with filling their round bellies they hardly notice our passing. Before deserted here, before grasping and engaging Thoreau's eloquence, was I akin to the mangy rodent?

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Instructor: Andrew Mossin, Writing Seminar in English: Verbal Landscapes

Sweta Patel

Gulping Memories

“Ahrām se,” whispers Bapuji, telling me to relax.

If only it were as easy as it sounded. “But, Bapuji, what if I choke?”

“I know how to do the Heimlich maneuver,” he responds teasingly, only it sounds more like “Heem-lick.” Seeing that I am in no mood to laugh, he placates with seriousness, *“Ahrām se.”* My grandfather opens the bottle of Flintstones multivitamins, effortlessly outsmarting the child-lock system. Bapuji then places a tiny pink Fred Flintstone, enriched with calcium and zinc, into the crevices of my palm. “Try again,” my grandfather insists.

For the past forty-five minutes, I have been spitting half-chewed, watery remnants out of my mouth, in which lingers an overly sweet taste of artificial cherries. But just to appease my grandfather, I place the tiny vitamin in my mouth. After taking in half a glass of water, I realize that Fred is floating around in my mouth, banging against my two front teeth. I feel like I can do this. I try to imagine that there is no vitamin in my mouth; I am only drinking water—a huge, oversized sip of water. And, just like that, I swallow. This time, nothing remains.

As Fred floated in my mouth, he posed a problem. Literally and figuratively, problems like Fred bang against our two front teeth, gnawing at whatever they can. Ironically, I have realized that we must sometimes ignore these troubles in order to fully resolve them. I did just this when convincing myself that I was only drinking water. I temporarily distanced myself from what I thought was the pathogen, the entity that disturbed my sense of

comfort, only to incorporate it into my body moments later. To my surprise, this alleged pathogen turned out to be not only a source of calcium and zinc, but also a process that transformed the manner in which I think. To succeed, perhaps we must tell ourselves that we are only drinking water, a translucent substance that is free from complexity. If we do, then the reality (that we are ingesting obstacles that are far above us) will not be so daunting. It is still tricky, however, to follow my own words of advice—to feign that we are only drinking water—especially when we are trying to gulp painful memories:

My mom is cooking dinner; my older brother, Bhai, is in the adjacent room, hanging up his newest buy: an M. C. Escher poster, a drawing of an oversized eye. The drawing strikes me. The veins in the white of his eye fade in and out of focus under the glossy water collecting at the corner. Everything converges here: the halves of his almond-shaped eyelids, the blood that enables vision, and tears that have built up but are too few to escape. As my brother struggles to lay the painting perfectly parallel to the ceiling and floor, the phone rings.

“Hello!” I exclaim.

“Give the ph-phone to your ... mummy,” a familiar voice with quite an alarming tone replies. I realize now that it is my aunt on the other side.

“Mami, is everything okay?”

“Just gi-give it to Mummy quickly!” she screeches with the little voice she has. I hear muffled sounds from the earpiece and learn that something happened to Bapuji.

“Bhai, come here. Mummy is crying.”

“Hold on, I think I got it this time. Hold this still.”

“Bhai! Something’s wrong. I think Bapuji died.” At that very instant, I look up at my older brother, and for the first time in my life, I see him choke up a bit.

I immediately think of telling him a joke in hopes of turning him back into my normal, dispassionate older brother. Nothing comes out. Escher’s eye glares at me, as if it is some voice of authority that coerces me to stay quiet. The drawing also speaks to my brother, although in a slightly different manner. It serves as his own eye of authority, a part of his conscience that orders him to remain detached and unemotional. The drawing illustrates the feasibility of hiding emotions, attributable to the corners of eyes that are able to retain tears. Tears can stay hidden only when our eyes lie parallel.

Only then can the salty water distribute itself evenly. When the drawing goes askew, tears from all directions accumulate, swelling to the point where their hiding spot reaches full capacity. What happens when, like my brother, something threatens our parallelism, our sense of equilibrium? The tears have no choice but to hopelessly plummet, descending down our cheeks and into the breach between the two halves of our lips. We must then force ourselves to gulp this salty water, remembering though to ignore the salt. When swallowing our tears, we must pretend once again that we are only drinking water. We must push our grief deep inside, fooling ourselves that it does not exist for a short while, in order to ultimately overcome it.

I can't help but recall an essay I recently stumbled across by Virginia Woolf, entitled "Old Mrs. Grey," which paints a startling sketch of Mrs. Grey, an elderly woman who pleads with God to let her die. As Mrs. Grey wrestles fate, she feels "nothing but a zigzag of pain . . . that twisted her legs as it wriggled; jerked her body to and fro" (639). And I, too, feel this pain as a part of me begins to indulge in memories of Bapuji. Am I clinging onto him too tightly? Am I, like Mrs. Grey, the "damp sheet [that] is folded over a wire," weighed down with memories of Bapuji (639)? Woolf's essay compels me to answer the daring question: if I am that person, is it appropriate for me to let go of that wire and allow myself to end the remembering?

The trick with concurrently ignoring and accepting difficulty rests in the fine line between forgetting and letting go. For so long, I deemed the terms *forgetting* and *not remembering* synonymous. I am now beginning to notice the stark contrast between the two. The act of remembering is a dynamic one, one that asks us to recall and reflect, both in the past. It is also draining. The nostalgia manifests itself in our tear-filled eyes and thus impedes us from thinking in the present. Forgetting, however, implies a deliberate deletion, both unhealthy and cruel. Mrs. Grey, at age ninety-two with grave medical illnesses, still remembers the pain and heartache from her past as she mumbles, "'All dead All dead . . . my brothers and sisters. And my husband gone. My daughter too'" (639). Ironically, she, the very person who wants to escape the wire, is letting other bodies cling to it. Grief and heartache are not like diseases of which Mrs. Grey can presumably be cured. Pain is, I think, always present whether it is evident or stored. The difference between these two marks the true success of mourning. When we correctly deal with anguish, the pain should be pushed deep inside of us, reminding us of the

past intermittently, but not continually. Perhaps if Mrs. Grey finds a way to stop remembering and push inside these sorrows, fate will bring her to where she longs to go. Perhaps if I can learn to do the same, I will finally be able to learn to "*ahram se*."

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Instructor: Jessica Roemer, Writing Seminar in English: Speaking Personally

Maureen French

The Real Music of the City

Through the dull roar of an awakening city floats a melody so soft and sweet it seems to exist solely to contrast the harsh honking of horns echoing from the streets. The wavering tempo floats playfully around the stoic footsteps of businessmen and the swelling pitches break through the monotonous rumbling of trains entering and exiting the station. It is as if the music comes from the foggy morning air itself; the windy timbre of the flute floats through the parking lot on layers of cloud, trying to return a sense of nature to this concrete playground of a city. A man sits on the ground across the lot with a flute raised to his lips. Is it possible that music this beautiful could be coming from a tired old man surrounded by dirty bags and a rusting shopping cart? Unfortunately, his elegant music is entirely ignored by the fast-paced and structured city culture.

Walking down the street with the white strands of headphones running down their necks, the people of today's cities hear nothing of the outside environment. They make the soundtrack to their own lives, and by doing so lose any auditory connection with the world around them. While this man creates something magical from a musical instrument, they see only a desolate figure blending into the wall behind him. Even those who lack the presence of an iPod let their eyes slide over these forms far too easily. Businessmen rush forward in the chaos of their lives, the clipping of dress shoes on the hard ground the only rhythm they experience. A mother pulls her son along frantically by the hand, tugging his bright eyes and ears away

from the sight and sound of one of the few live performances he has ever seen. While tuning out the screeching of tires, glaring screams of sirens, and honking of horns, the passers—by simultaneously ignore one of the most beautiful aspects of the city. People today do not consciously ignore street musicians—they have simply been conditioned to tune them out entirely.

Street musicians also face the unfortunate stereotype that comes with their condition. They are pegged as lazy and unskilled, and in both appearance and music style are polar opposites of the latest pop-culture icons. Wearing tattered jeans and an old brown jacket, this particular musician seems to have taken on the precise color of the drab wall he is leaning against. Even the addition of a fiery bright scarf does little to help him compare to the likes of Justin Timberlake. However, his music lifts him out of his environment in a way that his appearance never could. The simplicity of his instrumentation and complexity of musical style are both at odds with the full bands and steady rhythms of most musicians today. The sound of a single flute would seem, to modern ears, to be far inferior to a drum kit, two electric guitars, and three vocalists. And yet, despite its simplicity, both the light, airy quality of the upper octaves and the dark lower pitches can be easily distinguished from the dull roar. The complexity of style implemented by this simple man continues to set his music apart from the noise of the city. It flirts playfully with a quick tempo and then dips into a slower motif. It occasionally settles into a steady beat but then quickly shifts away, undulating through both pitches and meter. In contrast to the rigid beats of mainstream music and the rigid schedules of those who listen to it, this music is wild and free. Unfortunately, instead of noticing these wonderful differences in style, people ignore them. They are far too busy leading fast-paced, structured, iPod-filled lives to notice a piece of free-flowing live music produced by a man who could not be more dissimilar to the next American Idol.

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Alexandra Drewicz

Connectivity Versus Disorder

One question that may arise after reading Ghassan Kanafani's *All That's Left to You* is the significance of the murder scenes at the end of the novella. The story focuses on the complex relationship between Maryam and Hamid, two Palestinian siblings pushed apart by the sister's shameful pregnancy, yet kept close by their strong emotional attachment. The novella closes violently and unnaturally, however, with Hamid murdering an Israeli soldier he encounters in the desert, and with Maryam murdering her husband, Zakaria. The murder scenes may seem to have no relevance to the general story line at first, but as one considers the narrative style and structure of the novella, their thematic importance becomes obvious. Through his three narrators, Hamid, Maryam, and the desert, Kanafani creates a story that jumps back and forth, from past to present and from one character to another. Sometimes the narratives are related, and sometimes they are not, creating confusion about how the story is actually progressing. The double-murder scene serves as a point where the scattered, disjointed tale about the siblings comes together, emphasizing a greater theme of connectivity.

One might argue, however, that the murders simply exemplify how Kanafani intended the story to be nonsensical. He creates a theme of disorder that is seen most obviously in his use of several narrators. Hamid, Maryam, and the desert each have their own distinct voices, and their stories are often juxtaposed in an uncomfortable way. For example, on a single page the narrative jumps from Hamid's harsh conversation with the Israeli soldier,

to Maryam's contemplation of her scandalous pregnancy and marriage, and then to the desert's beautiful and insightful description of the tension between Hamid and the soldier (36). The stories are intentionally fragmented and jumpy in order to show how little connection truly exists between them. In the same way, then, the murder scenes contribute to this theme of disorder. Neither Maryam nor Hamid has a strong motive; both murders are spontaneous reactions to a situation at hand. Hamid kills the Israeli though he could leave him where he is, and Maryam kills Zakaria in a fit of inexplicable rage. One could therefore assume that Kanafani uses the two random murders to further reveal the theme of disconnection, applying this broad idea to the characters' lives and relationships.

This theme of disorder does not actually apply to the novella and to the murder scenes if one considers other scenes and images Kanafani includes, however. Examples of how much connection and meaning actually exist are strewn throughout the narrative, such as his symbolic inclusion of time. Each relationship is influenced by time in some way: Maryam is driven crazy by the ticking of the clock on the wall that reminds her of every step he takes away from her, Hamid discards his watch so that he may become more connected to the desert, and the timeless desert is the setting where the soldier and Hamid struggle. In a similar manner, the author reconnects the siblings, separated by Maryam's shame and Hamid's departure, with the parallel murders at the end. Both striving for power in their situation, they murder to express their newfound authority. Maryam, previously unsure of her desires and needs, recognizes that the knife in her hand is "sure of purpose," as she finally achieves some power in her marriage to Zakaria. Hamid, with his nationalist ideals and also in his search for manhood, kills the soldier to prove he is strong enough to do so. By combining the siblings in a single, powerful act against their victims, Kanafani reinforces how linked all the characters truly are.

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Instructor: Asma Al-Naser, Writing Seminar in Comparative Literature: The Art of Murder

Albert Ryou

The Compelling Soul of Distress

Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* explodes with both animation and death. The street is littered with dead articles: a mutilated arm fast clutching a broken dagger, a hand free of the wrist, and a severed head. Among the corpses the survivors weep, yell, and pray.

One of the living is a mother who howls, an ear-splitting shriek, while her baby softly dangles in her half-embrace. There is something amiss about the muted infant; instead of characteristic liveliness and defiance, the baby holds a perverted silence. The sight of the mother beholding her offspring draped on her hands like a wet blanket grabs the viewer's subconscious and violently shakes it.

In the jumble of shapes and lines, however, it is quite difficult to tell which figure is dead and which is alive. The dynamic features of the survivors—rolling eyes, clattering teeth, wiggling tongues—are also borne by those holding the deathly quiet. Indeed, it is the dead who boldly demand an answer while many of those alive creep silently, afraid to incur another wrath from above.

Ultimately, what makes the painting so powerful is its ability to incite discomfort in the viewer. Comfort makes a person feel cozy and relaxed, and his brain, having no incentive for improvement, goes into hibernation. Distress, on the other hand, produces an opposite effect. It makes the person squirm in the face of something unexpected, even deviant—something that requires a deeper level of engagement than a superficial glance. In other

words, distress forces the person to think. *Guernica*'s painfully honest rendering of a tragic event triggers the human capacity to observe and absorb so that any viewer who approaches the mural receives a sharp, intellectual kick in the brain.

“Hurry up, Denton.”

The road was steeper and the sun hotter during the trip back from the lighthouse. We should not have chosen the bicycle journey as our first activity here on Block Island in the Long Island Sound; we blamed the fact that these bikes had been free rentals.

“Denton, could you please ride faster?”

As the first rider, I had developed a habit of looking back as often as I could to see how the others were keeping up. Baris was a good distance behind me, and Pollak and Goldman too; but Denton was now beyond the horizon. I stopped my bike and waited. One by one the group formed again, but still no sign of Denton. A small cloud of worry gathered above me. What if something bad had happened, I thought.

“I’m gonna go see if Denton’s coming or not,” and the others, enjoying the island breeze, simply nodded.

Once again I pedaled. Neither colonial farmhouses nor cows mowing grass bore witness of my friend. I pedaled more and saw Denton; he was off his bike. I pedaled harder; he remained motionless. I pedaled with the last ounce of strength. Only when I got closer and saw that Denton was holding a camera did I realize that he was photographing a wild duck, which seemed to view Denton with the same fascination he bestowed upon it.

“Denton, come on!” I shouted, so happy to see that everything was fine.

Whenever my friends and I muse over the memory of Block Island, the bike trip is the first thing that crosses my mind. The scene of Denton zooming in his lens at the duck always brings a smile to my face. Yet my friends, including Denton himself, say they cannot recall that particular incident. The reason seems to be that I alone had anxiety engulf me that day. In the face of Denton's absence, the others assumed he was fine, and Denton, of course, knew the same. Only I was fostering doubt, and doubt made me pedal back toward the lighthouse.

From Picasso's *Guernica* I have learned that distress engages us to think,

but the event on Block Island has also taught me that by causing us to think, distress makes a memory unforgettable. Often an event that a person can vividly recollect is stained with anxiety and fear, because these are the effects of distress that render an experience real. Real experiences are those that touch us in our subconscious. The split second of realization that Denton might be in trouble distressed me more than all my past tests and quizzes combined. The Block Island adventure relating my retrieval of Denton shall remain a memory I will cherish for a long time.

In the poem, “Let America Be America Again,” Langston Hughes describes a nation which is, in his eyes, plagued by such vices as discrimination, inequality, and corruption. He writes, “I am the farmer, bondsman to the soil. / I am the worker sold to the machine. / I am the Negro, servant to you all”. As the hardworking Americans seeking opportunity suffer from the same Old World tyranny, the auspicious symbol that is the New World loses its meaning. Instead, “only the same old stupid plan / Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak” welcomes the immigrants. The so-called American Dream, a notion that anyone can start anew and be successful by working hard, is simply that—an illusion born of futility. “America never was America to me”, echoes the voice of Hughes throughout the poem.

Although the poem submerges the readers in the same desolation as *Guernica* has done for its viewers, Hughes is not disillusioned. His longing for a brighter future brims with optimism as he concludes that “Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death, / The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies, / We, the people, must redeem”, claiming that it is up to the individuals to remain strong and rekindle the beacon that is the Dream.

In fact, the beacon today burns brighter than ever. Equal rights and universal suffrage movements changed the United States considerably in the last century. Hughes had been part of the revolution that impelled others to take up the picket and march for freedom. While Picasso used distress to communicate with his audience his message about the horror of war, Hughes employed it in order to move people’s hearts. Thus, the same distress that fills our minds with discomfort and anxiety is also a powerful force of change.

It is strange to believe that a feeling as unpleasant as distress defines who we are; it shapes our experiences, affects our memories, and transforms our

thoughts into actions. But distress is much more than just a sad story. It is an alarm clock that beeps whenever the conscious and the subconscious worlds converge. Thus, every incident that reconnects us to our fundamental human instincts imparts a bit of wisdom, so that from distress we grow mature.

Instructor: Jessica Roemer, Writing Seminar in English: Speaking Personally

Menghan Fu

Close Reading of a Page in the *Codex Espangliensis*

On the American flag, the color red instills us with the gallantry of war. Red stripes symbolize the blood shed for the valorous pursuit of freedom and justice. Yet in a darker context, red denotes the vainglorious and bestial killing in the quest to reach said zenith of virtue, to become *the land of the free, the home of the brave*. The seemingly irreproachable conversion of native heathens into Christians resulted in murder; the red stripes whisper of the innocent blood shed. Similarly, in the *Codex Espangliensis*, by Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Enrique Chagoya, and Felicia Rice, the color red insinuates the metamorphosis of the heroic into the grim. *Codex* depicts the Spaniard's brutal treatment of the native Aztecs in their "noble quest" to convert the heathens. On one page, an etching of Spanish explorers mutilating the hands of defenseless Aztecs inculcates superheroes associated with justice (see fig. 1). The authors utilize the color red to induce the reader to acknowledge the grim realities of war.

Using red in combination with iconic images in the *Codex* forces the reader to realize his apathy toward bystanders harmed in war. A page in the *Codex* depicts the iconic Spiderman tainted with blood (see fig. 1). The spilled blood effectively functions as a shock factor—rarely does artwork implicate a hero in the massacre of innocents. The placement of the blood-tainted icon in front of mutilated Aztecs screams this very accusation. Such an implication provokes readers to consider the unwritten side of cartoons:

although superheroes always emerge victorious, think of the damage they do to cities in pursuit of the villain. Think of the harm they cause to innocent, un-depicted bystanders in the quest to take down one villain. The relevance to current affairs is also undeniable. By association, *Codex* implicates America, the superpower defending the world—as a hero would—against an "axis of evil." America could very well be the blood-tainted Spiderman on the page. The War on Terror has harmed countless innocent civilians, who remain mostly ignored by the media.

Likewise, red signifies that there is no salvation for the victims of war. By distorting artistic references, *Codex* presents the Aztecs' hopeless despair under the triumphant Spanish. In the foreground, a native reaches a bleeding limb—as Adam reaches in Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*—to God, for spiritual salvation (see fig. 2). Similarly, a native on the bottom right of the etching reaches a handless limb to the sky, his gait similar to that of Eve in Masaccio's *The Expulsion from Paradise* (see fig. 3). In Masaccio's fresco, an angel drives Adam and Eve from Eden as they both cover themselves with shame for their sin. In contrast, the Aztec continues to reach up to the heavens. He is innocent of any wrongdoing, yet there is no hope of salvation since he cannot "touch" the heavens with his hand. Similarly, his hand mutilated by the Spaniards, the Aztec of the *Creation* symbolically loses the ability to gain salvation. Indeed, however noble the goals of the Spaniards at first, their ultimate actions led to massacre and bloodshed. *Codex Espangliensis* reminds the reader that wars leave bleeding scars—the heroic will never be revived.



Fig. 1. Enrique Chagoya, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, and Felicia Rice, *Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol*, 2000. Letterpress-printed in black and red from zinc photoengravings on Amatl paper lined with Shintengujo tissue, 9 x 11.5 x 1572 in. Published with permission from Moving Parts Press.



Fig. 2. Michelangelo. *The Creation of Adam*, c. 1511. Fresco 480 _ 230 cm, 189.0 _ 90.6. Sistine Chapel, Vatican City. Reproduced from iStockphoto.



Fig. 3. Masaccio. *Expulsion from Paradise*, c. 1425. Fresco, 7' x 2' 11". Brancacci Chapel, Church of Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence. Reproduced from Arts Resource, www.artsres.com.

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Instructor: Michelle Strizever, Writing Seminar in English: Books Unbound

Laura Herring

Within or Without Withness?

Gusts of Greek wind rustled the silver olive trees and blew all of the paper plates and plastic cups into a whirlwind of garbage. A Greek friend of mine reached across the table for my hand, ready to dance. I claimed that I had eaten too much: “I couldn’t possibly imagine dancing now.” But really, the complicated moves and intricate footsteps of the *Glenti* dances terrified me. I rarely had the courage to dance in front of my reflection. Suddenly, the image of my last ballet recital infiltrated my mind. I am certain that if I had not lost focus mid-leap, I would not have fallen into a clumsy split against the wall. I felt forced to quit ballet lessons because I made no progress despite my lithe teacher’s attempts. I had absolutely no confidence in my dancing skills. I am not sure whether, initially, the fear of failure trapped in my tangled stomach held me back, or whether the paralyzing panic of embarrassment sent me into a state of shock. With the sensation of a sudden firm tug, I gracefully leapt up from my flimsy plastic chair and headed for the dancing crowd. There was some motivating force that kept my legs and feet moving. I found my clammy palms pressed up against those of the 200-pound-plus Greek man on my left and those of the ten-year-old child on my right. My feet raised themselves up in front, back down behind, and to the side. My body swayed from side to side, front-step, back-step, side-step, in a dizzying circle.

Was it this circular, roundabout, confusing, and new method that forced me to participate in this new dancing experience? Walker Percy, in

his essay “The Loss of the Creature,” confronts the way that an individual’s experience is negatively influenced and ultimately swallowed by the educators and expectations of society. Percy opens his essay by comparing the experience of witnessing the Grand Canyon of García López de Cárdenas, its discoverer, with that of the modern-day sightseer. Whereas Cárdenas was amazed and entranced by the physical anomaly, today’s sightseer does not appreciate the Grand Canyon for what it truly is because the sightseer has been influenced by “the symbolic complex” (97) that has already developed in his own mind. The sightseer approaches the spectacle not with a blank slate, but with a preexisting image. The degree to which the sightseer appreciates the Grand Canyon is based on how it compares to this preexisting image. Percy claims that in order for the sightseer to fully appreciate the vision’s beauty, he must be motivated to “leave” (98) the beaten track. Like the sightseer at the Grand Canyon, I was, at first, merely a sightseer at the *Glenti*. I was observing the dance as a tourist, observing the “symbolic complex” of professional dancers’ feet participating in dances. I was someone who had been formally taught the steps, but I had never performed them. Watching and not participating was generally approved for untalented circle-dancers such as myself. But I “left” my seat and danced. Was it the alternative method of learning, the leap of faith, that suddenly extracted the learned steps stored in my brain? It was not until I had abandoned the formal protocol, choosing not to learn from the “expert” before the performance, and had “left” the forced, memorized steps that I truly understood the dance.

People must practice in order to improve, but what is the “correct” and most effective method of practice? In his essay “The Learning Curve,” Atul Gawande reflects on his time spent in a teaching hospital and how the experiential method of teaching led to his success as a surgeon. The teaching hospital is a controversial institution due to its permission of learning practitioners to actively participate in treating patients. Gawande writes of the necessity of students’ exposure to direct medicine and the way that surgeons follow “a curious egalitarianism,” believing in “practice” rather than “talent” and so allow the students to equally participate in medical procedures with them. They endorse “leaving” the beaten track, embracing the sense of excitement that comes with experimenting with real lives, in order to “practice to get good at what we do” (51). Despite Gawande’s

repeatedly unsuccessful attempts at implanting a central line, he remains determined. He remains determined because his teachers do not treat him as an inferior. He remains determined because his teachers understand that progress only comes from practice. Perhaps if my ballet teacher had committed to preventing my withdrawal, I could have been a world-renowned dancer. If she had looked beyond my lack of distinct talent and forcefully encouraged me to practice, perhaps I, unashamed, would now always participate in dancing circles. Percy condemns the type of educator who teaches in such a way that his student feels a loss of “sovereignty” (103) and may surrender his experience, such as I did with ballet.

Walker Percy sees the highest role of the educator as the “maieutic role of Socrates” (110). *Maieutic*, defined as “obstetrics” in Greek, was used in early Greece to refer to the “supportive enablement” (Sanford 7) of a woman delivering her own child with the expectation that she possessed an innate sense of her body. Carol Sanford, in her essay, “The Role of Questioning in a Learning process: A Typology of Inquiry Methods and Results,” is in strong favor of Percy’s “maieutic role of Socrates.” Sanford describes such a role as directing a student toward her own “innate self-understanding” (7). This educator should not impose his understanding on the student. Instead, the educator should allow the student to learn through alternative methods and self-exploration until the student reaches her “inherent” experience. This ideal is the quintessential teacher not only according to Sanford, but also according to Percy, Gawande, and myself. This ideal is the teacher who understands his student and who wholly positions himself within his student. A teacher, whose force is felt through this “withness,” this connection with his student, is able to directly relate to and ultimately motivate him. While my ballet teacher did not possess this quality of “withness,” Gawande’s surgical teachers did, and were successful in imparting their knowledge to their student. Percy yearns to find such educators who will strive for this “withness” in order to allow the student his own sovereignty and to make the experience of education more enjoyable.

It was the lack of “withness” when learning to dance that crippled my sense of confidence. My teacher strived to relate to neither me, nor my situation; and I was unwilling to strive without motivation, as I was initially unwilling to experience the *Glenti* dancing. I was not inspired by a moment of “withness” with others at the *Glenti*. I did not know any of the people

dancing; even worse, I was intimidated by them. It was the leap of faith that I unconsciously took that brought me closer to “withness.” I felt “withness” within myself. I felt pure comfort within myself. Walker Percy does not explicitly recognize this term “withness,” but he does recognize that the experience of outside discovery leads to self-discovery, and inevitably changes the way individuals think and behave. As I returned to my flimsy plastic chair after the *Glenti* dance, I tasted the sweat of self-discovery. I understood the tension within myself because that tension was finally released. I understood that my fears and past experiences must be challenged for my personal growth. I confronted my fear of dancing and grew to learn and love dancing.

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Evan Dvorak

When Politics Plays Sports

Nowadays, it seems as though Iran can't escape negative press in America. If President (read: dictator) Ahmadinejad isn't calling for the complete annihilation of Israel, reports stream in accusing Iran of supplying insurgents in Iraq or funding Hezbollah terrorists. The good news is that for the Iranian people, most of this undesirable press is directed toward the government of Iran itself, and not at the people who disagree with the dictator's inflammatory rhetoric. The bad news, however, is the recent story of the Iranian-German soccer star who refused to play in a game against Israel. Though almost entirely unknown in America, Ashkan Dejagah is an Iranian-born, German-raised athlete whose brilliance as a striker on Germany's national U-19 soccer team earned him much recognition in Europe. This recognition was only increased by the profusion of media coverage that resulted from the German Football Federation's decision to suspend Dejagah from the German team in light of his refusal to play a match in Tel Aviv because of "political reasons." As you can imagine, controversy ensued. At the center of the hype lies the crucial question: was Dejagah right in his actions?

Those who support Dejagah's decision will undoubtedly cite the numerous instances when politics have snuck into the athletic arena. One only needs to look as far back as the 1980 Olympics when the United States boycotted the games in Moscow to see politics' close relationship with athletics. Furthermore, it should be noted that often it isn't the outside political groups that force their way into the world of sports, but rather

the athletes themselves who usher in controversy with political moves—the most notorious example of which is perhaps Tommie Smith and John Carlos's Black Power salute upon the 1964 track-and-field Olympic podium. Dejagah's supporters cite the potential security concerns that that the young athlete was forced to acknowledge as a result of his Tehrani roots. The Iranian government has officially restricted any Iranian citizen from traveling to Israel and has been known to eliminate "political enemies" who disregard Iranian policy. Dejagah and his team could have faced threats not only from Tehran but also from the Iranian communities in Berlin. Those who support the player's decision will suggest that no person—athlete or not—should be put into a situation that has the potential to compromise his or her security.

I will not argue that politics has no place in sports—history certainly demonstrates that the two share an intimate relationship. Nor will I go so far as to say that Dejagah's security concerns were ill founded. Though no specific threats were ever made, I don't believe that Dejagah's concerns were simply a cover-up for what seems to be a bigoted decision. The crux of the issue, however, is this: in joining Germany's national team, Dejagah made the conscious decision to represent a Western nation with Western morals and ideals. Regardless of his place of birth, Dejagah is a German citizen who must be held to the same standards as every other German citizen. Germany currently has a special relationship with Israel, and Dejagah's refusal (for whatever reason) to play in Israel is a direct slap in the face not only to Israel, but also to Germany and modern German values. As Dr. Efraim Zuroff of the Simon Wiesenthal Center writes, "it is precisely such a situation that affords a unique opportunity to make political statements that reverberate around the entire world." This is especially true with respect to two groups of people. Germany's Muslim immigrants face the daily struggle of integration into German society—often they are accused of rejecting German mores and remaining steadfast to traditional Islamic values despite being citizens of a Western democratic nation. Dejagah's move is a disservice to his Muslim-immigrant community in Germany in that it could possibly alienate them from the rest of the country that embraces German values. Second, Dejagah had the opportunity to make a powerful statement with respect to Muslim-Jewish relations. If Dejagah did represent Germany in Israel, he would have rejected the messages of hate that Muslim extremists propagate throughout the Islamic world and sent a powerful message of peace to Jews and Muslims

throughout the Middle East. Instead, his decision only corroborates the unfortunate view that many Europeans hold of Muslim immigrants—that their loyalties remain with their countries of origin.

Dejagah has Tehran, his city of birth, tattooed on his right wrist; on his left is the city in which he was brought up, Berlin. It is as if these tattoos symbolized the ideological struggle between the East and West, with the rest of Dejagah's body and spirit somewhere in the middle. Most sports fans, however, know that the arms have very little to do with soccer. More important to our discussion is where his feet and heart should lie. I stress to German, Iranian, and global sports fans that Dejagah did not move to Germany the day before he started playing for the national team. Rather, the controversial star was raised in Berlin and reaped the same benefits of democratic life as every other German citizen, including freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and the right to petition the government. Citizens of democratic nations all over the world should be shocked and appalled to learn of a German citizen who consciously chose to align himself with the hateful policies of a country that denies to its people the basic rights Dejagah enjoyed while being raised in Germany. There would not have been an issue if Dejagah merely played for a league team in Germany that is not representative of the country as a whole, but he made the decision to represent German soccer to the world when he joined the national team. As long as he wears the red, yellow, and black and sings Deutschlandlied with his hand across his heart, Dejagah has the responsibility to play in matches no matter where they take place geographically, just like every other player on the team. If Ashkan Dejagah has a problem with this, then maybe he should reconsider where his loyalties lie. Besides, I'm sure Iran would love to have him play.

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Instructor: Jacqui Sadashige, Critical Writing Seminar in Cinema: In The Zone

Jeffrey Lanes

Panther's Pride

Beginning in 2005, Pine Crest School, an elite Fort Lauderdale, Florida, high school, embarked on a mission to improve its athletic program to match the institution's academic success. As one of the most competitive secondary schools in the country, Pine Crest has no issues thriving academically. Its goal to enhance the athletic program, however, threatens that reputation due to the admittance of lower-caliber student-athletes. "Even though it's nice to be able to watch good, competitive teams with some players who have real potential, the deterioration of Pine Crest's academics will have a far greater negative impact, as academics is the reason most students enrolled at the school in the first place," states alum Mayank Vijay. Though not the only belief, Vijay's outlook is most common among students, as a genuine fear exists that the quality of education will begin a steep descent. While the recruitment of high caliber athletes has improved Pine Crest's standing in the high school sports world, it has substantially reduced the school's academic reputation as one of the elite preparatory institutes in the nation.

While realizing the negative impact of recruitment on the academic reputation of the school, many, including administration, continue to support and further the institution's transformation into a competitive sports program. Administration believes in the potential of Pine Crest to thrive both academically and athletically. Many point to sophomore point guard Brandon Knight—one of the top players nationwide—not only succeeding academically, but also leading the Panthers basketball program to new heights, as the

team fought its way to the state semifinals. The success of the basketball team has led to greater exposure not only for the players, but also for the school, as the team will compete this upcoming season on national television. Administration anticipates that the positive exposure will highlight Pine Crest as an elite academic and athletic institution. Furthermore, many support the recruitment of athletes, as the improved teams allow for school pride and greater unity. As many of the teams are thriving, attendance has greatly improved, and many are excited about the prospect of the upcoming seasons. This has allowed for students to unite as a community for a common goal, which is a drastic transformation from the past, when apathy towards such sporting events was the rule and not the exception.

While recruitment has drastically improved the athletics program and allowed for school pride, the costs of deteriorating academics outweigh any of these potential benefits. While not all recruited athletes are unqualified to enroll at Pine Crest, many are students whom would not be accepted to the school otherwise. Furthermore, the admissions process is more of a formality for athletes than a true evaluation, as many recruits are not even obligated to take examinations other students are required in order to enroll. "When I transferred to Pine Crest to begin my high school career, I left many of my lifelong friends behind because of the educational opportunities available there. I feel that the recruitment of athletes has lowered the standard for not only students accepted, but also for the overall educational experience," states alum Joshua Berman. Berman's thoughts echo the dominant belief held by many of the students who struggled to gain entrance into the prestigious preparatory school. The lowering of standards for admissions has not only affected the quality of students, but also has affected the quality of the learning experience, as teachers must slow the pace and workload of the class to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to thrive. For instance, when I was enrolled in a tenth-grade honors English course, preparation for tests consisted of reviewing 100 vocabulary words. As students entered the same class two years later, exam preparation was diminished to reviewing only 40 words. Teachers across subject areas have focused on lowering their standards in order to appease all students, thus deteriorating the quality of learning. Over the past few years, advancement placement (AP) exam scores have begun to decrease on average. For instance, the chemistry AP exam average has lessened from a high of 4.5 to 3.8, with a 200 percent increase in

the number of 2's and 3's. While success in the sports domain is welcomed by many at Pine Crest, it is, in fact, and must continue to be, secondary to academics.

While the balancing of academics and athletics remains an issue at Pine Crest School, it is also a concern at high schools and universities throughout the nation. Colleges and high schools strive to ensure that both academics and athletics complement one another in order to achieve the most efficient outcomes. Schools, including the University of Pennsylvania, struggle with the notion of whether to provide athletic-based scholarships. Debating parties try to decide whether athletic scholarships will provide greater benefits in terms of increased recognition and possible increased revenue or greater costs in terms of decreased standards for admissions. While improved athletic programs might lead to a greater feeling of school pride and unity and national recognition, academics and the quality of education are what ultimately drive students to attend any given school.

Instructor: Jacqui Sadashige, Critical Writing Seminar in Cinema: In The Zone

is inside, a familiar, delicious flavor fills the air. She silently peers down the hall into the kitchen. Grandma is removing a loaf of bread from the oven.

Instructor: T. Mera Moore Lafferty, Writing Seminar in Global English: Immigration and Communication

Nathalie Elvasvili

Buyukada Home

Now eighteen years old, Nilgun has returned for a summer visit to her family's seaside home in Buyukada, Turkey. The island has recovered from a major earthquake. On the taxi ride from the airport, she notices some fields where buildings used to be. Paying the driver and carrying her backpack and suitcases toward the house, she notices the empty front yard. She recalls how her grandmother used to rest beneath a large, old maple tree, leaning against its wide trunk and looking out towards the blue ocean in the distance. Nilgun remembers a similar June morning ten years before.

The eight-year-old girl had barely opened her eyes when the smell of freshly baked bread, gingerbread cookies, and pastries wafted into her room. As usual, Grandma had woken at five in the morning, preparing to cook all day long for a household of fifteen. During the summer holidays, cousins, aunts, and uncles joined together here at the family's house on Buyukada, an island close to Istanbul. After breakfast, the girl was free to stroll around the meadows and could cycle to town whenever she wanted. Most importantly, she could spend time with Grandma, chatting or taking walks together along the peaceful trails surrounding their home.

On August 17, 1999, Nilgun's world changed. Although she and her family were away at the time and not harmed, the natural disaster destroyed their summer home, including the maple tree. Many neighbors and friends died in the earthquake. Ten years have passed since the unpleasant event. Nilgun turns the knob on the front door of their renovated house. Once she

Young Jae Koo

Quest for *Chung*

The play *99 Histories* by Julia Cho takes place in suburban Los Angeles, telling the story of conflict between a Korean immigrant, Sah-Jin, and her American-born daughter, Eunice. The young woman, now in her late twenties, has developed a harsh antagonism toward her widowed mother. Eunice moved away as soon as she became an adult and rarely communicated with Sah-Jin, who has been living alone. Suddenly, Eunice returns home, pregnant and unmarried. The play revolves around the Korean concept of *chung*—which refers to sentiment for another person, an enduring feeling—as the two women find a way to reunite.

Mother and daughter suffer from lack of communication. Eunice keeps quiet about where she has been, what happened to her, and the identity of the father of her child. Sah-Jin also avoids communicating; she refuses to discuss her husband's death or the mystery surrounding what happened to her sister, Eunice's aunt. However, the wall between mother and daughter starts to come down. As Eunice uncovers secrets of the past, she comes to understand her mother's untiring love. Eunice was a prodigy on the cello when she was small, but she lost interest in music after a robber shot and killed her father while he was working in their family's small grocery store. Eunice makes her mother discuss the tragedy and the secret about her aunt: Sah-Jin's sister suffered from mental illness. Eunice has worried that she might have inherited the disease. When she and her mother freely discuss these matters, Eunice realizes that she is not mentally ill but rather suffers from a lack of

communication with her mother. The solution is for Sah-Jin and Eunice to talk about their problems and thereby face them together.

Eunice initially declares that she will give up her baby for adoption. She writes a letter to the baby explaining that she believes she would be an inadequate mother. She introduces herself as coming "from a family that doesn't really talk about the past" (14). Although her parents came from Korea, she barely speaks any Korean language and knows little about Korean culture. Sah-Jin is afraid that discussing events of the past will cause her to fall apart. Nonetheless, only by talking about and accepting the past can the two women thaw their bitter, misunderstood relationship.

The ultimate cause of Eunice and Sah-Jin's reconciliation is Eunice's appreciation of *chung*, a uniquely Korean emotion built through duration. One can even have this emotion toward someone he or she dislikes if one has known the person for a long time—thus, *chung* helps Koreans to find common ground even when disagreeing with someone. Because Sah-Jin has *chung* for Eunice, when Eunice comes back pregnant, she does not kick her out or criticize. She accepts her daughter no matter what. Although Eunice has estranged herself from her mother, she cannot get rid of the *chung* between them. Her mother gave birth to her and raised her. They have shared moments of happiness and pain. Eunice finally tells her mother about the break-up with her boyfriend, the baby's father. At the end of the play, Sah-Jin asserts that a mother's love may be "the strongest kind" of *chung* (47). Eunice decides to keep her baby and live with her mother in their family home. Through *chung*, and by keeping open the channels of communication, they will raise the child together as a family.

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Instructor: T. Mera Moore Lafferty, Writing Seminar in Global English: Immigration and Communication

Samantha Wertheimer

Twelve and Thin

The woman's words hit me so hard; I was stunned. There I was in my black leotard, pink tights, and pale pink ballet slippers, with my hair pulled neatly back into a secure bun. I truly looked and felt like a dancer. I was carefully following her words as to ensure I didn't miss a beat. "And plié and stretch. Plié and stretch." I was doing well. My feet were turned out. I had fantastic posture. "Grand plié and no, no wait. Stop the music please. Stop the music." Stop the music? We were all doing so well, but maybe she wanted to correct someone. "Girls, I'm looking around the room at each of you and you all have very nice technique but before we move on, I feel as if I need to share something with you." I was waiting for some constructive criticism. "The dance industry is highly competitive, and as I am aware that this is only a workshop, not an audition, I want to use this opportunity to give you some advice." I thought this was fantastic. I was getting advice from a professional dancer. "No matter how strong your *pas de deux* partner may be, he will not be able to lift a cow." What? "You all need to lose some weight." I did? "About fifteen pounds or so." I was twelve years old. "Nothing major." I only weighed one hundred pounds. "If you want to make it in the dance world, you need to be thin." I knew that, but I thought I was thin. "End of story." The story does not end there.

I danced at the same studio for fourteen years. The woman who owns the studio was once a professional dancer and therefore knew the layout and the politics of the dance world very well. Although she spewed out a massive

amount of constructive criticism on a nightly basis, she never deliberately made any dancer feel badly about herself. She always offered helpful advice, ways in which our technique could be improved, but a malicious comment never left her lips. Most importantly, she had confidence in us, which made us have confidence in ourselves. She brought us to that particular ballet workshop in New York so we could have a taste of the professional dance world at a young age. She knew we were good enough, she knew we were confident enough, and although she would never admit it to anyone, she knew we were thin enough, which was undoubtedly a requirement. Never would she have put us in a disadvantageous situation. She was shocked when ten other twelve-year-olds and I walked out of that dance studio in New York with tears rolling down our cheeks, our egos bruised and self-images permanently skewed.

From that point on, I did not feel the same about my body. I no longer had confidence in the dancer that gazed back at me in those floor-to-ceiling studio mirrors. No matter what my dance instructor said to me about my appearance, weight, or dancing ability, I was convinced that there was another professional somewhere out there who would say otherwise. That day in New York, one person changed me. That woman altered my self-perception in less than a minute. I was twelve years old, and my confidence in relation to myself in the dance world was completely shot.

What kind of person would tell a twelve-year-old to lose fifteen pounds? To the average person, this situation seems absurd; however, it is quite common in the dance world. It is true that all ballerinas must be walk the fine line between thin and emaciated. They must maintain a frame with just the right amount of muscle as to allow them to dance with strength, but appear waiflike and weightless. Obtaining the ideal ballerina's body seems impossible, but thousands of girls and women are encouraged by company directors to do so. In reference to a particular dancer, Heidi Guenther, who once was a member of the Boston Ballet, was advised to lose five pounds. After losing the suggested amount, Guenther continued to lose weight. It is thought that her death was precipitated by an eating disorder (Van Boven). The dance world is image-conscious to the extent that companies are attempting to perfect their images at the expense of their company members and are instilling the "die to be thin" mentality in the minds of dancers.

The interesting part of this situation is that this mentality, which was

once confined to the dance world, has found its way into everyday life. Adolescent girls do not comprehend the physical and psychological danger in trying to obtain a waiflike frame (Chang). Young girls especially feel the effects of our weight-obsessed society. From a young age, they are encouraged to strive for thinness because being thin means being pretty and, more importantly, achieving happiness. This obviously is not the case. A large number of adolescent girls suffer from anorexia, and about 10 percent of these girls die as a result of living with the disorder (Chang). In today's world, teenagers are literally dying to be thin, and it is rare to find a person who is completely content with his or her body. I often wonder if I would be one of those rare cases of self-image satisfaction had I not gone to that ballet workshop seven years ago. Maybe I would have experienced a similar situation further down the road, but perhaps I would have gone on dancing, feeling that my body was in good condition and that there was no reason to alter it. However, I was in that room, and that woman's words had a lasting impression on me. She said the kind of thing you wish no one had ever said to you because if they hadn't, your life might have been so much less emotionally and physically taxing.

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Instructor: Jane Kauer, Writing Seminar in Anthropology: The Concept of Fat

Robert Hass

The Dance Is a Bit Hokey; So What?

"You put your right hand in, take your right hand out, you put your right hand in, and you shake it all about ..." Generations of children and adults have performed this rhyme with its accompanying motions. Longevity of such a degree suggests that its subject is extremely valuable to society, as indeed it is. Although people often overlook the subtleties of the Hokey Pokey, its qualities are such that it embodies the most important teachings necessary for a pleasant life. In fact, it would not be misguided to propose that the Hokey Pokey is really what it's all about.

Chief among the precepts that this dance instills in its practitioners is an appreciation for interpersonal relations. The Hokey Pokey is done in a group, impressing a spirit of community upon all who perform it. Further, the dance is performed in a circle with no leader. Everyone says the words in unison; an egalitarian spirit pervades. Anyone in such a setting, surrounded by peers all reciting the same lyrics and performing the same actions, will naturally feel a certain bond of camaraderie with his or her co-participants. By extension, he or she is likely to be more open to social interaction in other scenarios and to gain an appreciation for the company of others.

Aside from the far-reaching psychological benefits afforded by the Hokey Pokey, the mere physical act of performing the dance renders it a key part of anyone's life. In a time when obesity is more prevalent than ever in recorded history, an engaging activity that gets people up on their

feet, moving themselves and their limbs and “shaking them all about,” is invaluable. The Hokey Pokey is an ideal middle ground of enjoyable calisthenics for children as well as adults. While distance running or similar forms of exercise would be a more intense cardiovascular workout than the dance, they are not as engaging. If entertainment is coupled with exertion, it is more likely that exercise will be looked upon fondly and not as a boring obligatory task. The Hokey Pokey’s appeal to children renders it an especially sensible pursuit. Habitual physical activity when young sets a precedent for older years; if a child influenced by the Hokey Pokey remains active through adulthood, his health will be ensured for the rest of his life.

Instructor: Matthew Katz, Writing Seminar in Philosophy: Identity & Self in Film

Trixie Canivel

Op-Ed: Opposing Argument

Tall, dark and handsome are not exactly the crucial characteristics that one would expect a senatorial candidate to possess. Evidently, two celebrities thought that those, along with their impressive cinematic credentials, were enough to win them a seat in the recent 2007 elections in the Philippines. One would think that this occurrence was a glitch in Filipino politics, an incident that would most likely never happen again. Sadly, this is but a tip of the iceberg of the blur between the Filipino entertainment industry and its political system. Over the past ten years, the obsession with celebrities in politics has grown exponentially. Celebrities are glorified in the Philippines and are idolized by masses of people in the country. Unfortunately, the exaggerated attention given to celebrities by the media negatively influences the political decisions made by the Filipino voters.

The representation of celebrities in the media can be seen as a major avenue to educate the general community in politics. Since celebrities receive the most media exposure, they can take advantage of this to reach out to the population on critical issues of the country, such as those having to do with politics. In fact, several celebrities have already tapped into their superstar influence to promote their political ideologies. Richard Gomez, one of the “tall, dark and handsome” senatorial candidates, is a proud advocate for *Mamamayan Ayaw sa Droga*, a political party list against drugs, and Sharon Cuneta, the Filipina version of Oprah, was the driving force behind her husband’s senatorial campaign. If not for the presence of these celebrities, many political causes would go unnoticed and would not be

garnering the political strength that they have today.

Despite the political strength garnered by celebrities, their superstar status does not automatically qualify them to be politicians. Unfortunately, many celebrities have used their fame as the thrust for their political campaigns. Commercials and posters featuring politicians with celebrities by their sides are used to draw in the votes of the Filipino people. The 2004 campaign of current senator Jambay Madrigal did not revolve around her political aptitude, but rather around the fact that she was friends with Filipino drama star Judy Ann Santos. Joseph Estrada, a former action star, was elected mayor and eventually worked his way to claim a seat in the senate and finally the presidency in 1998. Estrada did not graduate from college or have any political experience prior to being elected mayor, but despite that, garnered political strength because of his superstar appeal and by promoting himself as a friend of the masses, their *pare*, or “buddy.” This phenomenon almost repeated itself once again in the 2004 presidential elections when yet another action star, Fernando Poe Jr., declared his candidacy. Similar to Estrada, Poe was not a college graduate, but other than that, had no political experience whatsoever. However, Poe lost by only a very slim margin of votes to the current president, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. In both the Estrada and Poe cases, the candidates’ media appeal overrode the fact that they did not have experience in the political fields. The exaggerated media publicity that the celebrities receive act as a replacement for political debates and policy speeches usually given by candidates. Prospective politicians are forced to garner support by appearing on noontime variety shows instead of appearing in news interviews because it is the former form of media that reaches the largest communities of Filipino people. The Filipino voters are not exposed to enough political information and are thus forced to base their decisions on whether or not these celebrities are going to sweep them off of their feet, just as they do in every movie that they watch.

Statistics compiled by the National Economic and Development Authority of the Philippines show that several sectors plummeted during the Estrada presidency. The financial and real estate sector both exhibited a decline in gross domestic product trends during his term and only began to pick up following his impeachment. This is quantitative data that supports the fact that celebrities do not necessarily make the best politicians, let alone leaders of a nation. It is imperative that voters, regardless of socioeconomic

class, be educated regarding their political decisions. Candidates must not rely on the superstar power to propel them to governmental positions, but rather, they must use their publicity to educate the voters on their platforms and political viewpoints. All candidates, celebrity or not, should be voted on the basis of their capability to lead the country and not on the basis of their on-screen persona.

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Instructor: Jacqui Sadashige, Writing Seminar in Asian Studies: Race & Popular Cinema

Alex Bratman

Kibble Konnection

The “Power of Food” assignment was in two parts. The first part was to watch several episodes of “The Power of Food” show on Food Network’s website. The students had to study and write out the formula for the segments. For example one recurring convention is that each segment ends with the line: “The power of X, Y, Z for me is...; The power of cake for me is... The second part of the assignment was to adapt and combine Kenneth Bruffee’s “Two Reasons” essay with the conventions of the “Power of Food” shows. So the students had to write a narrative essay about what the power of a specific food is for them, and then give two reasons why.

-Thomas Devaney, Senior Writing Fellow

One of my family members never gets full. He remains constantly alert and on the prowl for morsels of sustenance. He is my dog Buddy, and food is his *raison d'être* (his reason for being). When I open a bag of graham crackers, his life comes to a standstill in hopes that I'll be sharing. When the kitchen comes alive with activity, not even the chance to take a walk, one of Buddy's favorite pastimes, can entice him away. Food is our common language, and it has created a remarkable bond between us. Food is at the heart of our communication and is our key to resolving behavioral issues.

I communicate with Buddy simply and effectively through food. He depends upon the daily meals I provide for him. This is my way of

demonstrating to Buddy that he is safe, loved, and truly part of the family. In return, he shows his affection by remaining with my family, trekking along on our adventures, and of course slipping the occasional kiss.

Buddy communicates with me through his meals and treats. For people, meals are unquestionably a social institution. People gather around tables, relax, rejuvenate, and share a moment in time together. Unlike many dogs, Buddy is a social eater. He will not eat unless he is with me or another one of my family members. Usually, we all eat together in the kitchen. However, if we are not in the kitchen when Buddy is ready to eat, he will simply fill up his mouth with kibble, come find one of us, spit the food out on the floor next to his chosen dinner guest, and then, and only then, chow down. This process can seem excessive at times, particularly when he is running from the kitchen, upstairs, and back down again to get more food. But when Buddy comes right up beside me and spits out his kibble, he's communicating his need to be social. It is at such moments when I know that we have a lasting bond.

Even though Buddy and I have established a trusting, loyal relationship, we've had a few bones to pick with each other. Food has been the catalyst by which we have modified our behaviors. One of my problems with Buddy was his excessive barking when a guest would enter our house. The solution came as we sat down together to eat some saltine crackers topped with peanut butter. That is, I ate crackers, and he was rewarded with them when he abstained from barking. If Buddy barked, the crackers stayed in the box—he quickly caught on to the system, ceasing the annoying behavior. Food was also used as a reward when I trained him to sit and stay at street corners during our daily walks.

Buddy had some problems with me as well. He is an opinionated guy and he makes his preferences well known. He'd get mad at me for feeding him plain Cheerios when he preferred the Honey Nut ones. He'd simply spit them out all over the floor. That sure got my attention, and he was able to modify my behavior. Buddy also made it quite clear that he expected a treat before each walk. As soon as I would take out his leash, he would begin his ritual game of chase around the house. I now know I need to dangle a treat in front of him to get him to settle down long enough to put on his leash. Food has thus been the key ingredient in helping Buddy and I to connect, change our behaviors, communicate our preferences, and learn the true meaning of

give-and-take.

My name is Alex Bratman, and to me the power of food lies in its ability to connect and create lasting bonds between people and animals:, in my case,: a man and a dog.

Instructor: Thomas Devaney, Writing Seminar in English: Food for Thought

Jessica Adams

Grizzly Man's Misunderstandings

In Werner Herzog's documentary *Grizzly Man*, Timothy Treadwell believes he can be both animal and protector of animals. While immersing himself emotionally into both roles, he becomes so infatuated with the bears that he would be happy to "die for these animals" (<http://www.script-o-rama.com>). Yet Herzog's film is not about Treadwell's noble work on behalf of nature, but about the sinister impact nature has on Treadwell himself. Timothy's story teaches us that we cannot be both animal and animal protector; it is hypocritical to maintain both roles and our efforts as such will not be appreciated.

Treadwell tries to demonstrate that he has an intimate and amiable bond with wild animals by filming himself in close proximity to the bears while proclaiming his love and devotion for them. He attempts to prove to us that all his heroic endeavors are performed for their security. Throughout his footage, Treadwell repeats how he is a "kind warrior," protecting the bears in the Grizzly Maze, where "bears do not have human protection but are under human threat" (<http://www.script-o-rama.com>). We see Treadwell weeping as he pats "Spirit" the fox; he cries, "I'm so in love with them, and they're so fucked over, which so sucks." (<http://www.script-o-rama.com>). At one point we even see Timothy perform a ranting, irate tirade against the park service, which he sees as the adversary of his protective efforts. He curses the

park service and their laws requiring him to keep his distance from the bears, proclaiming, “I beat your fucking asses! I protected the animals! I did it! Fuck you!” Yet, confused by his need and desire to be one with and savior of the bears, Timothy loses confidence in his ability to exert social force against the threat of human intruders when the opportunity to be the bears’ hero arises.

Herzog reveals that Timothy disturbed innate man-to-man, man-to-animal understandings. Throughout his thirteen years on the Alaskan Peninsula, having taken over 100 hours of filmed footage, Timothy’s closest encounter with intruders was hardly confrontational or protective of any bears. In his footage, we see Timothy hiding behind a bush as he observes an invasive company of men pitching stones at a cub. Timothy had been around this bear, whom he’d named Downy, since she was a newborn; she had thus grown to be fearless of people. While the undaunted animal approaches the men, Timothy shrinks away from them, he says, because, “I don’t wanna expose myself to them” (<http://www.script-o-rama.com>). In many other takes, however, we see Timothy have no hesitation confronting, speaking to, and even touching the bears. He cannot protect the bears from himself. It is because of his prolonged presence around the bears that they have lost their natural fear of potentially harmful humans. Either by choice, or by instinct, Timothy has chosen not to associate with other men. By now, his animal-like tendencies have caused him to withdraw from humanity entirely. By juxtaposing Timothy’s human versus non-human encounters, Herzog demonstrates how backward Timothy’s rationale is; how confused he remains, still searching for identity. Timothy’s romanticized self-image as the bears’ protector is hypocritical in light of his passivity in a situation where he could have defended a vulnerable cub. He has surrendered himself whole-heartedly to the allure of bearlike behavior without retaining the ability to relate to people. He is no longer endowed with the good sense and confidence needed to defend himself, and the animals, from people.

As Herzog’s narrative emphasizes, Treadwell’s protective stance and protective measures are entirely redundant. As one park service representative comments, the grizzly bears form “a very healthy population, it’s a stable population ... you can harvest about five percent of the population annually and still have a healthy group of bears. ... Poaching is not a big concern around here.” (<http://www.script-o-rama.com>). Despite

government statistics that show that the bears need little aid, Timothy, desperate to help feed the bears, moves river rocks to make a salmon ladder, toward the bears’ habitat, for the fish to climb during a month of drought and shallow water. His nature-manipulating efforts, however, are feeble and futile. The salmon could not run until the river had swelled naturally with rain runoff. In this and other instances recorded on film for us to see, Timothy doesn’t help the bears; nature acts of its own accord. Sadly and ironically, despite his good intentions, Treadwell’s efforts to protect the welfare of the bears were merely superfluous. As Herzog comments toward the end of this profoundly tragic film, the bears looked at Timothy with “only the overwhelming indifference of nature.”

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Instructor: Andrew Mossin, Writing Seminar in English: Verbal Landscapes

Danyal Kothari

Gogol

Gogol. For most, the name conjures thoughts of the great Russian authors: Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, and (of course) Nikolai Gogol. For Mira Nair, though, the name is at the crux of her protagonist's central conflict—assimilation to a culture versus retaining values of an old culture—in her film *The Namesake*. Although the film primarily deals with Gogol, a young Indian American, and his journey into adulthood, it also follows the classic immigration story of his parents, Ashima and Ashoke, as they struggle with retaining as much of their native culture in a foreign land as possible. Through a series of dichotomies between Gogol and Ashima as well as between Indian and American culture, Nair advocates an anti-assimilation attitude.

The parallel stories of mother and son propose a negative view of assimilation. Ashima, the mother, represents Indian culture; despite living in America for nearly thirty years, she retains her traditional Indian clothing and continues to speak Bengali with her husband. Gogol, on the other hand, rebels against his parents' culture throughout his adolescence and young adulthood, resenting them for the name they bestowed upon him and ignoring them because he is embarrassed of their "backwardness." However, despite their seemingly antithetical representations, Ashima and Gogol undergo the same struggle of searching for their identities in uncomfortable environments. The director sets up a series of parallel scenes to link the

two characters. In one set of parallel scenes, Ashima's husband dies, and she decides to return to her native Calcutta. She explains to her children that she longs to go back to be "free," and by returning to her motherland she is "following her bliss." Similarly, after Gogol has matured through his adolescent resentment towards his native culture, he realizes that he is finally "free." Although he does not physically return to his homeland like his mother, he comes to accept and eventually embrace his culture and finally seems to feel comfortable with himself. The language that both characters use and the repetition of "free" suggest that there is an inherent connection between retention of native culture and freedom. Moreover, the idea that without a sense of return, one cannot be free implies that assimilation is merely an artifice. Creating this link between Ashima and Gogol allows for two separate and very different assimilation stories to highlight the same concept: the artificiality of assimilation. Nair creates other dichotomies between her two principal characters throughout the film to further her anti-assimilation views; another set of dichotomous contrasts she presents is between Indian and American culture.

By presenting exaggerated versions of both cultures, the director successfully steers the viewer's sympathies away from American culture and, in turn, away from assimilation. One clear example of this juxtaposition occurs when the Ganguli family makes a trip to Calcutta. Nair does not reveal the pollution, corruption, poverty, and injustice that the developing nation is rife with. Instead, she focuses on scenes of grandeur, glorifying the past and present of the Indian people. In one scene, the clothes-washing *dobis* are shown washing brightly-colored fabrics against a dreary, cloudy sky. The pure aesthetics of this scene are enough to give the viewer the sense that retaining any aspect of a culture that can create something so beautiful and simple is worth keeping. Gogol is fascinated by the history of India, especially the Taj Mahal. The director shows the Taj from different upward angles to emphasize its grandeur and mystify the grand mausoleum. Nair establishes a timeline of tradition, glory, and myth associated with Indian culture. However, immediately following the scene of the Taj, the film cuts to the Gangulis returning to their graffitied mailbox. By placing these two extremes of culture next to each other, Nair highlights the negative aspects of American culture and romanticizes the ancient and beautiful history and culture of India. Although this dichotomy does not directly tie into

the plotline of Gogol's assimilation conflict, it clearly indicates the film's attitudes towards each culture—new and native—and thus sheds light on the film's overall attitude toward assimilation.

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Instructor: Jacqui Sadashige, Critical Writing Seminar in Asian Studies: Race & Popular Cinema

Wilson Gachugu

Watching over Him

It's a Friday. Alex, finished with his last class of the day, leaves his high school and walks back home. No one's there. His dad is away on a business trip. His brother works overtime for his new company. His sister is out with her friends. Alex sighs.

On Friday evenings, Mum used to pick him up from preschool exactly on time. He would run towards her and give her a hug. Her perfume always lightened his senses. His mother was a cautious driver, paying attention to the road while chatting. She would ask him about school that day. They would also sing along to the popular songs played on the local radio station for the remainder of the trip back home. The whole family looked forward to Friday evenings. Their house buzzed with activity. In the kitchen, his mother prepared *pilau*, a regular Kenyan dish consisting of rice, beef, and spices. His father would teasingly snap photos of Mum cooking in the kitchen. The sweet *pilau* aroma engulfed the lively house. Alex's elder sister kept to her mother's side, taking every detail of every step of her mother's *pilau* recipe. Meanwhile, Alex wrestled with his older brother for any available appetizers dished out while mother desperately tried to keep them at bay. When the family sat down together at the dinner table, everyone waited for Mum to say grace. "Guess what I got for dessert tonight ..." Mummy would always start after saying grace. "Well, guess who's taking you guys out for a movie after dessert!" Daddy would respond. Conversations ran back and forth during the meal as the whole family recapped on its daytime exploits.

Tonight, the house is empty. The kitchen is untidy. Alex ordered a

pizza. He settles in an empty dining table. An open window swings back and forth due to the rushing wind from outside. Inside, the silence is deafening as Alex flips through the cable channels and eats by himself. There's nothing interesting on TV. He stares outside the window. Suddenly, a shooting star shoots across the night sky. Alex makes a silent wish to see his mother again one day. She died of cancer ten years ago. Tears crop underneath his eyes, yet Alex smiles. He knows his mother is watching over him.

Instructor: T. Mera Moore Lafferty, Writing Seminar in Global English: Immigration and Communication

He (Helen) Huang

Strength

Alice's grandfather is a tall, lean man with an angular figure. He gives off the strong, fresh smell of tea. At the age of fourteen, he joined the military; the discipline he learned from serving in the armed forces taught him both bravery and persistence, qualities that he wished to pass on to his granddaughter Alice. Alice lived with her grandparents as she grew up, and her grandfather grasped every opportunity to spend time with her so that he could pass along his wisdom and strength. A beautiful river ran across the small city they lived in, their balcony offering a lovely view of the water. Along that shore, Alice started her journey toward maturity.

Every morning, Alice's grandfather took her running along the river. On the path grew wild lilies and grass covered with morning dew, giving off a sweet, refreshing smell. Tall trees stood along the way with singing birds. The magic of nature always amazed her. Despite the beauty of the surroundings, she was scared of the daily morning workout. She worried that her overweight body could not stand the intensity of a sport like jogging. Her grandfather, however, was always energetic and vigorous, ready for exercising. His encouraging words dragged Alice through the path and cheered her up. His voice was deep and thick, as if giving out military orders. One day, Alice tripped, her mouth and nose bleeding. The salty smell and the taste of blood made her want to vomit, and she cried out in pain, but Grandfather showed no sympathy. Regardless of her bleeding, he urged her to continue down the path, saying, "It does not hurt!" and "Do not cry!"

Wiping away her tears, she kept going. That day, her grandfather's tough, independent strength entered Alice's spirit.

Now, Alice runs every morning. Whenever she trips, she gets back up and pushes along. She goes back to visit her grandparents once or twice a year. When she asks Grandfather to work out with her, he says that he is too old to jog these days. Instead, he watches Alice running along the shore. Every time she jogs past the building where her grandparents live, she looks up to the balcony and sees him smiling.

Instructor: T. Mera Moore Lafferty, Writing Seminar in Global English: Immigration and Communication

David Antivolo

Get a Neat Hobby; Go to an Ivy League

Wharton's undergraduate acceptance rate was 9 percent this year. People know it's something absurdly low like that, so when they find out I'm going to Wharton, they usually say something along the lines of, "What?! How in the world did you fall under that 9 percent?!" I know, how nice of them-, but I can think of one explanation: I have some pretty neat hobbies. So I can thank my hobbies for being in Wharton. Winston Churchill also seems to regard hobbies very highly. According to him, "The cultivation of a hobby ... [is] a policy of first importance to a public man" (251)¹. Some ask, "What's so great about hobbies?" Well, I know hobbies can get one into the university, and Churchill believes one needs hobbies "to be really happy and really safe" (252)².

I used my superior deductive reasoning skills to determine that indeed it was indeed my hobbies that allowed me to get accepted to The Wharton School. My grades weren't anything special; my standardized test scores barely fell into the 25th-75th percentile range; and even though I picked out the perfect picture to send along with my application, that could only have gotten me so far. This leaves my essay, in which I described my neat hobbies. First of all, I'm a passionate Klezmer musician. Not just normal music, but traditional, century-old Jewish music. The Princess (my clarinet) and I wail as we portray the cultural sentiments of Jewish oppression throughout the ages. Secondly, I've picked up some random hobbies. I like to ride unicycles,

¹ Churchill, Winston. Thoughts and adventures: Hobbies. Page 251.

² Ibid. Page 252.

juggle almost anything (including eggs, basket balls, bananas, and tennis rackets), as well as solve Rubik's cubes. And I like to do these three things simultaneously. I also have some other hobbies, of a more dubious nature, which might better go unmentioned. So when the admissions people read about my hobbies (and after seeing my picture), I guess they decided they were interesting enough to let me come to Wharton.

Now, if my word isn't enough, then Churchill's word should surely lead one to believe that hobbies really are so very important. Not only was Churchill an amazing writer, historian, orator, broadcaster, and almost anything else one can think of, but also he understood the human mind. As an old man, he knew that the human mind gets tired throughout its lifetime. Old people just can't carry out the same rigorous intellectual activities as well as they used to. For example, they have a harder times remembering names, or learning complex scientific concepts, or other things of the like. This is what he calls the "wearing out" of the brain. In order to combat this wearing-out process, Churchill suggests engaging in completely new or different activities, i.e. hobbies, in order to stimulate the brain in positive ways. One great suggestion of a hobby he proposes is reading in a different language. If one is able to truly find joy in literature of a non-native language, his or her brain is stimulated in a truly positive way. Churchill explains this point with a metaphor: "A man who blew the trumpet for his living would be glad to play the violin for amusement" (255)³.

These days, so many people want to go to great universities, but universities don't want them. And the reason is simple: those people don't have interesting hobbies! (Or they just don't stand out as interesting, but an interesting hobby would help them stand out to the admissions committee.) Another problem these days is that old people wear out their brains and become miserable, utterly miserable. If only they would take Churchill's advice to adopt a hobby, they would be able to engage in intellectually stimulating activities that give rest to the tired mind. Clearly, everyone should adopt a hobby or two, either to be like me and go to the best university, or, like Churchill, and not to be miserable in senescence.

³ Ibid. Page 255.

Instructor: Paul Deveney, Writing Seminar in History: Winston Churchill

Alison Wand

Treadwell's Secret World: Thoughts on the Role of Humans in Nature

The Alaskan wilderness is a testament to the wonder of Nature's creations. Shadowy forests, where Western hemlock and yellow cedar—tall, powerful, and commanding—loom overhead, enclose wide, grassy fields, where wildflowers and shrubs flourish in the summer sun. Streams of clear, icy water carve riverbed trails down mountains, pooling into silent ponds in the valleys below. This is a thriving world, a languishing world, where life and death mingle in harmony and discord. As mothers feed their young, predators stalk their prey; as one cub is born, another perishes nearby; and as the flowers bloom, they inevitably begin to wither—all before the backdrop of Nature's masterpiece. What is this world, this perfectly orchestrated symphony that we cannot decipher? How can we possibly begin to comprehend its complexities, its mysteries, its secrets...

What role should humans play in nature? Timothy Treadwell, nature enthusiast and self-proclaimed protector of bears, believed he had found the answer to this timeless question. He was convinced that his place in the world was not among humans, but rather in the Alaskan wilderness, where he could live among wild grizzly bears. For over a decade, it seemed that Treadwell had bridged the gap between people and the rest of the natural world, living peacefully with these ferocious creatures. However, his untimely death suggests that there is a definite barrier between the human world and the

wild, one that not even Treadwell could cross. Yet it is undeniable that Treadwell came remarkably close to penetrating the “secret world of bears” during his years in the Alaskan wilderness. Was Treadwell delusional, or was he really on the verge of a brilliant discovery? Is it truly possible for humans to live among bears or, for that matter, in the wild at all?

If humans were to fully enter this world of bears, we would have to learn to comply with its laws. But is it irrational to demand this of humans? Werner Herzog declares that he can “discover no kinship, no understanding, no mercy ... only the overwhelming indifference of nature [in the faces of Treadwell’s bears].” This “indifference” he speaks of is the apathetic instinct for survival that humans cannot comprehend. In the wild, survival requires placing self-preservation above all other instincts and “considerations”—such as not eating a friend. Humans, with our own survivalist instincts dulled by the comforts of modern civilization, can never fully understand the laws of the animal world, which permit acts that we could never condone. Even Treadwell, with his extraordinary understanding of the “secret world of bears,” mourns the cub killed by her father so that her mother would be able to mate again—he cries, “I love you. I love you and I don’t understand. It’s a painful world.” Could humans ever live in this world where, as Herzog describes, a “half-bored interest in food” dominates relations between creatures? Psychologically, we could never govern ourselves by the laws of the natural world—as humans, we could not live so apathetically, caring only for our own survival.

A fox cub lies dead upon the ground, her body, though concealed by the tall grass, exposed to the scavengers of the woods. She will become food for other animals—in her death, others will live. This is the fine balance, a cruel equilibrium, in the natural world. The living creatures that feed on the dead do not owe any debt. It is simply the way of survival.

So can we condemn the bears of this story, the unknowing characters who acted out their roles for an eager filmmaker? Or should we mourn the bear who was murdered by humans because, in his struggle to survive, he offended them? Surely the bear had no greater obligation to this human than he would to a salmon in a nearby stream. Then again, can we say this with certainty?

Is it reasonable to say that Treadwell’s encounters with the bears lacked

any sort of emotional connection? Treadwell’s footage betrays some form of relationship between the bears and their guest. Certainly Treadwell’s love for the bears is evident throughout the film—he often professes his love for the animals, thanking them for “being my friend” and for “giving me a life.” His feelings for the bears are clearly both very sincere and extremely deep; furthermore, it is undeniable that Treadwell’s life revolves around his experiences with the bears each summer. His footage acts much as a diary, capturing Treadwell’s most intimate thoughts and genuine emotions, and it is difficult not to be moved by his passion. But does this mean that the bears reciprocated Treadwell’s affection? And if so, do Treadwell’s experiences serve as evidence that humans are capable of integrating themselves into the wild?

Though one can never judge if the bears felt any bond for their annual visitor, it is intriguing that, in over a decade, no bear ever harmed Treadwell. Even Herzog credits his friend with having “[captured] such glorious improvised moments, the likes of which the studio directors, with their union crews, can never dream of.” Treadwell was able to defy all conventional boundaries between humans and wild animals. In one scene, a bear approaches Treadwell menacingly, as though threatening him. Treadwell, quite unafraid, calmly tells the bear, “Go back and play. Go ahead back. Go back.” Shockingly, the bear retreats. Watching this shot, it is hard to deny that Treadwell had earned the bears’ respect. He also claimed to have mastered their “language.” He recounts one instance when he met a bear on a trail, and the bear “promptly charged me with the intent to probably strike. I know the language of the bear. I was able to deter him from doing that, and I’m fine.” Having gained both the bears’ respect and an understanding of their “language”, perhaps Treadwell had found a place in the “secret world of bears” after all.

The bears were his friends, his confidantes, his idols—they were all that was flawless, pure, unadulterated by the evils of the human world. In his mind, his love for these creatures gave him a life; his passion gave him a purpose; his devotion gave him a place in their world. The faith he had in the bears, his conviction that they would love and protect him in return, makes his death all the more tragic. His end makes a mockery of his life—how ironic that his life would be taken by those he fought so hard to protect, by those whom he loved above all else.

And yet, can we say that he would have regretted this end? He sought a life in the natural world—he desired to be a part of this secret world. Though we find his death tragic and senseless, can we declare with certainty that it was not his choice? Knowing the dangers, he pursued this existence with a sense of purpose, and while his life came to a terrible end, he felt, at his death, that his life had meaning ...

Though Treadwell's life was a testament to the idea that humans can be humans in nature, his death raised the inevitable question—is it truly plausible that humans can have this role in the wild? Is it possible that we might find a new place for ourselves in the natural world? Treadwell believed that he had. Having already distanced himself from human society, stating, “How much I hate the people's world,” Timothy retreated to the one environment where he felt at ease. But regardless of any other factors (Treadwell's love for the bears, the bears' reciprocation of this bond, or Treadwell's willingness to accept the laws of nature), one unconquerable barrier lay between him and his complete integration into the wild: Treadwell's human-like inability to defend himself against the dangers of the Alaskan wilderness, including his beloved bears. Treadwell's death is evidence that no human can protect himself indefinitely in the wild. In his film, Treadwell claimed that he survived because “I'm edgy enough and I'm tough enough. But mostly I love these bears enough ... to do it right.” This statement shows a grave miscalculation. Humans are not physically built to defend themselves against predators, and nature is cruel to vulnerable creatures. I feel that this inadequacy may ultimately determine our role in the wild. If we do not have the physical means to achieve some sense of security, we will never truly belong in the wilderness.

But must we isolate from nature? Treadwell's belief that humans have an obligation to respect, understand, and oftentimes proactively protect the natural world remains a popular philosophy among many naturalists today. Still, is there a border that we must not cross? Is that the lesson of Treadwell's life and untimely death, that overstepping the boundary between the human world and the nature world will bear tragic results? There are countless marvels yet to be discovered in nature; however, in our explorations, we must always be conscious of the inherent division that human society has created between itself and the natural world. These are lines that we would be wise not to cross. As Herzog explains, “[Treadwell]

seemed to ignore the fact that in nature there are predators. I believe the common denominator of the universe is not harmony, but chaos, hostility, and murder.” This is a world that humans are not yet prepared to enter.

Regardless of how we view Treadwell—his choices, his beliefs, and his convictions—it is undeniable that he led an intriguing life. His life and death were so remarkably intertwined with the wild—the untamed world he loved so much—that we cannot help but contemplate our own relationship with nature. What joys, what fulfillment could we find in nature if we only allowed ourselves to find it? Perhaps we have overlooked the most obvious source of contentment that the natural world has to offer—is it possible that we could seek a deeper sense of fulfillment, a higher joy in the wild landscapes of nature? Perhaps the secrets are ours to discover, interpret, and embrace, if only we can let ourselves explore. As the poet William Wordsworth once wrote, in reflection on the wonder of the forests,

The budding twigs spread out their fan,

To catch the breezy air;

And I must think, do all I can,

That there was pleasure there.

Work Cited

Grizzly Man. Dir. Werner Herzog. DVD. Lions Gate, 2005.

Instructor: Andrew Mossin, Writing Seminar in English: Verbal Landscapes

Lauren Lipsay

Adventures on the Wheels of Steel

In looking at hip-hop through a merely historical or lens, it is easy to gloss over the individual achievements of specific trailblazers, and to instead to analyze hip-hop's creation as a by-product of African American oppression in the 1970s. However, as argued by Joseph G. Schloss, hip-hop is done the most justice by being studied ethnographically, so as to both focus on the "series of small innovations" (Schloss 27) made by a few key individuals, and to reject the ever-present idea of studying only oppression and socioeconomic difficulty as essential factors of hip-hop's creation. Examining hip-hop in this way gives due credit to those whose "volition, creativity, and choice" (Schloss 27) were essential in creating the genre, and at the fore of these hip-hop "founding fathers" is the disc jockey. It was the *specific* creativity and genius of the deejay that helped to create hip-hop. Though there is indeed merit to Schloss's argument for a more individual-focused approach to learning about hip-hop's history, he does not delineate which particular individuals should be studied. From our retroactive perspective today, it is clear that the deejay had the largest hand in hip-hop's creation and should be studied as such.

The Bronx atmosphere that birthed hip-hop in the late 1970s was one in which the deejay was regarded as the be-all and end-all. Hip-hop emerged out of the late disco scene, in which the party was the center of the universe, and of which the deejay was reigning king. Leaving their cares at the door, Bronx residents mobbed these dances, held in clubs, gymnasiums,

or at old-fashioned block parties. With their disco and funk tracks, it was the deejay in these instances who keenly sensed what the people wanted, and who creatively delivered. To study this part of hip-hop's history by taking a look solely at its community of allegedly disgruntled partygoers would be highly misguided; while the oppression of African Americans at this time was indeed relevant to hip-hop's birth, it has little to do with the tale of the genre's creation as it pertains to the deejay. Making note of crowd reaction to the deejays of the time, however, does serve to highlight the importance of what they were doing.

The foundation and favorite part of the music at that time, and arguably today as well, was the break, the section of a song in which "the band breaks down, the rhythm section is isolated, basically where the bass guitar and drummer take solos" (Schloss 33). Speaking to the individual-focused nature of hip-hop's founding is the legendary deejay Kool Herc, who is widely credited with "inventing" the breakbeat. He "started to buy two copies of each record so that he could repeat the same break back to back" (Brewster and Broughton 209). What started as a simple way to better cater to the dancers for whom he deejayed was really a momentous discovery for hip-hop, though it was certainly not realized at the time. Partygoers were wowed by Herc's almost intuitive knowledge of what they wanted; they knew that his technique was revolutionary, and it was what they had unconsciously been waiting for. Indeed, "with his new technique, he could extend the excitement found in a piece of music" (Brewster and Broughton 210).

However, "if Herc ...discovered the electricity of the breakbeat, it was [fellow deejay] Grandmaster Flash who wired it up and put a plug in it" by delivering his breakbeats in an uninterrupted, perfectly mixed way (Brewster and Broughton 213). Taking cues from both Herc and his disco deejay predecessors, with their respective break use and continuous dance beats, Flash set out to devise a turntable method that would combine their strong points; "he wanted to take the phenomenal power of Herc's style and deliver it to the dance floor with a constant, unbroken way" (Brewster and Broughton 213). Methodical and technically knowledgeable, Flash devoted months to experimenting with his turntables and mixer, often unsure of why his interest in this new idea bordered on obsession. Once he finally got it right, however, the answer became strikingly clear: "By teaching himself to flit between his two turntables at breakneck speed, find the first beat of

the chosen part of a record in a matter of seconds, and to play, repeat, and recombine a few selected bars, Flash became able to completely restructure a song at will” (Brewster and Broughton 215). In Flash’s discovery was the true start of hip-hop as a genre.

While “Herc had the head start and the volume, [and] Flash had the techniques ... Afrika Bamaataa had the records” (Brewster and Broughton 221). Having rejected the gang craze earlier in his youth, Bam instead garnered respect in the emerging hip-hop world as a deejay. Riding on the coattails of Herc and Flash in terms of technique, his extensive, quirky record collection was his distinguishing factor. Bam’s breaks were uniquely inspired, in large part because he did not consider himself limited to the genres from which these breaks were usually drawn. Taking sections from songs by the B-52s, the Rolling Stones, Billy Squier, and Kraftwerk, Bam “had no concern for the genre of the records he played; his only thought was for their effectiveness as sonic components and their effect on a dancefloor” (223). This innovation came forcibly into play later in hip-hop’s history, as sampling technology allowed deejays to extract their favorite elements of songs with greater ease, and later still as producers used this same idea in the beatmaking process. Bam’s open-mindedness set an important precedent, establishing hip-hop as a mash-up of other genres and setting the norm for deejays to incorporate diverse elements into their sets.

Initially, the rap component of hip-hop arose as a means of touting the skills of the deejay; this is only another justification for the deejay’s massive importance in hip-hop, as rapping has since obviously grown into much more. Kool Herc was among the first deejays to integrate the use of a microphone into his performance; while he was only shouting to his dancers as a means of covering up his awful inter-song cuts, he set into motion a trend that grew into the basis for rapping as we know it today. As battling, too, took off in the Bronx, MCs would take to the mic, touting the skills of the deejay whom they represented. Herc’s primitive raps, and later those of other deejays’ crews, “set off the new era of the MC...The greatest impetus for this was the fact that the deejay, using the breakbeat, could now provide the MC with an unshakeable beat over which to rhyme” (Brewster and Broughton 227).

Try as he did, Grandmaster Flash was a terrible rapper. And he knew it. So he solicited the help of fellow deejay Gene Livingstone to write some

of his primitive lyrics. What resulted from this partnership, however, had nothing to do with rapping. The duo discovered that Livingstone’s thirteen-year-old brother, Theodore, was a deejaying prodigy. With nimble fingers and an exceptional ear, he was quick to pick up the skills exhibited by his predecessors. While Theodore’s young age was impressive, what really cemented his place in hip-hop’s history books is his discovery of the power of scratching. By dragging the needle back and forth on his records while quickly manipulating his mixer’s crossfader, he created a new percussion-type sound that resonated, literally and figuratively, with both deejays and dancers. Scratching, because of its newness and innovation, “was a massive crowd draw” (Brewster and Broughton 225). When familiar songs were “accompanied by a deejay’s futuristic *zigga-zigga* scratch percussion, they were really stunned” (Brewster and Broughton 225). Soon dubbed Grand Wizzard Theodore, this young visionary helped immensely in legitimizing the activity in the Bronx that was previously seen as a particularly quirky part of the five boroughs’ music scene.

Though hip-hop’s turntable-fueled history is a powerful indicator of the deejay’s extraordinary importance, the best evidence of the deejay’s role is the ease with which they may make the switch to producing. This fluidity illustrates the fact that the production process and deejaying are very much alike. DJ Mixx Messiah, when interviewed by Schloss, said that “...deejaying is pretty much combining sounds and splittin’ ‘em and breakin’ ‘em down to tracks. And when you hit the [studio] console, it’s basically just deejaying with more inputs and more outputs... So if you can execute a perfect mix on the turntables, it’s almost like you internin’ for the console” (qtd. in Schloss 53). In other words, deejays deconstruct beats, extracting their key components to make new beats on the spot; producers, however, do this with multiple, layered breaks, and do not work in real time. Case in point: the renowned DJ Premier, who advanced from the turntables to the studio, producing tracks for hip-hop’s finest (Nas, Method Man, and RZA, among many others). Tellingly, Premier still often uses his decks in beatmaking, integrating scratching and other deejaying techniques.

Today’s hip-hop scene abounds with rappers lauding their own importance, but the true stars of the industry have always been the creative individuals behind the turntables. Without the deejay - particularly, the deejays Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash, Afrika Bamaataa, and Grand

Wizzard Theodore—hip-hop would not exist. As such, studying hip-hop through any lens aside from that of the deejay does not do the genre—or its creators—adequate justice.

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Instructor: Julia Bloch, Writing Seminar in English: Mashups and Remixes

Everett Aaron Benjamin

Media, Music and Madness: The Black Female Image

In American society, racial ideologies are practiced when those in power have the ability to sway the majority toward a particular opinion. As a result, certain concepts reign in society and create tension. When considering the development of racial prejudice, historical oppression remains a valuable element in understanding the continuation of racism. Audre Lorde describes racism as a dehumanization of one group by another in order to further empower those in control and promote their desired superiority. Media and music in particular operate as enablers of ideologies that define black women through their portrayals. The rap industry, especially, represents an instance where social constructs are intertwined in messages sent by music videos, leading to pervasive yet false understandings of black females. Throughout modern history, they have been humiliated for the entertainment of others and the deterioration of the black race. Consequently, the denigration of the black female image must be addressed by unveiling the fallacies of these destructive images.

Veiled in the façade of culturally accepted business ventures, people sell images that reflect negative ideologies across the nation and throughout the world. Corporations have infected the lives of many generations with widespread ideas of racial hierarchy. Snoop Dogg, one of the projected icons of the money-making rap industry, is a repeat drug and illegal weapons possession offender. His music promotes the degradation of the female

body, the perversion of the black male image, and the veneration of the thug lifestyle. “Video vixens”—young, scantily clad women—permeate his music videos and shape the social conceptions of black women as highly promiscuous and overtly sexual. As well, the idealized black male of the media, as presented by Snoop, is the thug who overpowers women with his hyper-masculinity and glorification of materialism. Young black people accept these projected ideologies as who they are and therefore act accordingly. Some would argue that black people being the largest group of individuals affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic is a consequence of this hyper-sexuality. What can be said is that the attraction of the rap industry has consumed black teenagers and young adults and has further encouraged the acculturation of negative images of the black race by the larger society.

When observing history, the story of Sarah Baartman is critical to understanding the influence of racism on cultural norms. Baartman, a black woman who traveled to Europe for fame, was made a spectacle because of European fascination with the superficial differences between black and white female bodies. In 1910, Baartman traveled to Britain and was placed nude on display to show off her breast and buttocks. Some even paid to grope her body. After her death in 1915 at the age of twenty-five, Sarah Baartman’s vagina, brain, and skeleton were placed on display in Paris’s Musée de l’Homme until 1974. Only recently, “her remains were returned [for burial] on Women’s Day, 9 August 2002, in the area of her birth, the Gamtoos River Valley in the Eastern Cape” in South Africa (Davie). The degradation of black women expresses the belief in their inferiority by the larger society. Many believed in the inferiority of the black race and used this to justify using blacks for entertainment purposes.

Objectification of people of different races is nothing new. Scientific and medical research formed the bedrock of European ideas about black female sexuality as exemplified by the representation of Baartman’s savage sexuality and racial inferiority. The exploitation of black females is not discussed because of people’s pursuit of a color-blind society, resulting in a neglect of racial denigration. “Too often,” Audre Lorde says, “we pour the energy needed for recognizing and exploring difference into pretending those differences are insurmountable barriers, or that they do not exist at all” (115). Lorde discusses society’s neglect and denial of racial conflict and how the impact of the past has directed the present. Success of the overall

society depends on the removal of formally instituted obstructions that promote the W.E.B. DuBoisian-based concept of the “inferiority complex” within the black race and empowers the social hierarchies. The unconscious nature of these ideas is the result of people not having dealt with racism in the past and the perpetuation of racist constructs into the present. Racism has never left; it has only been suppressed as a nonessential influence in the lives of individuals. However, the parallels between the origination and consequences of racist ideologies, as represented by the stigmatizing of Sarah Baartman and by extension black females, and continues today through rap culture. These images and their origins must be discussed in order to conquer the racist social constructs that have oppressed dehumanized blacks for centuries.

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Instructor: Adrian Khactu, Writing Seminar in English: Race Matters

Gregory Wall

More than a Flashy Fiesta?

Take a box. Toss in sleek wood and velvet banquets in shades of red and gold. Add margarita-sipping thirty-somethings, a splash of terra cotta paint, and a golden bicycle. Shake. You'll have El Vez.

Named for the so-called Mexican Elvis, El Vez, on 13th and Sansom in Philadelphia's Center City, is by no means the place for a quiet, intimate supper. It is one where you take a group of rowdy friends for some excellent drinks and respectable Mexican fare. And rowdy is an understatement. The restaurant is almost deafeningly loud, making conversation initially difficult. But after a while, it becomes fun to sit amid the rock music and tequila-induced laughter.

Looking around, it is clear El Vez is as much an exercise in restaurant décor and atmosphere as it is in food. This is almost to be expected, given it is the work of Stephen Starr, the prolific Philadelphia restaurateur behind such hip hangouts as Tangerine, Pod, and the Continental.

At the center of Starr's circus of Mexican kitsch is a large circular bar with a veritable tequila shrine at its core. Atop these agave spirits sits the restaurant's focal point, a vintage golden bicycle slowly rotating in all its glory. The halogen light bounces off the metallic relic, highlighting other curiosities around the cavernous room.

To start, we order guacamole served in a traditional molcajete, a mortar and pestle made of volcanic rock. The mixture is just right. The half-dollar size chunks of avocado nod to its freshness and make green supermarket

purées seem like baby food. There is just the right amount of lime, salt, and cilantro. We scrape our chips along the bottom of the molcajete in hopes of more.

Next comes the Manchego cheese dip. We fight to secure the warm, runny concoction onto our chips and finally to our mouths. It is so addictive that we somehow catch our peppy waitress to ask what it contains.

"There's the cheese, cream, caramelized onions, Swiss chard, and yucca to give it that texture."

In the quick three minutes between appetizer and entrée, I enjoy a hibiscus tea. The ruby red drink is brewed from hibiscus blossoms and chilled. Here at El Vez, they seem to mix in some sweet cranberry juice to cut the tea's slight bitterness.

Whizzing from kitchen to table, our waitress brings the entrées.

The taco tasting platter's presentation is striking. The large, square plate becomes the palette for five distinct tacos piled high with meat and suitable accompaniments.

The tacos are small, each on a corn tortilla no larger than the base of a large coffee mug. Their size ensures the right amount of food. The beef taco has cubes of meat marinated in garlic and spices (maybe cumin?) dotted with fresh tomato salsa. The chicken taco contains pulled white meat in a piquant hot sauce topped with a mound of shredded iceberg. The iceberg is aptly named, cooling the spicy sauce.

"How are you guys?" chirps the waitress far too often. The service is extremely attentive—attentive to the point of rushed. Even through the thumping music, I can feel her hoping we hastily finish our entrées and choose an expensive dessert.

Like the chicken taco, the pork variety also consists of pulled meat; however, it lacks a sauce. Instead, it is sprinkled with pickled white onions and a few orange suprêmes. The play between salty and sweet is evident, successfully demonstrating the kitchen's attention to detail. This detail is also present in the black bass taco. A post-it sized strip of the fish is placed on a sweet potato puree and topped with fried jalapeños and crisscrossing chives. The fish is surprisingly buttery and sweet; a combination both mimicked in the sweet potato foundation and complemented by the hot, crunchy jalapeño rounds.

These three-bite tacos all have great potential; yet two things stand in

their way. First is the imbalanced tortilla-to-filling ratio. The loads of fillings require you forgo manual eating in favor of a knife and fork.

The second offense: salt. Too much of it. They may have the right amount on the rims of margaritas and in their signature guacamole, but otherwise nearly everything is overly seasoned.

The chicken mole and chicken enchiladas suffer a similar salty sorrow. The mole, traditionally a complex combination of dozens of spices, chilies and even chocolate, was nuanced but had an unpleasant sugary note and texture not unlike that of barbeque sauce. As for the enchiladas, the chili-based sauce with melted cheese topping was excellent (aside from the salt), but the shredded meat on the interior was bland and boring.

Two courses and coffee had amounted to a mere seventy minutes—a whirlwind meal. Was this speed intentional? A ploy to crowd more stylish young professionals around the golden bicycle? It seems all too likely.

The bottom line is that people are right to know El Vez for its drinks and guacamole. What may be harder to realize is that this glitzy Stephen Starr design can turn out a few other satisfying Mexican dishes as well. Unfortunately, between the salt and the noise, El Vez may leave your taste buds ringing, if not your ears as well.

Instructor: Thomas Devaney, Writing Seminar in English: Food for Thought

Johnny Lloyd

Roar the Speech, I Pray You

Much like Hamlet, who the end of the play that bears his name, implores Horatio, the tale known as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has been told in many ways that illuminate the text of the play. In the past, writers and producers presented the classic tale spun in ways which are both surprising and original. Movie versions such as the 2000 version of *Hamlet*, set in a present-day corporation, and play adaptations such as *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* have all focused on different aspects of the Hamlet story and turned it into something vastly different from the original. No adaptation, however, is as much of a drastic change in both setting and content as the Walt Disney film *The Lion King*. The Walt Disney movie changes the story from a tragic tale into a moral lesson because it polarizes the characters and makes them starkly positive or negative.

Because the Disney tale makes the protagonists of *The Lion King* less morally ambiguous, it depicts the conflict between the main characters as the struggle between good and evil, as opposed to what could possibly be a crazed obsession. Simba, the Hamlet character, is a lion prince who finds himself in many of the same trials and tribulations as Hamlet. His uncle murders his father, the king of the lion pride, in front of Simba's eyes, then exiles him. Simba, however, returns to avenge his father. But while Hamlet's moral ambiguity contributes to his character, Simba is not morally ambiguous. Whereas Hamlet goes crazy or pretends to do so, and becomes obsessive about avenging his father, Simba never appears to be

doing anything aside from what is right. At the end of *Hamlet*, the title character kills Polonius and causes Ophelia to commit suicide before he kills Claudius. Simba, on the other hand, only tries unsuccessfully to emotionally or physically hurt Scar, a stand-in for both Claudius and evil in general. Other characters are stripped of their moral ambiguity and become righteous figures. The ghost of Mufasa, Simba's assassinated father, appears as a noble, nearly god-like figure who asks his son to do the right thing; however, in *Hamlet*, even Hamlet is unsure whether his father's ghost is "a spirit of health or [a] goblin damned" (1.4.43). By making the intentions of the character more obvious, *The Lion King* avoids the question of whether or not Simba makes the right choices and allows the viewer to support Simba's decisions fully in a struggle against evil. The Walt Disney film even eliminates the morally questionable actions of minor characters, such as Simba's mother, Sarabi. Whereas Gertrude exhibits both positive and negative qualities, showing an immense love for her son but an equally large amount of disrespect for her dead husband, Sarabi stands up to Scar throughout the movie, and turns against Simba only when she is under the impression that he killed his father. By making Sarabi and other secondary characters more righteous, Disney sets the stage for a moral contrast between the rest of the characters and the primary evil.

While Disney's interpretation changes many of the characters into more admirable figures, it also transforms the Claudius character, Scar, from a morally confused antagonist who does wrong to an archetypal villain. In *Hamlet*, Claudius appears to be evil, but his character development shows that he is not soulless. In 3.3, Claudius proclaims his disgust with his own actions, and says that his "strong guilt defeats his strong intent" (3.3.43). This soliloquy, bares Claudius's tormented soul, and the reader experiences a glimmer of sympathy for his character. Scar, however, proves to be an utterly detestable character. Throughout the course of the movie, the viewer witnesses Scar's plot to kill Mufasa and Simba, and when he does not succeed in killing the latter Scar guilt's him into exile. He shows no sympathy for his actions; instead, he cackles at his mischief in a dark, evil-sounding roar. Unlike Claudius's moral ambiguity, Scar's character is straightforward; instead of having shades of gray, Scar is a stark black. This sense of pure evil shapes the Disney story. In *Hamlet*, everyone pays for their sins or the sins of others, including Hamlet himself. However, in *The Lion King* only Scar is

killed, in a fiery, hell-like pit. Disney modifies the Claudius figure and makes him the only casualty of the film, suggesting that, in the end, evil will always lose and good will always be triumphant—a moral which is nowhere to be found in *Hamlet*.

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Instructor: Julia Bloch, Writing Seminar in English: Mashups and Remixes

Jeong Mi Lee

The Bright Side of Destruction: A Literary Analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Death and taxes are hardly the only certainty in this world. The past, too, is just as certain, and even more difficult to avoid. It seems unfair to attribute certainty to something that has already come and gone. The inevitability of the past, however, lies not in its occurrence, but instead in its ability to hound us for the entirety of our lives. In *Beloved*, Sethe finds this out the hard way, after years of repressing her “rememories” to keep herself sane. When the past that she buried resurfaces in the corporeal form of a young woman, Sethe’s pains resurface as well. The return of *Beloved*, however, is a positive event as much as it is a negative one.

“[T]he children can’t just up and kill the mama” (Morrison 301) is Ella’s response to the comment that Sethe deserves to be killed by *Beloved*. Ella’s statement accurately sums up the negative effect that *Beloved* has on Sethe, as *Beloved* literally begins to draw the life from her mother. At first, Sethe was plagued only by dreams and fears—the image of her sons walking away from her, the absence of Baby Suggs, and the ghost of the baby. None of these things, however, could wear her down as *Beloved*’s return did. Her powerful effects on Sethe begin with her trying to strangle her mother in the clearing as Sethe calls for the aid of Baby Suggs (113). Before this incident, it is unclear as to whether *Beloved* actually means good or harm, but *Beloved*’s destructive intent is exposed in this scene. She continues to worsen Sethe’s

life by chasing away Paul D, who represents the “one shot [Sethe] had of the happiness a good man could bring her” (199). Although Sethe is not in love with Paul D, she had the chance of having a normal life with him, which she was able to visualize before he left: “all three of them were gliding over the dust holding hands” (56). After Paul D leaves and *Beloved*’s effect on Sethe strengthens, her perception of even this possibility changes. She comes to believe that she had previously been mistaken, and that “[o]bviously the hand-holding shadows she had seen on the road were not Paul D, Denver and herself, but ‘us three’” (214). This change in thought marks the beginning of her growing obsession with *Beloved* and the girl’s role as the daughter Sethe had believed to be dead. Sethe soon comes to devote the entirety of herself to her older daughter, forgetting about Denver in the process (282), and even forgetting herself: “Denver saw the flesh between her mother’s forefinger and thumb fade. Saw Sethe’s eyes bright but dead, alert but vacant, paying attention to everything about *Beloved*” (285). Sethe begins to die in the literal sense of the word, gradually passing away as much physically as she does emotionally.

Despite the negative effects that *Beloved* has on her mother, however, her presence brings about more positive changes than negative. *Beloved*’s return, firstly, gives Sethe an opportunity to try to explain herself to her daughter and clear herself of the guilt with which she has been living with for many years. Although she does not succeed in convincing *Beloved* of her intentions, the fact that she is given this opportunity to do so keeps her content, if only for a little while (236). Sethe also comes to realize what she did wrong the first time in trying to protect her daughter. This is evidenced by her attacking Mr. Bodwin, who she believes to be ‘Schoolteacher’ come to take her children away from her again (308-309). Having learned from the heartache of her infanticide eighteen years before, however, Sethe resolves instead to protect the second chance that *Beloved* represents. The girl’s presence also affects Denver, who, as a direct result of seeing the negative effects on her mother, begins to mature to adulthood. She steps outside of the house of her own will for the first time in many years, and gets help for the mother who has supported her all her life (288). The biggest positive effect that *Beloved* has, however, is that which she has upon the community as a whole. The community, which had previously turned away from Sethe, unites to rescue her from the destruction that *Beloved* has wreaked on her mother.

Women like Ella, who had nothing to do with Sethe after the murder and her seemingly supercilious return, come together to contribute food when Denver works up the courage to ask. Moreover, it is these women that who come to exorcise Beloved's presence from 124 Bluestone Road and restore peace to its inhabitants (302-304). It is the entire community, therefore, that sets things right again once they perceive that one of their own is in trouble.

The dichotomous nature of Beloved's return makes it a valuable experience for everyone involved, particularly for Sethe. It allows for a second chance, for growth, and for healing, and it can be said that the negative side of Beloved's destructive powers provides the trade by which the brighter side of things can be seen. Although Sethe suffers beyond what she deserves, she is ultimately able to rest more peaceably than she could ever have managed before, and her remaining daughter, along with the rest of the community, are finally made whole and given the opportunity to move on together.

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*Instructor: Asma Al-Naser, Writing Seminar in Comparative Literature:
The Art of Murder*

Emily Mullin

On Influence

To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim.
-Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

While London bustled with spring excitement, its center stood still. The Old Bailey courtroom held its breath for the verdict on Britain's aesthetic genius. Oscar Wilde faced Justice Wills resolutely as, after two grueling trials examining his conduct, he heard the third jury finally bring forth a verdict: guilty. Wilde might have seen a flicker of triumph cross the Judge's face, for in a moment he would tell Wilde, "It is no use for me to address you. People who can do these things must be dead to all sense of shame, and one cannot hope to produce any effect upon them" (qtd. in Linder, Sentencing Statement of Justice Wills). As harsh as Wills's denouncement seems, Oscar Wilde had struggled with the same question of atonement and corruption as he first penned a version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* for *Lippincott's Magazine* five years earlier, in 1890. Throughout *Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde plays with the question of influence—Dorian's ability to affect his soul and his sway over others. Similarly, the novel was condemned for its potential sway over its readers and used as incriminating evidence during Oscar Wilde's trial. Interestingly enough, the descent of Oscar Wilde comes to parallel the descent of his creations; Dorian and Wilde complement each other as their descents intertwine—perceptions of their morality depend upon opinions about their influence.

England condemned Oscar Wilde, not for his behavior, but for his influence. The jury found him guilty of being “[the center of a] circle of extensive corruption of the most hideous kind” (qtd. in Linder, Sentencing Statement of Justice Wills). Witnesses claimed he had “used his influence to induce [them] to consent [to indecent acts]” (qtd. in Linder, Testimony of Alfred Wood). Indeed, the trials began when the Marquess of Queensberry libeled Wilde in an attempt to protect his son, Sir Alfred Douglass, from a “disastrous acquaintance” (qtd. in Linder, Opening Speech for the Defense by Edward Carson, Attorney for Queensberry). Queensberry’s lawyer did not concern himself with the factual relationship between Wilde and Douglass, but rather with the potential:

I am not here to say anything has ever happened between Lord Alfred Douglas and Mr. Oscar Wilde. God forbid! But everything shows that the young man was in a dangerous position in that he acquiesced in the domination of Mr. Wilde, a man of great ability and attainments. (Ibid.)

According to Carson, Wilde’s actual relations with Douglass were irrelevant—Wilde ought to be condemned because he might influence Douglass in the future. Wilde’s degradation lies in his tendency to lead others astray.

Similarly, Wilde’s own definition of Dorian’s venality rests in his character’s ability to affect others. When asked to explain Dorian’s unnatural vices, Wilde declares Dorian Gray “a man of very corrupt influence” (qtd. in Linder, Cross-Examination). Indeed, our only glimpses into the interim years when Dorian Gray’s morality utterly depreciates are through the young men he has corrupted:

There was that wretched boy in the Guard who committed suicide. You were his great friend. There was Sir Henry Ashton, who had to leave England, with a tarnished name. You and he were inseparable. What about Adrian Singleton, and his dreadful end? What about Lord Kent’s only son, and his career? ... What about the young Duke of Perth? What sort of life has he got now? (Wilde. 144).

We later discover that Adrian Singleton’s tragic end lies in an opium den by the docks, where his addiction twinges even Dorian’s guilt. Furthermore,

we also meet another man, Alan Campbell, whose past with Dorian allows him to be blackmailed into destroying the body of Basil Hallward against his own moral inclinations. As Basil laments, “[Dorian’s] friendship is fatal to young men” (144). Indeed, Dorian’s acquaintance proves as disastrous for his friends as Queensberry feared Oscar Wilde’s would be for his son.

Still, drawing a parallel between an artist and his creation would gall Wilde—he blatantly protects against this misconception in the preface to *Dorian Gray*: “To reveal art and conceal the artist is art’s aim” (3). Oscar Wilde did not intend to paint a portrait of himself when he drew Dorian Gray. Instead, he imagines himself hidden behind a mirror that he uses to reflect our souls. But, art absorbs as much of its creator as much as it reflects its spectators. In *Dorian Gray*, Wilde transcribes his personal vision of the world’s truths: the book and its principal character act as channels for Wilde’s perception of beauty. Whatever we seen in Dorian has already imbibed its author, and Dorian’s portrait reflects *that* as much as it reflects us.

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Instructor: Thomas Ward, Writing Seminar in English: Behind the Veil

Lauren Kapsalakis

The Femme Fatale Must Die

“No, I never loved you, Walter—not you or anybody else. I’m rotten to the heart,” purrs Phyllis Dietrichson, femme fatale of the film *Double Indemnity*, a heartless seductress who uses her beauty to sway men to do her deadly bidding. She mercilessly entangles innocent insurance salesman Walter Neff into her plot to kill her husband, or so she is portrayed through the skewed masculine perspective of the man she deceived. Although both are involved in the murder, it is Phyllis who is culpable and dies for the crime; as Walter says to Phyllis, “it was you, baby.” In *Double Indemnity*, the character of Phyllis is molded throughout the film into a dehumanized caricature who deserves death in order to legitimize the actions of the male protagonist, Walter Neff.

Double Indemnity is not a reflection of reality but rather a biased interpretation of events and people filtered through the mind of Walter, the narrator, who boldly proclaims, “I’m telling the story.” Accordingly, the aspects of the film are confined to the male perspective and constitute Walter’s masculine fantasy. Through his voice-over, the audience is encouraged to pay attention only to his introspections, as if his feelings were the only ones that matter. Consequently, women portrayed in *Double Indemnity* are contrived fragments of the male imagination formatted to fit certain roles within the masculine fantasy. In *Double Indemnity*, Walter’s portrayal of Phyllis is carefully assembled to show her as a demonic force in society that must be removed for the balance in life to be restored. She is

shown as a moral illness in Walter's life and an outsider refusing to prescribe to typical female stereotypes. She is a cause for Walter's mental illness and a feminine barrier to male relationships. Thus, her place in the masculine fantasy is to take the blame and die for Walter's sins.

To highlight the femme fatale's evil characteristics, the film offers another woman, the ideal vision of femininity, to act as her foil. In *Double Indemnity*, the counterpart to femme fatale is naïve Lola, Phyllis's stepdaughter. Lola confirms the stereotype of the ideal domestic woman who is completely dependent on men. She dreams only of her future commitment to her husband. In contrast, Phyllis Dietrichson is portrayed as enigmatic, evil, confident, and illicitly sexual. She derives her confidence from her ability to seduce men, and her eyes glimmer with murderous intent. Even her name, Phyllis, is connotative of syphilis, a sexual infection that men need to get rid of immediately to avoid death. An example of the differences in behavior between Phyllis and Lola is shown when Phyllis warns Walter not to sympathize with Lola's crying because it is an act intended to trick him. She knows this because she used the same tricks on Walter.

From its male perspective, *Double Indemnity* initially offers the fantasy of having both kinds of women wrapped up in one person. Walter Neff believes that Phyllis is killing her husband to run away with him and live as his wife in a quaint domestic setting. However, as the movie progresses, it becomes immediately clear that Phyllis lacks the naïveté and humanity of Lola. In contrast to Phyllis, Lola shows Neff her potential for a romantic love of which Phyllis is incapable of feeling. The scene in which Lola and Walter watch an orchestra on top of a hill is a much more romantic scene than Phyllis and Walter ever appeared in together (01:27:40). In public, Phyllis and Walter are never romantically paired. During the supermarket scene, they avoid meeting each other's eyes and speak in whispers with their backs turned to each other (00:40:36).

The character of Phyllis becomes increasingly dehumanized by Walter's narrative until she fits the role of an evil, selfish vixen completely disconnected from societal norms. The settings in which she is placed, for example, emphasize how she diverges from her prescribed role in society, a demure married woman with the sole intention of pleasing her husband and caring for her children. The scene in Jerry's Supermarket contrasts the murderous intentions of Phyllis with the domesticity of motherhood. As

mothers push their babies in strollers, Phyllis looks down upon a pyramid of products, smirking at the foolishness of domesticity (01:24:26). She refuses to be identified as a mother, as evidenced by her resentment of her stepdaughter Lola. Phyllis has no future because she shows no potential to be remorseful for her actions, as evidenced by the two murders she commits. She will never fulfill her role in society because she lacks humanity. This dehumanization shows that Phyllis has no acceptable role in society, and therefore it is easy for Walter to project his evil deeds onto her.

In addition to refusing to fulfill her accepted role in society, Phyllis is shown as a threat to masculinity, an androgynous force that acts to disrupt the social hierarchy between males and females. Phyllis rebels against patriarchy, which comes in the form of three men: her husband, Walter, and Keyes. In Walter's apartment she clearly states in reference to her husband, "I hate him" (00:30:32). She even appears masculine as she strives to fulfill her own ambition by destroying everyone who stands in her way. Another way in which the femme fatale threatens masculinity is by destroying the bonds between males. Walter's bond with Keyes, his father-figure, becomes strained as he lies to cover up his relationship with Phyllis. The only way that this relationship can be reinstated is through killing Phyllis, the obstacle that threw Walter's relationships into imbalance. The flashback format serves to as an extended confession to Keyes. At the end of the film, the relationship between the two men is reinstated as shown through them lighting each other's cigarettes. This echoes an earlier scene when Walter lit Keyes's cigarette (01:47:07). The repetition of this scene at the beginning and the end of the film shows the ordered and balanced patriarchal world that exists without the demonic threat of Phyllis.

The deterministic framework of the movie as a flashback gives a sense of the inevitability of actions and lack of free will on the part of Walter Neff. He tells the story as if he had been drawn irresistibly to the femme fatale and did not consciously choose to submit to her will. This sentiment is echoed in the dialogue of Keyes, who portrays Walter and Phyllis on a train ride in which "they've got to ride all the way to the end of the line. And it's a one-way trip, and the last stop is the cemetery." (01:23:00) Likewise, by claiming that Phyllis provoked an insanity that robs him of his will, Walter absolves himself of taking responsibility for his own actions. Walter is obsessed with Phyllis and knows exactly what she wants from him. He explicitly tells her that he will

not help her kill her husband (00:21:39). However, his attempts to escape her are futile. When she arrives at his apartment, he is not surprised and submits to her demands immediately (00:23:50). He can only watch himself go down the road to destruction, knowing where it leads.

Phyllis Dietrichson dies to validate Walter Neff's masculinity. In his retelling of the sequence of actions, Walter portrays Phyllis as a moral disease plaguing society that had to be killed both to bring the world back to order and validate his murder. He legitimizes his actions primarily by portraying Phyllis as an outsider threatening masculinity by refusing to prescribe to the traditional role of women in society. At the same time, he absolves himself of any responsibility by exposing Phyllis as an evil siren robbing men of their free will.

Work Cited

Double Indemnity. Dir. Billy Wilder. Perf. Fred MacMurry, Barbara Stanwyck, Edward G. Robinson. Paramount Pictures, 1944.

Instructor: Michael Burri, Writing Seminar in Cinema: Cinema of Paranoia

Contributors

Jessica Adams, a native of Houston, Texas and a College freshman, developed her artistic prowess at the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts (Beyonce Knowles's high school). At Penn she has found outlets for making art in her fine art classes as well as set design and construction for iNtuitions Experimental Theater and writing for her Verbal Landscapes writing seminar. Debating between a major in architecture or fine art, she eases the stress of this decision by sprinting for varsity women's track and field team or heading to the Adirondack Mountains to meditate.

Amy Altemeyer is a freshman in the School of Nursing and is currently also pursuing a minor in African studies. She was born and raised in Indianapolis, but has traveled much throughout her life and is planning on doing research on and working in sub-Saharan Africa after graduation. Besides travel, Amy enjoys reading, writing, running and hanging out as much as possible during the rare free time she has.

David Antivolo is a citizen of the world (for lack of a real place to call home). He was born in Santiago, Chile, and has lived in other way cool parts of the world, including Utah, Venezuela and Peru. Currently a freshman in Wharton, he has noble ambitions including but not limited to becoming extremely rich, saving the world and learning an Asian language.

Everett Aaron Benjamin, the youngest of three boys, hails from South Brunswick, New Jersey. He attended the Lawrenceville School, where he introduced the first Black publication, a literary journalism magazine, The Messenger. Everett has coordinated Hurricane Katrina relief efforts and researched social stratification at Brighton College in London. At Penn, he has joined the efforts of the Netter Center for Community Partnerships to create Scholars of Courage, Agents of Change, a high school enrichment writing and literacy program, and also serves as political co-chair of the UMOJA board.

Alex Bratman is a proud Quaker hailing from Los Angeles. He is currently studying business at Penn and plans to focus on the field of operations and information management. He enjoys going out to lunches and dinners with friends, visiting history museums, and seeing foreign films. In the future, he would love to work for an airline and use the travel benefits to explore the U.S. on the weekends.

Trixie Canivel is a sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Maureen Devenny, who hails from the Philadelphia suburbs, is a freshman in the College. She is a political science major and a Hispanic studies minor. Maureen represents her hall in the Fisher Hassenfeld House Council, volunteers as an ambassador in Kite and Key Club, copy edits the *Pennsylvania Punchbowl* humor magazine, and serves as a writing tutor at the Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing. While not in class or a meeting, Maureen enjoys perusing the aisles of FroGro, taking epic walks, singing loudly and badly, and reading books about constitutional law.

Alexandra Drewicz is a freshman in the School of Nursing from Trooper, Pennsylvania. She hopes to minor in nutrition, and is involved in Big Brothers/Big Sisters in West Philly. She enjoys singing, reading, and writing, and is honored to be featured in 3808.

Evan Dvorak is from Lafayette Hill, Pennsylvania, and is a graduate of Plymouth Whitemarsh High School. A mechanical engineering major in Engineering and Applied Science, he is also interested in anthropology. On campus, Evan enjoys volunteering at the Ronald McDonald House, and in Summer 2008 worked as a teaching assistant in nanotechnology for high school students. Evan would like to thank Dr. Sadashige for a great experience in Penn's Critical Writing program. Evan's favorite book is *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Nathalie Elvasvili was born in Turkey and is a native speaker of Turkish. Her multilingual parents always emphasized the importance of learning new languages. When she was three, they enrolled her in a British preschool, and she continued her English studies in a Turkish elementary school and thereafter in an American school where she took the International Baccalaureate program. She studied French for four years in high school, and now studies Spanish at the University of Pennsylvania.

Jason Fiedler graduated from Scarsdale High School in Scarsdale, New York. A three-year varsity athlete and senior captain of the Scarsdale Varsity Basketball team, Jason loves sports and values academics, and tries to find the perfect balance between the two. Jason is also an active member of Westchester Reform Temple in Scarsdale. The unique combination of his dedication to sports, academics and religion has fueled the insights and trends explored in his essay, "Religion's Last Stand."

Maureen French is a freshman in the College of Arts and Sciences, coming to Penn from the suburban town of Weston, Massachusetts. At this point she is considering a major in biology, but she tends to change her mind almost weekly. Outside of her academic studies, Maureen is a member of the Penn Women's crew team, which makes her one of a few Penn students to regularly see the Philadelphia skyline before sunrise.

Menghan Fu is a freshman in the Vagelos Program in Life Sciences and Management. As yet, she is undecided in her major, but plans to concentrate in the Biological Basis of Behavior program. She enjoys painting and the martial arts in her spare time. Menghan is delighted to be published in 3808 and hopes to further pursue her passion for writing during her remaining three years at Penn.

Wilson Cachugu is currently a sophomore in the Wharton School. Although he hails from the beautiful highlands of Kenya, he is not a long-distance or marathon runner. He possesses a passion for sports and he is a lifelong Manchester United fan. He also plays club tennis. Wilson's inspiration for this piece was drawn from his mother's death due to cancer ten years ago.

Rob Hass is from Newton, Massachusetts, a Boston suburb. He is literate, a quality presumed rare among computer science students but might be explained by his additional major of linguistics. Robert is a member of the Philomathean Society, which he highly recommends to anyone who liked his essay. He also writes for *The Punchbowl* and does layout/design work for the *Daily Pennsylvanian*.

He (Helen) Huang grew up in China and moved to Guam two years ago, where she got tough enough to join the outrigger paddling crew. Currently a freshman at Penn, she is undecided on her major, but she surely wants to make a difference as vice president of Wharton China Association and treasurer of the University Honor Council. She also looks forward to volunteering for the 2008 Beijing Olympics this summer!

Laura Herring is from New York City and is a graduate of the Chapin School, where she studied for twelve years. She is currently a sophomore in the College and plans to major in sociology and minor in classical studies. She is a member of the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority and enjoys cooking and baking, spending time with her friends and family (including her dog), and traveling.

Sarah A. Johnson hails from suburban Philadelphia and is a rising junior in the College of Arts and Sciences. She is a chemistry major and mathematics minor. As Sarah enjoys spending her free time in the laboratory, she plans to attend graduate school and become a biochemical researcher. She has also been playing the violin for eleven years and is a member of the Penn Symphony Orchestra.

Lauren Kapsalakis is a sophomore from Bayonne, New Jersey in the College of Arts and Sciences. She plans to study anthropology and Spanish and spent her summer doing archaeology field work in Roc de Marsal, France. She is an associate editor for the *Pennsylvania Punchbowl Magazine*.

Young Jae Koo was born and raised in Seoul, Korea. After six years of elementary school and one year of middle school, she transferred in eighth grade to a boarding school in Ohio. In addition to her native language of

Korean, she can also speak English, Japanese, and some Spanish. She is currently taking Mandarin Chinese and hopes to study French in the future. At Penn, she plans to major in economics and later possibly pursue an MBA or attend law school to become either an accountant or a tax lawyer. Born and raised in Miami,

Dara Kritzer-Cheren has always had a love of the outdoors and seeks to contribute her efforts toward preserving the natural world. Her proposed major is environmental studies, along with some business exposure to assist in her endeavors. Dara's immediate family remains a huge part of her life, providing her with such support, comfort, and love that living more than a thousand miles away has proven interesting, to say the least. This is Dara's first publication at Penn.

Danyal Kothari is a junior in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Jeffrey Lanes is a junior in Wharton School of Business.

Jeong Mi Lee, a biology major in the College, hails from Los Angeles, California. She dreams of being a doctor while nursing her ardor for the written word, and hopes to be able to live by Chekhov's words, keeping medicine as her lawful companion, and literature as her lover. Additionally, she enjoys sleeping (should time allow it), watching bad movies with good friends (although good movies in said company are even better), and kicking people in legally defined settings (more specifically, taekwon do).

Danetsy Len is a freshman in the Wharton School of Business. She is yet undecided on her concentration in Wharton but has decided to complete a minor in Hispanic Studies. She is originally from Panama but was raised in beautiful Fresno, California. She is passionate about giving back to her community and most recently spent her summer volunteering on the Obama campaign in Denver, Colorado. During her spare time at Penn, she is involved in ACELA and can be found blasting salsa and reggaeton music from her dorm room.

Lauren Lipsay, a College freshman, hails from Great Neck, New York, and is a deejay and hip-hop aficionado who has performed in Philadelphia and New York City. A member of Sigma Delta Tau, involved with 34th Street and Penn Model Congress, Lipsay plans to study English and communications, though she doesn't have a clue what she wants to do when she grows up. Actually, she's pretty sure she doesn't want to grow up at all! When she's not deejaying, she enjoys writing, reading (preferably Jennifer Weiner or Jodi Picoult) and online shopping, her guilty pleasure.

Johnny Lloyd is a rising sophomore considering a major in international relations. He hails from Asheville, North Carolina, and is a member of Penn Singers and the iNtuitions Experimental Theatre Company. In his spare time, he tries to appear far more artsy and knowledgeable than he actually is; however, he usually fails.

Emily Mullin hails from Wayzata, Minnesota, although she usually just says she's from Minneapolis. Currently undecided on a major, she's trying to choose between English, theater, and urban studies, and will probably minor in French. Other interests include reading, graphic design, and imagining that she has a cat named Mimi.

Sweta Patel is a freshman at the College of Arts and Sciences. Although she is uncertain of her major, her interests range from public health to economics. She is also passionate about the arts, and is a member of PENNaach, Penn's South Asian all-female dance troupe, dedicated to bringing ancient Indian traditions together with new Western trends. Growing up in Long Island, New York, Sweta attended Herricks High School in New Hyde Park.

Albert Ryou attended Hopkins School in New Haven, Connecticut, where he fenced for four years and was captain of varsity fencing. Albert wrote for the school newspaper, and was an Op/Ed editor in his senior year. Albert's favorite subjects, though, were biology and physics, and he plans to major in physics at Penn. Outside of class, Albert continues his interest in literary publication, participating in *The Daily Pennsylvanian* as well as the *Penn Bioethics Journal*.

Gregory Wall hails from exotic Long Island. He is freshman in the College of Arts and Sciences, who is unsure of his major, but likes it that way. In his free time, he can usually be found on a culinary excursion, oil painting, or reaching for his umpteenth cup of coffee at Starbucks. He hopes to continue to document his food experiences in Penn Appetit and become more active in the arts community at Penn.

Alison Wand is a freshman in the College of Arts and Sciences. She currently plans to major in history, though she has been known to change her mind sporadically. Outside of her studies, Alison loves skiing, cooking, and procrastinating. She is very excited to have her work published in 3808 this year.

Samantha Wertheimer is a sophomore in the College and has yet to decide on a major. She hails from Rydal, Pennsylvania, a town right outside of Philadelphia. She has been dancing for fifteen years and cannot imagine her life without dance. Samantha is a member of City Step, a dance group on Penn's campus that teaches dance to children in the West Philadelphia middle schools. She also enjoys reading good books and is non-discriminatory when it comes to music; she loves all types, especially Bob Marley and The Beatles.

Student Editors:

Emily Belfer is a sophomore in the College from New York City, which distinguishes her from so many other Penn students. She majors in European history and minors in English, which she adores, and has decided to spend her junior fall abroad in London. Upon her return, she will—among other things—resume her position as a writing tutor in the building that this journal is named after: 3808 Walnut Street.

Nicky Berman graduated from the School of Arts and Sciences with a major in Political Science in May 2008. Formerly a distinguished writing tutor at 3808, Nicky now teaches in New York City with Teach for America.

Jillian Dent is a Junior English major from Lee's Summit, Missouri. She works as a writing tutor at 3808 and is an RA in Rodin College House. She spends most of her time acting in theatrical pursuits around campus. She is a writer, performer, and the Fall Assistant Director for *Bloomers*, the all-female musical sketch comedy troupe on campus. She has also acted and choreographed for groups such as Quadramics, Stimulus Children's Theater, and The Underground Shakespeare Company.

Krystyna Dereszowska is a senior from New York City, although becoming increasingly convinced that Philadelphia is home. Infatuated with colonial history, she can often be found in Old City pretending to be a tour guide, much to the embarrassment of her friends. Unfortunately, the time has come for her to finally come back to the present and somehow combine her English major and pre-med focus into a satisfying and productive career path, which will likely entail graduate school, to-be-determined.

Neel Lalchandani is a junior from Oakland, California, interested in all things political and legal. When he isn't reading about the election or the Supreme Court, he enjoys working in local Philadelphia public schools. A writing tutor, Neel is currently considering Teach for America as a post-Penn option, but his decision depends completely on Nicky Berman's experience.

K. Devin McIntyre graduated from the College in May 2008 after majoring in Linguistics and minoring in Religious Studies and Cognitive Science. She greatly enjoyed working as a writing tutor and will miss the Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing. She plans to teach English in Japan for a year or two before pursuing her Ph.D. In her free time, she reads and attempts to write interesting things.

Katie Siegmann is from Philadelphia and is a graduate of the William Penn Charter School. She is currently a junior in the College of Arts and Sciences and is majoring in English with a minor in Urban Education. When not in class, she enjoys spending time with her friends and family, especially down the shore. In addition to being a peer tutor and involved with 3808, she also serves on the executive committee of the Newman Council and is a member of the Kite and Key Society.

Ariel Tichnor graduated from the School of Arts and Sciences with a degree in History in May 2008. Formerly a writing tutor, Ariel currently teaches in Arizona through the Teach for America program.

Jessica Wolfe is from Denver, Colorado, and is a graduate of Rocky Mountain Hebrew Academy. A junior in the College, she studies English with a concentration in 18th- and 19th-century literature and culture and serves as a writing tutor in the Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing. Jessica plans to spend the spring of her junior year with the Penn London Program. Her interests include writing, basketball, and reading.