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CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE	1
CHRISTINA MICHAUD	
WR 098 Essay	
How the García Girls Lost Their Accents: Yolanda's Struggle with Identity	2
<i>Prize Essay Award</i>	
JIANI SHEN	
WR 100 Essays	
Passive Objectification: Vulnerability in Yoko Ono's Participatory Art	8
EVA VIDAN GALLAGHER	
Finding Veritas in Harvard's Tourism	15
CLARA KIM	
<i>Optima dies prima fugit</i> : Jim's Privileged Nostalgia in Opposition to Cather's Portrait of Modernity in <i>My Antonia</i>	22
ORLY LIPSET	
American Media and the Dream in Ta-Nehisi Coates's <i>Between the World and Me</i>	29
<i>Prize Essay Award</i>	
REETU VARADHAN	
WR 150 Essays	
Hydentity Crisis: Interpreting Dr. Jekyll's Doppelganger as a Golem	36
DANIEL COLLINS	
When Awareness Is Not Enough: Trivialization of Women's Symptoms and the Gender Gap in the Outcomes of Cardiovascular Disease Patients	44
MEGHAN ROBBINS	
Battling Against Stigmatized American Orientalism: An Analysis of Mayling Soong Chiang's Rhetoric of Chinese Principles	52
DAVE SEBASTIAN	

Adopted into an Identity Struggle: An exploration of themes presented in *Wo Ai Ni Mommy* and *Somewhere Between* **60**
Prize Essay Award
GAYLE TAN

The Greater Good: Analyzing Morality in *Watchmen* **68**
JEFFREY WU

Alternative Genre Essays

The Excavation of Mind, Body, and Culture: A Final Engagement with *Tributary* and *Silent Anatomies* **76**
VANLIZZA CHAU

Situation Script: India Kager "Caught in the Crossfire" **84**
SARAH HIRSCH

The Fallen Sakura: A Retelling of the *Ballad of Fa Mulan* **92**
Prize Essay Award
HELEN LUO

Honorable Mentions **101**

Editor's Note

Diverse in style and topics, the essays in this volume of *WR* reflect the Boston University undergraduate experience and showcase the goals of the Writing Program. As editors, we were privileged to read scores of essays submitted for consideration: the essays you will read here exhibit excellent analytical and argument skills, rigorous research and citation methods, and elegant prose, from the word to the sentence to the paragraph to the essay.

The four prize-winning essays that follow particularly exemplify these qualities; selecting these essays for prizes was both challenging, given the vast field of interesting, high-quality submissions, and also quite straightforward, as each of these essays clearly merits a prize for its own unique strengths.

“*How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents: Yolanda’s Struggle with Identity*” by Jiani (Liz) Shen was written for WR 098, one of our courses specifically aimed at multilingual writers. In this essay, Shen skillfully brings together three disparate texts, synthesizing them to argue that globalization prevents the characters in Julia Alvarez’s novel from having a “harmonious” identity, even as it brings them great advantages.

A creative retelling of a classic Chinese poem, “Fallen Sakura: A Retelling of the Ballad of Fa Mulan,” by Helen Luo, is accompanied by an analytical essay that explains Luo’s choices in the creative work. Written for one of the classes in our fairy tales cluster, this piece shows that great argument-driven writing need not be narrowly defined by genre borders.

Reetu (Ria) Varadhan wrote “American Media and the Dream in Ta-Nehisi Coates’s *Between the World and Me*” in WR 100, yet uses a variety of sources (both literary and journalistic) with great ease to build a complex argument about the mainstream media and its flawed depiction of African Americans.

Finally, “Adopted into an Identity Struggle: An Exploration of Themes Presented in *Wo Ai Ni Mommy* and *Somewhere Between*” was written by Gayle Tan for WR 150, our research course, and truly shows Tan’s facility with research. The two documentaries about international adoption that this essay analyzes are wonderfully contextualized for readers, and their subtleties are not overlooked.

All the essays in this volume, whether prize winners or not, are worth reading, as much for their insightful content and compelling and original arguments as for their status as exemplars of excellent writing. Whether you are a student or a faculty member, we hope you enjoy this volume and allow the diversity of these texts to speak to you as a reader and as a writer.

Christina Michaud
Editor, *WR: Journal of the CAS Writing Program*

FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

Jiani (Liz) Shen wrote this excellent essay for her final paper assignment in WR 098, a course for ESL students that asks them to engage in debates on a range of complex issues connected to the topic of globalization. For the first three units of the course, Liz and her classmates read and critically analyzed numerous essays that treated the themes of linguistic and cultural differences, multiculturalism and assimilation, and sense of self and belonging. In the final unit of the course, we shifted genres and discussed a novel, *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, which presented students with a (fictional) representation of one immigrant family's experiences with many of the important themes that we had been exploring all semester. For their final paper assignment, the class was asked to pose a theme-related question about *García Girls* and to then develop an argument in which they also converse with two essays from units 1–3 for added dimension and support.

Throughout the semester, Liz's writing repeatedly focused on issues related to the themes of multiculturalism and identity, and it was clear that her interest was academic as well as personal. Her proposal for this final paper was, therefore, a logical conclusion for her consistent critical and sophisticated questioning throughout the course. It was such a pleasure to witness Liz's writing process and to discuss her successes and struggles with her as she thoughtfully progressed through (and revised) her argument. The result is a testament to her personal investment and intellectual curiosity, as well as to an impressive command of language and rhetorical strategies that anticipate alternate points of view while strengthening her own. I am so very proud of Liz and all of her accomplishments, and I wish her all the best in her continued studies at the University of Pennsylvania—they are lucky to have her!

Lesley Yoder

WR 098: Academic Writing for ESL Students 2

FROM THE WRITER

While reading the book *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, I often felt a strong connection with the main character, Yolanda. As a Dominican immigrant in the U.S., she faces many cultural dilemmas and struggles to find her true identity. I found her story and my personal experience similar in some ways. After coming to the U.S. in ninth grade, I went through the same stages as Yolanda—from encountering cultural shock in the beginning to making every effort to be Americanized to gradually and unconsciously leaving part of my root behind. Therefore, in examining how the consumption of English and American culture have shaped Yolanda's identity, I was also self-exploring, wanting to know where I stand, how I have changed, and how much of the American culture has replaced my own. I also wanted to find out if one can successfully merge two or more cultural identities. Through synthesizing and analyzing different readings in my paper, I realized that having a harmonious multicultural identity is extremely difficult and that it is important for immigrants to find the balance.

JIANI (LIZ) SHEN is rising sophomore who will be transferring to the University of Pennsylvania in Fall 2016. She was born and raised in Shanghai, China. She came to the U.S. in 9th grade and attended a small private high school near Philadelphia. Although she has left BU, she's sincerely grateful for what she has learned during her first year of college here. She wants to give special thanks to Professor Yoder, who passionately and patiently guided her through her first college writing course and made it so fun and rewarding. She would also like to thank Professor Finlayson, who gave her constructive feedback and encouragement in WR 100 and further strengthened her writing skills.

JIANI SHEN
Prize Essay Award

HOW THE GARCÍA GIRLS LOST THEIR ACCENTS: YOLANDA'S STRUGGLE WITH IDENTITY

Can a person have a harmonious multicultural identity? In her essay “A Gentle Madness,” Humera Afridi explores this question by reflecting on her childhood experience of leaving her homeland, Pakistan, at the age of twelve and how it affects her identity. She realizes that although she has moved to many places later in life, her early memories of Pakistan still follow her and shape who she is. Like Afridi, the García sisters in Julia Alvarez’s novel *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, also leave their homeland, the Dominican Republic, at a young age and struggle to find their true cultural identities. After immigrating to the U.S., the sisters undergo a series of transformations to assimilate into the new environment. Yolanda, especially, strives to be proficient in English and its cultural connotations so that she can fit into American society faster and establish a new “self.” However, her eagerness to consume American culture through English has trapped her between the two cultures. By examining the connection between language and identity, we can gain a bigger picture of the globalization of English and analyze its effects on non-English speakers. Learning English has helped Americanize Yolanda to some extent, but it fails to give her a sense of belonging in the U.S. because, like Afridi, she is unable to leave her roots behind.

Yolanda’s English-learning process has offered her new insights and has reshaped her old perceptions, giving her an American voice she desires. Before moving to the U.S., Yolanda lived in a patriarchal society where women were expected to submit to men. When trying to trade toys with her cousin, Mundín, Yolanda obeyed his inappropriate request that she physically show him that she’s a girl: “I lifted up my cowboy skirt, tucked it under my chin, and yanked my panties down” (Alvarez 235). Though Yolanda was hesitant, she did what he asked because Mundín was in a more powerful position both in the trade and in the Dominican society. She was used to being obedient to her father, as well as to other men in the household, at all times. However, Yolanda’s wish to detach from the Dominican standards for women starts to show when she writes a bold speech for school: “That night, at last, she started to write, recklessly, three, five pages, looking up once only to see her father passing by the hall on tiptoe. When Yoyo was done, she read over her words, and her eyes filled. She finally sounded like herself in English!” (Alvarez 143). Instead of accepting her father’s advice by praising the teachers, Yolanda composes a speech inspired by Whitman’s poem, endorsing the idea of celebrating oneself (Alvarez 142). The content of the poem, though quite against the traditional Dominican values, touches Yolanda deeply and opens her eyes to a new, liberal, and creative world. Through the writing of that speech, she discovers her real voice in English and her desired new identity. At this point of her life, Yolanda, a passionate “consumer” of English language and literature, finally feels like an English speaker, an American.

This “consumption” has guided Yolanda to her ideal “self” by changing her perspectives on gender equality and being a woman. In her essay “How Does Language Shape the Way We Think?” Lera Boroditsky proves that language can significantly influence one’s mind: “... linguistic processes are pervasive in most fundamental domains of thought, unconsciously shaping us from the nuts and bolts of cognition and perception to our loftiest abstract notions and major life decisions ”

(Boroditsky 143). Reading and speaking English not only teaches Yolanda how to apply the language but also inadvertently imbues her with American values, including intellectual liberty, independence, and gender equality. Reshaping how Yolanda interprets the world, these values have led her closer to her ideal identity: an independent and courageous woman who owns the same rights and freedom that men own—far from a humble and obedient woman so commonly observed in her native Dominican culture. In short, Yolanda’s rejection of the Dominican stereotypes for women and her adoption of American liberty, as when she writes her speech, is due to her English-learning process.

Now, some readers may argue that Yolanda’s Americanization is a significant step toward assimilating into the U.S. and making it her second home. While it is true that Yolanda has incorporated Americanness into her identity, she fails to find a sense of belonging in the U.S. because her past in the Dominican Republic is deeply ingrained in her, just like how Afridi’s early years in Pakistan are ingrained in her. Yolanda is trapped between American and Dominican culture, between the present and the past. Her helplessness manifests itself in her failed relationship with Rudy: “I saw what a cold, lonely life awaited me in this country. I would never find someone who would understand my peculiar mix of Catholicism and agnosticism, Hispanic and American styles” (Alvarez 99). When Rudy pressures Yolanda to have sex, she is both offended by his disrespectful locution and disappointed by his lack of understanding of her mixed background. This feeling of estrangement in the U.S. is attributed to Yolanda’s deep-rooted Catholic-Hispanic belief that her body is holy like a temple, which was formed when she was a child and only spoke Spanish, and which conflicts with her more liberal American views (Alvarez 234).

Though Yolanda left home when she was young, her early perceptions cannot be neglected in the development of her identity. No matter how much American culture Yolanda consumes, her memories of the Dominican Republic will always define her and trap her in the past that wasn’t yet ready for the present. In “A Gentle Madness,” Afridi recalls a similar experience: “This singular memory is the core around which I’ve come to orient myself, circumambulating it still, despite the passage of time and regardless of place” (Afridi 52). Memory plays an essential role in both Yolanda’s and Afridi’s life because they were both uprooted from their homelands at an age when they had just begun to develop their identities and connections with their origins. Spanish, Yolanda’s first language, was critical to shaping her preliminary perceptions, which later become central to her identity and cannot be easily removed by the new American values. As a result, the past not only distances her from others in college but also haunts her as she grows older. The haunting is demonstrated in the final chapter where Yolanda reflects on defiantly stealing a newborn kitten from its mother: “At that hour and in that loneliness, I hear her, a black furred thing lurking in the corners of my life, her magenta mouth opening, wailing over some violation that lies at the center of my art” (Alvarez 290). Continuously reappearing in Yolanda’s dreams, the image of the mother cat reminds her of the Dominican Republic as well as the “violation” of being removed against one’s will from one’s home. Just as the kitten was taken away before it could “make it on its own,” Yolanda too was separated from her motherland before she could survive without it (Alvarez 285). Both her guilt of taking the kitten and her psychological fear of having to adapt to a new country become an emotional burden she has to carry and a barrier between her and America.

How the García Girls Lost Their Accents presents various problems that the García sisters face as immigrants in the U.S., mainly concerning language, culture, and identity. While the extent to which language and culture impact one’s identity remains a controversial issue up for debate, Yolanda’s experience with English demonstrates that the consumption of another language or culture reshapes but does not replace one’s original cultural identity. Boroditsky’s research supports that language does indeed have the power to reshape one’s identity by influencing one’s cognition while Afridi’s narrative illustrates that memories prevent one’s cultural identity from being replaced by another. Through speaking English and studying literature, Yolanda can be Americanized but cannot be “an

American.” So, it’s time to consider this question again: can a person have a harmonious multicultural identity? According to Yolanda’s story, my answer is no. Given such a globalized world we are living in today, we can easily interact with other cultures and add a new cultural dimension to our identities by traveling abroad or learning new languages. Yet, the new culture we acquire may not necessarily be in agreement with our native culture. This means having an identity composed of multiple cultures can bring confusion and difficulties to defining ourselves and knowing where we truly belong. Despite having assimilated into the U.S., Yolanda continues to search for her identity in the Dominican Republic by confronting her past.

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In her essay, Afridi shares a traumatic childhood memory to illustrate that her early memories of her homeland, Pakistan, are at the core of her identity no matter how many places she has lived since. Afridi's narrative resembles Yolanda's experiences with her homeland and will provide a comparison for my second point of analysis.

Boroditsky, Lera. "How Does Our Language Shape the Way We Think?" *Globalization: A Reader for Writers*. Ed. Maria Jerskey. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 135–145. Print.

Boroditsky conducts several experiments on the effects of language and proves that language shapes our cognition, perception, and decision-making. The scientific facts and conclusions in her essay serve as evidence for my first point that learning English has Americanized Yolanda.

FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

Writing is an inherently participatory, communal act, as a scholar can only form a meaningful argument in dialogue with other artists and authors. Students in WR 100, “When Cultures Collide: Global Perspectives in Contemporary Art,” directly addressed this issue of participation in their third paper assignment, which asked them to contextualize an international visual artist’s work against relevant theories of interactive art. Yoko Ono, an artist renowned for her individuality, nuance, and grace, seemed a natural choice for Eva Gallagher, who exhibits these same qualities in her sophisticated prose.

Eva’s essay is notable for its dexterous treatment of multiple types of sources. A historical performance such as Ono’s *Cut Piece* must be contemplated through its documentation: videos, photographs, and an “event score” or script that dictates the action. Eva met this challenge by translating her visual source materials into lush descriptions, which in turn, she interpreted using the theoretical texts assigned for class. She further expanded the discussion to include carefully selected sources from her own research. Perhaps Eva’s nuanced approach to these visual and textual materials stems from her concurrent work in graphic design: her composition *Puddle Illusions* adorns the cover of this issue of *WR*. Ultimately, Eva’s conclusion links Ono’s proto-feminist examination of gender to contemporary feminist efforts, such as the “free the nipple” campaign on social media. In so doing, Eva reveals how Ono’s piece transcends its original 1960s iteration to illuminate urgent contemporary concerns, both within and beyond academia and the art world.

Sarah Parrish

WR 100: When Cultures Collide: Global Perspectives in Contemporary Art

From the Writer

With women's rights being fought for more than ever in human history, feminism is no longer a radical stance; it is a global movement, a mentality that Yoko Ono has embodied from the very start. She has made what was once a foreign concept a meaningful and accessible way of perceiving the world by granting her viewers a chance to be participants in her artistic process. As I delved deeper into my research, I was increasingly intrigued by the objectifying quality in Ono's work and felt it was imperative that I determine the underlying relationship between the female body and the vulnerability that seems to accompany its exposure.

EVA VIDAN GALLAGHER is a rising sophomore in the College of Fine Arts majoring in graphic design and minoring in photography and journalism. While she resides in Boston during the academic year, the summer is reserved for her family's place of origin, Croatia, where she has interned with Croatian graphic designer Boris Ljubičić and exhibited her photography in one of the leading photo galleries in the country, Fotoklub Split. Gallagher recently won first place in the BU Global Programs Photo Contest and will have a separate triptych exhibited in Silber Way's gallery. In addition to her photography, Gallagher has worked as a research assistant for Harvard University's Milman Parry Collection since 2015, and has designed graphic materials for two short films, both of which were featured at major international film festivals. She plans to continue bridging her interest in graphic design, photography, and writing after her time at BU.

PASSIVE OBJECTIFICATION: VULNERABILITY IN YOKO ONO'S PARTICIPATORY ART

Contemporary art, regardless of its medium or creator, is united by a seemingly evident objective: to engage its viewer. To capture the slightest of attention spans and achieve a thought-provoking status is central to the creative process; however, it may be even more so in participatory art. Known for its interactive nature, participatory art relies entirely on its audience to execute a particular set of instructions, such as an *event score*, as coined by the international art movement *Fluxus*. In completing these directions, the audience actualizes the artist's underlying message, evident in both the viewers' facial and emotional responses, and ultimately retreats with far more than a gallery pamphlet—they are left with an experience. Despite a passive role in many of her unconventional participatory works, Yoko Ono draws her viewers into an entirely immersive experience, granting them the permission to engage on a tangible level. Through the dualism of Ono's passive objectification and the active physical engagement required of the audience, Ono challenges what art historian Sarat Maharaj refers to as the "impossibility of translation" (Maharaj 29). In so doing, Ono reaffirms that the sensations of discomfort and intimacy are mutual, shared by both artist and participant (Maharaj 29). By means of live audience interaction, the participatory nature of *Cut Piece* (1964), *Fog Piece* (1964), and *Touch Me III* (2008) reveal the degree to which Ono engages in this passive objectification of both the female body and her physical self, highlighting the loss of agency that accompanies touch and female nudity in the public eye.

While Ono's lasting impact on the viewer is beyond her control, she defies the momentary barriers of translatability as established by Maharaj's "'Perfidious Fidelity: The Untranslatability of the Other.'" Convinced the act of translation is virtually impossible, Maharaj labels it inherently "opaque" and never truly "transparent" (Maharaj 29). Though the notion of "hybridity," or combining the "self and other," takes on an essential role in the interactions between Ono and her audience, Maharaj also suggests a distortive tendency is present, seemingly tainting the shared experience (Maharaj 29). However, the sensations of discomfort and intimacy are reciprocated by the artist and the viewer, generating a unifying force that defeats what remains visually and conceptually ambiguous. According to art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson, Ono's former husband Tony Cox suggests "Ono is an artist who does not translate clearly, and that the enigmatic aspects of her work should be seen as a delicate part of a foreign culture" (Bryan-Wilson 119). By attributing the ambiguity present in Ono's participatory art to her Japanese roots, Cox degrades the authenticity of human interaction, imposing the boundaries of countries and cultures on the engagement of the artist and viewer. Ono successfully overcomes the "impossibility of translation" by rendering both herself and the female body vulnerable; the audience members participating, regardless of gender, experience the mutual formation of a "hybrid," and the performance ultimately becomes a "vehicle for demarcating and disseminating difference" (Maharaj 29). Just as the event scores translate from text to performance, Ono's

passivity and the audience members' active engagement also emerge in dualistic synergy. In so doing, Ono and her viewers are not constrained by the translation process; rather the shared sensations of discomfort and intimacy enhance the overall performance, gradually decreasing the stigma that accompanies exposure of the female body.

Perhaps Ono's most influential performance, *Cut Piece*, embodies both the passive objectification of women and the active engagement of the audience to convey the loss of agency in being "stripped, scrutinised, and violated by the audience's gaze" (Bryan-Wilson 103). In this participatory piece, Ono invites her viewers to individually join her on the stage and cut away a piece of her garment with provided scissors. To add to this already vulnerable state, Ono remains entirely silent for the duration of the performance, maintaining an expression of neutrality and poise. These subtleties are only amplified by her seating on the ground, where she rests on her shins in a traditionally polite Japanese position known as *seiza* (Bryan-Wilson 101). While Ono seems to abide by the manners of her homeland, this sitting position, with its modesty and reduction in stature, is a greater mark of vulnerability than cultural conformity.

Curiously, the viewer experience of those seated in Yamaichi Concert Hall, Kyoto, Japan, on July 20, 1964 was rather mixed. With anticipation and wonder in the air, Yoko Ono took the stage to perform *Cut Piece*, a mask of resilience and concentration shielding the vulnerability to come. Looking back on her earliest performance, Ono admits her viewers initially "did not know what to make of it," as the newly emerging concept of performance art was shocking in itself, forcing the viewers to engage in topics otherwise neglected ("Yoko Ono's Cut Piece Still Shocks," *BBC*). Addressing such themes undeniably evokes a range of responses, yet beyond the tangible creases of faces are underlying emotional reactions, igniting passion to perform or even reinvent Ono's work as "few people elicit as visceral a reaction as Yoko Ono...the mere sound of her name...sends people into facial contortions, either of awe and admiration or disgust and dismissal" ("I Just Let Things Happen," *Pop Matters*). The audiences' participation in unison with the exposure of the female body, particularly Yoko Ono's as a public figure, is empowering in a feminist context; however, when removed from this framework, gender does little to protect from the vulnerable state that remains.

Although in her 2003 performance of *Cut Piece* Ono sits on a chair, it is possible that this upgrade is a sign of abandoning her prior innocence and embracing a sort of inner resistance to her self-objectification. Such nuanced defiance is revealed even in her earlier performances, most notably in 1965 when a man removed large portions of Ono's tank top, exposing her undergarments ("Yoko Ono—Cut Piece (1965)", *YouTube*). In a small act of instinctive resistance, Ono slightly lifts her hand in opposition, fighting the urge to pull away and protect her body. In this sense, Martha Schwendener's assertion that *Cut Piece* is "more like a rape than an art performance" is entirely justified (Bryan-Wilson 103). Perhaps only visible to the most empathetic of viewers, Ono displays utter distress during those lingering seconds, and it is her gender that heightens this sense of endangerment. The fact that Ono is unable to maintain her composure actually *strengthens* the translatability of the piece; the individuals interacting with her becomes acutely aware of her discomfort, which in turn influences their succeeding steps. An internal conflict arises, most notable in the participants' facial expressions, as they strip her of the lone fabric that shields their body from the world's glare. What is more, Ono claims that in her first performance of *Cut Piece* a man "took the pair of scissors and made a motion to stab me," thereby adding to both the physical and psychological vulnerability of being threatened, particularly by a male (Bryan-Wilson 107). Indeed, as Bryan-Wilson reminds us, in this performance "Ono's body represents all female bodies, and she as female art object represents all

females as objects” (Bryan-Wilson 103). In addition to being more susceptible to gender subordination, aggression, and sexual assault, women who reveal more skin are routinely labeled as overly provocative and bringing these threats upon themselves. This objectification mirrors the violation of women worldwide, and it is ultimately Ono’s silent resilience and exposed flesh that empower participants to confront the vulnerability that accompanies the female gender.

Despite its lesser-known status, Ono’s *Fog Piece* (1964) manifests an inversion of *Cut Piece*, expanding upon the play between passive and active, in addition to the physical exposure of women. As opposed to disrobing Ono, the interactive piece requires its audience to wrap her in white bandages as a fog machine produces smoke to “obscure her further” (Bryan-Wilson 104). Though this reverses the sense of physical exposure, the vulnerability remains as she is stripped of her agency yet again. Countering Maharaj’s claim of untranslatability, the interaction between artist and viewer in *Fog Piece* elicits the same discomfort and intimacy as *Cut Piece*, albeit through opposite means. Perhaps even a sense of wrongdoing accompanies this act, as the audience is covering an entirely passive individual to the point of completely imposed concealment, and by extent, potentially inflicting a feeling of nonexistence upon Ono. While some participants may not be moved to the same degree as others, there is an intrinsic response of guilt in bringing this performance to life, ultimately revealing the power event scores hold and the implied collision between individual and society underlying both pieces. By broadening the dualistic nature of this passive and active artist-audience relationship in *Fog Piece*, Ono successfully addresses the loss of agency of women in the context of concealment.

In relation to *Cut Piece*, *Fog Piece* also addresses the other end of the spectrum when it comes to baring the female body: concealment. Although there are countless women who simply prefer to be covered due to their identity, culture, or religion—all of which should be respected—there are many regions of the world where the covering of women is a mark of oppression. In the context of *Fog Piece*, the participating viewers are representative of societies’ insistence on covering the bodies of women, even in entirely absurd scenarios, such as breastfeeding in public. This need for physical control over women is of equal relevance in the metaphorical concealment of women. Silenced and underrepresented, women of the Western world are stripped of agency in the realm of politics, reproductive rights, and the economic discrimination of lower wages and maternity leave. This imposed invisibility forms a paradoxical twist: women are vulnerable to the world both exposed *and* concealed, an indication that reform is paramount. However, in this day and age, it seems the most instantaneous loss of agency occurs when the female body is exposed.

Drawing upon the elements of exposure and vulnerability further, Ono’s more recent work *Touch Me III* (2008) renders the female form passive to an even greater extent as Ono removes herself entirely from this installation, only to leave behind wooden frames containing silicone cast female body parts. Displayed on a wooden table next to a stand with a bowl of water and cloth, these body parts feature the mouth, two breasts, belly, pubic area, knees, and feet. Interestingly, no other facial features are included apart from the mouth, signaling a sexual connotation as well as a potential lack of identity or loss of agency. What is more, this further objectifies the female form by quite literally isolating individual body parts and placing them in confining compartments. As for translatability, even without the artist’s physical presence, the nature of the installation allows for both a visual and tactile interpretation. While there may be some degree of ambiguity with regards to intent, Ono’s artistic choices, such as the use of boxes and individual female parts, communicate the message concerning the exposure of the female body. Since this participatory piece enables viewers to actively interact with the body parts as they please, the resulting implication is women’s overall vulnerability when exposed. In bridging

the passive and active roles as in the previously mentioned performances, Ono presents her audience with the power to tower over the table, instilling an authoritative perspective upon this tactile experience. While Ono is not physically present in *Touch Me III*, her absence by no means lessens the quality of engagement or the impact of her message in relation to *Cut Piece* and *Fog Piece*. Even in a sedentary installation such as *Touch Me III*, a relationship still exists between the viewer and the object, and it is the power of this interaction that ultimately conveys the issues of exposure and vulnerability for women.

In urging her audiences to engage with the participatory nature of her performances *Cut Piece* and *Fog Piece*, as well as her installation *Touch Me III*, Ono conquers Maharaj's claim that individual experiences are untranslatable, delivering pieces that evoke both discomfort and intimacy. By juxtaposing the passive objectification of women with the active interaction of her viewers, the vulnerability and loss of agency that accompany the exposed female form become central to Ono's works. These issues are not confined to the art world, however. Given the recent unraveling of the *Free the Nipple* campaign initiated by activist and filmmaker Lina Esco, the general public, as well as some legislators, have begun to address the double standards concerning exposure of the female body. This movement is not only rooted in the grounds of equality; it also pertains to motherhood, and the absurd taboo surrounding feeding a hungry infant in public. The shift in attitude from many women in the Western world has led to organized protests and small acts of resistance among individuals, inspiring a new era of feminism. In an act of tribute to Ono, musician and performance artist Peaches embodied the values of this movement even prior to its formation in 2013 by reenacting *Cut Piece*. Ono praised her for her "sensitivity, vulnerability, strength without trying—all with dignity, representing us women" (Ono, "Yoko Ono on Peaches' Performances"). Looking back on her own experience in performance art, Ono admits, "we, the past feminists, thought it was important to look like soldiers if we wanted to be taken seriously. No more. Women are not scared of showing their vulnerability" (Ono, "Yoko Ono on Peaches' Performances"). Perhaps Ono was born before her time, attempting to translate what truly used to be untranslatable. However maybe that was exactly what the world needed: an artistic mind to start the conversation.

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FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

Clara Kim's essay "Finding Veritas in Harvard's Tourism" was written in the fall of 2015 for a WR 100 seminar focusing on tourism in New England. In the class, we examined what various forms of tourism in the region can tell us about American culture. This essay was submitted for the third assignment in the course, in which students were asked to independently visit and research a tourist site in New England and construct a persuasive analysis about that site.

This essay offers a critical examination of Harvard University as a tourist site. Through an analysis of Harvard's website, tourism brochures, and the tour itself, Clara claims that Harvard offers tourists a solely celebratory narrative of its history and legacy, disavowing its complex and often unsettling involvement in the history of slavery and race relations. Clara presents her claim clearly and supports her ideas through a thorough analysis of these sources.

Clara's essay is not only well structured and clearly articulated, but it also contributes to a larger scholarly conversation about the role of tourist sites that engage with public history—whose history is told at these sites, and whose is left out? How should the tourist industry make these decisions? Clara's piece suggests that Harvard and other public history sites must strive to provide tourists with a comprehensive history that acknowledges the "dark" elements of a site's past and present.

Emma Newcombe

WR 100: Touring New England and the World

FROM THE WRITER

When dealing with a topic as broad as New England tourism, it becomes difficult to hone in on a specific site and deal with all the nuances of public perception and institutional presentation. I remembered wanting to focus on something relevant to my own personal experience yet removed enough for exploration. I chose to focus on Harvard because of its accessible tourism and race relations because of my standing as a Korean American. Existing in the gap between privileged and unprivileged allowed me to examine, thoroughly, the larger framework of race through the lens of an industry as broad and narrow as campus tours.

CLARA KIM (Class of 2019) studies Environmental Analysis and Policy at Boston University's College of Arts & Sciences. She is from Stevenson Ranch, California. Her passions include the Spanish language, studying rudimentary Bokmål Norwegian, and philosophy. She thanks Professor Emma Newcombe for her unending support through the writing process.

FINDING VERITAS IN HARVARD'S TOURISM

Harvard's motto is *veritas*, or truth. A university that prides itself on the noble pursuit of ethical academics, it seeks to reflect integrity in all its facets. However, despite its advertised commitment to honor, Harvard University does not make its controversial interactions with slavery and race issues as accessible or as visible as it does its merits. This creates a seemingly perfect image that does not convey the reality of the truly complex history behind Harvard University. Debunking Harvard University's glorified history concerning its involvement in abolitionism and race is crucial to understanding the perseveringly complex nature of race relations today. Harvard University does not address these issues on its tours, but they must be acknowledged due to the institution's ubiquitous nature propagated by its tourism's extensive merchandising and frequency in popular culture.

Harvard is portrayed as a very American institution with impressive global reach. Founded in 1636, it is the country's oldest institute of higher education. Its website lists eleven American heads of state as graduates, and even more presidents with honorary degrees.¹ It has been host to the Crown Princess of Japan Masako Owada and Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-Moon, two key figures in the modern political macrocosm.² Politically and academically established faculty members are scattered about the website and displayed with distinction as not only accomplished scholars but global citizens. They are instigators of widespread change and academic advancement. Advertisements for seminars about topics from iconoclasm to climate change are all led by professors and high-profile guest speakers and further cement the nationalism displayed by the university.³ The American element is unmistakable: a country in the political center of the world holding prominent discussions at the prime academic hub of the world only promotes the idea of exclusivity. The Harvard President herself, Drew Gilpin Faust, is a lauded historian of both the Civil War and the American South, effectively connecting a high administrative position, academic prowess, and America's deepest, darkest history in a self-satisfied loop that advances Harvard's popular standing as not only a highly patriotic university but also an enlightened one.⁴

However, with all of its good American qualities come the bad ones, particularly in relation to race. In a project entitled *Harvard and Slavery*, Sven Beckert, a Harvard professor, reveals the unexpected racially fuelled tension that permeated the academic environment during the 1800s.⁵ Harvard was rife with discouragement of discussion of abolition. Discussion of such topics was considered uncouth and improper, especially because Harvard University was beholden to a

¹ "Heads of State," *Harvard University* (website), The President and Fellows of Harvard College, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.harvard.edu/about-harvard/harvard-glance/honors/heads-state>.

² "Heads of State," *Harvard University* (website).

³ *Harvard Gazette* (website), The President and Fellows of Harvard College, accessed November 29, 2015, <http://news.harvard.edu/gazette>.

⁴ "Office of the President: Biography," *Harvard University* (website), The President and Fellows of Harvard College, accessed December 2, 2015, <http://www.harvard.edu/president/biography>.

⁵ Sven Beckert and Katherine Stevens, "Harvard and Slavery: Seeking a Forgotten History," November 16, 2011.

financial house called the Baring Brothers, an institution whose major trade was, incidentally, cotton. In addition, many plantation-holding families dreamed of sending their sons to learn at this prestigious school where they coexisted with the non-slaveholding population with ease. Active abolitionism was taboo, and faculty members who called for the abolishment of slavery were told to reconsider with prudence, a thinly veiled way of proposing job loss over causing too much social disruption. An entire university indebted to a business run on the backs of slaves muffled talks of activism in its best economic interests and perhaps, as an unintended consequence, perpetrated the slowness to turn the public away from blatant racism, a slowness that persists to this day. Harvard professors, even in the 1800s, were considered academic authorities; their opinions held great sway in the minds of many. This power was effectively utilized by Louis Agassiz, a prominent professor, who further aggravated the issue of slavery by giving slaveholders an excuse through his very extensive work in polygenism—the belief that the basis for inequality, genetics, is evidence that the story of Adam and Eve only applies to Caucasian people, thereby justifying holding slaves to the highly religious South.⁶ Harvard is a school whose history is littered with failings such as these, but it is difficult to find them in Harvard’s public history.

In particular, Harvard’s tours fail to address the school’s very controversial role in black history and the complexities of it in very much the same manner as the Freedom Trail. The university delegates pleasant history to its public tours and its historical blemishes to papers such as the one written by Sven Beckert. The Freedom Trail, according to historian Alfred F. Young, “has fragmented social history by groups,” a dangerous practice that places different phenomena, such as race relations, on “separate tracks with their own timetables.” In both cases, “the challenge... is to integrate such histories into the larger narrative.”⁷ They both present modified images of glorified institutions, ones that are particularly harmful to the perception of race today. Tour guides discuss a very whitewashed history poorly hidden by mentions of academic progression and diversity, failing to mention how Harvard University in particular has failed people of color for decades, how the very campus has come to develop since the growth of equality. They mention the university’s commitment to the advancement of knowledge in all its facets, but the guides address the university’s history in half-truths in a manner inconsistent with the very principle of *veritas*. Nowhere in the readily available pamphlets distributed outside the campus does it mention the controversial history of the school. Tourists hear about John Harvard’s financial contributions, the many ways in which Harvard has changed the world in the past, and the ways that Harvard continues to impact the geopolitical sphere in the present, but there is no acknowledgment of a history that is not as pleasant as the unsuspecting tourist may think. For instance, Harvard’s Memorial Hall, meant to simultaneously honor students who fought on the Union side and, more dishonorably, deter federal interference into Harvard’s affairs (racism chief among them), is only addressed in a positive light, a falsely innocent symbol of a righteous fight for emancipation and abolition. Tourists, as a result, remain blissfully blind to the school’s less-than-ideal reality in favor of celebrating the very prominent accolades of an institution that does not properly address its past shortcomings.

Many will say that, because Harvard University was definitely not a sole instigator in the slow progression of equality, it is not necessary to discuss this institution specifically. More importantly, the institution is not likely to change its campus tours to include its ties to slavery. However, it is important for the school to address it, to discuss it, to be honest about it in some other capacity—if

⁶ “One Race or Several Species,” *Understanding Race* (website), American Anthropological Society, accessed December 1, 2015, http://www.understandingrace.org/history/science/one_race.html.

⁷ Alfred F. Young, “Revolution in Boston? Eight Propositions for Public History on the Freedom Trail,” *The Public Historian* 25, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 36.

not on its tours—because it is almost impossible to escape Harvard’s influence and image both in and out of Massachusetts. Boston is scattered with Harvard merchandise. Faneuil Hall’s university apparel shops prominently feature the familiar crimson lettering in favor of, say, the brown and blue of Tufts University. Harvard Square itself capitalizes on prospective students touring the campus by offering exclusive sweaters, scarves, and bags at exorbitant prices. Consumers are therefore a mode of advertisement as they walk the streets of both Cambridge and their hometowns wearing the colors of an elite university. Popular culture simultaneously exploits Harvard’s prominent image by plastering the familiar red brick across television screens and marketing its name across the country. The Old Yard is recognizable from beloved works such as *Good Will Hunting* to the degree that it is not uncommon to hear “Park the car in Harvard Yard” years after the making of the movie. The television series *Gilmore Girls* paints the university as a place of academic prowess and achievement, a place that the noble protagonist strives to attend in the early episodes of the show. No matter where one may be, Harvard is highly visible and will continue to be visible in the future. Discussion of the failings, perhaps in the *Harvard Gazette* or in some of its famous lectures, of such a prestigious institution will encourage, not discourage, the discussion of systematic racism in today’s society.

Why would a university think to bring to light its dark history? Why would it deliberately expose its shortcomings, especially in the manifold area of race? Race is still a hotly contested topic politically, socially, and universally. The systemic oppression and stigmatization of people of color persists, despite the end of slavery more than a century ago. The modern focus on black history has proven to be insufficient in the advancement of people of color.⁸ Harvard itself was involved in a racially fueled event that highlighted the fact that even a university of seemingly enlightened individuals is not safe from racism: black tape over the faces of African-American Harvard Law professors revealed that discrimination survives in America’s oldest, most treasured institution, despite the limited efforts in addressing it in the past. The university was forced to confront the ugly existence of hate on its campus, and the world was forced to watch as students rallied in solidarity with its African-American professors, as they attempted to discuss that there were some in their own student body who contemptuously defaced pictures of revered faculty members because of their race.⁹ In an article in *The New York Times*, they expressed dissatisfaction with the way their own school did not “[do] enough to make the school fully inclusive of minority students and faculty members.”¹⁰ Bringing to light the truth, the *veritas*, in Harvard’s past and present moves the conversation of race into the future.

Widespread acknowledgement of Harvard University’s dark history, especially through the way it markets itself to tourists, will stimulate necessary discussion of race relations in the United States. Though it is unlikely that Harvard will change its repertoire of tourism techniques, glorification of its history dismisses it from culpability that extends to this very day in the way that people of color experience systemic oppression. The tours are blinding, and therefore market schools as improbable places for racial tension, and the elevation of such a visible school as a place of total equality hides the unpleasant reality from the general public. Despite renewed efforts in light of recent events at the university to address systemic racism, the racial climate has not changed; it is not enough. When a visible entity addresses its shortcomings publicly, thoroughly, to its visitors and prospective

⁸ Jeff Nesbit, “Institutional Racism Is Our Way of Life,” *US News*, May 6, 2015, accessed November 26, 2015, <http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/at-the-edge/2015/05/06/institutional-racism-is-our-way-of-life>.

⁹ Jess Bidgood, “Tape Found Over Portraits of Black Harvard Professors,” *New York Times*, November 19, 2015, accessed November 23, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/20/us/tape-found-over-portraits-of-black-harvard-professors.html?_r=0.

¹⁰ Bidgood.

applicants, the world listens with bated breath, with intent to examine itself. Tourism, despite the fact that it is an area that will most likely remain unchanged, highlights a need for honesty elsewhere. Harvard is an institution recognized almost universally as an academic authority, and its words hold power. Knowledge of Harvard University's involvement in the slow progression, and even inhibition, of racial equality should be made more accessible to the modern person, a move that will widen the discussion of race in America today. *Veritas* is out there, and it is Harvard's turn to find it.

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FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

In “*Optima dies... prima fugi*” Orly Lipset writes about the privilege of nostalgia in Willa Cather’s *My Antonia*. Our course was interested in the relationship between memory and perception and the intersection between personal and collective memory, beginning with Cather’s examination of the urbanization of the American frontier. Since Blythe Tellefsen’s (1999) reading of the novel as self-conscious examination of the intersection of self and national mythologizing, critics have tended to read the violent disruptions of protagonist Jim Burden’s otherwise pastoral elegy to the fading frontier as evidence of the return of the repressed Others to manifest destiny.

Orly was dissatisfied with the oblique attention to social class in the critical discourse and provocatively demonstrates the ways that class threatens to overwhelm every sentence of the novel. The essay extends Tellefsen’s reading to mark out the ways that Jim’s disavowal of the privileged class position that undergirds his scholarly thoughtfulness leads him to be unable to meaningfully articulate his relations with the farm girl Antonia, and traces the incoherence of Jim’s narrative to the lacuna between the myth of manifest destiny and the crushing reality of working class life on the frontier. Lipset argues this original and well-motivated claim through a wonderfully close, perceptive reading of Cather’s best-known novel, which she balances with a balanced examination of the wider historic and economic context of the novel—a fantastically successful first essay.

Jordan Eisenback

EN 120: Freshmen Seminar in Literature

FROM THE WRITER

I am interested in studying the rifts created by inequalities. Especially in wake of the upcoming election, I am riveted by the ongoing national conversation about what does and does not constitute fairness or justice. Of further interest is what aspects of people's lives inform their understanding of these abstract concepts. Willa Cather's novel, *My Ántonia*, engages with these questions. As I read, I was struck by the divergent experiences of protagonist Jim Burden—a character whose gender, race, nationality, and socioeconomic class enables him to pursue an education—and neighboring immigrant farmers. When Mr. Eisenback presented the class with a critique launched by certain scholars that Cather had “no report to make to us on the America of her time,” I passionately disagreed. This essay is my attempt to articulate the value of Cather's “report.”

ORLY LIPSET studies history and English literature in the College of Arts and Sciences. She would like to thank Mr. Eisenback alongside all of her other English teachers, her parents, and her dog.

**“OPTIMA DIES... PRIMA FUGIT”:
JIM’S PRIVILEGED NOSTALGIA IN OPPOSITION TO CATHER’S
PORTRAIT OF MODERNITY IN *MY ÁNTONIA***

“There seemed to be nothing to see; no fences, no creeks or trees, no hills or fields. If there was a road, I could not make it out in the faint starlight. There was nothing but land: not a country at all, but the material out of which countries are made” (Cather 7) observes Jim Burden, the protagonist of Willa Cather’s novel, *My Ántonia*, as he travels by train to his grandparents’ settlement in Nebraska. Indeed, as Jim notes, the novel’s remote Midwestern setting is not only pre-industrial; it is pre-societal. It is a setting that lends itself better to episodes featuring “giant grasshoppers, twice as big as any... ever seen” (Cather 14) than to those attempting to tackle the issues of “mass production... technological employment... cyclical depression” (Arvin, *New Republic*).

Perhaps for this reason, many of Cather’s contemporaries criticize her for what they perceive to be an inordinate focus on antiquated themes and values. Clifton Fadiman, for example, accuses Cather of having “no report to make to us on the America of her time” (*Nation*). This could be said of the character Jim Burden, but certainly not of the author Willa Cather. Although Jim—an American-born, financially stable white man with a blinding obsession for his past—may himself have “no report to make to us on the America of h[is] time” (Fadiman, *Nation*), Willa Cather successfully communicates the realities from which Jim shies in the form of peripheral details and implications. In *My Ántonia*, realism competes with nostalgia as Cather demonstrates the ways in which privileged Americans of both past and present are afforded the ability to repress harsh truths in favor of nostalgic delusions.

Cather does not depict Jim’s grandfather’s picturesque farm as unequivocally good (as critics who accuse her of misplaced agrarian nostalgia might suspect), nor does she depict later, more modern settings, as unequivocally bad. Instead, she contrasts Jim’s privileged experience with the experiences of everyone else. Although Jim fondly recounts feeling “entirely happy” (Cather 14) as he lay among the pumpkins in his grandparents’ garden, so too does he describe its verdancy as “stifl[ing]” (Cather 1). Obligations to farm work severely limit the potential of its less fortunate peoples. Ántonia “cr[ies]” as she explains that she “ain’t got time to learn... [if she is to] help make this land one good farm” (Cather 80). Jake is severely “handicapped by his illiteracy” (Cather 93), and Otto is “one of those... case hardened labourers who would never marry or have children of their own. [But] he was so fond of children” (Cather 55). Mr. Shimerda and a wandering homeless man are driven to suicide. Pavel dies of illness, and Peter is evicted, forced to mortgage his beloved milk cow, which symbolizes American opportunity lost.

And yet, even in the midst of such chaos, there is ample reason to interpret *My Ántonia* in light of its nostalgic undertones. Critics who understand Cather as being overly nostalgic for rural Nebraska may, for example, point to the scene in which Jim finds comfort in the phrase “*Optima dies... prima fugit*” (Cather 169) while he reminisces about life on the farm as evidence for their claim. Indeed, Jim’s time spent lying among the pumpkins surely mark some of his “best days.” His unparalleled happiness on the farm, however, is symptomatic of his status as a white, American-born

male who has access to education, funded by his financially stable grandparents, and who is exploitatively reliant on two illiterate field hands who work on the farm so he can attend school. The myth of the idyllic farm exists only among the select few whose privilege enables them to revel in its beauty, their lifestyles unmarred by struggles typical of the less fortunate responsible for the actual success of the farm, and the labor that entails.

Jim's position of privilege allows him to "romantic[ize]... put a kind of glamour over... the country girls" (Cather 146) partly because, "after [he] began to go to the country school, [he] saw less of the Bohemians" (Cather 82). In this, Cather evokes images of *Ántonia* performing grueling work "out in the fields, with those rough threshers" (Cather 100) while Jim concocts unfounded fantasies about her *charmingly agrarian* existence from the comfort of his school desk. Jim's experience is, in many ways, defined by his otherness. As *Ántonia* explains, "if I [or any other immigrant, or for that matter, less fortunate American-born] live here, like you, that is different. Things will be easy for you. But they will be hard for us." For those whose race, gender, or socioeconomic class (and subsequent inability to access education) bar them from lives of ease, their existences on the farm are punctuated by tragedy, poverty, death and hardship. So, for the immigrant demographic, the progression from the agrarian to the small-town Midwest signals a positive change that allows for greater opportunity.

Although Jim forever looks back to his "*optima dies*" (Cather 145) as he advances through increasingly modernized settings, the economies of the towns and cities he navigates with such restlessness provide refuge to the many immigrant "hired girls" who travel from their families' farms to work domestic jobs. Lena Lingard—previously described as "something wild... [living] among her cattle, bareheaded and barefooted, scantily dressed in tattered clothing" (Cather 106)—initiates her path to prosperity by proclaiming that she is "through with the farm. There ain't any end to work on a farm, and always so much trouble happens" (Cather 104). So, too, does *Ántonia's* mode of living improve when she assumes a position as house cook for the Harling family. She no longer "work like mans [sic]" (Cather 80). Instead, her days in Black Hawk are filled with baking syrupy popcorn balls and mending buttons on shooting coats. The market economy in Black Hawk allows so-called "hired girls" both to escape grueling farm labor and to better themselves significantly financially: "the girls who once worked in Black Hawk kitchens are to-day managing big farms and fine families of their own; their children are better off than the children of the town woman they used to serve" (Cather 128). Jim alone yearns for his family farm perhaps because he is the only one whose memories are less of toil than they are of grasshoppers and pumpkins. While Jim Burden promotes the myth of the idyllic farm through his personal experiences, Willa Cather exposes its limitations through her depictions of less fortunate characters.

When Jim moves to metropolitan Lincoln to study at university, the distance created (in both a literal and metaphorical sense) between him and rural Nebraska allows him to further romanticize the lives of those he leaves behind. In between readings of the *Commedia* and the *Aeneid*, for example, his "mind plunged away from [him], and [he] suddenly found himself thinking of the places and people of [his] own infinitesimal past. They stood out strengthened and simplified now" (Cather 168). This process of "strengthening" and "simplifying" detracts from these people's realities, specifically with respect to the hardships they face and the multi-dimensional ways in which they act. Indeed, as Jim goes on to explain, the figures of his childhood are "so much alive in [him] that [he] scarcely stopped to wonder whether they were alive anywhere else, or how" (Cather 168). While he observes "the edge of the prairie, where the sun had gone down and the sky was turquoise blue" (Cather 169) from the privileged position of his boarding house window in Lincoln, the Ambrosch Shimerdas of the world observe the setting sun over their heads, as they labor under its sweltering heat.

After years of performing “the work of a man on the farm” (Cather 202) and an illegitimate pregnancy, *Ántonia*—who acts as privileged Jim’s impoverished, foreign counterpart—is reduced to a shadow of her former self. This degradation takes forms both spiritual—“so crushed and quiet that nobody seemed to want to humble her” (Cather 202)—and physical—“one tooth after another ulcerated... her face swollen half the time” (Cather 202). Yet Jim continues to focus less on her decline than he does on how “there was a new strength in the gravity of her face, and her color still gave her that look of deep-seated health and ardour” (Cather 205). He celebrates *Ántonia*’s insistence that, despite all the hardships she’s faced, she still “want[s] to live and die here” (Cather 205) in the fields. Jim is, by this point, a well-educated adult; he has witnessed the myriad ways in which life on the farm takes its toll on those who actively cultivate its fields, and still he remarks upon “the solemn magic that comes out of those fields at nightfall,” and longingly “wishe[s] he could be a little boy again” (Cather 207).

At the novel’s close, Jim explains that he has deferred visiting *Ántonia* for fear that he will find her “old and broken” (Cather 211), or, in other words, that her strenuous lifestyle will be reflected in her physical appearance, thus shattering his self-indulgent, romanticized, and inherently mythical vision of her and the demographic that she represents. Throughout his visit, he continues to downplay her transformation: he acknowledges that “it was a shock, of course” to be confronted with the physical taxes on her appearance, but he further acknowledges that “as [he] confronted her, the changes grew less apparent... she was there, in the full vigour of her personality, battered but not diminished” (Cather 214). He comments on “how little it mattered” that she has lost her teeth because her “inner glow” (Cather 216) remains dutifully intact.

Because his privilege is so blinding, he distances himself from issues relating to labor and suffering, and instead latches onto details that reinforce his notion of the idyllic farm. Although *Ántonia* explicitly describes the economic hardship associated with raising such a large family, explaining that “it’s no wonder their poor papa can’t get rich... we have our own wheat ground for flower—but then there’s that much less to sell” (Cather 217), Jim fixates on the children’s “blissful expression of countenance [that] gave [him] some idea of [the food’s] deliciousness” (Cather 218). He naively describes the orchard on which *Ántonia* and her eleven children work tirelessly to sustain themselves as containing “the deepest peace” (Cather 219). He feebly attempts to relate to the Cuzaks by quoting the “young Queen of Italy” (Cather 220), recounting the times he heard a bohemian singer live in both London and Vienna, and sending them “some photographs of [*Ántonia*’s] native village” (Cather 211) while abroad. Eagerly, he volunteers to resume his position as farm-boy by “sleeping in the haymow, with the boys” (Cather 221), but this loses its novelty fast: “I began to feel the loneliness of the farm-boy at evening, when the chores seem everlastingly the same, and the world so far away” (Cather 223).

Although *My Ántonia* is, by many metrics, a bildungsroman, it is not one that ever comes to fruition. Jim’s privilege continues to pave a smooth course throughout his entire life, and, in the context of this story, allows for an existence without obstacles. Without such obstacles, he cannot experience the individual triumphs and growth central to a successful coming-of-age story. Because Jim has been gifted the “grand chance” (Cather 224) that *Ántonia* and so many other characters are denied, he is effectively blind to the realities of his less fortunate childhood friends, and more broadly speaking, the realities America faced in the late nineteenth century. Furthermore, he’s a hypocrite: rather than return to his “*optima dies*” by buying his own stake of land, Jim retreats into the world of industry, where, as “legal counsel for one of the great western railways” (Cather 1), he assists in urbanizing the very place to which he dreams of returning. He is one of “the hounds” chasing the “rabbit” (Cather 238) of the agrarian wild west. And so, through the arc of Jim’s life, Cather adeptly explores issues relating to the rise of industry, the struggles of immigrants, and the development of America. Critics who fail to recognize *My Ántonia* for the light it casts on the hot

topics of its time and the poignant statement it makes about the oft selective memory of peoples in positions of privilege fail to recognize its immense value as a historical and philosophical work.

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FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

In the final essay for WR 100: “Reading Disaster: #FergusonSyllabus,” students were asked to use a problem or question from Ta-Nehisi Coates’s challenging new book, *Between the World and Me*, as their motivation for a conversation across multiple exhibit and argument sources. Here, Ria examines contemporary media depictions of black life (and death) alongside Coates’s difficult advice to his teenaged son to embrace the struggle that he sees as the lot of black Americans. She finds that these depictions often fail to acknowledge struggle, a narrative that might serve to humanize such victims of systemic racism as Trayvon Martin and Oscar Grant. This alone would be a worthwhile exercise, but Ria takes her argument further by considering how other texts we read or watched during the semester present a more honest view of “black experience that is free of selective historical amnesia.” While Bill O’Reilly might be an easy target in such a conversation, Ria displays a fundamental respect for all her sources. She is a complex thinker and a beautiful prose stylist, grappling with nuance, while remaining attentive to the sonic and rhythmic possibilities of syntax and diction.

Jessica Bozek
WR 100: Reading Disaster

FROM THE WRITER

This was a paper born of frustration. Written as my final essay for Professor Jessica Bozek's WR 100 section, "Reading Disaster," its contents were a culmination of all the injustice and racial politics that we had spent the semester dissecting. What most agitated me, I believe, was the concept of respectability politics—the idea that a black person's life must meet certain standards of behavior in order to be considered valuable. We'd picked at this topic throughout the semester, but for me, Ta-Nehisi Coates's dismissal of the American Dream in *Between the World and Me* was what truly brought it into focus. It was through his work that I addressed my frustration, tackling the notion of the Dream where I most often saw it: threaded across the American media.

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REETU VARADHAN
Prize Essay Award

AMERICAN MEDIA AND THE DREAM IN TA-NEHISI COATES'S *BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME*

Ta-Nehisi Coates's essay *Between the World and Me* is at once a cautionary tale, a bildungsroman, and an analysis of contemporary American society. Written as a letter to his fifteen-year-old son, Coates uses his own adolescence and young adulthood as a means to communicate the reality of existing as a black man in America, thus creating what appears to be a how-to guide for the young black American. But this summation is surface level. Despite its epistolary form, *Between the World and Me* caters to an ambiguous audience; Coates himself claims that he "didn't set out to accumulate a mass of white fans" (León 1), but his surprisingly extensive white readership raises the question: What message would *Between the World and Me*, a letter from a black man to a black teenager, carry for a white reader? One answer is Coates's implicit suggestion that white people, and by extension the American media, should learn to discuss black life via black struggle instead of the inherently racist American Dream. This switch, however, is not offered as a solution to racism; rather, *Between the World and Me* serves as a call-out to the largely white media on their perpetuation of a quintessentially racist ideal, regardless of whether or not Coates explicitly intended for it to do so.

The keystone facet to Coates's description of the black American's reality is his separation of black Americans from so-called Dreamers—i.e., those who can and do follow the American Dream, which purports that the ultimate goal of life is a nuclear family, white and suburban with two-point-five children. Coates almost immediately dismisses the notion of a Dream that is accessible to black people; he cites that though "for so long [he] . . . wanted to escape into the Dream" he eventually realized that that had "never been an option," because the Dream "[rested] on [the] backs" of black people, on the "bedding made from [their] bodies" (11). With these statements, Coates orchestrates a two-part assertion; first, he establishes that there is a veritable chasm between the black populace and the Dream, and second, he casts the Dream as the begetter of this chasm, the systematic aggressor to the black American's victim. But Coates's condemnation is not exclusive to the Dream, an inanimate ideal. Coates also deliberately others the Dreamers, the individuals responsible for the Dream's continued existence. He laments "the burden of living among Dreamers," who "nullify [the] anger, [the] fear" of the black experience in order to preserve "their [own] innocence" (106); this concept of existing "among" but not *as* Dreamers draws a clear distinction between non-Dreamers and Dreamers, between black and white, between prosecuted and prosecutors. Furthermore, the claim that Dreamers intentionally delegitimize black pain in order to preserve the rosiness of the Dream suggests that Dreamers are willfully ignorant of black strife, and that the Dream is a tool with which Dreamers can justify their maintenance of the status quo.

Poised opposite the Dream, however, is Coates's cumulative advice to the young black American: struggle. Where the Dream is built on a Janus-like deceit, in which Dreamers can simultaneously "[pillage] Ferguson for municipal governance" and "[quote] Martin Luther King" (131), black struggle acknowledges the aftereffects of history, acknowledges the uneven ground upon which American citizens stand. In the final paragraphs of the book, Coates encourages his son, and more generally black youth, to "struggle for the memory of [his] ancestors" (151); here

“struggle” implies that like the Dream, Coates is urging black Americans to strive, but that unlike the Dream, this struggle would not erase the root source of the disadvantages that black people face, and would not blame black society for said disadvantages. Coates provides struggle as a foil to the Dream, an alternative method of viewing the black experience that is free of selective historical amnesia.

Throughout the book the Dreamers are an integral presence, the rightful focus of much of Coates’s frustration and pity, and yet they are never once outright addressed. Just as there is a clear distinction between non-Dreamers and Dreamers, there is also an established dichotomy between the direct and indirect audience. The direct audience is the black readership for which Coates intended this book, specifically his son and his son’s peers. The indirect audience is white, and a consequence of style. According to those like Matthew Shenoda from *The LA Review of Books*, Coates’s “[rhetorical] ‘ignoring’ [of] a white audience . . . can be seen as a way of writing *to* them” (“Reading ‘Between the World and Me’”). Although Coates never intended to reach a white audience, he did, and he managed to inform those white readers simply by excluding them. When he expounds that “ ‘White America’ is a syndicate arrayed to protect its exclusive power . . . and control our bodies” (42), he is telling the direct audience that there exists a system bent on their demise, and he is hinting to the indirect audience that they are part of a system bent on the demise of black people. While this unintentional education works to enlighten the white public in general, it also—in light of increased publicity surrounding anti-black violence—affects a very specific sect of the white populace: the American media.

As of 2012, a cringe-worthy three percent of American television was licensed by people of color; the remaining ninety-seven percent of television ownership fell under a white and mostly male domain (“Diversity in Media Ownership”). As such, if *white* is interchangeable with *Dreamer* and the American news media is overwhelmingly white, it can be said that Dreamers have a sizeable influence over what appears on-screen. Combined with increased media coverage of anti-black violence, the superimposition of the Dream on black lives by the Dreamer-controlled media is glaringly obvious. Black victims of violence are offered sympathy proportionately to how well they adhered to the Dream; in other words, the Dream becomes a measuring stick for the value of a black life. This standard is evidenced by frequent dialogues surrounding how a victim was college-bound, as in the case of eighteen-year-old Michael Brown (“Remembering Michael Brown”), or an honor student, as in the case of seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin (LaCapria 1), with no room for error or misgiving. The implication here is that if a murdered black American did not aim for the Dream, if he did not veer from stereotype to his fullest capabilities, then he deserved his fate. The Dreamers’ case-by-case judgment of black worth keeps in line with their habit of avoidance; rather than analyze the white structures that feed into the stereotypical caricature of black Americans as lazy and insolent, the Dreamers use the media to applaud black victims who resisted the supposed vices of their race, and in doing so place the blame for the black community’s socioeconomic disadvantages on the black community itself.

It is arguable, of course, that the media’s impression of the Dream on black lives, and the willful ignorance that lurks beneath it, is better than nothing. News reports that don’t feature the Dream are stereotypical and almost damning; for example, in the murder of Trayvon Martin, Martin was deemed a “drug-addled ‘thug’” regardless of the invalidity of that statement (Williams 1), and prominent media figures like Fox News’s Bill O’Reilly were at liberty to proclaim that Martin looked “how ‘gangstas’ look,” and that though he “was innocent” he still “looked a certain way [and] lost his life” accordingly (Wemple 1). Later in the article O’Reilly does address issues of infrastructure in black communities, but his inability to acknowledge that Martin was murdered as a direct result of racial profiling, and that racial profiling is a product of white supremacy, allows anti-black stereotypes to flourish. With such blatant racism in mind, the Dream seems unproblematic. The

Dream humanizes black Americans where others typecast them. The Dream makes discrimination subtler, more palatable. Enter black struggle.

When used in lieu of the Dream, black struggle is the far more effective tool for the humanization of black Americans. If the Dream is a plastic, one-dimensional rendition of life, an impossible fantasy that acknowledges no errors in its all-white formation and tolerates no missteps from its nonwhite participants, then black struggle is a realistic portrait. There is no flash-judgment, no division of messiahs from pariahs; instead, black struggle in the media displays black Americans as human, with ups and downs, triumphs and failures, and it does not shy away from the echoes of slavery and systematic oppression. Two relatively recent examples of black struggle in forms of publicly accessible media are *Men We Reaped*, the 2013 memoir by Jesmyn Ward, and *Fruitvale Station*, a 2013 film based on the 2009 shooting of Oscar Grant.

Men We Reaped converges Ward's childhood as a lower-class black American in the Deep South with the premature deaths of several of her loved ones, all of which occurred over the span of five years. Much of the book is anecdotal, packed with starkly human incidents that capture Ward's loved ones' happiness and sorrow, their dreams and their struggles. Ward does not flinch from the truth; if her loved ones participated in stereotypically thuggish behavior, those behaviors were not omitted from the book. In one especially striking scene, Ward sits at the funeral of her friend Rog and laments on the funeral t-shirt, which features a picture of her brother Joshua, who died several years beforehand. In the photograph, Joshua is holding a gun and has a "bandana over the bottom half of his face, [with] his hair cut close to his head"; he looks, according to Ward, the very essence of a "young thug" (Ward 40). But this pigeonholed depiction is undercut by Ward's next proclamation: this image "reveal[s] nothing of what [Joshua] was, and represent[s] everything that he wasn't" (40). Later on in the book Ward attributes Joshua's problematic behaviors to "institutions that systematically undervalue him . . . as a human being" (211), cementing *Men We Reaped's* status as a beacon of black struggle. Through Ward's memoir, young black men are portrayed as whole beings beyond stereotype, with both strengths and flaws, and the source of their struggle is made explicit; they are victims of systemic oppression, of a long history of anti-black sentiment.

Along a similar vein, *Fruitvale Station* follows the final day of Oscar Grant, a black man murdered on New Year's Day by police officers at a BART station in Oakland, California. The film makes a point to emphasize the sheer compassion and love that fuel some of Grant's actions; within the timeframe of his last day of life, he is sweet and indulgent towards his young daughter, he rescues an injured pitbull from a hit-and-run, and he makes preparations for his mother's birthday party. Grant is not a flawless symbol of black virtuosity, however. He is an ex-convict and an ex-dealer who has cheated on his girlfriend in the past and who can be abrasive at times. The film is as clear about these dimensions to his personality as it is about his more endearing traits, and the truly remarkable aspect of *Fruitvale Station* is that Oscar Grant is afforded dimensionality at all. Grant is presented as a human who has made mistakes, who has struggled, and who tries to improve but is ultimately felled by a system of racism; his story follows the formula of black struggle to tragic precision.

At the time of their release, *Men We Reaped* and *Fruitvale Station* were both prime examples of black struggle being conveyed in the media, and they were rewarded for it. *Men We Reaped* was named a National Book Critics Circle Finalist, whereas *Fruitvale Station* won a whole host of accolades, including but not limited to an Independent Spirit Award and a NAACP Image Award. As Wesley Morris notes in his response to *Fruitvale Station*, the depiction of Oscar Grant's final moments, and in broader terms the depiction of black struggle, elicits an emotional response such that Americans are "reduced . . . to their most vulnerable selves" ("Strange Fruitvale"). These narratives surrounding black struggle were indisputably successful, and therein lies the proof that

black struggle is an equally, if not more, potent method of humanizing black Americans within a mainstream media culture of demonization.

But the recent success of black struggle does not signal an end to racism, nor is black struggle a solution to racism. The mere fact that humans must be humanized lest they be demonized speaks to a much larger prejudice in the general psyche; replacing the Dream with black struggle is akin to replacing Scotch tape with a Band-Aid on a wound that requires stitches. It is an improvement, but it doesn't solve the core problem. When Coates dismisses the chances of the Dreamers "coming into consciousness" and "[learning] to struggle" (146, 151), he implies to the indirect audience that in a better world, they would move past their need to categorize black people as either saints or stereotypes, but he does not pretend that white acceptance of black struggle instead of the Dream would forgive the horrors of the past. Using its indirect intimations at a white audience, *Between the World and Me* rightfully accuses Dreamers of ignoring their supremacist history and their supremacist present in favor of a "peppermint"-smelling, "strawberry shortcake"-tasting illusion (11), and it offers said Dreamers a less ignorant viewpoint, but it does not offer a solution to the deeply-embedded racism that sparks stereotype and violence. In a hypothetical future, however, where the seeds of racism have been properly acknowledged and subsequently stamped out, perhaps Roxane Gay's rally cry that "we should not have to prove [black victims] . . . are worthy of living . . . [or] suitably respectable" will come to fruition. Perhaps, in this future, black victims need not be humanized in the media because it is redundant to say that they are human, and perhaps books like *Between the World and Me* need not instruct black America on how to survive.

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FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

When Daniel Collins first asked me if Mr. Hyde, from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, could be related to the figure of the golem, I had to tell him that I wasn't sure, although the question was certainly an interesting one. To the best of my knowledge, no scholar had looked at Stevenson's novella in that particular way. But I could see where Daniel's ideas were coming from, and I encouraged him to pursue the line of inquiry he had started. I'm glad he did: the paper he wrote is an original work of scholarship that shows us something no other scholar has about the novella and its central antagonist, the uncanny Mr. Hyde. It provides us with greater insight into how Stevenson conceived of Hyde's character and just what it is that makes Hyde so disquieting.

This paper assignment, for the first major paper of WR 150, was left intentionally open-ended. Students were simply asked to write an academic research paper focusing on a central question they had formulated based on the readings. What makes Daniel's paper important as a work of scholarship is not only the originality of the question he raises, but also the care and specificity with which he researched that question and responded to it through reasoned arguments supported by textual and historical evidence. He makes a convincing case that Mr. Hyde is a golem figure, and addresses clearly and thoroughly the implications of that argument. To me as a teacher, his paper demonstrates that students at any level can engage in the ongoing conversation that is academic research, adding to that conversation their own observations and insights. It is unusual for an undergraduate to add a significant contribution to the scholarly research on a nineteenth-century literary work, but that is exactly what Daniel has done here.

Theodora Goss

WR 150: Fantasy at the Fin-de-Siecle

FROM THE WRITER

I first became familiar with the golem legend during my senior year in high school, when I took a course on speculative fiction that, among other things, discussed the influence of Jewish culture on the genre's development. So it was that when I read Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, I was struck by the similarity of Mr. Hyde's description to that of the golem. This revelation led to a closer examination of the relationship between the two stories and the subsequent realization that, not only was this connection largely undocumented, but that it helped to elucidate some of the finer points of the text, as well as place Stevenson's work in a broader literary context.

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Daniel would like to acknowledge the contributions of Ms. Tracy Townsend, the teacher of the speculative fiction course which laid the groundwork for this paper; Dr. Michael Hancock, whose unwavering support and friendship have been a constant sources of relief and encouragement; Prof. Anandita Mukherji, the WR 100 instructor who sought so valiantly to impose word limits on his writing; and Prof. Theodora Goss, the WR 150 instructor who allowed him to so flagrantly ignore them.

HYDENTITY CRISIS: INTERPRETING DR. JEKYLL'S DOPPELGÄNGER AS A GOLEM

It has been noted that Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, can be read as anything from a detective story to a religious allegory. Depending on one's perspective, the labels of Gothic novel and science fiction may also be justifiably applied (Linehan 124). Yet despite the breadth of these interpretations, it is curious to note that virtually none of them point out the striking similarity between the character of Mr. Edward Hyde and the archetypal figure of the golem from Jewish folklore. Strangely, this comparison has been readily made to another, equally famous character of the same genre: the monster from Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein*. While there can be no doubt that these two works, though written some 68 years apart, bear a marked resemblance to one another, it is intriguing that Stevenson's novel has yet to be thoroughly analyzed for its use of the golem legend. Consequently, this paper will seek to establish an interpretation of *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* that treats Mr. Hyde as a golem figure. Furthermore, it will explore the repercussions such an interpretation would have on traditional readings of the novel and consider its effects on the work's placement within the larger continuum of science fiction literature.

The term "golem" can be traced back to the Hebrew Bible, where, in Psalms 139:15, it is used to denote "my unshaped form" (Cohen 1), referring to the primordial matter to which God has yet to give life. In a more practical context, "golem" is used to describe a large creature fashioned from clay that is made with the purpose of accomplishing some task. While various forms of the golem legend appeared throughout the Middle Ages, the most famous is that associated with Rabbi Loew of Prague. In order to protect the Jewish ghetto from anti-Semitic attacks, the Rabbi is said to have built the golem with clay from a nearby riverbank and brought it to life by carving the word *emet*, the Hebrew for "truth," onto its forehead. To destroy the golem, the letter "e" was erased, forming the word *met*, the Hebrew for "death." Other versions of the myth hold that the tetragrammaton was combined with every letter of the alphabet and pronounced with all possible vowel sounds so as to produce the correct permutation of the name of God, thus emulating creation. Still others simply state that instructions were written on a slip of paper that was placed into the golem's mouth, bringing it to life, but inhibiting its speech. Whatever the method, the remainder of the story tells of how the golem, required to rest on the Sabbath, is not deactivated by Rabbi Loew in time and goes on a rampage until he is eventually destroyed. It is in this form that the golem legend has made its way into popular culture. For instance, the word "golem" is sometimes used to refer to someone who is dumb or slow, or who follows rules pedantically. The latter alludes to the golem's connection, especially within the realm of science fiction, to robots or automatons, which, by their very natures, can only interpret instructions literally (Cohen 1–4). More generally, however, golems, in their various forms, have become a staple of science fiction literature, and Stevenson's novel is no exception.

Though it is by way of Mr. Enfield's discourse with Mr. Utterson that Mr. Hyde is first introduced to the reader, it is not until Mr. Utterson's encounter with Hyde that the reader is given a

good description of him. After the rather unpleasant meeting, Utterson remarks: ““God bless me, the man seems hardly human! Something troglodytic, shall we say? or can it be the old story of Dr. Fell? or is it the mere radiance of a foul soul that thus transpires through, and transfigures, its clay continent? The last, I think; for O my poor old Harry Jekyll, if ever I read Satan’s signature upon a face, it is on that of your new friend”” (Stevenson 17). This characterization is fascinating, as it seems, even superficially, to contain many allusions to the golem legend. The most prominent of these is Utterson’s description of Hyde as having a “clay continent”, which Katherine Linehan clarifies to mean “earthly, i.e. the body” (17 note 1). This bears a remarkable resemblance to not only the golem’s physical composition, but also the root of the word itself. Moreover, Utterson’s comment that he has “read Satan’s signature upon [Hyde’s] face” seems to directly parallel the notion that golems were controlled by carving instructions onto their foreheads. What is interesting, however, is that, should one choose to accept this theory, it presents an apparent contradiction on Stevenson’s part, since the character of Satan does not exist in Judaism. How, then, should Utterson’s comment be taken? One possibility is that Utterson is the product of a highly Christian society and therefore simply projects his own preconceived notions onto the narrative. This stance is easily supported by the fact that Utterson was previously described as, on Sunday evenings, customarily “sit[ting] close by the fire, a volume of some dry divinity on his reading desk, until the clock of the neighbouring church rang out the hour of twelve, when he would go soberly and gratefully to bed” (12). Alternatively, Stevenson may merely be making an oblique reference to the Jewish notion of *yetzer hara*, or the evil inclination that naturally exists in everyone. This possibility is favored by Jekyll’s belief that everyone is composed of both good and evil parts.

Utterson’s impression alone, however, does not constitute the entire body of evidence in support of an interpretation of Hyde as golem. Indeed, this similarity is noted by Dr. Jekyll, who, in his “Full Statement of the Case,” remarks, in the third person, that:

He had now seen the full deformity of that creature that shared with him some of the phenomena of consciousness, and was co-heir with him to death: and beyond these links of community, which in themselves made the most poignant part of his distress, he thought of Hyde, for all his energy of life, as of something not only hellish but inorganic. This was the shocking thing; that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices; that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no shape, should usurp the offices of life. (Stevenson 60)

Here again, Linehan provides context by observing that “Jekyll’s vision of ‘amorphous dust’ masquerading as life invites comparison with Genesis 2:7, where ‘the dust of the ground’ is made man only when God gives it shape, breath, and immortal soul” (60 note 2). Given this, the comparison drawn between Hyde, as deformed, and something that “was dead, and had no shape” seems to clearly reference the golem, whose name literally means “unshaped form.” This is further supported by the images of “amorphous dust” and “slime of the pit” which, in their depictions of primordial matter, also seem indicative of the golem, particularly its biblical origins. Moreover, Jekyll’s description of Hyde as alive, yet “not only hellish but inorganic,” again echoes the golem motif, since golems give the appearance of being alive, though they are made of clay, and can be quite destructive, under the right circumstances.

Jekyll’s uncertainty about Hyde’s true nature smacks of the phenomenon of the “uncanny,” which is discussed by the Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud at length in his essay of the same name. In his exploration of this singular feeling, Freud explores the origins of the word’s German counterpart *unheimlich*, which he explains refers not only to that which is “unhomely” or foreign, but to that which “ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light” (200). Hyde certainly fits this bill, as Jekyll goes to great lengths to keep him out of the public eye, only letting him out at night and by way of the back door. Therefore, when Hyde is encountered, he

immediately evokes an uncanny response in the viewer, since they know they are bearing witness to something that they were not meant to see. This effect is particularly evident following the “Incident at the Window,” in which Mr. Utterson and Mr. Enfield unwittingly see Jekyll involuntarily transform into Hyde. As the two gentlemen try to invite Jekyll on a walk, he begins to respond, only for the following to transpire:

But the words were hardly uttered, before the smile was struck out of his [Jekyll’s] face and succeeded by an expression of such abject terror and despair, as froze the very blood of the two gentlemen below. They saw it but for a glimpse, for the window was instantly thrust down; but that glimpse had been sufficient, and they turned and left the court without a word. In silence, too, they traversed the by-street; and it was not until they had come into a neighbouring thoroughfare, where even upon a Sunday there were still some stirrings of life, that Mr. Utterson at last turned and looked at his companion. They were both pale; and there was an answering horror in their eyes. (Stevenson 32)

This scene describes the type of uncanniness discussed by Freud to a T. Utterson and Enfield are both struck with a sense of literally unspeakable horror because they have seen something that Jekyll had meant to keep within his home but that had managed to escape. Moreover, Stevenson makes a point of saying that it is not until Utterson and Enfield have returned to a populated area, where “there were still some stirrings of life” (32), that they can even begin to comprehend what they have just witnessed.

It is this last detail in particular that really bridges the gap between the uncanny and the golem. In his essay, Freud quotes the German psychologist Ernst Jentsch’s supposition that feelings of uncanniness can be aroused by “doubts [about] whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not be in fact animate” (qtd. in Freud 201). Moreover, Freud notes that Jentsch cites “wax-work figures, ingeniously constructed dolls and automata” as good examples of this, as well as “epileptic fits, and . . . manifestations of insanity, because [they] excite in the spectator the impression of the automatic, mechanical processes at work behind the ordinary appearance of mental activity” (201–2). Jentsch’s first point seems to mesh not only with Utterson and Enfield’s reaction to Jekyll’s transformation and their subsequent need for human contact, but also with Jekyll’s own surprise that “what was dead, and had no shape [referring to Hyde], should usurp the offices of life” (Stevenson 60). The second, that the uncanny is something that displays mechanistic behavior in place of human emotion, is satisfied by Enfield’s account of his first encounter with Hyde. He recounts an incident in which Hyde, “like some Juggernaut,” tramples a little girl in the street one evening, only to remain “perfectly cool and [make] no resistance” upon being stopped, “but giving me [Enfield] one look, so ugly that it brought out the sweat on me like running” (9). This portrayal of Hyde is very reminiscent of the mechanistic and inhuman behavior described by Jentsch. Enfield’s description of Hyde as a “Juggernaut” carries its own foreign and mechanistic connotations, while Hyde’s lack of emotion suggests some sort of automaton devoid of feeling.

These characterizations of Hyde and his repeated evocations of uncanniness align perfectly with more contemporary notions of the golem. In the larger tradition of science fiction literature, golems are commonly regarded as precursors to automatons, androids, and later cyborgs (Cohen 1). It is, then, but a matter of mutual association to conclude that Hyde can himself be seen as a golem. Doing so helps to explain not only the mechanistic and unemotional variety of uncanniness he causes, but also the questioning of his origins and even life, as it were. Thus, interpreting Hyde as a golem is consistent with the uncanny nature of his character and, in fact, goes so far as to offer an explanation for its so being. Yet this conclusion serves to open up another parallel that helps to both resolve some of the contradictions in Jekyll and Hyde’s character and place Stevenson’s novella in a broader literary context.

Specifically, conceding that Hyde's unhuman uncanniness is a result of his similarity to a golem leads one to question whether other aspects of the uncanniness described by Freud can be explained by this solution. Indeed, such is the case with the idea of the double, which pervades both Freud and Stevenson's works. In his discussion, Freud explains that doubles come across as uncanny because they were "originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego," but over time, and with the advent of civilization and the forfeiture of more primitive ideas, "the 'double' reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death" (210–11). More generally, doubles came to encompass two opposing identities inhabiting the same form. Karl Miller summarizes this best by observing that "[o]ne self does what the other self can't. One self is meek while the other is fierce. One self stays while the other runs away. . . . Doubles may appear to come from outside, as a form of possession, or from inside, as a form of projection" (126). Within Stevenson's novella, the double is obvious, yet there is a subtler one present in the golem legend. Recalling that the golem was made by Rabbi Loew to protect the Jewish ghetto of Prague from anti-Semitic attacks, it is apparent that a doubling relationship exists between Rabbi Loew and the creature that he creates. Just as Miller notes: "[o]ne self does what the other self can't." Furthermore, Cohen states, albeit it in a different context, that "the golem is depicted as both domestic servant and resistance fighter, simultaneously protector and threat, emblematic of both the act of creation and the act of destruction" (1). Thus, the golem interpretation expands upon the established notion that doubles are a central thematic element of the novella. Yet in so doing, it exposes yet another parallel that cannot go unnoticed. Namely, the doubling of creator and creature, present in the story of Rabbi Loew, reveals a thematic connection between Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Commentators have noted many similarities between Stevenson and Shelley's novels, not the least of which is their utilization of the mad scientist archetype. Shelley's Victor Frankenstein is the classic unsettled genius, seeking to create life from inanimate matter. Eventually, he succeeds in creating a monster composed of an amalgam of reanimated body parts that is then inadvertently let loose upon the world, only to return and wreak havoc on Victor and his family and friends. A similar, albeit internal, trajectory is followed by Stevenson's Jekyll, who is also prone to study arcane science while this time attempting to separate his being into its good and evil components. However, things go wrong, and his creation ends up coming back to destroy him, or so it seems. Indeed, while Victor is left to chase his creation through the Arctic, Jekyll, in the ultimate inversion, is locked in his cabinet with himself, now transformed involuntarily and permanently into Hyde, with the prospect of either suicide, or arrest and execution. In the final scene chronologically, the reader is left with Utterson breaking down Jekyll's door to a cry of "for God's sake, have mercy!" only to find Hyde dead on the floor after apparently committing suicide with cyanide (Stevenson 38–9). While these events are clear enough, their perpetrators are not. Specifically, there is significant debate as to who cries out at the last and who commits suicide. In his narrative, Jekyll contemplates suicide as a way of stopping Hyde, but hypothesizes that it will be to no avail given the involuntary transformations. Before breaking down the door, Poole remarks that the voice is not his master's, and Utterson similarly concludes it is Hyde's. Yet this creates a fundamental contradiction that makes it impossible to tell who is responsible for what. If Poole and Utterson are correct and Hyde is the last man standing, as it were, then he would have committed suicide himself, which seems at odds with his rebellious character. Applying the golem interpretation helps to resolve this paradox. If Hyde can, in fact, be seen as a golem, then it would be up to his creator, Jekyll, to stop him, just as Rabbi Loew did. The cry for mercy, then, could be interpreted as Hyde's plea to Jekyll, who may have retained some amount of mental dominion, rather than Utterson. Interpreting the story thus provides a neat application of the golem theory while differentiating the story from *Frankenstein*, since Victor himself is not responsible for the monster's death.

Given the remarkable amount of evidence in favor of interpreting Hyde as a golem, it remains perplexing that *Frankenstein* has received practically all of the attention in this regard, while *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has received virtually none. Perhaps this is a result of the swaths of Christian allegory that cloak Stevenson's story, obscuring some of its more Jewish elements. Or perhaps, as Christopher Toumey (414) points out, it is the utter lack of detail regarding the monster's creation in *Frankenstein* that allows at least some room for speculation. After all, Frankenstein's monster quite literally is a re-shaped form, whereas Hyde is merely a deformation of Jekyll. Thus, it is perhaps this difference in imagery that separates the two stories and leads scholars to primarily interpret *Frankenstein* as a reimagining of the golem legend. Yet if anything, the corpus of evidence presented here in favor of a similar treatment of *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* should warrant a reevaluation of this convention. Not only do many details of the story suggest that Hyde is, in fact, a golem, but this theory is consistent with the Freudian psychological elements of the story and is useful in elucidating certain points of the plot. Indeed, the use of the golem legend in the story is one of many aspects that go into securing its place as a cornerstone of science fiction literature.

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FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

In “When Awareness Is Not Enough” Meghan Robbins explores a weighty problem: Why are women still dying of heart attacks at a higher rate than men, despite the success of recent awareness campaigns educating women about symptoms? The explanation Meghan offers for this persistent gender gap is a fascinating example of the ways biology and culture interact. She wrote the essay as part of a semester-long independent inquiry in WR 150: “Representing Illness,” which is part of the Genre and Audience cluster.

Though Meghan’s essay is driven by passion, even outrage, her argument is precise and carefully supported. It was hard for Meghan to achieve this balance as she drafted, but a series of opportunities for peer review, including a cross-section exchange with Gwen Kordonowy’s students, helped her refine her rhetoric in a way that satisfied the expectations of the kind of academic reader WR 150 students are learning to become. Meghan’s essay offers an inspiring example of how the best academic writing marshals passion to serve logic and marshals logic to serve passion. It also shows that Meghan’s high school English teacher is right: Aspiring doctors should keep writing!

Sarah Madsen Hardy
WR 150: Representing Illness

FROM THE WRITER

The inspiration for this essay came from my own experiences as a patient as well as my observations made while volunteering in the emergency department of a hospital. I noticed that physicians seemed to be more skeptical of the symptoms female patients reported than those that male patients reported. I wondered how this apparent gender bias affected the tests and treatments physicians administered. Cardiovascular disease proved to be the best illness with which to expound upon my ideas because it is so closely associated with men despite being the leading cause of death in women. Through careful, balanced analysis of statistics surrounding cardiovascular disease as well as the personal stories of female patients with the disease, I was able to explore what it means to be a woman navigating the healthcare system.

MEGHAN ROBBINS is a rising junior in the Sargent College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, studying human physiology. She is from a suburb just outside of Boston and hopes to become a physician to be able to give back to the community. She would like to thank her high school English teachers for encouraging her to continue to write regardless of her field of study. She would also like to thank Professor Sarah Madsen Hardy and her friends for their support and guidance during the writing process.

WHEN AWARENESS IS NOT ENOUGH: TRIVIALIZATION OF WOMEN'S SYMPTOMS AND THE GENDER GAP IN THE OUTCOMES OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE PATIENTS

Abstract: To date, attempts to close the gender gap in the treatment of cardiovascular disease have included women as subjects in medical research studies and education about female cardiovascular disease symptoms. However, despite the decrease in mortality for both genders since the early 2000s when The Heart Truth and Go Red For Women started, statistical data shows a persistent gender gap in both the treatment and mortality of cardiovascular disease. Women's accounts of the dismissal of their self-reported symptoms in medical settings as well as academic studies on the same topic will be used to show that gender bias against women influences physicians to administer far fewer diagnostic tests and treatments for cardiovascular disease in women than in men, resulting in higher mortality for female patients with the disease. This suggests that it is the physicians, not the patients, who are responsible for the gender gap in cardiovascular disease patient outcomes.

For decades, physicians and scholars have been confounded by the mortality rate of women with cardiovascular disease (CVD), which was much higher than the mortality rate of men. Since historically scholars thought of CVD as a male problem, they commonly assumed that females' lack of knowledge about the symptoms of CVD in women caused the gender gap in the treatment and mortality of CVD. It seemed plausible that without access to gender-specific knowledge about CVD, women would be hesitant to seek medical attention or would not report that they had experienced key heart-related symptoms. In response, public health campaigns like The Heart Truth, well known for its related Red Dress Campaign, and Go Red For Women succeeded in systematically educating women about the symptoms and risk factors of the disease beginning in early 2002 and 2004, respectively. However, at the same time the gender gap in mortality for myocardial infarction, commonly known as a heart attack, stagnated, and the gender gap in implementation of several treatments for CVD increased (Cohen et al. E1165). Raising awareness of CVD in women has not reduced the gender gap in treatment and mortality of the disease.

The fact that the gender gap in treatment and mortality of CVD has not improved suggests that a factor other than lack of awareness is perpetuating the gap. In assessing the results of CVD awareness campaigns, their sponsoring institutions like the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute and the American Heart Association fail to address the relationship between patient outcomes and increased awareness, and the problem of gender inequality in the treatment of women with CVD has persisted. In establishing these campaigns, these two organizations assumed that the female patients themselves played the largest role in determining the outcome of their cardiac event so that by giving them the tools to recognize and take action in response to CVD, and in particular a myocardial infarction, patient outcomes of women should have drastically improved. However, this assumption ignores the role of the physicians who failed to efficiently diagnose and treat women's cardiac events despite the higher numbers of women accurately reporting heart-related symptoms.

This would seem to indicate that the gender gap in the treatment and mortality rate of CVD is not caused by a lack of awareness in female patients, but another factor, which more thorough analysis suggests to be the unwillingness of physicians to give credence to women's self-reports of symptoms due to gender bias.

It is evident that awareness of CVD in women became widespread because the results of The Heart Truth campaign and Go Red for Women were studied extensively through surveys of women from a variety of backgrounds from the time the programs were created until 2007 and 2012, respectively. Between 1997 and 2012, the percentage of women aware that cardiovascular disease was the number one killer of women rose from 30 percent to 56 percent (Mosca et al. 1257), and women's answers to survey questions began to reflect that they understood that risk of cardiovascular disease was a continuum and that they were not completely protected just because they lacked certain risk factors, such as a family history of the disease (Brown S61). Women also became more knowledgeable about the prevention and common symptoms of cardiovascular disease in women by 2012 (Mosca et al. 1257). The increased availability of educational programs about CVD, as well as informational material online, helped increase awareness of CVD in women across the whole country, so that women would be empowered to seek medical treatment for a suspected cardiac event (Wayman et al. 40). Because of awareness campaigns, the majority of women would know when medical intervention was necessary and be prepared to explain crucial heart-related symptoms to healthcare professionals. There is no question that the goal of awareness was achieved, but the larger goal of closing the gender gap in the treatment and mortality of CVD has remained elusive. The gender gap has not seen the improvement that was expected as the result of CVD awareness campaigns.

A primary example of these campaigns' ineffectiveness is that throughout the 1990s and 2000s the mortality of CVD in young women saw no significant improvement, though this was masked by the larger decrease in mortality of CVD when all demographics are combined (Wilmot et al. 997-998). Additionally, a study published in order to illustrate the degree of effectiveness of The Heart Truth's Red Dress Campaign shows that from the time it was first implemented in 2002 until 2007, mortality of women who had an acute myocardial infarction was higher than the mortality of men under the same conditions, whether at the time of the incident or up to one year later (Cohen et al. E1165). Cohen's study of the Red Dress Campaign, as well as a later study, dispelled the possibility that a reduction in the mortality gender gap could have been lagging despite improvements in the gender gap of treatment and prevention. The study of the Red Dress Campaign's effectiveness showed that, of people who had acute myocardial infarctions, the percentage of men who received either left heart catheterization (LHC) or percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) was greater than the percentage of women who received each of these treatments, and this difference between genders increased over the course of this period (Cohen, et al E1165). Another study published in 2015 and sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, which created The Heart Truth, stated that "women are 11% less likely to have been told they are at risk [of developing CVD] and are counseled regarding risk modification 16% less often than men," which contributes to the disparate mortality of women with CVD (Merz et al. 1958). Because women received increasingly less treatment than men for a myocardial infarction as well as less counseling to reduce their risk of CVD, women consistently died from cardiac events more frequently than men did during the period after The Heart Truth's Red Dress Campaign and Go Red For Women were started. Therefore, increased awareness did not help close the gender gap in CVD patient outcomes.

With lack of awareness discounted as a cause of the gender gap in the treatment and mortality for CVD, there must be an alternative factor resulting in its persistence. The correlation between increased awareness and an increase in the gender gap of treatment using LHC or PCI may

be a key in understanding this phenomenon. Increased awareness of CVD in women could have exaggerated some factor in the physician-patient relationship that was already present before awareness campaigns were implemented because women who were substantially better able to describe and interpret their symptoms than their predecessors were more likely to fail to receive treatment in their encounters with the healthcare system. The most effective mode of investigation, therefore, is to examine cases of women who had awareness of CVD symptoms but still experienced gender bias. Some such cases were publicized by the American Heart Association in order to show the benefits of CVD awareness. The women who shared these stories later became advocates for awareness of CVD. Ironically, their stories reveal that physicians' gender bias played a more influential role in their encounters with the healthcare system than their own awareness ("Stories of Women").

The stories of these women who experienced a cardiac event show that despite their ability to clearly articulate their symptoms, their physicians were dismissive towards them. Because they had an unusually extensive knowledge of CVD, when they each experienced a cardiac event, each woman went to the hospital soon after they experienced symptoms and told their doctors about their suspicions that they were having a cardiac event, which turned out to be true in each case ("Stories of Women"). For example, one story states that when Judith Leitner informed her physician about her family history of CVD, her high cholesterol, and her jaw pain, which is a symptom of myocardial infarction, she was still not taken seriously ("Stories of Women"). The physician told her, "Take another Pepcid, honey!" ("Stories of Women"). Leitner, who was well informed about CVD because of her family history, was immediately and insensitively contradicted by her physician, as if what she was saying could not possibly hold water ("Stories of Women"). This is all too common when women report pain, and her physician's words indicated that what she said had no influence on the decisions about her treatment. Men's reports of pain are more likely to be believed because men are seen as being stoic in the face of most painful symptoms due to being socialized to be less emotionally expressive (Hoffman and Tarzian 17). This being the case, it is assumed that if they report pain it must be "real" and worthy of immediate medical attention (18–19). Women's reports of pain, on the other hand, although more accurate because they are free of the particular social expectations placed on men, are often dismissed as emotional or psychosomatic responses (17). Although Leitner later learned she needed a quadruple bypass surgery as a result of the first physician's dismissal of her symptoms and medical history, she suffered a stroke following the procedure because her condition had worsened so much during that time ("Stories of Women").

The primary reason for the physician's dismissive reaction is that, armed with knowledge, Leitner assertively explained her symptoms in the context of a heart problem, so perhaps the physician was taken aback by this and responded by ignoring her symptoms in an attempt to restore the balance of power in the situation. Physicians generally hold a substantial amount of authority, and "women in Western societies are socialized to take turns in conversation, to downplay their own status . . ." (Hoffman and Tarzian 21). Women who are assertive because they fully believe themselves to have a heart problem are therefore rejecting their traditional social role when they interact with a physician, a figure of authority, the gender of whom makes no meaningful difference (Hoffman and Tarzian 21). In fact, the physicians who most strongly believe they are not biased are shown to be the most biased by an implicit bias test, and this group is not exclusive to men or women (Merz et al. 1958). That is to say, even female authority figures still hold other females to the societal expectation of weakness. This bias is seen when the physician calls Leitner "honey," a term which is also inherently belittling and may be an attempt to regain control of the conversation ("Stories of Women"). Women like Leitner who display confidence in their convictions are not adhering to the submissive role, and for those seeking treatment for CVD this has resulted in

physicians reacting by attempting to mute this confidence by trivializing their symptoms and refusing to provide treatment.

The false assumption that women's reports of symptoms tend to arise from emotional instability may be giving many physicians a false sense of confidence in their initial assessment of female patients, so they do not feel it necessary to run basic diagnostic tests. Susan Bradbury-Sneddon, who was knowledgeable about CVD because she volunteered for the American Heart Association, was misdiagnosed for years, told by doctors that she was being "overdramatic" and was "too young for any heart problems," even though she later had a myocardial infarction due to an untreated mitral valve prolapse ("Stories of Women"). Her experience reflects the fact that among people who are not hospitalized for a suspected cardiac event, women are less likely than men to receive a stress test, which is a routine diagnostic test that measures cardiovascular health (Hoffman and Tarzian 17). When Bradbury-Sneddon went to the hospital on another occasion suspecting a heart attack, she had to fight to be admitted, with the attending physician condescendingly telling her, "Come by the ER in the morning to tell me good-bye when you're dismissed" ("Stories of Women"). She had to have open-heart surgery the next day to repair a LAD fistula that would have caused her death within a few weeks ("Stories of Women"). This is another unfortunate example of the "Yentyl Syndrome" Hoffman and Tarzian describe in which women have to first prove beyond a doubt that they are as ill as male patients prior to eliciting an appropriate response from the physician (17). While physicians may think they are just assessing a patient to the best of their abilities, they may be allowing their judgment to be clouded by gender bias. Physicians' emotional responses to having their authority questioned by a woman appear to influence the course of treatment as opposed to doing what is medically best for the patient.

Allowing gender bias to influence a patient's diagnosis and course of treatment puts the patient's health at risk, especially if that patient happens to be less assertive when interacting with a physician. For some like the mother of Christine Faccio, who died of a myocardial infarction after repeatedly being told she had heartburn despite no diagnostic tests being performed, the realization that a woman has a severe heart problem comes too late to make a difference in the outcome because she lacks the confidence to question her physician's decisions ("Stories of Women"). Faccio's mother was not as assertive as Leitner and Bradbury-Sneddon because she did not have much knowledge of the symptoms of CVD in women since the incident took place before CVD awareness campaigns made any headway. Without the confidence of being well informed, Faccio's mother could not pose much of a challenge to her physician's authority ("Stories of Women"). Still, she experienced "Yentyl Syndrome," and because she was unable to prove her illness beyond a doubt, she died without treatment (Hoffman and Tarzian 17; "Stories of Women"). Faccio's mother's death shows that whether the woman is more assertive due to knowledge of CVD's symptoms like Leitner and Bradbury-Sneddon or not, she can still be negatively impacted by the gender bias of physicians. Gender bias inhibits medical decision-making regardless of whether the patient is passive or assertive when dealing with the physician as an authoritative figure.

It could be possible that if Faccio's mother had the knowledge she needed in order to be more assertive, she might have eventually received a diagnostic test that showed how precarious her situation was, but this is not the way medicine should be. It is unrealistic to expect all women to be willing to contradict an expert in the field of medicine like Bradbury-Sneddon did when she demanded to be admitted to the hospital ("Stories of Women"). Leitner said following her stroke, "I have learned the hard way that women need to be more assertive in taking care of their health care decisions" ("Stories of Women"). Beyond the statistical evidence of the gender gap in the treatment and mortality of CVD, women themselves can attest to the fact that female patients must press harder to have their symptoms taken seriously.

Because outcomes like that of Faccio's mother are not uncommon for women with CVD, Bradbury-Sneddon goes so far as to express gratitude for the outcome of her case. She says, "After living 49 years with an undiagnosed heart defect and 20 of those years in mild to severe pain, I am now living with a good prognosis because of the American Heart Association's education and programs. I am so very fortunate" ("Stories of Women"). While it is true her awareness due to the American Heart Association's work did motivate her to stay in the hospital against the advice of the emergency room physician, people must be careful when describing the positive impact of awareness of CVD in women. While it can help some women like Bradbury-Sneddon, its effects are limited. While Bradbury-Sneddon is fortunate to have "a good prognosis," instead of being grateful to be one of the lucky women who survived despite the negligence of her physician, her story should serve as a motivation not just to raise awareness of CVD in women, but also to demand equality in the treatment of this and all medical conditions. True gender equality in medicine cannot exist until receiving proper diagnosis and treatment of CVD is the rule, not the exception, for women.

Unequal access to healthcare is usually discussed in concrete terms, such as legal and financial barriers to health, but the gender gap in the treatment and mortality of CVD shows that inequality runs much deeper than that. It is present in every interaction a woman has with a healthcare provider, and women have to start to demand better. Receiving a simple diagnostic test or being admitted to a hospital for serious health concerns should not be a battle. The battle women should fight instead is to be treated with the same dignity and respect that men can expect, both within the healthcare system and in every aspect of life. Possibly even more important than demonstrating the negative health impacts that physicians' gender bias has on women with CVD, the stories of those three women reveal that society still views women as inherently less competent than men, regardless of how well informed they are about the subject at hand.

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FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

Dave Sebastian completed my WR 150 course, “The Rhetoric of Freedom,” in the spring of 2016 when he was a first-year student in the School of Communications. At the time, Dave was also a reporter for Boston University’s *Daily Free Press*, where he evidently became comfortable as writer and curious as a researcher. A hallmark of Dave’s work was his intellectual independence: for both of his research papers in Writing 150, he selected subjects that made sense within the thematic parameters of the course but that also required extensive research and reading beyond our syllabus. In my comments on Dave’s first draft of the essay, I wrote, “This is a strong and promising draft! There is so much to admire here. From the intellectual independence you displayed in locating this worthwhile subject to your careful scholarship in well-chosen primary and secondary sources, this work is impressive.” I did, however, urge Dave to provide greater help to readers unfamiliar with his subject, Madame Chiang Kai-Shek (Mayling Soong.) “You need,” I wrote, “to explain more about her rise to prominence and her education and life.” Dave acted on this advice—and the result was a final paper that was far more accessible to an educated but general audience. In the introduction to his final portfolio, Dave explained how much he learned from making the essay accessible to unknown readers—and how motivated he was to research his subject. “Through multiple drafts,” Dave wrote, “I have learned how to introduce Madame Chiang, a complex figure, to unknowledgeable readers by writing a potent problem statement that includes a short biography of Madame Chiang. This skill of setting common ground with readers will be beneficial in my endeavors as a journalist, as I would need to be able to report on complex matters in an understandable language. Most notably, my passion for my essay subject is evident through my research: I spent nights at the library delving into books from the 1940s, analyzing the intricate yet stylistic rhetoric of Madame Chiang, who published numerous articles in the American media.” A product of intellectual curiosity and careful library scholarship, Dave’s essay models what students are capable of achieving when they are both independent intellectually and responsive to feedback on a draft.

Thomas Underwood
WR 150: The Rhetoric of Freedom in America

FROM THE WRITER

One may wonder how my China-related essay could correlate with the topic of “The Rhetoric of Freedom in America.” The United States of America—whether through imperialism, trade, or religious missions—has spread its ideals across seas. Resulting from that unwavering influence, American rhetoric has not only been crafted by Americans themselves but also by those who are familiar with American thoughts. The American-educated Mayling Soong, who was the First Lady of the Republic of China, served an epitome of the West’s entrenchment of ideals in the East. When I conducted my research, I could easily find Soong’s rhetoric on library shelves and online—her rhetoric, both in speech and in writing, was widely publicized around the time of World War II, charming Westerners with her flawless English. But Madame Chiang Kai-shek, as Soong was popularly known, did not merely instill American values in her rhetoric; she strived to elevate China’s position among nations, ameliorating prejudices against Chinese people in America. I believe Madame Chiang’s rhetorical efforts can serve a lesson for today’s prejudice-ridden America: One need not be of a particular race, nationality, or belief to excel.

DAVE SEBASTIAN ventures through words and adventures by slicing comma splices. He is a rising sophomore majoring in journalism in the College of Communication and also studying business administration. Born and raised in Jakarta, Indonesia, he spent six years at an all-boys’ Catholic school and is fond of Asian history and politics. Aside from his “nerdy” predilections, he jogs by the Charles River and plays the trombone in his spare time. He would like to thank Dr. Marie McDonough, of WR 100, who taught him clarity in writing and guided him in transitioning to the American curriculum; Dr. Thomas Underwood, of WR 150, who allowed students to pen through unconventional essay topics; and Dr. Veronica Ellis, of COM CO 201, who elucidated grammar conventions in the clearest way possible.

BATTLING AGAINST STIGMATIZED AMERICAN ORIENTALISM: AN ANALYSIS OF MAYLING SOONG CHIANG'S RHETORIC OF CHINESE PRINCIPLES

Various imprints of the Orient are palpable across the United States: its languages, its spiced cuisines, its Chinatowns. The prevalent Asian-American heritage in the American society further enhances America's image as a melting pot of cultures. Yet Asian culture did not integrate into America's cultural pot instantly. Asians, especially the Chinese, have been subject to blatant discriminations in the U.S. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, for instance, prohibited immigration of Chinese laborers into the U.S., claiming that such influx of foreign workers "endangers the good order of certain localities within the territory thereof."¹ Sixty-one years later, however, a petite Chinese woman donning a black *cheongsam* dress stood confidently before the U.S. Congress. "We in China, like you, want a better world, not for ourselves alone, but for all mankind, and we must have it," said the woman, Mayling Soong.² Born in 1898 in Shanghai to a wealthy Christian family and educated in America, Soong spoke fluent English with a thick American Southern accent. Being the First Lady of China through her marriage with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Republic of China from 1927 to 1975, Soong was also popularly referred to as Madame Chiang Kai-shek. Her appearance before Congress was part of her 1943 U.S. tour, which aimed to garner American support for China's war against Japan in World War II. But most of Madame Chiang's rhetoric, which frequently echoed the principles of democracy, were merely publicity stunts, according to Christine Rosen, a fellow at the Ethics & Public Policy Center, in her article "China Doll: Madame Chiang and her times."³ "Beloved by some and reviled by others, [Madame Chiang] always insists that her goal is to promote democracy, even though she is also clearly perfecting the art of promoting herself," Rosen wrote. Being "a political figure in her own right," Rosen argued, was Madame Chiang's utmost priority.⁴ Nevertheless, Madame Chiang's prowess still contributed to the positive perception of the East in the West.

During the heyday of her popularity in the late 1930s to early 1940s, Madame Chiang ardently delivered speeches and wrote articles for both Chinese and international audiences. Having spent a decade of her formative years in the U.S., Madame Chiang had been familiar with Western thought—she briefly attended Wesleyan College in Georgia and studied English literature and philosophy at Wellesley College in Massachusetts. In May 1942, she wrote an essay for the *Atlantic* entitled "China Emergent," which starts by decrying the calamities of war, particularly the brutal

¹ "Transcript of Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)," *Our Documents* (website), accessed February 22, 2016, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=47&page=transcript>.

² Mayling Soong Chiang, "Soong Mei-Ling, 'Addresses To The House Of Representatives And To The Senate,' February 18, 1943," *US-China Institute* (website), USC US-China Institute, accessed February 21, 2016, <http://china.usc.edu/soong-mei-ling-addresses-house-respresentatives-and-senate-february-18-1943>.

³ Christine Rosen, "China Doll: Madame Chiang and her times," *The Weekly Standard* 12, no. 28 (2007): 33, accessed February 22, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/233001502?accountid=9676>.

⁴ Rosen, "China Doll," 33.

exploitation of China by Japan.⁵ In asserting China's equality among nations, she condemned past exploitations of China by Western countries. She recalled the Qing Dynasty, the monarchy that ruled China before the Republican government's revolutionary foundation in 1912, powerlessly yielding to Western countries' demands of opening five trading ports—Shanghai, Canton, Ningpo, Fuchow, and Amoy—where they enjoyed extraterritorial rights. “America and Britain have already shown their consciousness of error by voluntarily offering to abrogate the iniquitous system of extraterritoriality that denied China her inherent right to equality with other nations,” Madame Chiang wrote.⁶ She then denounced unjust systems, such as unfair wealth distribution, that prevailed globally; however, she stressed the Chinese people's reluctance to pursue communism, relating it to authoritarianism and the absolutism of the single-party system. “China,” Madame Chiang dubbed, “is the Columbus of democracy,” as popular vote conferred power upon three Chinese emperors in the ancient times, long before the rise of Western democratic thought.⁷ Madame Chiang stated that the Republic of China pursues a kind of socialism embedded with democratic principles through the Three Principles of the People (*San Min Chu I*), a set of ideologies—Nationalism, People's Rights, and People's Livelihood—coined by the country's founder, Sun Yat-sen. The Three Principles of the People, the First Lady asserted, “is no mere pale reflection of Western socialism.”⁸ Although she admitted that Chinese democracy “will undoubtedly be influenced by the Jeffersonian views of equality of opportunity and the rights of the individual,” the Chinese system will not merely imitate that of America's and will serve China's needs and traditions.⁹ Madame Chiang concluded that upon the Allied Powers' victory in World War II, there should be peaceful governance of people of all races.

Responding to Madame Chiang's rhetorical products, such as “China Emergent,” Rosen deemed Madame Chiang's promotion of democracy “yet another irony of history.”¹⁰ Rosen argued that Madame Chiang's emphasis on democratic ideals is misleading, as Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's regime was, in reality, repressive and autocratic. Led by the Generalissimo, the Nationalist Party was, in effect, the sole political party of China, as the Generalissimo had been striving to rid the Chinese Communist Party¹¹—the reality contradicts Madame Chiang's disagreement over the single-party system in “China Emergent.” Despite these rhetorical inaccuracies, Rosen's absolute dismissal of the Chinese First Lady's war efforts is overgeneralized. Rosen overlooked the palpable aspect of Madame Chiang's rhetoric: the assertion of China's equality among other nations amid stigmatized perceptions of the Orient, especially in America.

Since the 18th century, China has been a popular trading partner for Western nations. In the early 1800s, Warren Delano, an American trader who would later be the grandfather of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, stationed himself in Canton and garnered immense wealth. During his decade in China, Delano witnessed the Qing Dynasty succumbing to Western demands, such as the ceding of Hong Kong Island to Great Britain. Most notably, he was never interested in learning the country's culture and customs. Delano believed that China was a “pitiful, drug-addicted, backward pagan mess of a place,” noted historical nonfiction author James Bradley in *The China Mirage*.¹²

⁵ Mayling Soong Chiang, “China emergent,” in *We Chinese Woman: Speeches and Writings During the First United Nations Year* (New York: The John Day Company, 1943), 28.

⁶ Chiang, “China emergent,” 28.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁰ Rosen, “China Doll,” 35.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹² James Bradley, *The China Mirage* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2015), 28.

Correspondingly, China viewed itself as the most righteous, deeming Westerners as “barbarians.” Delano, in accordance with the prevailing trend at that time, wished for Western traders to “[have] Christianized and westernized enclaves [in China] where they could conduct themselves as they wished, under their own rules,” Bradley recounted.¹³ His wish was supported by American missionaries, who had built schools and churches in China, hoping to Americanize and Christianize the Chinese.

When Madame Chiang addressed the international community, she was the quintessential representation of the “Christianized and westernized” China. Charmed by Madame Chiang, who encapsulated President Roosevelt’s grandfather’s vision of China, the U.S. showered China with billions of dollars of war support from 1941 to 1945. However, in garnering support for her country, Madame Chiang did not simply showcase China as an Americanized nation; she stressed that the “China” she represented was not the same imperial dynasty that caved in disgracefully to Western exploitation, but a revived nation that embodies its inherent democratic values. “Any governmental policy in China ought to take cognizance of the all-important fact that we are an agricultural nation,”¹⁴ wrote Madame Chiang in “China Emergent.” She mentioned that under Republican China, the Chinese people have advanced toward better standards, such as accessibility to education, shelter, and hygiene. In practice, according to Rosen, such standards were not met due to the Generalissimo’s corrupt and polarized government. Nevertheless, Madame Chiang, together with her husband, made efforts to revive the Chinese people’s mentality. In 1934, Generalissimo and Madame Chiang launched the Chinese people’s guidebook of social renewal entitled the *New Life Movement*, which revived the ancient Chinese virtues of etiquette (*Li*), justice (*I*), integrity (*Lien*), and respect (*Chih*). Written before the Japanese aggression in China, the guidebook aimed to reinvigorate the Chinese people’s spirit after years of domestic unrest due to warlordism, wrote Madame Chiang in her book “China Shall Rise Again,” which included a summary of the *New Life Movement*.¹⁵ The guidebook, Madame Chiang explained, aims “to satisfy both psychological and physical needs,” such as cleanliness and the promotion of cooperation.¹⁶ These practical standards might have been influenced by Madame Chiang’s education in America and Christian upbringing; she might have been appalled by the sight of Chinese people being “benumbed, impoverished, and reduced to beggary.”¹⁷ Other than reminding citizens of their “individual and collective rights, duties, and responsibilities,” the *New Life Movement* also strived to repel undemocratic legacies of Imperial China under Manchu (Qing Dynasty) rule. “[T]he off-setting of the inertia caused by hundreds of years of Manchu misrule which, by excluding the masses from participation in State affairs and administration, killed national consciousness and produced an apathy calamitous to national progress and well-being,” Madame Chiang declared.¹⁸ Through her rhetoric, Madame Chiang appealed to the democratic world that China embodies its own unique democratic values, which have similarities to Western thought but are not merely replicas of Western ideals.

Through her performance as a vocal and astute first lady, Madame Chiang exposed to the world a distinct persona of Chinese women. Madame Chiang’s traits as a political leader’s wife were similar to those of American first ladies, such as President Woodrow Wilson’s wife, Ellen Wilson, who advocated for social causes, and President Warren Harding’s wife, Florence Harding, who

¹³ Bradley, “*The China Mirage*,” 23.

¹⁴ Chiang, “China emergent,” 29.

¹⁵ Mayling Soong Chiang, *China Shall Rise Again* (New York and London: Harpers & Brothers Publishers, 1941), 287.

¹⁶ Chiang, “*China Shall Rise Again*,” 288.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 287.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 288.

spoke frequently in public, noted Daniel Paul Lintin in his University of Minnesota dissertation.¹⁹ Other traits of U.S. first ladies, such as “overt support of their husbands’ administrative policies” and “working with the media,” were also embodied by Madame Chiang. Lintin wrote that “[b]ecause of similar efforts on her part, Madame Chiang Kai-shek was hailed in the United States as the First Lady of China.”²⁰ In 1929, two years after her marriage with the Generalissimo, Madame Chiang spoke in an interview with British Movietone News, mentioning how Chinese women “have lived a more or less sheltered life.”²¹ The First Lady said that Chinese women had been effacing themselves by being dutiful wives and wise mothers. However, inspired by Sun Yat-sen’s Three Principles of the People, Chinese women had begun to gain economic and political liberty, she said. “[T]he women themselves have been quick to realize that with this new privilege, they must fit themselves for their new responsibilities,”²² said Madame Chiang. Thus, it may be true that Madame Chiang may have striven to become a prominent political figure apart from her husband, as Rosen argued. Yet despite her supposed motives, Madame Chiang had nonetheless ameliorated the stigma towards Chinese culture in the West through her rhetoric.

In her 1943 U.S. tour, Madame Chiang also underlined the Chinese people’s persistence amid Japanese ruthless aggression. Madame Chiang, who was invited to the U.S. by President Roosevelt, clearly had the objective of garnering financial and military support for her country. Even so, she maintained China’s position as equal among other nations instead of desperately kowtowing to Western demands. Lintin wrote that “[t]hrough her rhetorical actions, both in word and deed, Madame Chiang demonstrated her intense belief in democracy and her commitment to a future democratic system in China.”²³ Madame Chiang charmed her American audience by showcasing her familiarity with the American people. In her speech before the U.S. Congress, Madame Chiang used the beginning “Let us” in an anaphoric manner for four times, all of which condemn Japanese atrocities; such rhetorical device is also used in the U.S. Declaration of Independence’s indictment—and later in Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech in 1963. “Let us not forget that during the first four and a half years of total aggression China has borne Japan’s sadistic fury unaided and alone,” said Madame Chiang. She further projected her familiarity with the American people by recollecting her American education and praising America as “the cauldron of democracy” and “the incubator of democratic principles.”²⁴ Then, she conjoined her ideological references with those of China’s, such as Sun Yat-sen’s encouragement for “the fortitude to carry on.”²⁵ In essence, she emphasized China’s equal standing among nations by underlining the importance of cooperation. “Since international interdependence is now so universally recognized, can we not also say that all nations should become members of one corporate body?” Madame Chiang inquired, reiterating the 1942 Declaration of United Nations by the Allies of World War II, which China had been part of. With that being said, she appealed for Congress to help China in its war efforts against Japanese aggression, stating that the Allies should not easily succumb to mere convenient solutions at the cost of the failure to bring peace. “We shall have faith that, at the writing of peace, America and our other gallant Allies will not be obtunded by the mirage of contingent

¹⁹ Daniel Paul Lintin, “From First Lady to Dragonlady: A Rhetorical Study of Madame Chiang’s Public Personae Before and During Her 1943 U.S. Tour” (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2001), 112.

²⁰ Lintin, “From First Lady to Dragonlady,” 112.

²¹ British Movietone. “President of China,” *British Movietone* video, 2:56, July 29, 1929, <http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/youtube/961012ace2f1444a9d564dc5407e1454>.

²² British Movietone.

²³ Lintin, “From First Lady to Dragonlady,” 213.

²⁴ Chiang, “Addresses.”

²⁵ *Ibid.*

reasons of expediency,”²⁶ Madame concluded. As she brought home full-fledged American support, Madame Chiang also implanted China’s revived image on American soil.

The Republic of China government under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek may have been riddled with considerable shortcomings: its corruption, its nepotism, its failure to actualize its demagogic rhetoric. The Chinese people themselves had been outraged by Chiang’s unjust regime—following the Chinese Communists’ victory in the Chinese Civil War, Generalissimo and Madame, with the entire Nationalist government, relocated to the island of Taiwan in 1949, never to set foot again on mainland China. Nevertheless, Mayling Soong’s rhetoric, especially during World War II, contributed toward the correction of Westerners’ misperceptions of China—nine months after Madame Chiang’s Congress speech, President Roosevelt repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act, regarding the gesture as “a manifestation on the part of the American people of their affection and regard.”²⁷ Rosen’s dismissal of Madame Chiang’s contributions as “an irony of history” belittles the struggles of the Chinese people in acquiring a valid position on the world stage. Mayling Soong’s rhetoric serves a symbol of the Orient’s desire to thrive among and beyond the Western world.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Statement on Signing the Bill to Repeal the Chinese Exclusion Laws,” *The American Presidency Project* (website), The American Presidency Project, accessed March 3, 2016, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16354>.

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FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

Taught as part of the Genre and Audience cluster, the WR 150 seminar “Global Documentary” asks students to design independent research projects entirely motivated and shaped by their interests. For Gayle Tan, whose essay won one of this year’s prizes, the question she pursues—What challenges do internationally adopted children face in forming their identities?—emerged from her experiences as an international student from Singapore. As she reflected early in the research process, “[I]t was living away from home that helped me to see how big a part my nationality and race play in determining who I am.”

Gayle sought answers to her questions by locating two documentaries that represent in different ways the experiences of American children adopted from China. Drawing on historical and anthropological scholarship, Gayle demonstrates how concerns about identity imbue all international adoption discourse, even if such concerns aren’t directly acknowledged. In the process, she challenges the optimistic assurances of the documentary *Wo Ai Ni Mommy* and anthropologist Signe Howell. And she reveals, through the adoptees’ words and physical gestures, an underlying anxiety and confusion. Gayle’s analysis of evidence from the films is a particular strength of this stellar essay.

What can Gayle’s essay teach us about designing and executing a research project? She answers this question with the same insight that she brings to the finished project: “to conduct my research with an open mind, and to explore different material without a preconceived idea of what I wanted to find.”

Marisa Milanese
WR 150: Global Documentary

FROM THE WRITER

My first year studying overseas in America not only opened my eyes to the diversity of culture and people from all around the world, but also gave me reason to reflect on who I am. Being surrounded by people from different nations and cultures for the first time made me realize that being Singaporean and being Chinese are core parts of my personal identity. Though I have many friends here in Boston, I cannot help feeling like a “stranger;” each time I go back to Singapore, I feel a strong sense of truly belonging. These struggles as an international student made me wonder how much more difficult it must be for internationally adopted children who, being born in one country but raised in another, must find themselves in a bind when defining who they are and where they belong. Having been given the opportunity to choose our research topics in my class “Global Documentary,” I thus wrote the following essay which is an exploration into what some of these identity struggles look like for internationally adopted children.

GAYLE TAN is a rising sophomore who is majoring in Psychology in the College of Arts and Sciences. Born and raised in a country known as the “little red dot,” she is very proud to call Singapore her home. She would like to thank all teachers past and present, especially Professor Milanese, for imparting their valuable expertise and for molding her into a better writer. She would also like to thank her ever-supportive parents, twin sister Grace, and friends in Boston and back in Singapore who constantly encourage and motivate her to strive for excellence.

GAYLE TAN
Prize Essay Award

**ADOPTED INTO AN IDENTITY STRUGGLE:
AN EXPLORATION OF THEMES PRESENTED IN
WO AI NI MOMMY AND *SOMEWHERE BETWEEN***

“Do you feel like you’re more Chinese, or more American?” director Stephanie Wang-Breal asks young Faith in the closing scene of *Wo Ai Ni Mommy*, a documentary that chronicles Faith’s journey of adoption. Born in China but adopted by an American family when she was eight, Faith (Sui Yong) initially struggled with living in her new home and was reluctant to learn the English language. Just fourteen months later, though, she replies to Wang-Breal’s question with a confident “American,” and a little nod. Witnessing this scene, however, made me wonder whether Faith really understood and meant what she said—as a young nine-year old, she likely had not explored the meanings of identity and belonging yet. While watching this film helped me to better understand the experiences of international adoption in a family, it also raised many questions for me: Will Faith struggle with her sense of identity and belonging as she grows older? Will she ever feel truly American, or truly Chinese? Where is home to her?

International adoption is a burgeoning phenomenon today: Since 1991, over 70,000 Chinese children have been adopted in America; worldwide, more than 250,000 children live with adoptive parents outside the nation of their birth. In recent years, international adoption has been brought to the spotlight through the media, as well-known celebrities Angelina Jolie (together with her husband Brad Pitt) and Madonna publicized their adoptions of children from less developed nations, and various filmmakers have undertaken documenting the lives of adoptees. Yet much of the public remains unaware of the multiple challenges that international adoptees face. In fact, one may argue that this recent publicity surrounding international adoption has simplified it to a mere act of goodwill in the minds of the public—common is the notion that being adopted is a “happy ending” in itself. *Wo Ai Ni Mommy* is one example of a film that offers a glimpse into the struggles and the joys that internationally adopted children and their adoptive families face, but fails to adequately address the identity struggles that many adopted children experience. This paper is thus an attempt to explore in greater depth some of the complex issues, ranging from insecurities about their appearances to uncertainties about their pasts, that internationally adopted children grapple with as they search for their self-identities.

Adoption takes children away from their birth parents and places them in new families and communities that they are expected to accept as home. International adoption goes one step further by placing children in a whole new country, with parents who often look, speak and behave differently from the child’s biological family. Whether or not children are aware of their adoption when it happens, they sooner or later grow conscious of it; in fact, many of them regard being adopted as a core part of their identity. Yet while adoption is often a “site for . . . identity thinking,” it is at the same time a “‘crossroads of ambiguity’ at which identity seems to break apart” (Yngvesson 37). For international adoptees, discovering their sense of selves can be particularly challenging as they deal with uncertainties about their past and questions that arise from their

relationships with parents and peers. Reconciling physical differences with their families, dealing with feelings of abandonment and insecurity, and living with questions about their origins are just some of the complex issues that complicate international adoptees' personal identities. Yet understanding in a deeper way the issues that adoptees grapple with is the first step in empowering parents, teachers and society at large to better support these adopted children as they journey to discover, define, and develop themselves.

The origins of international adoption are often traced to the mid-1950s, when foreign nationals began adopting Korean "war orphans" after the Korean War (Yngvesson 21). Various conditions in both sending and receiving nations continued this trend of international adoption in the later half of the twentieth century. While civil wars in less developed countries and China's one-child policy resulted in a lack of adequate care for large numbers of children, increasing rates of childless couples in the West coupled with decreasing numbers of domestic children available for adoption there led many parents in Western countries to look abroad for adoption (Yngvesson 29). Today, Sweden has the highest rate of international adoptions (Yngvesson 48). The demand for international adoption in Sweden began in the 1960s because a declining birth rate and a decrease in domestic children available for adoption coincided with a time when involuntary childlessness between couples was at a high of 10–15%. Sweden's Adoption Centre, one of the most influential organizations for international adoption, was also instrumental in Sweden's growth in the number of international adoptions in the 1970s and 1980s. Adoption Centre's organizational structure and operational transparency have facilitated the continued rise of international adoptions in Sweden until today (Yngvesson 48).

Despite the rise in international adoptions throughout the past century, this phenomenon has not been without controversy. Back in 1986, "concern ... at the large number of children who [were] abandoned or [became] orphans," together with a "conscious[ness] of the need [for] universal principles" (United Nations) regarding foster care and adoption precipitated the UN General Assembly's Declaration on Social and Legal Principles Relating to the Protection and Welfare of Children. There, foster care and "appropriate institutional placement" in the child's birth country was determined preferable to international adoption (Yngvesson 20). Though this position changed seven years later at the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, a divisive issue remained: that of whether the Convention should encourage international adoption or restrict it. On one hand, a child's "need for a family" (Yngvesson 20) led some to believe that international adoption should be endorsed; on the other hand, the understanding that a child's identity is inextricably tied to his/her past convinced others that international adoption should not be excessively promoted. Ultimately, the Convention concluded that in light of the child's need for "a family environment," international adoption would be privileged over domestic foster care and institutional care, but only after domestic adoption had been considered (Yngvesson 20). I argue that this contention over what constitutes "the best interests of the child" (United Nations) reflects an acknowledgement of the challenges that the international adoption process poses to both adoptees and their families. Recent Swedish studies indicate that international adoptees are "three to four times as likely to commit or attempt suicide, ... five times as likely to be drug-addicted, and two to three times as likely to abuse alcohol or commit crimes" (Yngvesson 107). While this may be in part because parents were more likely to give up children deemed problematic for adoption, I believe that the extent of these glum statistics also point to the fact that international adoptees face many difficulties after adoption.

Such difficulties are portrayed in *Wo Ai Ni Mommy* and *Somewhere Between*, both films about Chinese girls who were adopted into American families. *Wo Ai Ni Mommy*, a 2010 film by New York based filmmaker Stephanie Wang-Breal, follows the journey of just one child, Faith, as she grows up in an American home. Separately, *Somewhere Between* depicts the stories of four separate Chinese

teenagers who were also adopted by American families. This film was produced in 2011 by Linda Goldstein Knowlton, an American who herself adopted a baby girl from China; she in fact introduces the film as a gift to her daughter. *Wo Ai Ni Mommy* does contain scenes that hint at the difficulties of belonging in a new country, yet it seems to portray a linear process of Faith becoming more American without much attention paid to how her past affects her identity. In contrast, *Somewhere Between* conjures for the audience a complex fabric of what it means to be adopted from another country, as it explores the girls' struggles and confusions as they reflect about their experiences.

Pertinent to both films is the fact that the adopted girls, being Chinese, look very different from their American parents. Fifty years ago, this would have been a big cause for concern because at that time, many believed that the more similar the child was to his or her adoptive parents, the more likely the adoption would "succeed;" thus, transracial adoptions were rarely supported (Howard and Altstein 1). Subscribing to the idea that parents would be better able to "identify with a child who resembles them," adoption agencies in the past have tried to match children with adoptive parents who were as similar to them as possible—physically, emotionally and culturally (Howard and Altstein 2). When transracial adoption began increasing in the 1960s-1970s, it was vehemently opposed by some—the National Association of Black Social Workers at its 1972 conference went so far as to claim that "Black children in white homes are cut off from the healthy development of themselves as Black people" (Howard and Altstein 14). While this claim may sound extreme, it was not an uncommon belief that being adopted by parents of a different race would be harmful for the child. One of the strongest arguments against transracial adoption was that "white families, no matter how liberal or well intended, cannot teach a Black child how to survive in an essentially racist society" (Howard and Altstein 16). International adoptees, though defined by being of a different nationality, are also often of a different race from their parents. The fact that parents of international adoptees find it difficult to relate to the racial experiences of their children is made clear in *Wo Ai Ni Mommy*, where in a discussion with Dr. Amanda Baden, a transracial adoption psychologist, Faith's father makes the remarkable suggestion that "maybe (Faith) sees herself as white when she looks in the mirror." Baden clearly disagrees, but offers the claim that "many white parents don't have a real history about talking about race" as an explanation for his lack of empathy. Yet this acknowledgement does not discount the reality that because many parents of transracial and international adoptees are unable to fully empathize with the experiences of their children, children feel alone as they navigate issues of racial identity.

Though in the post-Civil Rights era race is no longer explicitly regarded as an indicator of one's worth, it remains a universal experience that how we look affects how we view ourselves. For international adoptees, physical differences, often obvious to the eye, play out in adoptees' lives as well. In the film *Somewhere Between*, Haley Butler's mother admits that before Haley turned four, she had already begun to realize that she looked different from her family and expressed her wishes to have "blond hair and blue eyes" like her older sister. At fourteen, Haley is able to joke with Knowlton that she is "a banana, yellow on the outside but white on the inside." Yet her looks do continue to affect her. A later scene at her school depicts her friends teasing her and asking if she was a Chinese orphan, following which she comments (albeit lightheartedly) that "at times like this, I wish I was white." For Sara Nordin, a Swedish adoptee born in Ethiopia, the incongruence between her external appearance and her official citizenship complicates her sense of self. We perceive this tension clearly when she says, "I have tried to absorb the 'black' but then I have difficulty holding onto the Swedish. I have tried to absorb the 'Swedish' but then I haven't understood what I see in the mirror" (Yngvesson 35). Nordin also shares that growing up, she felt torn between identifying with her Swedish friends and with her immigrant friends, and that made her unable to "decide [herself] where [she] belonged" (Yngvesson 130). The experiences of Butler and Nordin are

powerful indicators that one's identity is inextricably tied to one's appearance. Though Faith herself does not comment on her racial identity in *Wo Ai Ni Mommy*, her parents' concern in helping her understand her race (made clear in their discussion with Dr. Baden) is reflective that it is a prevailing issue for her. International adoptees, whose closest family and friends often look vastly different from them, often question this aspect of their identity.

Apart from the present experience of looking different from their parents and peers, international adoptees' uncertainties about their past also greatly impact their views of themselves. The idea that they were once given up by their birth parents is one that haunts many adoptees throughout their lives. Responding to a question on coping with the word "abandon" during a conference on adoption, Jenna Cook in the film *Somewhere Between* tears up as she admits that "even though 99% of me believes that I was really placed, I think somehow I can't get rid of that one percent... I can't get rid of that small thought that maybe I was abandoned." She shares that it is this persisting idea of abandonment that has influenced her perfectionist personality; that the idea of not being "good enough" drives her to "search for way[s] to compensate" by striving for excellence in what she does. At the same time, the knowledge that they could be leading drastically different lives makes some adoptees feel disconnected from their adoptive families. In the film *Wo Ai Ni Mommy*, Faith's question to her parents "Why would you want a Chinese girl for a daughter?" similarly hints at an understanding that while she was chosen by her parents, she could just as well have not been chosen. In this question we catch a glimpse of Faith's uncertainty of whether she truly belongs in her new home. Because in adoption parents have a choice over the children they adopt, and this choice is seemingly arbitrary, children may at times question whether they really belong in their new home. Feeling rejected by their biological families and yet still an outsider in their adoptive families, adopted children find it difficult to identify a place and community where they truly belong.

Ambiguity about their origins is another thought, one step further into their pasts, that complicates many adoptees' sense of belonging and identity. It is a widely accepted belief that "descent creates solidarity;" we see this in the fact that words like "roots," "blood," and "home" are closely associated with one's identity (Legrand 247). In her research about genealogy, anthropologist Caroline Legrand found that adoptees in particular spoke of genealogical research as a "search for origins," and regarded the process as a "seeking [of] their identity" (Legrand 246). Haley Butler in the film *Somewhere Between* is one example of an adoptee determined to find her origins. Her claim to her friend Ann that "I'll be looking for my birth parents until I'm grey and wrinkly" translated to action in the film as Haley went back to her province, did DNA testing, and eventually reunited with her birth family. Recounting the experience, Haley shares that this new knowledge of her family is comforting, and that receiving a Chinese name from her birth parents "meant a lot" to her. Undoubtedly, not all searches for birth families and communities will end in success – for many adoptees who have little information about their birth places, the chances of ever finding their birth parents are very slim; among those who reunite with their birth families, some adoptees regret doing so for these new relationships burden them. Yet I believe that the act of searching in itself, and even the prior longing to know where they come from, stem from a sense of incompleteness about their sense of identity. This uncertainty about their past is a major influence that confounds many international adoptees' perceptions of themselves.

Not everyone agrees that international adoptees regularly grapple with questions about their identity. Anthropologist Signe Howell, in his work with Norwegian adoptees, found that most of them were indifferent to finding out about their origins, and were content with the "place in their adoptive parents' family trees" (Howell 262). At least in Norway, he asserts that adoptees who regard their genealogy as an important part of their identity are but "a vocal minority," and he quotes an adoptee who says that "Personally, I am not interested in biological roots" to reflect this point (Howell 258, 260). In a strong statement, Howell suggests that adoptees who concede to the

notions that “blood is thicker than water” and that kin must be “of the same flesh and blood” “render themselves deeply unhappy” (Howell 258, 267). He proposes instead that international adoptees are “de-kinned and re-kinned when they were abandoned and adopted”—by this he means that the abandoned child, “stripped of biological kinned relatedness,” is “socially naked” and is later “socially and emotionally kinned by their new parents and family in their new country” (Howell 264). In Howell’s view, international adoptees’ struggles to find their identity are perpetuated by the myth that blood relations determine one’s identity, and can be overcome by defining oneself by one’s sociality, instead of biology.

While Howell’s assertion that the link between blood ties and personal identity is a mere construct may contain some truth, it does not deny the tangible impact that holding on to this idea entails. Howell concedes that “Americans seem to be more preoccupied with their roots than Norwegians,” possibly because as a nation of immigrants, “Americans are generally more aware of their racial-ethnic identity” (Howell 259). Yet this distinction between the experiences of international adoptees in different receiving countries indicates that while his theory of “de-kinning” and “re-kinning” may sound plausible, in practice it does not easily extend to all international adoptees. The belief that “blood is thicker than water” is one that is deeply ingrained into society, and it undoubtedly affects many international adoptees’ opinions about where they belong and who they are. In particular, as Faith grows up in America, where race and background are seen as a big part of one’s identity, she will likely regard her past as an important part of who she is. Though I agree with Howell that biology alone does not define one’s identity, I believe that totally neglecting it—as he proposes adoptees should—is something that not many can do. Notwithstanding the fact that each adoptees’ experience differs, and that some may easily find belonging in their adoptive homes and families, I believe that there are nonetheless a large proportion of international adoptees who, at some level, struggle with defining themselves, Faith included. Though her words when she was nine may have indicated otherwise, I believe that as she grows to understand the complexities of identity and belonging, she will face challenges in defining her personal identity.

From the outset, lawmakers have recognized that “adoption does not make the adopted child of the blood of its adopter, nor of the blood of his ancestors” (Yngvesson 22). Although international adoption is sometimes presented and perceived as a simple process of the adopted child integrating into his or her new family, I believe that many international adoptees face complex struggles in figuring out their self-identity. The search for one’s identity is a personal journey but is also a universal experience; at some point of time all of us grapple with the question “Who am I?” For international adoptees, answering this question can take a lifetime to answer and can cause much grief and distress. Granted that each adoptees’ experience is unique and that one cannot make a blanket generalization of the challenges that they face, this essay presents a glimpse of certain struggles common to many adoptees. With a greater understanding of some of these challenges, it is time for researchers and policymakers to explore how they may better equip parents and teachers to support international adoptees as they journey to define and develop themselves.

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FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

What strikes me most about Jeffrey Wu’s wonderful essay “The Greater Good: Analyzing the Morality of *Watchmen*” is its deft handling of sources. This essay—the capstone for our WR 150 course, “Monsters”—originally began as a proposal with a very different topic: Jeffrey wanted to write about Zach Snyder’s film adaptation of Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons’ graphic novel. As he researched the critical conversation around *Watchmen*, though, he encountered a problem: there is an almost overwhelming amount of scholarly writing about the novel, and little to none about Snyder’s film. At the same time, Jeffrey discovered a pattern in that criticism that he decided to investigate further: critics were writing their essays about only one character in *Watchmen*, or setting them in parallel rather than analyzing them together. If they could not see how the characters form different pieces in a single puzzle, they could not see the puzzle as a whole; their conclusions about the book were partial at best. This observation became the kernel of the final essay.

Throughout the essay, Jeffrey demonstrates a deep familiarity with his exhibit source as well as with the critical conversation around it. Unlike many students who write about graphic fiction, Jeffrey attends to the art of *Watchmen* in addition to its written text; this is especially impressive in his exploration of the book’s watch motif. His startling insight that the countdown clock to the next catastrophe has been visually restarted at the end of the novel leads to his brilliant conclusion: by leaving *Watchmen*’s ending unresolved and its moral universe undetermined, Moore and Gibbons want to encourage readers to develop their own moral stances—and perhaps to avoid the next catastrophe in our own world.

Marie McDonough
WR 150: Monsters

FROM THE WRITER

At the start of the semester, a friend of mine saw that I had bought a copy of *Watchmen* and immediately pointed it out as the best graphic novel that he had ever read. Now I can say the same. After reading the comic book and discussing it in class, I really wanted to write a paper addressing the idea of morality throughout *Watchmen* and examine the messages that Alan Moore was trying to convey through the graphic novel. “The Greater Good: Analyzing Morality in *Watchmen*” examines various unique views and analyses of *Watchmen* while contributing a different take on the revolutionary comic book.

JEFFREY WU is a rising sophomore in BU’s College of Arts and Sciences, double majoring in Computer Science and Statistics. He has lived all over the Washington metropolitan area and currently resides in Oakton, Virginia. He would like to thank Professor McDonough for her counsel and insight as well as his friends and peers for their constructive criticism.

THE GREATER GOOD: ANALYZING MORALITY IN WATCHMEN

In 1986, Alan Moore's revolutionary graphic novel, *Watchmen*, redefined the superhero genre and pushed the bounds of what is considered great literature. At the center of its plot sits the classic heroic notion of the greater good, the sacrifice of the few for the many. Set in an alternate version of the 1980s, *Watchmen* follows several heroes as they uncover their comrade Ozymandias's plan to unite the world by sacrificing millions of innocent lives and blaming it on a fake alien invasion. However, when they discover his plot, it has already been carried out and he is able to convince all but one of them, Rorschach, not to reveal the truth to the world. Throughout its story, *Watchmen* presents several takes on the morality of murder, the ultimate judgment of death, and its implications in the grand scheme of the world. However, no verdict is passed on the world's fate. Rorschach's journal, containing an account of events leading up to the mass slaughter, is left in the hands of a young, unkempt newspaper assistant. Most current analyses of the graphic novel disregard the collective ideals represented in *Watchmen*, choosing instead to focus on a single outlook that allies with their own ideologies. While it is important to recognize the different ideas and perspectives represented through the graphic novel, the ramifications of the work as a whole cannot be ignored. By understanding and piecing together the unique positions collected in *Watchmen*, taking into account the recurring motifs and symbols as well, a completely new perspective is born: there is no moral justification for killing, only the justifications that individuals place upon it.

Unlike other classic comic books, *Watchmen* does not have a clear protagonist or antagonist. The characters are eerily human for the genre, struggling through life's various moral and personal obstacles including bullying, child abuse, and adultery. Most do not have any sort of superpowers. What sets them apart is their morality, their minds: each feels a deep need to be a hero and that is what ultimately pushes him or her to become one. S. Evan Kreider takes a look at the moralities of these characters in his article "Who Watches the Watchmen?" In it he explores the characterizations of Rorschach, Manhattan, and Ozymandias, three "superheroes," and how they would handle the fundamental question: "Is it ever morally acceptable to sacrifice the interests of a few for the greater good of the many?" (97) After detailing the various philosophical and moral ideals each character represents, Kreider concludes that *Watchmen* does not offer a "correct" answer to the question of whether millions of lives should be sacrificed to save billions through its characters. However, if he were to choose a "true hero of the piece, it may be Dr. Manhattan" due to the moral middle ground that he represents and his final actions in preserving peace by preventing Rorschach from revealing the truth to the world (Kreider). Yet, this statement raises more questions: If Manhattan is the true hero, why does he allow so much senseless violence to occur and why does he ultimately desert humankind for another universe? Kreider's technique of looking at the story in parts, solely focusing on single characters' journeys throughout the course of the graphic novel, makes it impossible to see *Watchmen's* true themes. Instead, by taking into account all that *Watchmen* has to offer, its unique characters, recurring symbols, and powerful imagery, a new theme within the graphic novel is revealed.

The true sense of morality in *Watchmen* lies in its lack of a "true hero," of a "right and wrong," of a "correct" answer. The world the Watchmen inhabit is dark, gloomy, and above all, vicious.

Around every corner, behind every door, violence lurks. The art throughout the comics is graphic, and the colors are dreary, with menacing black and blood red used wherever possible. In a single word, *Watchmen* is gothic. In his article, “‘Nothing ever ends’: facing the apocalypse in *Watchmen*,” Christian W. Schneider looks at how Moore uses gothic elements and traits to enhance the story telling in *Watchmen*. Schneider argues that the extensive use of dark and blood red colors, vivid crimes, and violent scenes provides a gothic atmosphere, showing that *Watchmen*’s world is “bleak, with its glaringly negative sides exposed... ultimately, it is not worth saving” (Schneider 89). With a world so gloomy and the air so ominous, lines become blurred. Criminals are not the only ones killing; the murders committed by the heroes, who are supposed to prevent crime, may be even crueler.

Rorschach, a main character in the comic book, embraces this surrounding cruelty in every moment of every day. He sees all the evil around him and has made it his life’s purpose to extinguish it from the world at any cost. The progeny of an abusive prostitute, his psychopathic personality is the focus of an entire chapter. Thus, when it is revealed that he witnessed his mother at work, readers may understand why he sees the world as “stand[ing] on the brink, staring down into bloody hell” (Moore 1). Schneider expands on Rorschach’s views, deciding that the world drives “Rorschach over the brink, into insanity and extreme nihilism” (89). However, Rorschach is not without morals. He has an idea of right and wrong; it is just not the same idea of right and wrong as everybody else. After fighting crime while abiding by the law for some time, he decides that he was “soft on scum. Too young to know any better. Molly-coddled them. Let them live” (Moore 192). After this revelation, Rorschach attacks without restraint those he perceives as evil, going as far as chaining a man to a water pipe, handing him a hacksaw, lighting his house on fire, and harshly telling him, “Shouldn’t bother trying to saw through handcuffs ... Never make it in time” (Moore 203). He takes an uncompromising approach to fighting crime, punishing all no matter the severity of the offense. However, what makes him truly terrifying is that he is the judge, jury, and executioner of his own morality. He wholly relies on his own judgment to determine who lives and who dies.

Although this seems like a rather unique point of view, ultimately demonstrated when he is the only one who rebels against Ozymandias’s plan, the source of his ideology is not uncommon. In the numerous glimpses into Rorschach’s mind and judgment, one thing is clear: Life is inherently meaningless and there is no greater purpose beyond the principles individuals impart to it. In his own words, “Existence is random, Has no pattern save what we imagine after staring at it too long. No meaning save what we choose to impose” (Moore 201). Rorschach sees the world as a blank slate, without an inherent set of moral standards, just the set of morals each individual places upon themselves. This theme is common throughout the narrative: each character has their own view on their role in the “picture of empty meaningless blackness,” one that serves their own interests (Moore 206). In Rorschach’s case, he fills his slate with the anguish of his past, the bullying and torment of his childhood. His existence is for the sole purpose of punishing the guilty in ways he sees fit, discarding the laws that society has already put in place in favor of his own distinct moral code.

Still, it’s possible to read even further into Rorschach’s mind, the reasons behind his intense need to serve his brand of justice to any criminal he comes across. The narration in the comic book switches between several characters. It begins with Rorschach’s consciousness, expressed through his personal journal, as he documents his investigation into the death of a fellow hero, the Comedian, who was killed after he discovered Ozymandias’s plan. Rorschach’s short, concise train of thought, hardly legible and without pronouns, provides deep insight into the true motives behind his actions. As the comic moves through the Comedian’s brutal thrashing, he writes: “The future is bearing down like an express train” (Moore 68). Yet, what’s most striking about the scene is not the text, but the scene unfolding in the background. Along with the foreboding words is a map of the United

States burning up in flames, as if to say that even greatest country in the world cannot escape its eventual destruction. So as the world is saved from impending doom, Rorschach sticks to his ideals, to “never compromise” and deliver justice to Ozymandias even if doing so would return the world to chaos. He chooses to die before giving up what he believes. Rorschach has turned the meaningless blackness that he was given, his blank moral slate, into the only thing that means anything.

No character showcases this idea of meaninglessness more than Dr. Manhattan, the only hero in *Watchmen* with superpowers. Born of a nuclear accident, Manhattan exhibits a variety of abilities, from replication to telekinesis to disintegration. He is essentially a god, save a single debilitating flaw, his indeterminate moral compass. Despite having the capability of changing the world for the better with a single thought, he works mindlessly for the U.S. government as its plaything, doing its bidding without purpose. His reasoning? “We’re all puppets ... I’m just a puppet who can see the strings” (Moore 285). Manhattan pushes the idea of fate being set in stone. Since he experiences the past, present, and future all at the same time, he cannot see the world as anything except immutable, unyielding to any outside forces. In an essay describing the characters’ relationships to the political sphere and the various political messages in *Watchmen*, Michael J. Prince concludes that Manhattan’s “knowledge and perspective disqualify the possibility of individual agency categorically” (Prince 821). Similarly, Schneider calls Manhattan *Watchmen*’s “most ineffectual character” (90). Manhattan is given godlike power but, at the same time, sees himself as powerless against the flow of time. As a result, Manhattan, much like Rorschach, sees life as a morally blank slate.

However, where they differ is their views of this blank ethical slate. Comic book analyst Bryan D. Dietrich examines the many motifs throughout *Watchmen* and their roles in how readers interpret the graphic novel and its characters. In his essay, “The Human Stain: Chaos and the Rage for Order in *Watchmen*,” he notes that Manhattan “cannot see a self, because he is all selves and all truths, all possibility and all reason, he too acts on what must be... a singular (if infinite) vision of right and wrong” (Dietrich 122). That is to say, Manhattan does not make moral decisions based simply on an uncompromising set of guidelines like Rorschach. There is no one rule in his mind that dictates when killing is justified and when it is not. This is shown throughout the story when he does not stop countless murders, something he is very capable of doing, yet he kills off a fellow hero, Rorschach, in order to stop exactly that, the countless murders that would ensue if the world returned to its former tumultuous state. While Rorschach is single-minded in pursuing his form of justice, Manhattan sees a more complicated world, without a fixed right and wrong, where a single decision can ripple far beyond current circumstances.

Nevertheless, even though he does not have a singular idea of morality, he is not, as Schneider puts, a nihilist who views life as meaningless; rather, he just does not conceive of a fixed right or wrong. He knows what the future holds, so there is no moral deterrent from killing. Since all possible choices are ultimately trivial, Manhattan’s “views rest on a deontological principle concerning the value of human life” (Kreider 107). More plainly, Manhattan acts upon an obligation to preserve human life. Instead of making moral decisions based on a right or wrong, he weighs his options according to whether the outcome of the event is important or trivial, ignoring simple homicides while keeping the world from nuclear apocalypse. He takes into account all the information he has, all the potential outcomes, “all selves and all truths, all possibility and all reason” (Dietrich 122), and makes a decision based on the gravity of the situation. The numerous instances where he does not prevent what society would deem a crime can be justified by these crimes having no overall effect on the survival of humanity. They will not change the course of the human race, so Manhattan does not care about them.

Again, as with Rorschach, Manhattan's morality is informed by a distinct view of the world that only he can see. His unique perspective that bears the burden of countless deaths is based on the fundamental premise that the future is circular and unchangeable. However, this is not just Manhattan's view. Moore also displays the concept of time as an inflexible construct. When the story begins, the art opens to a peculiar image of a blood splattered smiley face lying on the sidewalk. Although it may not hold any significance at the moment, as with all reappearing imagery in the revolutionary comic book, it is there for a reason. The blood splatter on the face bears a striking resemblance to an arrow, one that appears on the cover page of Chapter 1 pointing to 12 minutes before midnight. As representing the 12 chapters of the book before Ozymandias's plan comes to fruition. However, as the clock strikes midnight and humanity is seemingly saved from the nuclear apocalypse, the smiley face reappears in the last panels of the comic, once again stained with an arrow pointing to 12 until midnight, counting down to the next catastrophic disaster. Moore displays the future as relentless and recursive. What is destined to happen will happen: the only variable is when.

By displaying the future as immutable, along with the endlessly violent and gloomy backdrop in which the story takes place, Moore emphasizes the single variable: the distinct morals of the unique characters. In particular, for Rorschach and Manhattan, Moore displays that "for [Rorschach] law is definable, for [Manhattan], infinitely recursive and indeterminate" (Dietrich 122). Rorschach and Manhattan essentially see the world in similar ways, even though they seem diametrically opposed: for Rorschach, a "meaningless blackness", and for Manhattan, "the darkness of mere being" (Moore 281). Despite this, Manhattan decides to base his morals on preserving human life, which always seems to find a way to reset itself after great tragedy or a period of peace. Since he also sees that time is fixed and enduring, he determines that the laws society enacts to protect life are both necessary in the short term and useless in the long term.

Similarly, Adrian Veidt, or Ozymandias, holds a consequentialist view of morality, basing his actions solely on their final results, choosing to ignore short-term harm in service of long-term benefit. Albeit he has taken it to the extreme in his decision to kill millions of New Yorkers and blame it on aliens in order to bring about world peace. Ozymandias provides the epitome of the idea that "right and wrong are determined by the consequences of our actions" (Kreider 102). Moore thus seems to provide three distinct views of morality to show the extremes of all variations. Ozymandias represents the epitome of long-term, consequentialist thought, Rorschach, the simple self-righteous mentality, while Manhattan displays deontological ethics, basing his judgment on what is better, worse, or insignificant for humanity. Of all these characters, Ozymandias displays the most desire to make a difference, acknowledging his horrific actions: "I know I've struggled across the back of murdered innocents to save humanity... but someone had to take the weight of that awful, necessary crime" (Moore 409).

However, despite how it may seem like his morality is based on the good of others, it is ultimately derived from a selfish need for fulfillment, a need to feel like he is making a difference. As Prince puts it, Ozymandias is "tainted by a lack of compassion, and an ends-justify-the-means mentality" (826). In her essay "Radical Coterie and the Idea of Sole Survival in *St. Leon*, *Frankenstein* and *Watchmen*," Claire Sheridan compares how the need to survive factors into the motivations of the main characters in the aforementioned books. Her exploration provides an interesting insight into the mind of Ozymandias. According to Sheridan, in order to feel like he is making a difference, "Veidt interprets those who might challenge his belief system in a productive way as threats to his sovereignty" (Sheridan 189). As the "smartest man in the world," Ozymandias cannot see himself doing any wrong. This is appropriate when considering his namesakes: Ramses II, whose Greek name was Ozymandias, and Alexander the Great. Though they built great kingdoms, their

impressive empires were no exception to the ravages of time. By naming his main protagonist as he does, Moore hints that Ozymandias's utopia will be no different.

Additionally, Moore seems to use Ozymandias as a foil for Rorschach, a point of comparison to highlight the distinguishing features of both characters. While Ozymandias is wealthy, powerful, and handsome, Rorschach is filthy, despised, and unattractive. Ozymandias focuses only on the consequences of his actions, an ideal displayed in his monologue describing his ultimate goal of building a "unity that would survive him" (Moore 358). His ideology obviously contradicts Rorschach's self-focused, shortsighted moral absolutism of extinguishing evil. Still, in the end, even Ozymandias, with the purest of intentions, is only doing "good" for himself, for his own self-importance, deciding that he will do whatever it takes to feel like he is making a difference, even at the cost of millions of lives. Ozymandias struggles to justify his actions, even to himself, and is left wondering how long his newly created peace will last, with Dr. Manhattan cryptically telling him "Nothing ends, Adrian. Nothing ever ends" (Moore 409).

Yet, somehow, that is the beauty of the story: that nothing is certain, that each individual's morality is of his or her own making. No matter what the circumstances are, they can always change, hopefully for the better. More importantly, *Watchmen* exhibits the best part of being human: our ability to choose our own ideas for right and wrong and act upon them. Despite being deemed superheroes, the characters in *Watchmen*, including Dr. Manhattan, are all fundamentally human. As Schneider puts, in their capacity to change the world "they are in no better position than the rest of humanity, neither on a moral nor on an authoritative level" (90). Perhaps the point is not that superheroes can be human, but that humans can be superheroes. Moore suggests that because of our ability to choose our own ethics, our own limitations and the fate of the world are ultimately in our hands, which aligns perfectly with *Watchmen's* enigmatic ending.

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FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

The final assignment for WR 100 “Poetry Now” asks students to write a book review that puts two or more books of contemporary poetry into conversation. Because we are reading newly published books from independent presses, our framework for considering such books is often minimal: an interview with the author, a review or two, and our own discussions during class.

In her review of *Silent Anatomies* and *Tributary*, Vanlizza makes compelling connections between two very different books without forcing them. She demonstrates that she can read visual poems and make sense of complex forms, never losing sight of the larger issue—how the authors speak for and complicate our notions of specific marginalized communities. Perhaps what is most exciting about Vanlizza’s essay is that it constitutes the first published piece on *Tributary*. A BU undergraduate has started the academic conversation about an important book by an LGBTQ writer.

Jessica Bozek
WR 100: Poetry Now

FROM THE WRITER

In this final engagement with *Silent Anatomies* and *Tributary*, I strove to define the silver linings between privilege and limitation in cultures that implicitly bar the freedoms of minority groups. I was initially intrigued by the bodily experiences of the complex speakers presented in both debut poetry books—how each individual oppression not only led to personal insecurity and devaluation, but also echoed a larger struggle felt by all minority communities. During the drafting process of this engagement, I explored the points of intersection between external experience and internal damage and how culture can play a role in normalizing minority circumstances. By the end, I hoped to not only define the reality of and flaws within certain oppressive systems, but also call attention to the importance of listening to and understanding the things that are often left unsaid.

VANLIZZA CHAU is a rising sophomore in Boston University's Questrom School of Business. A California native, raised in sunny San Diego, she moved to Boston to begin exploring her love for writing and business. She would like to thank her professor—Jessica Bozek—for pushing the limits of her writing capabilities and teaching her to write with clarity and influence. Additionally, she would like to thank and dedicate this piece to her family who has unconditionally supported her through every milestone; to them, she owes the world.

VANLIZZA CHAU

THE EXCAVATION OF MIND, BODY, AND CULTURE: A FINAL ENGAGEMENT WITH TRIBUTARY AND SILENT ANATOMIES

Silent Anatomies

Monica Ong

Kore Press, \$19.95 (paperback)

Tributary

Kevin McLellan

Barrow Street Press, \$16.95 (paperback)

We find our largest source of discomfort and doubt in the machines that give us our truest identity: our bodies. As a result, our skin becomes a sealed envelope with the question: Is it wrong to be the person that I am? Wrong to love, speak, and walk without the fear of being misinterpreted or diminished? As humans, we have the natural rights to life, liberty, and property, yet minority groups and individuals are still being stripped of their ability to live full lives with the freedom to be who they are and to claim their identities without shame. Essentially, this discrimination stems from inherited conservative ideals that helped to write our nation's blueprint into the Declaration of Independence. Thus, between the lines of "natural rights," "liberties," and "freedom," many communities, including women, gay people, and people of color, were quietly excluded in the equation. Two debut poetry books, Kevin McLellan's *Tributary* and Monica Ong's *Silent Anatomies*, address the destructive stratifications and ongoing social inequalities that are embedded within certain traditions and cultures. McLellan and Ong both experiment with form and the figurative excavation of self and body in order to unveil the realities of being a minority. *Tributary* pays tribute to the voices of the LGBT community that would otherwise be muted by the echo of conservative ideals that have been passed on for generations. In contrast, *Silent Anatomies* articulates for the inarticulate by mapping the prevailing traditionalism of East Asian culture and its lasting mark on its people.



In *Tributary*, McLellan grapples with individual insecurity and the insecurity of the entire gay community by establishing a direct tone and control over figurative language. The reader—from the beginning—is immediately immersed in the speaker's search for stability: "It was not that long ago / that I reached me. From where / I speak now, not exactly / whole" (5). The directness in which the speaker confronts his incomplete identity sets the candid tone for the rest of the book. Consequently, both the reader and speaker embark on a journey to translate "the foreign shapes inside [the speaker's] blood" (7). As the book progresses, the speaker begins to define not only himself, but also the silver linings that separate certain privileges and restrictions that come from being a gay individual in society. In "The Weight of Second Person," the speaker calls attention to the threatening routine which people easily fall victim to: "the everyday of: step, stepping, stepped" (10). This routine translates to a bigger picture; just as every individual finds comfort in a daily

schedule, minority communities also easily fall into the shadows of dominating social groups that continue to dictate policy and perpetuate inequality, as the speaker states at the end of the poem: “I am sorry for us” (10). His faint apology not only addresses the gay community as a whole but also displays a small moment of self-pity.

Although the gay community has gained incredible visibility in the past decade, it is still a semi-loose collective of thoughts, bodies, and voices that seem to be “scattered in the night sky” (14). Finding the binding force that will empower such a large group begins with finding power within and accepting imperfection: “I can’t escape this / my body is a trench. / To fall in. To climb out of” (73). Essentially, the speaker must overcome his own self-doubt and find his voice before he can contribute to one louder than his. It is with this realization of inevitability that the speaker reaches resolution: “regret doesn’t exist here” (7). When the speaker recognizes his place in “this world of unidentifiables” (56) he bravely confronts his present insecurities and his past experiences in efforts to find closure in “Of Bones” (27):

(You stopped placing me
I question that which
Has always within been
Within
Atop your shoulders.)
(How can I trust
versus what is also
within? When restraint
receives a signal—
the signal—to fully surrender
what I know?)

McLellan gracefully plays with form to visually elongate the distance between present and past and how experiences from both periods of time intersect to define the person he is today. The manipulation of form is prevalent towards the end of the book where each poem after “Scattershot” becomes narrower and more minimal, ending with “Exordium” (77):

ending
becomes

last and last

becomes
salt

This simple ending imitates the crystallization of the speaker’s identity and the moment in which he finally comes to terms with the definition he creates for himself.



As McLellan made form an integral part in illustrating the journey towards self-realization, Ong similarly employs creative visual diagrams and graphics that take form to a whole new level. However, while McLellan’s motive is to pay a sincere tribute to the gay communities that are often misunderstood, Ong uses *Silent Anatomies* to criticize the negative language that surrounds women in East Asian culture. Ong underlines the goal of her collection by opening up her book with a quote

from Susan Howe: “I wish I could tenderly list from the dark side of history, voices that are anonymous, slighted—inarticulate” (2).

In *Silent Anatomies*, Ong adds satirical spice to her visual criticisms about the overpowering patriarchy in East Asian tradition. Although Ong reserves appreciation for many aspects of Asian ideology, she focuses on spotlighting the flaws within that subjugate and diminish women. In “Onset,” the series of medicine bottles serve as a satirical criticism of actual potions that impregnated mothers commonly relied on to fix the “shortage of sons” and “guarantee the protection from bearing daughters” (27) in East Asian Countries. The faces and certain body parts of the people on the medicine bottles are purposefully removed in order to emphasize an erasure and loss of identity:



The bottles pictured above and many more, such as “Perfect Baby Formula” or “Yeong Mae’s Oral Whitening Rinse,” collectively overwhelm the reader with an array of magical potions and unrealistic hopes. Effectively, the bottles’ labels call into question how ridiculously people handle such important privileges like having a child—allowing themselves to be easily tricked into taking medicines in order to prevent the “terror of asymmetry” in their offspring (27).

The angst beneath the speaker’s critique stems from personal experience. In the second poem, “Bo Suerte,” the speaker introduces a vintage family portrait in which her mother is disguised as a boy. The answer as to why lies in her mother’s explanations: “Grandfather was ashamed. / He didn’t want people shaking their heads” (5). From a young age, the speaker was already exposed to sentiments that imposed a negative connotation on being a girl: “the fact of five daughters was the immutable kind” (5). Like many other Chinese families, the speaker’s mother’s experience is

something that is commonly believed to be a form of “payback” for an “unsavory ancestor in an imperial court” (5).

Ong weaves in strands of Asian superstition into her poems (“unsavory ancestor,” “Imperial court”) in order to implicitly emphasize the sometimes gullible nature of her people. Explicitly, East Asian ideologies rely heavily on old legends, superstitions, and proverbs which make their followers vulnerable to the deception of corrupt fortune tellers and medicinal doctors. Although it seems outlandish, people from East Asian countries did purchase pills like “Perfect Baby Formula” that promised “fetal masculinization” and ensured “superior academic performance” in newborns (28). Additionally, many people that fell for these fake potions and empty promises came from rural backgrounds that couldn’t afford raising daughters that wouldn’t be able to take on the family business. As a result, many people put faith in statistics and numbers that influenced whether someone chose to get an abortion or not: “the way numbers wet us with the illusion of control” (15). In “Catching a Wave,” Ong arbitrarily enters percentages on a copy of an ultrasound to highlight the deceptive nature of data and how easily numbers can be manipulated (17):

Accidents (%)
in pink plastic bags
19
on bare branches
38
fingerslipped
43

Ong’s artistic use of medical “dialect” and anatomical diagrams show how external experiences and tradition can tattoo the body with bruises of insecurity and weakness. In “Elegy,” Ong writes along an extended arm to illustrate a brief coming of age: “womanhood tore you” (37). The beginning of the arm traces to a time of liberation and liveliness: “music-spiral. night full of cars. we were girls” (37). As the poem nears the end of the hand and reaches the fingertips, lightheartedness is replaced by a “radio silent pulse” and the realization that all things come to an end: “the incompatibility of time and tumor” (37).

In “Catching a Wave,” Ong gives voice to all unborn baby girls: “she longs for a willful tide that could see her through an entire lifespan” (14). As for the women who were already born into such unfortunate social circumstances, Ong acknowledges them and the difficulty of speaking out against a tradition that other cultures may not fully understand: “If we knew all the floods that get trapped in the lungs” (45). For example, “on the Western shore,” individuals are encouraged to celebrate and embrace our bodies; however, in the East “this dialect was not designed for *her*” (45). The cervix and vagina are two of the most defining body parts owned by a female, yet there are no words for them in Kisoro. Rather, the area “*down there*” is simply referred to as a “dirty, shameful place” (45). To not only lack words to define the most crucial female body parts but also to regard them with shame are at the core of Ong’s frustration: “but what about *her* tongue?” the speaker asks (45). Ong leaves us with a simple question with a weighted interpretation. Essentially, we are all biologically similar—men and women both have hands, legs, and ears. So what about being a female makes our body parts less valuable?



Unlike *Silent Anatomies*, *Tributary* ends in a more resolute manner. The speaker finds warmth and a new beginning in the “morning light on his body” (McLellan 73). Although the speaker’s journey towards self-realization has crystallized into “salt,” a new beginning for him has emerged as

he takes off on a path with his newfound radiance (McLellan 77). On the other hand, Ong concludes *Silent Anatomies* with a soft layer of hope while still leaving the reader looking for a passage of liberation for the speaker and girls in East Asia. Both authors artistically play with form and figurative language to excavate culture and body. McLellan and Ong similarly develop complex speakers that endure social hardship and microaggressions in order to apply their stories to the gay and feminist minority groups that are not even given the chance to *be* heard. Both books end on bright and comforting notes but no resolution—no call to action. It is up to the reader to articulate the issues at play and choose to make the choice to enact change or stay caged in our metal lungs. Nonetheless, both authors brilliantly construct voices for minority groups—a silent tributary to the ones that need it most.

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FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

In her most recent book of poetry and lyric essays, *Citizen*, Claudia Rankine includes a number of “Scripts for Situations,” in memory of such people as Trayvon Martin and James Craig Anderson. Some of Rankine’s scripts serve as filmscripts, a point of origin for the short films made by her partner John Lucas. More generally, though, the scripts offer a set of imaginative instructions for approaching contemporary violations of human rights, for empathizing with victims of microaggressions, police brutality, and corrupt systems. Rankine asks us to put ourselves “in proximity to, adjacent to, alongside, within” (131) these victims and their experiences. That is exactly what Sarah Hirsch has done in her “Situation Script” for India Kager, an unarmed woman who was shot and killed by Virginia police in September, 2015.

Sarah was a student in WR 100 “Reading Disaster: #FergusonSyllabus,” which used creative texts as a lens onto contemporary racial injustice and violence. For Paper 2, Sarah opted to write a research-based Situation Script and Afterword that continued Rankine’s project. In her script, Sarah uses facts and found texts, while acknowledging the limitations of pure fact by making imaginative gestures and the more common tools of poetry (like imagery and repetition) relevant in conveying the emotional truth of Kager’s life and death. Proceeding from a gap in the national conversation (the sometimes-fatal consequences of invisibility for black women) and using texts the class read as models, Sarah creates a stunning elegy for someone who should not have died as she did.

Jessica Bozek
WR 100: Reading Disaster

FROM THE WRITER

I was walking home from a party, in the comfort of my white skin, when I learned of India Kager's murder. We went to the same high school and shared a common mentor, but I will never understand what it's like to walk in her combat boots. She served in the Navy and played four instruments and was the mother to a four-month-old baby boy. I will never forget the day that I received a text message from our mentor, informing me of her death, but the world will forget (if they even noticed) because there was no video documentation. Her murder only made local news and mostly not more than a headline. We walked through the same hallways, but I will never understand what it's like to walk in her skin. But I can imagine. "Caught in the crossfire" is my alternative genre paper for my WR 100 class, "Reading Disaster."

SARAH HIRSCH is a rising sophomore in Boston University's College of Fine Arts, studying theatre. She was born in the District of Columbia and raised in several places in the DMV area. Sarah cannot thank Professor Jessica Bozek enough for her guidance, encouragement, and wealth of knowledge.

SARAH HIRSCH

SITUATION SCRIPT: INDIA KAGER "CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE"

You wear a highly decorative uniform. In it, you are visible. Among the masses. In the front lines, you are seen. When you fight, when your arm muscles ripple like the men beside you, you are seen. You wave to the commanding officers, exhaustion making you forget. G'night. Excuse me? What did you say, soldier? Goodnight, sir. Watch your tongue. Your "aggression" makes you visible. Your eyes focus on a fly trying to escape as the commander devours you. Your breasts try to hide. The fly hits the glass, falling onto the windowsill. So close. Only when his belly swells, full, do your eyes leave the small black body.

Your feet are so numb they do not feel the itch of your wool socks. You walk back to your room and just sit on the bed. You wiggle your toes to make sure they are still there. You've had trouble sleeping. Tonight will be no different. How many bodies did you watch fall to the ground? Thank God you could not hear the sound they made. They will rot like fallen trees in far away forests. How many bodies make up the soil we walk on? You rub infinities into the left side of your temple. Nameless and far away. You think about the almost made-up college diploma. 365 multiplied by three. 1095 days. Now 1094. Your toes fade into the dust beneath your bed.

"caught in the crossfire"

These days and nights will bite at your ankles for years to come. This morning is no different. Fallen bodies wade in your oatmeal. You poke a chunk of banana. Your appetite and stomach are gone. You hum Duke Ellington to remember simpler days of blowing out music, the taste stuck in your cheeks.

Angelo comes into the kitchen and sits down. He takes your bowl and finishes your past.

"No one to talk with
All by myself
No one to walk with
But I'm happy on the shelf
Ain't misbehavin'
I'm savin' my love for you"

He talks and talks about something or other, your mind is focused on his fingers. They've parked themselves in the crook of your elbow. Warm and rough. Just like the man who owns them. You breathe him in. It's time to go, he says. You wish you could sit in this moment just a little longer. But baby is pulling you up. I got him, spills out of your mouth.

"caught in the crossfire"

You pick up your son from his white crib. Four months. Still so small. You are afraid that one of these days you will wrap him too tightly in your arms and break him. You are afraid that one day he will be broken. You are already thinking about what age you should teach him to walk, not run. On the playground, on his way home from school, on the way to the grocery store. Your lip quivers and disappears. Your teeth bite on air. One by one they fall out of your mouth. Fallen trees in a far away forest. When will he learn to talk? How will you teach him to speak?

“caught in the crossfire”

Your body is a bottle to be broken against the pavement. Intentional. But mostly pieces of a second thought. Try to pick up your pieces without getting cut. You try. Blood bubbles up on your finger tips. There has been so much blood in your life. You bleed for your country. Your ears pop and blow away with the wind.

“caught in the crossfire”

Today’s to do list:

Call mama, she’s worried about you

Buy diapers

Dry cleaning

Get guitar from baby brother’s house

Stop by 7-11 on the way home

Diet coke, orbit spearmint gum, peanut butter, ooh cheerios

Get home

What?

What officer? Your elbows unlock from the rest of your body. Angelo shoots at the policemen.

Your mind twists around itself, confused. Your knees buckle and leave you with your strength and understanding.

Run

Run.

Your legs are ripped off and pulled into the pavement. Your lungs cave in, crushing your spine into powder.

Get in the car

India! I said get in the car!

Where are you?

“caught in the crossfire”

The pain of losing yourself drains as you feel the open space embrace what is left of you. The rest is gone. You do not exist.

On September 5th, nameless baby boy lost his mother and father.

“Why didn’t they wait until she exited the car? That’s the question...If they were surveilling her, why didn’t they wait and just wait until the baby and India were safe, away from whatever they were planning to do?”

AFTERWORD

The visual dominating old runaway slave advertisements is the image of a black man with one leg up and bent, as if in motion. This criminalization of black mobility, specifically for black men, still rears its brutal head today. Both Jesmyn Ward and Claudia Rankine explore and dissect this criminalization of black male mobility in *Men We Reaped* and *Citizen*, each presenting different forms of emotional evidence. Ward focuses on narrative, utilizing imagination and speculation to create the moments before death that evoke empathy from the reader, for the five men taken from her. On the other hand, Rankine manipulates repetition, quotation and imagery to reveal the effect police brutality and microaggressions have on the body. With *Men We Reaped* and *Citizen* in mind, I used these methods to illustrate the way black women's bodies (India Kager's specifically) are rendered invisible and inconsequential by society (media and police), unless they are sexualized or masculinized.

In order to highlight India's invisibility, I needed to first make her visible by communicating her humanity. Making only local news, there are many unanswered questions about the shooting of India Kager and Angelo Perry, including Kager's life prior. Knowing only that she went to Duke Ellington School of the Arts for music and fought in the Navy, I chose to follow Ward's example and imagine a more precise past and what the morning before Kager was murdered was like, in order to elicit an emotional response from the reader. I wanted to cultivate a tangible humanity for the character of "you" (India). I did so by being specific: her memory and experience of war, recognizable exhaustion, and decision to leave a bowl of oatmeal unfinished. Even her moment with Angelo was loving but mundane. I wanted it to be understood that the police officers' act of brutal violence was indifferent, or perhaps personal by consciously deciding that her life was not worth anything. By giving "you" a daily life influenced by a past, the impact and urgency of this pervasive collective social understanding that black women either do not matter or do not exist increases.

One way I navigated these imagined and actual events was repetition. Several media sources reported India's murder as a result of her being "caught in the crossfire." The word "caught" implies that India's death was in the hands of fate, something beyond anyone's control. This word choice relieves the four white police officers of accountability. It diminishes the fact that the police officers either neglected to see India, her body invisible to them, or saw her and deemed her inconsequential, a casualty of war. The repetition of the word "bang" thirty times, mostly in succession, was intended to startle the reader and emphasize the excessive and aggressive nature of the police officers' response to the situation. The police officers did in fact shoot at Angelo Perry and India Kager thirty times in a row.

Another strategy I derived from *Citizen* is Rankine's incorporation of quotation into her situation scripts. She includes the words of family, witnesses, media, and police in order to cultivate a wider context for the various injustices she writes about. Her placement and juxtaposition of these quotations often adds another layer of meaning. Related to India Kager's death, Virginia Beach Police Chief Jim Cervera told the *Washington Post*, "Virginia Beach Police Department and our officers believe in the sanctity of life. We do everything we can to mitigate violent conflict." Cervera not only denied the use of excessive force but claimed, on behalf of the police department, the desire to protect and honor life. Placing this quotation in the midst of the chorus of "bang"s was intended to beg the questions: Whose life is deemed worth protecting? Why was India's life not considered? Why is she not seen, or not seen as a citizen whose existence should be acknowledged or valued? These questions I attempted to evoke also reflect the response of Kager's mother to the shooting. The two quotations I included in the situation script are both a series of questions. The

accumulation of questions is evidence of the notion that the condition of black life is not only one of mourning, as Rankine has argued, but also uncertainty. This condition of living is not only a result of the invisibility attributed to black (female) life, but also of the danger and vulnerability in the moments that black life is visible.

In class, we discussed Rankine's focus on the effects of microaggressions and blatant aggression on the black body, embodied by imagery of these physical reactions to being damaged: a headache or a sigh. I tackled physical imagery as well in my situation script, but took a slightly different approach inspired by bell hooks, who said, "No other group in America has so had their identity socialized out of existence as have black women... When black people are talked about the focus tends to be on black men; and when women are talked about the focus tends to be on white women." I explored this idea of a body being forced to disappear in my writing. Throughout the text, pieces of India, of the character "you," become part of the surrounding environment. Some body parts disappear more violently than others. For example, India's toes simply "fade" into dust, while her legs are "ripped off and pulled into the pavement." This variation represents the various faces making someone invisible can wear: a hurtful remark or a round of bullets. In the beginning of the script, there is an exchange between India and her commanding naval officer. In this moment her body (though not her personal humanity) is visible because of her perceived "aggression" and sexuality. The other black body in the room, the fly she stares at to avoid eye contact, is conducive to understanding the danger that India's own body is experiencing inside of her moment of visibility. The image of the fallen fly (and beer bottle) also represents the concept, reinforced by action, that black bodies are disposable and an afterthought. These images mirror the way India and her body were considered only after she and it were shot.

Without video documentation, it doesn't surprise me that most people don't know about India Kager. In this situation script, I wanted to not only employ the devices used by Jesmyn Ward and Claudia Rankine to demonstrate the ways in which black female bodies are in danger when seen and not seen, but also to give India's name a body and an individual history held within that body, though the details were of my own imagination. While America often deems black women inconsequential, I hope that the emotional weight of this script convinces readers that the life of this black woman, unknown to most, mattered.

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FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

"Case Studies in Fairy Tales" requires students to undertake a sophisticated, multimodal writing and research project that draws on both creative and academic skill sets. Students choose a classic fairy tale and research its origins, history, transformations through retellings, and context in popular culture. Then, they must write their own creative version of the tale inspired and informed by their newly acquired background knowledge, carefully analyze the place of that new version within the wider perspective, and finally create a case study website that showcases everything they've created and learned about the tale.

Helen Luo did exceptional work on every facet of this demanding project. Arguably, the shining centerpiece of her case study is *The Fallen Sakura*, her retelling of *The Ballad of Fa Mulan*, a stylish, carefully constructed, emotionally moving piece which showcases Helen's talent as a creative writer. That said, the retelling might never have come to exist in its final form had it not been for the time and care that Helen put into the research she pursued in the early stages of the project. What's more, the essay in which she contextualizes and analyzes *The Fallen Sakura* reveals not only the complex layers of the creative work, but also Helen's own metacognitive perceptiveness. She quotes and close reads her own words unselfconsciously, reflecting not only on all the things her retelling does so successfully, but even on moments when her authorial intention doesn't match up with the result. That takes insight!

Helen's work beautifully demonstrates what I want all my students to learn from this project: to retell a fairy tale is to make a kind of argument about it—and at the same time, to write an analytical paper is to tell a kind of story.

Amy Bennett-Zendzian
WR 150: Case Studies in Fairy Tales

FROM THE WRITER

When presented with the assignment to research a fairy tale and write our own retelling, I knew that I wanted to do a tale that had both Asian and American influence. The *Ballad of Fa Mulan* seemed to be the perfect choice, as many people are familiar with the Disney version of Mulan, and the classic ballad is often committed into the memory of Chinese elementary students. While my research and reading of other renditions of the tale brought me diverse insights about the story's origins and meanings, I began to see certain patterns emerge. There isn't really a villain, like in other fairytales; instead the story follows Mulan overcoming both the limitations set by her gender and the challenges of hiding her identity amongst her fellow comrades, emphasizing the sacrifice she made for both family and country. While retellings differed in cultural values and plot details, their conclusions were mostly the same.

I began to wonder: What had happened to her father? Her mother? Her siblings? How did her decision impact their lives? Could the tale have an unhappy ending? Thus, my retelling focuses on the perspective of Mulan's younger sister, and the idea that perhaps Mulan leaving wasn't the best for everyone. We all have a tendency to think our actions are in the best interest of both others and ourselves, but our assumptions about what is right can often lead to unexpected and traumatic results. My retelling hopes to highlight the fact that we can't really save everyone—that our actions have repercussions and that there's always another side to the story. Furthermore, in order to maintain a close relationship with the classic ballad version, I adapted and altered the format of the original ballad into my tale.

HELEN LUO is a member of the College of Communication's class of 2019, intending to major in Journalism and minor in Advertising. Hailing from Virginia and Beijing, Helen has always loved reading and writing—from documenting her travels in a journal to writing creatively. She would like to partially dedicate the publication of this paper and thank her wonderful writing professor Amy Bennett-Zendzian, who's given helpful advice during both the writing and researching process. Furthermore she would like to thank her parents, high school English teachers, and friends for all of their support.

HELEN LUO

Prize Essay Award

THE FALLEN SAKURA: A RETELLING OF THE *BALLAD OF FA MULAN*

A year has passed, the Orchids¹ have bloomed—the smell of Mulan is in the air. Yet Mulan is still not home. Mulan is still at war. I tend to the gardens, to the pigs and hens and horses. I tend to my ill-stricken father, my heart-broken mother, and my toddling brother. I weave the silken prints and bring them to the markets before dawn. I sigh, as I think of Mulan.

“Tsiek Tsiek and again Tsiek Tsiek”²

Mother weaves, facing the window. I don’t hear the shuttle’s sound; I only hear mother’s sighs. I ask who is on mother’s mind? Who is in mother’s heart? Mother says: “Mulan is on mother’s mind. Mulan is in mother’s heart.”³ Mulan, my eldest daughter—so lovely, so dependable—I still remember her laugh. Her reassuring smile and the twinkle in her eyes that seemed to say ‘mother, everything will be ok.’ I still see the shadows of Mulan in the house, in the courtyard, in the village. Mulan, the perfect daughter, who wove the most delicate and beautiful silk patterns, took care of Little Lee and you, young Mu-Ying, who took the darkest worries off my mind. But Oh! Last night, I heard the hooves of the horses riding out again. I saw the shadow of Mulan disappearing past the furthest mountain, heard the battle cry of the Huns, and saw blood drip from Mulan’s sleeve—just like the red in the weave.”

Three years have passed, the Orchids have bloomed—the smell of Mulan is in the air. Yet Mulan is still not home. Mulan is still at war. I tend to the gardens, to the pigs and hens and horses. I brew the healthy concoctions of herbs for father; I cook a hearty dinner on behalf of mother; I teach calligraphy and characters to brother.

Ouch.

The knife slashes against my fingertips, blood dripping onto the cutting board.

I sigh as I quickly bandage the wound; I sigh, as I think of Mulan.

“Qing Clang and again Qing Clang”

Father fights—or attempts to—wielding his already rusted sword, only to hunch over in a fit of coughs. Father is unwell, but he continues on in a hypnotic trance, the familiar footwork of the fighting routine embedded in his blood. He fought in the last big war, he said. Father was a general—and then illness and time took his health as a toll. I hear father’s coughs, his haggard

¹ Orchids are in reference to one character, lan, in Mulan’s name, and its meaning. Lan hua = Orchids.

² Taken from the lines of the original ballad.

³ I render the format of the original lines in the poem: “Mulan weaves, facing the door. You don’t hear the shuttle’s sound, You only hear Daughter’s sighs. They ask Daughter who’s in her heart, They ask Daughter who’s on her mind. ‘No one is on Daughter’s heart, No one is on Daughter’s mind.’”

breathing. I hear father's sighs. I ask who is on father's mind? Who is in father's heart? Father says: "Mulan is on father's mind. Mulan is in father's heart. Mulan, my eldest, loveliest daughter, who risked her life for mine—Oh dear daughter are you well? Last night, I heard, ten thousand miles away, the businesses of war. Last night I heard Mount Yen's nomad horses cry tsiu tsiu.⁴ Last night I saw Mulan, dressed in my own armor, fire in her eyes, only to watch her fall. I watched the fire disappear from her gaze as she fell limp, the screams of triumph and war mingling with the horrid smell of blood. I dreamt of Mulan, being hanged for treason. Last night I dreamt of Mulan in her red marriage gown, of her laughing in merriment as she held her child. Last night I dreamt of honor, dishonor, of life, and of death."

Five years have passed, the Orchids have bloomed—the smell of Mulan is in the air. Yet Mulan is still not home. Mulan is still at war. I tend to father, who is on the verge of death. I tend to mother, who can barely leave the bed. I tend to younger brother Lee, helping him with his studies, with his martial arts, and the struggles of life.

"Tsiek Tsiek and again Tsiek Tsiek"

I weave, facing the door. I don't hear the shuttle's sound. I hear my hefty sighs. I ask who is on my mind? Who is in my heart? I say: "Mulan is on my mind. Mulan is in Mu-Ying's heart. Mulan, the sister I barely knew. Mulan, the sister whose shadow I see. Mulan, the sister who left the family's burden on me. Father is sick. Mother is frail. Little brother Lee is still too small. Money has stopped a-flowing. No one wishes to buy our beautiful silk weaves in times of war—no one has enough money. The wealthy Wons are our only customers. And Oh. Their oldest son, Yuan, has taken a liking to me. Mulan, oh Mulan, when will you come back and save me?"

"Qing Clang and again Qing Clang"

Iron swords clash, as the Khan and the Huns meet in savage bloodshed. I hear the Yellow River's flowing water cry tsien tsien—I don't hear Father and Mother's cry. Northern gusts carry the rattle of army pots, but not the whispers of my sister's calls. Chilly light shines on the blood-splattered iron armor. Generals die in a hundred battles, blood flooding the Yangtze's waters and making it a murky brown. Gently, the snow falls, blending with the blood-soaked ground as a single Sakura falls before my feet. It is not spring, Sakuras are not in bloom, and yet I sigh. My comrades ask who is on my mind? Who is in my heart? I say: "Mu-Ying is on Mulan's mind. Father, mother, and Lee are in my heart. Last night I dreamt of mother's famous chicken soup, of father teaching me martial arts. Last night I dreamt of Little Lee growing to be a man, of Mu-Ying's twinkling, cheerful eyes."⁵

Eight years have passed, the Orchids should have bloomed—the smell of Mulan is not in the air. Mulan is still not home. Mulan is still at war. I no longer tend to father. I no longer cook hearty dinners on behalf of mother. Brother Lee no longer attends school; instead he helps with the chores around the house of the Wons. He is in the stables—he is a servant boy.

"Tsiek Tsiek and again Tsiek Tsiek"

⁴ These two lines are copies of the following lines: "She goes ten thousand miles on the business of war" and "She only hears Mount Yen's nomad horses cry tsiu tsiu."

⁵ In this stanza, the perspective switches back to Mulan. Through her dialogue, Mulan reveals what is happening on the war-front, and also her homesickness. Furthermore I have rendered the following lines: "Northern gusts carry the rattle of army pots, Chilly light shines on iron armor. Generals die in a hundred battles."

I weave, facing the door. I do not hear master's calls or the shuttle's sound. I only hear myself sigh. I ask who is in my heart? Who is on my mind? "Father, mother, and Little Lee are in my heart. Mulan is on my mind. My heart tears to see Little Lee, carrying the sacks of rice on his small back. My heart tears, cringes, each time I catch the Won's eldest son eyeing me fancifully, when he touches me in the dark of the night. My ears hesitate when I hear them call me Xiao-Yu, the name of a servant. Mulan, oh Mulan, when will you come back and save me?"

Ten years have passed. The stars are especially bright tonight. Father always said that when a person passes away, the stars glow brighter. Two stars glow bright. I wonder if, tonight, I'll see a third.

*"Crackle, snap, fizz and pop," the Firecrackers shout.
The war is over. The Khan has won. The Son of Heaven sits in the Splendid Hall. He gives out promotions in twelve ranks, and prizes of a hundred and more. He asks of Mulan what she so desires. "Mulan has no use for a minister's post. I wish to ride a swift mount to take me home."*

"Crackle, snap, fizz and pop," the Firecrackers shout.
I am marrying the eldest Won, Yuan—the rank of the third wife falling at my feet. But, at least now, Little Lee can attend school, can wed the woman of his dreams. I have married the eldest Won, and Mulan has returned home. She takes off her wartime gown, fixes her cloudlike hair, dabs on yellow flower powder and moves back into the empty house.⁶ Surprise is in her eyes, as she watches me don my own wartime gown. Though this one is less heavy, more red, donning a flair of fake merriness as it imprisons me for life.

Ten years have passed, the Orchids have bloomed—the smell of Mulan is in the air. Mulan is now home, Mulan is not at war.

I sigh.

I ask who is my heart, who is on my mind.

"Father, mother and Little Lee are on in my heart. Mulan is on my mind. Mulan, oh Mulan, you saved the country. But why, oh why, couldn't you save me?"

⁶ In this stanza, I use the following lines: "I take off my wartime gown/ And put on my old-time clothes/ Facing the window she fixes her cloudlike hair, Hanging up a mirror she dabs on yellow flower powder."

YOU MIGHT'VE SAVED THE WORLD, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU SAVED EVERYONE: ANALYSIS OF *THE FALLEN SAKURA*, A *BALLAD OF FA MULAN* RETELLING

Have you ever wondered what prompted Little Red Riding Hood's mother to send her out into the woods by her lonesome to visit her grandmother? Why the wolf chose to disguise himself as her grandmother before gobbling her up? Have you ever wondered about Maleficent's story in *Sleeping Beauty*? Fairy tales often omit the perspective, the voices, of minor characters because it could take away from the author's original intention of the tale. Yet, what's to say that Little Red Riding Hood didn't lie about her tale? Much as "History is written by the victors" (Winston Churchill), most classic fairytales are written by the hero or heroine. The emphasis is placed on the hero or heroine as they accomplish impossible tasks, come to transformational realizations, or defeat evil villains. Similarly, while the author introduces minor characters in *The Ballad of Fa Mulan* such as Mulan's family members, the poem mainly centers on the main character, Mulan, and her struggles. In most retellings, plays, and motion pictures based on Mulan, the story portrays plot lines similar to the original. The elements always present are Mulan taking her father's place in the army enlistment, her struggles during her time in the army, and her warm welcome home. After reading many different retellings of other fairy tales in class, such as "The Wolf's Postscript to Little Red Riding Hood," I began to wonder why there wasn't a version of this story told from the perspective of one of Mulan's family members. What happened to them? How did Mulan's choices affect them? Did the story really have a happy ending? *The Fallen Sakura* attempts to answer these questions by using the perspective of Mulan's younger sister, Mu-Ying, to tell her side of the story—of what happened on the home front while Mulan fought on the warfront. Mulan left because she believed it was the right thing to do, because she believed it could save her family. *The Fallen Sakura*, however, presents a counterargument that all choices have both consequences, and that one person cannot save *everyone*.

The Ballad of Mulan (sometimes also known as *The Ballad of Fa Mulan* or *The Ballad of Hua Mulan*) is a Chinese poem of anonymous origin. The poem is believed to have originated as a folk song in the fifth or sixth century CE during a period of foreign domination when China was divided between the north and south ("Ode"). The Xianbei, a non-Han ethnic group, were the rulers of the northern dynasties whilst the Southern Dynasties had stronger, more cultural ties, to the Han Dynasty (Kwa xiii). In summary, the legend of Mulan is of a maiden who performs heroic deeds in battle while dressed as a male soldier. According to Lan Dong, "Certain elements of the story are consistent in its many retellings: a young woman takes the place of her elderly father in war, serves her country valiantly in disguise as a man, and returns home with triumph and honor to resume her womanly life" (1). Most of these elements can be seen in *The Fallen Sakura*. Only, even though Mulan returns home, triumphant and ready to resume her "womanly life" (Dong 1), her life has already changed so much so that her role as a woman before she left has changed dramatically. She can no longer easily slip back into her old roles as a daughter and an older sister—in fact, *The Fallen Sakura* reveals that even though she sacrificed herself for her family to fight in the war, Mulan also gave up her responsibilities as a woman and a daughter: she was not there upon her father's passing. She did not care for her heart-broken mother or her ill-stricken father. She could not protect her younger sister or brother as they were bought as servants. By leaving and taking on the responsibilities of a man, Mulan neglected her responsibilities as a woman.

While plot elements of my retelling are consistent with most versions of the tale, I had to make a choice about what set of cultural values to emphasize. Dong points out that depending on

the “historical and cultural context in which it is retold... its plot and moral import are reshaped” (1). Regardless, each rendition of the tale “evolve[s] [Mulan] into an ideal heroine during a lengthy process of storytelling and retelling” (Dong 2). For example, in Disney’s adaptation, Mulan leaves in order to be true to herself “even in the face of persecution” (Hale), discovering herself and finding independence while at the same time saving her father. Disney’s values differ from those in the ballad and many historical retellings, where what prompts Mulan to leave is filial piety. It is a story about a daughter sacrificing and risking death in order to save her father—her family. Thus upon winning the war, she chooses to take as her reward a “swift mount/To take [her] back to [her] home” (Frankle), whereupon she settles back into her role as being a woman. Similarly, in a 2009 movie adaptation of the tale, the director adds a romantic subplot as Mulan falls in love with Sub-Commander Wentai; however, Mulan essentially gives up her pursuit of her love for her country. She returns home to take care of her ill father, while her lover Wentai will wed the Rouran Princess by command of the emperor in order to bring peace at last (Ma). Disney’s adaptation focuses on the moral of staying true to oneself because that is a value American culture holds dear. Both the original ballad and the Chinese film adaptation, however, emphasize the values of filial piety and loyalty to the country, because those are values Chinese culture holds dear. Thus, in *The Fallen Sakura*, I chose to stick with those values as a reason for Mulan’s departure.

Yet, while the values and certain details surrounding the plot were often changed in retellings, the conclusion was almost always the same—it ended happily. This made me wonder, what if the story didn’t have a happy ending? What if Mulan didn’t come back home to a celebration and warm-hearted welcome by both her family members and villagers? What if, after leaving, the repercussions actually caused her family to fall apart? Even though Mulan sacrifices herself by leaving for war and disguising herself as a man, the repercussions of her actions if caught prior to winning the war could still be great—it could lead to an execution and bring dishonor to her family name. Historically, Mulan’s actions can still be seen as treason, even if her motives are far from it. By choosing to leave, she saves her father from possibly dying were he to serve in the war; however, she also left the burden of being the oldest onto her younger sister. Leaving the household also meant one less pair of hands to help around the house to earn income. It meant the responsibilities of being the oldest would fall upon someone else – in this case, Mu-Ying, Mulan’s younger sister. Furthermore, Mulan leaving for war in place of her father only solved one problem—but during the time of her absence, no doubt other problems would arise that she wouldn’t be able to solve. Thus, in *The Fallen Sakura*, I explore these problems and repercussions: after Mulan leaves, her parents fall ill and die. The family becomes bankrupt, and both Mu-Ying and Little Lee are taken in as servants by the wealthy Wons. In hopes of giving Little Lee a better future, Mu-Ying reluctantly agrees to Yuan, the eldest Won’s, proposal—even though it places her in the position of being the lowly third wife and unable to ever find true love. *The Fallen Sakura* emphasizes the idea that the decision one might think is the best also has negative repercussions.

In order to highlight the toll Mulan’s absence took on the family, *The Fallen Sakura* mimics the original ballad by asking a question that is then answered by a character via dialogue. Inspired by retellings such as Agha Shahid Ali’s “The Wolf’s Postscript to ‘Little Red Riding Hood,’” I used a minor character as the main character and narrator in *The Fallen Sakura*. Thus, the retelling is told from Mulan’s younger sister Mu-Ying’s eyes. In order to keep the story closely tied to the ballad, I kept most of the main elements. Mulan still leaves for war—but the focus of the tale centers on the obstacles faced by Mu-Ying and her family rather than Mulan’s struggles in war. Understanding the structure of the tale is essential to understanding the retelling. Essentially, *The Fallen Sakura* reveals the thoughts of the mother, father, Mu-Ying, and Mulan, in different sections. Separated by the phrases “[blank] years have passed,” the tale foreshadows the changes surrounding the family throughout time via the eyes of the individual family members themselves (Luo).

Furthermore, in order to keep the poetic aspect of the ballad, I mimicked the sentence structure from *The Ballad of Fa Mulan* and kept select phrases from the poem, such as “*Tsiek Tsiek and again Tsiek Tsiek*,” in order to create a correlation (Luo). The structures set off by these onomatopoeic sounds symbolize the different roles of man and woman. “*Tsiek Tsiek and again Tsiek Tsiek*,” the sound made when weaving, is a representation of the domestic aspect of life and the role of a woman. “*Qing Clang and again Qing Clang*” is a representation of war and the role of a man. Each of these lines separate a stanza and a different perspective, revealing how Mulan’s absence has affected the lives of each individual family member. Moreover, *The Fallen Sakura* uses carefully chosen imagery, symbols, and figurative language in place of exposition, a stylistic choice that admittedly can obscure details and potentially make the story confusing for the reader. For one, readers might not understand that during Mulan’s absence, her parents both passed away: her father from illness, and her mother from depression and grief. Since their parents died with a large debt, leaving the family bankrupt, Mu-Ying and her younger brother became servants to the rich Wons. There, Mu-Ying catches the eye of the Eldest Son Yuan, and is pursued romantically against her will—eventually, she marries him in hopes of giving her younger brother a brighter future. In both cases, the heroines sacrifice themselves on behalf of the family: Mulan on behalf of her father, Mu-Ying on behalf of her younger brother. But the difference is, Mu-Ying’s wartime gown, her marriage gown, traps her for life, which is why she describes it as “less heavy, more red, donning a flair of fake merriness as it imprisons me for life”—while Mulan has returned home, free to an extent (Luo).

The twist at the end, with Mu-Ying remarking “Mulan, oh Mulan, you saved the country. But why, oh why, couldn’t you save me?” emphasizes the fact that one person cannot save *everyone*. Even the most valiant heroes or heroines have a story of having failed someone, having not been able to save a person dear to them—because when you try to save the world, when you sacrifice yourself, you’re also giving up something else too. Everything has an opportunity cost; life is a constant battle of weighing those costs and making a decision. In *The Fallen Sakura*, I wanted to make readers think, what if the heroine, in her haste to fulfill one obligation, left another role unfilled? What if Mulan couldn’t save *everyone*?

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