A showcase for undergraduate students at Kent State University at Stark who achieved writing excellence.
Letter from the Editors

The Writing Center Review is a student publication dedicated to student writers who have shown excellence in their writing assignments at Kent State University at Stark. It is compiled, edited, and written by students with the help of faculty on campus. The Review is truly a place for students to showcase their talent and to also learn from their peers. The writing showcased in this publication also exemplifies the most important goal of writing assignments — to engage in a dialogue with the academic world.

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In America, it has been proven that it only takes a few minutes for forty-nine lives to tragically end in Orlando or for twenty children and teachers to be stripped of their futures in Connecticut (Wilson). Mass shootings have become commonplace in the news and are no longer unexpected in modern American society. This has sparked a great debate in America over the role automatic and semi-automatic weapons play in these massacres. Many gun proponents seek to protect all weapons, but this excessive defense of every facet associated with the Second Amendments is to blame for these atrocities. American rights like those granted in the Second Amendment were created to foster greater American opportunity when, in fact, the very opposite has occurred. These assault weapons have done nothing but enable the slaughtering of those twenty children at Sandy Hook Elementary. This means America’s protection of the opportunity for gun enthusiasts to “play army” has been at the expense of these children’s opportunities for life. This is not the American Dream and this is why all automatic and semi-automatic weapons must be banned.

The most important reason these semi-automatic weapons must be banned alongside their automatic counterparts is because mass shootings occur more than once a day and these types of guns allow them to happen (LaFraniere, Cohen, and Oppel). It has become the mantra of gun lobbyists to say that “guns don’t kill people; people kill people” but this overused sentiment fails to recognize the ability of guns to enable people to kill more people. When somebody walks into a crowded movie theatre with a knife, it is much more difficult to attack more than a few people before the rest escape or retaliate. Molly Ivins put it best by sarcastically remarking that with a knife “you have to catch up with someone to stab him” ("Ban the Things, Ban Them All"). Guns are easy. Guns are quick. Guns are relatively clean. Unlike other dangerous objects including cars,
knives, and drugs, the only purpose guns hold is killing. By combining the destructive capabilities of any normal gun with increased power, speed, and capacity for ammunition, the only result is the same killing machine that happens to be able to end more lives more efficiently. These are weapons of war and many of them are currently allowed to sit in the gun safe of every American's neighbor. This is an obvious recipe for disaster.

This set of conditions has proven its disastrous qualities time and again in everyday mass shootings like the one at Sandy Hook Elementary. In this example, a twenty-year-old man named Adam Lanza shot his way into the elementary school building where he managed to massacre twenty children and six adults. This episode finished with the murderer killing himself upon the arrival of police ("Sandy Hook Elementary Shooting: What Happened?"). This was a tragic event that left the entire nation in shock. When something as terrible as this happens, it is necessary to our humanity to examine its causes in order to seek prevention in the future. The most important thing to notice is that Lanza took nothing but semi-automatic weapons on his grotesque mission. Lanza was well versed in weapons and had been shooting since age four. He practically had an entire arsenal at his disposal but selected only semi-automatic weapons with high capacity magazines. He also brought along a shotgun, but left it in the car ("What Adam Lanza Took, and Didn't Take, to Sandy Hook Elementary"). Lanza was on a mission when he went to the elementary school and he made these choices for a reason. He knew that they would allow the maximum possible damage in the shortest amount of time. After all, police arrived in a matter of less than three minutes after the first call. Killers in these mass shootings clearly seek to massacre a large number of people so they choose the weapons best suited to their goals. If semi-automatic weapons are the weapons of choice for killers like Adam Lanza, they have to be the weapons of choice for commonsense gun laws. If they are not, then more children's lives are put at stake.

Some opponents to gun reform would argue that if these semi-automatic weapons were not available to Lanza, he would have simply picked another weapon and done the same
thing. This perception is nonsense as it is obvious that nothing can cause damage nearly as extreme as assault weapons like those available to Lanza. Cases of attack surface every week, but none are at the magnitude of the Sandy Hook shooting unless the case is accompanied by assault weapons. In fact, within recent months there was an attack on the campus of the Ohio State University by Abdul Artan. This student caused a great panic when he crashed his vehicle into random students at a high speed and continued his attack by chasing others with a knife. Both of these weapons that Artan used, the car and knife, are weapons some gun enthusiasts would say are alternatives that a killer would use if certain guns were banned. They would say that a person who wants to kill would find the means to do it. Well, in this very relevant situation, a killer relied on his car and his knife but only managed to injure six people with the car and five others with the knife before being shot by police (Smith, Pérez-Peña, and Goldman). With examples like this, it is clear that violence is hardly preventable in America, but measures can be taken to reduce the impact of these violent outbursts. After all, what if Artan was equipped with a semi-automatic when he lashed out in the middle of a densely populated campus? In today’s America, he very well could have and this is a gamble we must no longer take.

With so many innocent lives taken by vicious attacks fueled by advanced weaponry, it is clear automatic and semi-automatic weapons must be completely banned, but many gun lobbyists argue it is a directed attack on expressed Second Amendment rights. However, this is quite the opposite as restrictive gun laws truly can be compatible with the Constitution as it stands. The Constitution states, “A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed” (Amend. II). This statement, like many aspects of the Constitution, is particularly outdated and must be left up to a great amount of interpretation. In the time of its writing, semi-automatic and automatic weapons were not in existence, and the Framers could have never begun to predict or understand the capabilities of such futuristic weaponry. This means it could never have been their expressed intent to protect these unnecessary weapons. For this reason, the words of the
Framers cannot be interpreted so strictly as to assume all guns must always be allowed. Rather, the amendment must be examined and the light of current events must be shed to reveal how things should be interpreted. Through such interpretation, America has strayed a significant amount from the text of the amendment by shifting the focus from the “militia” to the “individual”. American society has effectively reworded the amendment through its perceptions on individual, gun-owning rights. This makes sense considering the obsolete nature of a militia within each of the fifty states when the U.S. Armed Forces take their places. If the amendment has already been stretched in this direction, the government must also be able to reshape this amendment to exclude weapons that only harm every aspect of public safety. Interpretations of the First Amendment have created limitations to free speech by not allowing a person to induce panic by shouting “Fire!” in a public place. Interpretations of the Fourth Amendment have given the federal government a loose reign on invading personal privacy to promote national security. Every aspect of the Constitution creates a balancing act regarding where to draw the line—often times in an effort to protect the people. So far with the Second Amendment, this line has been drawn in a way that enables the mass killings of countless, innocent human beings. The government would be doing nothing new by reconsidering their stance on a sentence written over two-hundred years ago in an effort to promote safety. This means there is no reason such a stance could not survive harmoniously alongside the second amendment.

Nobody is calling to ban every single gun in America, but rather reconsider which weapons are truly necessary for the everyday citizen, and whether the rest truly need to be protected in the future. So far, America has really only been strict on automatic weapons. These weapons are those where bullets can be rapidly fired by simply holding down the trigger of a weapon. Semiautomatic weapons, on the other hand, can fire rapidly, but only as fast as one can pull the trigger. Both of these are effectively assault weapons and can be extremely dangerous in a crowd of people. The government has elected to take control of automatic weapons, meaning all machine guns have been banned except
those made before 1986. Despite this, the banning of semi-automatic weapons has been neglected ("Federal Law on Machine Guns & Automatic Firearms"). The threat posed by automatic weapons has been understood for decades, yet their semi-automatic weapon counterparts are allowed to cause similar considerable damage without notice by the legislature. This oversight has become increasingly ludicrous when semi-automatic weapons become increasingly capable of acting just like a fully automatic weapon. Currently, attachments are sold legally allowing someone to bypass the constraints posed by a semiautomatic weapon. David Coulson, of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, explains that by equipping a gun with Slide Fire, it “fires as a machine gun would” (qtd. in Liebelson). With these capabilities of legal weapons, current gun laws act more as political statements in response to violence rather than efforts to actually curb the destruction of violent outbreaks in the future. This current stance of the law is far too lenient and simply does not do the job of protecting Americans from the capabilities of these types of weapons.

Many gun enthusiasts continue to claim that the banning of more weapons is a violation of their rights and an overreach of power, but by considering the current lenience of the law, it is apparent that more can and must be done. With the ability to loosely interpret the Constitution and the need to expand the existing gun laws, even the courts are recognizing the legitimacy of laws that restrict semi-automatic weapons. Recently, the Supreme Court declined to hear a case challenging a Connecticut law banning semi-automatic weapons and large magazines (Vogue). Jonathan Lowry, the director of the Legal Action Project at the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, understood this action, best concluding:

The Supreme Court's decision to let stand Connecticut's assault weapons restrictions, is just the latest indication that Courts almost universally recognize that common sense life-saving gun laws are fully compatible with the Second Amendment. The fact that Connecticut chose to restrict assault weapons like the ones used in the Orlando and Sandy Hook mass shootings was both
reasonable and constitutional.
(qtd. in Vogue)
This inaction of the Supreme Court proved to be one of the most powerful actions they could have taken. This expressed once and for all the sentiment against semi-automatic weapons among our Supreme Court Justices—America’s primary interpreters and protectors of the Framers’ original intent. This seamless allowance of Connecticut to control semi-automatic weapons is proof that there is hope for these commonsense restrictive gun laws to live harmoniously with the rights guaranteed in the Constitution. Semi-automatics can clearly be banned constitutionally, and this action only stands to save countless lives, making the choice to ban them extremely obvious.

This choice to take a harsher stance on guns has been made time and again by almost every other advanced nation. In Germany, one must pass a psychiatric evaluation to buy a gun if under the age of twenty-five. In Finland, one must be in a shooting club, pass an aptitude test, interview with the police, and show proper gun storage. In France and Italy, one must have a legitimate reason to own a firearm and submit to background checks considering criminal and mental health records (Donohue).

In the United States, rules are far less strict and, therefore, the U.S. has the greatest gun ownership per capita with roughly 270 million firearms. This has led the U.S. to also have the most mass shootings between 2000 and 2014. Under a strict interpretation of the term “mass shooting,” the U.S. still had 133 mass shootings in comparison to the handfuls of mass shootings, all less than six, that faced every other country (Palazzo and Flynn). It is absolutely no coincidence the United States happens to have the most mass shootings and the most lenient gun laws in comparison to other advanced nations. In order to still be considered advanced, the U.S. clearly has to catch up and simply ban all automatic and semiautomatic weapons in order to make a huge stride in this direction.

In order to truly appreciate the improvements American society stands to gain with these changes, it is also important to look at other countries and their successes with stricter gun laws. Australia is prime example of this. From 1979 to 1996, Australia had thirteen mass shootings but none since. After
thirty-five people were killed by a murderer using a semi-automatic, many weapons were banned. With a sharp reduction in gun ownership, murder rates in Australia fell to less than a quarter of those in the United States (Donohue). This is simply one example of another country utilizing stricter gun laws to protect its citizens. This certainly cannot be copied within the United States, nor is this the current need. The Second Amendment makes it clear that the U.S. cannot ever rid itself of all weapons, but it most certainly can rid itself of all semiautomatic weapons. If Australia can go gun-free, the U.S. can go assault-weapon-free. Countless other nations have set the example and when mass shootings claim the lives of Americans every year, banning the weapons that have killed them is the least we can do.

When laws like the banning of semi-automatic weapons are clearly necessary and a minimum requirement for a safer America, it is amazing that so much time has passed without such a change. This call to rid America of vicious assault weapons echoed twenty-six years ago when the American Bar Association shrieked excitement because “a pivotal Senate vote in May signaled support for banning semi-automatic weapons” (McMillion). It was the call of the nineties to end the violence fueled by these weapons, yet even when decisions came close, somehow nothing happened. If only laws were different then, the fate of so many incidents today could be vastly different and must be left to imagination. Adam Lanza may not have had his assault weapons and may not have killed so many children. Some of them could be playing happily with their families today. Some forty-odd people might have escaped with their lives in Orlando and returned to the things that made them happy. Sadly, nothing can be done for those who have died in the past as a result of weapons that were never banned. Yet these deaths need not be in vain, as plenty can still be done for those who may be future victims of preventable gun violence. A cycle has been created in American society where somebody shoots a few people, we talk and feel sad about it, and then we promptly ignore and forget about it—until it repeats. We cannot allow another day of this cycle of careless mass shootings to take place. Rather, we must take action to see that all automatic and semi-automatic weapons are banned.
When ultimately considering whether laws should strengthen the control of military grade guns and reign in their carefree use, it can no longer come down to sheer numbers. So often we rely on statistics to convince someone that this shooting was bigger than the last, or more were killed now than then. These shocking values have been around for a long time, yet they’ve been unsuccessful in creating a change. This is because society has lost a basic value within our humanity—the genuine concern for others, their lives, and their well-being. It wasn’t just twenty-six people killed in Connecticut when Sandy Hook was attacked. Rather, it was a boy who had gone to school frustrated with his math homework on fractions, but was eager to learn.

It was a girl who just had a fight with her best friend but knew her dad’s kind eyes would console her later that day. It was a teacher that chose her profession out of her deep passion to teach a classroom filled with kids she loved dearly. These are the types of personalities and lives the school children and teachers at Sandy Hook may have had. Sadly, we will never know or care to learn these because in society today, these are merely numbers adding to the ceaseless count of lives lost to mass shootings in America. Despite this ignorance, these were genuine people who were loved and missed after their lives were tragically taken. They were taken because somebody had a mission to kill and their mission was made exponentially easier when rapid, destructive weapons entered the picture.

When a massive attack like this happens, rapid and enabling weapons are to blame for every +1 on the death toll. Therefore, it is on our conscience when someone is killed using an unforgiving weapon and we have spent the day ignoring the situation and not seeking the necessary changes. If a single life is saved from the creation of a semi-automatic gun ban, it was well worth it—be that change.

Works Cited
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**References:**

Are Video Games Sexist?
Charles Frantum

Write an op-ed or a letter to the editor focusing on a specific question and using researched evidence. This assignment was completed for Prof. Jessica Jones’s College Writing II.

More and more prevalent in video games today, and media as a whole, is the idea that “sex sells.” Look at the overabundance of scantily-clad, large-breasted, overly giggly and bouncy women found all throughout Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) and Japanese Role Playing Games (JRPGs). These female characters are hardly what most women want representing them, and many men are fed up with the lack of believable female characters.

One of the main problems is the inherent lack of respect from developers and publishers. With everything from all-male design teams to technical director of European game publisher Ubisoft, James Therien, citing that adding playable female characters to Assassin’s Creed: Unity would “double the work” (bbc.com). Fans were understandably outraged at this remark, especially as there are already female Non-Player Characters (NPCs) in the games, most commonly as prostitutes. As Unity was released after the side-game, Assassin’s Creed Liberation (which featured a female character as the protagonist), it seemed illogical to use this as an excuse.

Ubisoft did apparently see the error of their ways, as they added a playable female lead in Assassin’s Creed: Syndicate, but by then the amage was done. Other games have shown much more blatant sexism and in arguably much worse ways, but the Assassin’s Creed franchise has yet to fully recover from this blunder, and it’s unsure to many if it ever truly will. However, other publishers like Rockstar Games go about their sexist programming in entirely different ways. The Grand Theft Auto series has its fair share of problematic features and ideas, along with some installments being racially insensitive and downright offensive. The main goal of these games is, shockingly, to commit a variety of crimes, ranging from petty theft to mass-murdering police.

But by far, the most sexist element of these games is that the main
profession of female NPCs is, yet again, prostitution. The games sometimes take this as far as being able to solicit sexual acts from these characters, and then kill them afterwards. Prostitution seems to be the go-to profession for female NPCs in far too many games, and changing this could be the starting solution to the main problem.

Another starting point could be the skimpy, impractical armor seemingly countless characters are forced into for the purely simple reason of sex appeal. The exact same class, model, and level of armor in many fantasy games has a drastically difference appearance whether it is placed on a male or female character. The male model is usually practical and well-covered, impervious to many forms of attack with all their vital organs and weak points covered. Yet the female character base will be scantily clad, usually with their thighs and abdomen region completely exposed, and their breasts on somewhat full display, barely covered or forced into a metal bikini.

Even further, characters can have special or signature armor sets, items specifically for single characters, and on several occasions female characters have a literal swimsuit for their special armor.

In *Xenoblade Chronicles*, one of the main characters, a dual-wielding rouge named Fiora, has her special armor obtainable early in the game. If you manage to win enough fights and currency at this low of a level, you are rewarded with an armor set for her that is merely a bikini top and bottom, with sheathes for her knives on a belt that looks more out of place than the armor set in the first place. Granted, this issue can be seen for an armor set of the main character, Shulk, which is a speedo and "swim oil" that leaves his character shirtless if you equip it. The difference here is that Shulk's swimwear is outclassed soon in the game, while Fiora's remains the highest set for her until almost the end of the game.

Along with swimwear, there also seems to be a recurring trend in this genre of games with the famed "boob-plate design." Not only impractical and somewhat ridiculous in most cases, this design of armor is also completely useless, as a blade striking into the metal would be diverted directly into the center of the character's chest, possibly collapsing it and leaving the player to suffocate as the armor left their lungs punctured. And with exposed thighs, a simple gash or arrow could logically
leave the player to lose function of their limbs or to simply bleed out in the midst of combat. As thread commenter Brian Woody pointed out, there is a simple test to see if an outfit is sexist: “Take any female character, keep her in the same scenario and outfit type, but turn her into a guy. If it seems ridiculous (wearing a thong to fight a dragon) then its most likely sexist (or at least the female character is being treated as eye candy rather than as an actual character)” (quora.com).

However, a somewhat recent study funded independently by the European Research Council finds broadly no correlation between video games and sexist behaviors. This longitudinal study took place over several years, starting back in 2011 before sexism in games was widely questioned. The participants were 14 years old at the minimum, and snapshots of the data were taken from three waves of testing (forbes.com). In this article the author, Ollie Barder, gives an example of a “strong female protagonist” in Samus Aran from the Metroid series, published by Nintendo, quoting that “the argument that gaming as a whole is inherently sexist clearly doesn’t acknowledge the full scope of what gaming offers” (forbes.com).

What Ollie fails to mention when citing Samus is that in early promotions of Metroid, she was hypothesized to be a male character. Only shown in a large, powerful orange combat suit for most the game, players who managed to beat the entire game in under an hour were “rewarded” with a cutscene of Samus stepping out of her suit, wearing nothing but a blue bikini. This was later adapted into the skin-tight “zero suit” she is shown in during parts of later games, starting with its first appearance in Metroid: Zero Mission. However, this is seemingly practical seeing as she’d need to be wearing something under the power suit, and she takes more damage and is in turn more agile in the zero suit than her primary armor.

In conclusion, video games’ most sexist problems lie in developer’s disrespect towards women, both in lack of representation as sensible main characters and the ridiculous outfits the developers allow their female characters to be dressed in. While this is not always the case with games, the ones that break away from this pattern are few and far between. Developers need to start listening to their fans more often, and
make the women they design more believable.

**Works Cited**


In today’s society, we punish murderers by murdering them, declaring justice has been served because they got what they deserved. It is time to understand that trying to avenge death by killing another ruins our morals as a species. The death penalty is a very controversial issue that must be addressed. To continue with the death penalty is to allow ourselves to be ignorant to progress. We must end the death penalty as it is vastly unjust, extremely costly, demoralizing to our society, and an overall barbaric institution, ridden with the remnants of an uncivilized society.

Although many individuals support the death penalty, a large amount of these supporters do not realize the cost and effect that it will have on them. A death penalty case costs excessively more than a case without the death penalty. According to a study done by the Kansas Judicial Council, the average cost to defend a death penalty case is more than four times the amount of a regular case where the death penalty was not pursued ($395,762 compared to $98,963 on average) (Erb). Such astronomical costs to defend the case are only the beginning, with costs rising an exorbitant amount when all factors of a trial are considered. A death penalty case usually costs the prosecution and defense an average of $470,000 more than a life sentence case (Erb). However, this is not the end of high costs; a death penalty case will likely follow through with an appeal if the defendant is found guilty, resulting in even more fees for a death penalty case. The state of New York concluded that on average, a death penalty case will cost $1.8 million per case for the trial and the first appeal (Erb). This enormous figure does not even take into account multiple appeals, which reportedly cost over $100,000 more than an appeal for a non-death penalty case (“Costs of the Death Penalty”). The cost to pursue these cases is typically taken on by state governments, which use taxpayer dollars to fund. If individuals realized their hard-earned money was used in
countless, wasteful expenditures, perhaps many would change their outlook of the death penalty.

Similarly, the cost to house prisoners on death row is excessively more than the cost to house prisoners in the general population. Since death row inmates require both private quarters and additional surveillance, they are often held at expensive, increased-security prisons. To maintain these high-security prisons, state governments must employ more staff, technology, and equipment to effectively hold the death row inmates. Thus, the cost to house death row inmates is, on average, $50,000-$75,000 more than the cost to house general population inmates, which is around $25,000 per year (Erb). Further, a death row inmate is held in one of said high-security prisons for an average of fifteen years, resulting in an additional $750,000-$1,125,000 being spent on each death row inmate compared to a non-death row inmate. In a report done by the state of California, officials concluded that the annual cost of the death penalty in its entirety was $137 million. The annual cost for lifetime incarceration was only $11.5 million, making the annual cost of the death penalty more than eleven times the cost for lifetime incarceration (“The Cost of the Death Penalty”). With such extravagant amounts of money being spent on death row inmates, surely proponents of the death penalty could see what a waste of valuable taxpayer money the death penalty truly is.

A similar argument used by proponents to defend the death penalty is that the death penalty serves as a deterrent, intimidating would-be criminals and reducing crime rates. This opinion, while seemingly logical, actually has no evidence to sustain it. Countless studies have been conducted, producing similar results each time. The numerous studies show that there is no correlation between murder rates and the death penalty. In fact, research has proven that murder rates are actually higher in states where the death penalty exists (“Deterrence: States Without the Death Penalty Have Had Consistently Lower Murder Rates”). Therefore, to say that the death penalty deters crime is a fallacy, appealing to the ignorance of others and using a seemingly logical idea to sway others into thinking it truly deters crime. As for why the death penalty actually does not deter crime, researchers are not exactly sure, but they believe criminals often do not
consider the consequences of their actions when they are in the heat of the moment. Studies show that criminals are more concerned about whether they will be caught rather than the death penalty or anything that comes after their arrest (Ehrenfreund). To justify the death penalty by saying that it deters crime is an outright lie, conceived to target those ignorant on the subject.

Yet another fatal flaw of the death penalty is its inability to deliver “justice” fairly. The death penalty has a long, bloody history of inequality between those who are put to death and those who are not. Specifically, the inequality lies between the different races. According to a recent study done by the University of Washington, jurors were four and a half times more likely to impose a death sentence on an African American than they were in a case involving a white person in the same situation (“Race and the Death Penalty”). If African Americans are being put to death four and a half times more than whites, how could the death penalty be fair at all? Another study was done by the University of North Carolina, analyzing over 502 murder cases. The study found that race played a significant role in determining whether a defendant should be put to death or not. It also concluded that defendants whose victims were white are three and a half times more likely to be sentenced to death than defendants whose victims were non-white (“Race and the Death Penalty”). Alongside each other, the two studies prove that jurors are biased in many cases, favoring both white defendants and white victims over defendants and victims who were non-white. A statistic found by the United States Department of Justice when examining its own record found that more than 75% of the individuals given the death penalty were members of racial minority groups (Bright). This clearly proves that the death penalty specifically targets minority groups. Many minorities are already continuously discriminated against in their daily lives and with the death penalty they are targeted yet again. The death penalty is no small issue; it takes an individual’s life. The death penalty permits individuals to be put to death because of racism. To allow this abhorrent system to continue is an injustice, and insult, to millions of minorities across America.

Though race plays a significant and unjust role in determining whether
an individual should be put to death, it is not the only inequality posed by the death penalty. Individuals who are poor have no way of hiring an elaborate defense team. Often, they cannot even afford a singular defense attorney. Although they are provided a public defender by Constitutional right, they are at a disadvantage. This state-appointed defender, who could be inundated with other cases from the state, is unlikely to do as well as an expensive attorney. Judge Alvin B. Rubin, a judge who has sat on death penalty cases, has witnessed this firsthand, concluding:

The Constitution, as interpreted by the courts, does not require that the accused, even in a capital case, be represented by able or effective counsel. . . . Consequently, accused persons who are represented by “not-legally-ineffective” lawyers may be condemned to die when the same accused, if represented by effective counsel, would receive at least the clemency of a life sentence. (Bright)

Even when provided proper counsel, these financially poor defendants have a better chance of being put to death than those who could afford an expensive lawyer and it is merely because of their wealth. Not only that, but once a poor individual is sentenced, he/she cannot afford another lawyer for an appeal, thus, condemning them for their lack of money. Stated frankly, individuals are being killed simply because they could not afford a lawyer. To condone such a system truly reveals the atrocity of some American morals and ideals.

An extremely dangerous facet of the death penalty is that it is irreversible and inaccurate. When proponents of the death penalty defend it, they argue that a person is being put to death as retribution for the victim. However, what happens if the person being put to death is innocent? The death penalty then makes no sense whatsoever because when it is used, their death is irreversible and an innocent person is potentially killed. A study done by the University of Michigan analyzed the 7,428 cases from 1973 to 2004 in which the death sentence was employed. The study concluded that of the 7,428, roughly 4.1%, or 305 prisoners, of those sentenced to death were innocent. Of these 305 prisoners, only 1.6%, or 117, of them were exonerated (McLaughlin). That is around 128 prisoners who
committed no crime were sent to their death anyway. Such a large number of innocent people being put to death is inexcusable, showcasing once again how unjust the death penalty system is.

Although the previous figures exhibit a vast amount of innocent individuals being put to death, the number is likely much larger. This is because modern science has advanced tremendously, allowing officials to uncover new evidence that either led to the conviction of another individual or cleared the defendant that was sentenced to death. Also, critical oversights and misunderstandings have occurred within the police force, resulting in individuals being convicted for a crime they did not commit. Surely, these are cases where human error affected the way justice was carried out; however, when the cases are deciding whether to execute an individual or not, human error cannot occur. Since it is impossible to eradicate human error from any case, the natural conclusion must be to eradicate the death penalty. In recent years, studies have also shown that the death penalty is being considered more often, with the appeals process becoming narrower. Changes in the appeal process at the federal level have made it more likely that a death penalty will continue, even with questionable evidence against a defendant ("Innocence and the Death Penalty: The Increasing Danger of Executing the Innocent"). It is inevitable that some individuals will be convicted of a crime they did not commit, but we simply cannot put these people to death because of human error, a faulty piece of evidence, or an unethical decision.

An extremely alarming fact about the death penalty is the method it enforces to kill people. The death penalty has a long history, using various methods of execution such as death by firing squad, electric chair, lethal gas, and the now-common lethal injection. Though seemingly more humane, lethal injection can be a horrific procedure. There are three drugs commonly used in a lethal injection: sodium thiopental, pancuronium bromide, and potassium chloride. The sodium thiopental is the anesthetic, the pancuronium bromide paralyzes the individual, and the potassium chloride stops the heart (Eckholm). As media culture has expanded, an increasingly large number of pharmaceutical companies are refusing to sell these drugs to state governments, citing fear of public...
backlash as their reasoning. With the companies refusing to sell these commonly-used drugs, many states are trying novel combinations and mixtures to execute death row inmates, producing horrific results such as choking, feeling burning sensations, and even seizing (Eckholm). Also, a nationwide shortage of sodium thiopental is forcing states to turn to other countries for the drug (Kam). To protect themselves, states have imposed secrecy laws regarding the drugs used, resulting in a lack of information about whether the drugs are safe and effective to use. In one case, Texas refused to provide information on where they received the drugs used in a lethal injection (Eckholm). Just today, December 4, 2016, the state of Florida has proclaimed that it will be testing a new drug, which has never been used in a lethal injection before. The state said that it has run out of the drugs it used in the past to execute an individual, thus requiring new drug cocktails (Kam).

Similar inhumane practices have been rampant in the state of Ohio. In 2014, a death row inmate “gasped, struggled, and choked for about 10 minutes before silencing and eventually succumbing” (“Ohio Man’s 25-minute Execution Sparks Controversy”). With this gross misconduct and error occurring on multiple instances, Americans seriously need to re-evaluate the cost of having the death penalty. To torture these fellow human beings and make them literally gasp for air for an extended period of time is atrocious. To continue the death penalty is to continue this atrocity and is a tremendous blow to all of humanity.

Finally, the death penalty degrades America as a society because it goes against our very foundation as a country. The Eighth Amendment to the Constitution states that no cruel or unusual punishment will be used. This clause is very subjective, resulting in innumerable interpretations, allowing the death penalty to be justified by its proponents. However, a Supreme Court case named *Rochin v. California* changes that completely, firmly cementing the idea that the death penalty violates the Eighth Amendment. In the majority opinion, the Supreme Court declared the following:

What the majority hold is that the Due Process Clause empowers this Court to nullify any state law if its application "shocks the conscience," offends "a sense of justice" or runs counter to the
"decencies of civilized conduct. (qtd. in Rider)

Surely the death penalty does all of the things listed above by the Supreme Court. Thus, the Supreme Court is obligated to nullify the law as it violates our most sacred governing document. The United States is among only a few other countries that still use the death penalty, including China, Iran, and North Korea (Rider). Do we really want to be grouped with these countries that are largely known to be barbaric and cruel? Certainly, the death penalty is both cruel and unusual and a barbaric practice that must be abolished.

Stemming from the evil that the death penalty enables is the question of morality. Is it immoral to use the death penalty? It is a system that targets minority groups and the poor. It costs exorbitant sums of money, taking funds that could be used elsewhere for the betterment of all of society. It provides irrevocable injustice, taking countless innocent lives and proving ineffective in serving justice. It is inefficient, offering no deterrent to crime rates, but rather inspiring them. It brutally murders the murderers, degrading our society to an inhumane, toxic culture where we slaughter others to feel retribution or see that "justice" is served. The death penalty even breaks some of our oldest laws, providing a cruel and unusual process that is completely unconstitutional. It goes against every moral and standard that we, as Americans, hold ourselves and our society to. If we truly want to take pride in ourselves as human beings and progress as a species, we will stop making excuses, stop the evil, and stop this disgusting process.

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When Virginia Woolf wrote her essay *A Room of One’s Own* in 1928, she theorized that a woman must have personal money and her own private room in order to write fiction. What is interesting about her seemingly simple theory is that Woolf seemed unable to take a stance on which mattered more: the known quantity or quality of women’s writing. Woolf wavered between chronicling the obstacles woman writers of the past had faced and offering her train of thought on the untapped potential of the female writerly voice to come. I think that she had the best intentions of women in mind, but Woolf seemed torn between her passion for genderless intellectual art—genius, as she called it—and her observation of the raw deal that had been dealt to creative women.

To be fair, Woolf explained outright at the start of her essay that she had arrived at no clear-cut answer to the “problem” of women and fiction, and instead offered us a stroll through her thoughts and sentiments as she figured the problem. But for an idea addressed to scholarly young women in 1928 to linger so prominently in the collective minds of modern women writers nearly a century later, makes one wonder whether Woolf’s theory has been proven true. Woolf invited the readers of her essay to seek out the truth in her lies and “decide whether any part of it is worth keeping” (2444). Judging by the amount of scholarship on Woolf’s ideas in *Room*, it is safe to say that those truths have been found, for modern women have not, as she suggested, thrown the essay into the wastebasket and simply forgotten all about it.

Through my research, I find that the issue has not been solved, but it has transformed into something a little more tolerable, though equally difficult to pin down. In *Room*, Woolf’s proposed solutions to the problem of women and fiction are often contradictory and
ambiguous—it is a complicated issue. Therefore, the complicated relationship modern women writers have with their work—and the physical or metaphorical space in which it is produced—is fitting. Today, Woolf would likely be pleased with the abundance and quality of women’s ‘ordinary life writings’, but she might also be disappointed that no definitive female voice of genius – à la Judith Shakespeare—has arrived on the scene in the last 88 years since she penned A Room of One’s Own.

Woolf spoke of thinly veiled fictional colleges, Oxbridge for men and Fernham for women, to highlight the way women have been excluded throughout most of history from traditional educational opportunities afforded to men. She cleverly compared the luncheon menus and conversations she expected to be served at each college, as a metaphor to draw attention to a lack of nourishment for the female mind—food for thought. She describes extensively the gold and silver that had over the years been poured into the foundations of the buildings that comprised Oxbridge to emphasize the importance and stability of education—men’s education (Woolf 2446). What collective opinion and great faith made these institutions possible over the years? The same outlook that made such a place impossible for women. In contrast to the rich traditions of the men’s colleges, comfortable in their status and self-assured of their privilege to study, the new women’s colleges struggled just to raise enough funds to construct the buildings.

Surely, we have come a long way since then in terms of women’s education. It is common knowledge that women now outrank men for college enrollment in the United States. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, for 2015 high school graduates, the college enrollment rate was 72.6 percent for young women and 65.8 percent for young men (Bureau). Jane Piirto’s survey of successful contemporary U.S. women creative writers indicates that a recurring theme in their lives is attendance at prestigious colleges, often as a precursor to graduate degrees and future writing success (Piirto 7). So, many women now have a solid place in higher education, but what about their personal space? Woolf does not go into great detail about any physical specifications of this room that women need in order to write fiction or poetry, other than
commenting on the necessity of a lock on the door, and ideally, a sound-proof or quiet room. Anticipating criticism over the essay’s emphasis on material things, she explains that allowances must be made for the symbolism of the room: “that five hundred a year stands for the power to contemplate, that a lock on the door means the power to think for oneself” (Woolf 2473). Even so, material benefits and spatial relationships do have bearing on how well one is able to utilize their mental space. Observe the effect a messy desk can have on the writer trying to create, or the studies conducted on sleep quality compared to the relative cleanliness, darkness, and temperature of the bedroom.

There is nothing novel about the general idea of privacy for women, yet Wendy Gan points out that “Woolf’s prescient phrase highlights an increasing awareness of the importance of spatial privacy to modern women and, in particular, to aspiring women writers” (Gan 68). In her article, Gan argues that in order for young women to fully embrace the refuge of reflective inner space, “there needs to be physical solitude to make privacy complete” (Gan 68). When Gan investigates the emerging awareness of the power of space and its link to creativity, she finds that contemporary women writers crave choice in a room above any specific type of room. It is not enough to say that women want a study equivalent to the traditional male study, which can be seen as exclusionary. In describing her experiences at classy Oxbridge versus unestablished Fernham, Woolf claims that urbanity, gentility, and dignity are the offspring of luxury, privacy, and space (Woolf 2454). Gan’s article explains that many women need a private writing space with access to sociability, where they can allow others in when and how they choose (Gan 76). In Room, Woolf seems surprised at the idea that Jane Austen was able to create her masterpieces in the family sitting room, but it is a disservice to writers to say that they all possess the same processes or require the same circumstances. Gan recaps Woolf’s views on material space when she writes, “An undefined room as long as its access was controlled by its female inhabitants would be adequate” (Gan 77).

This begs the question of exactly where modern woman prefer to write. In A Room of One’s Own, Woolf’s focus was on the enabling qualities of a
“room” as a resistance to male oppression. Vicki Lindner recaps Woolf’s thoughts on the need for such a room: “a private space is what women need to write deeply, ‘calmly and wisely,’ liberated from their anger at men who preached, ‘You can’t do this and you shan’t do that’” (Lindner 306). So I question where the progress of gender equality in the last century leaves contemporary women writers. Lindner’s surveying of contemporary American writers on their “rooms” presents a varied picture of how Woolf’s room equates to the new woman writer. Many women, like Maya Angelou and Dorothy Allison, escaped the demons of their difficult pasts by writing in sparse hotel rooms, where they could “let the madwoman out of the attic” when it was warranted (Lindner 308).

For modern women writers trying to balance families with the personal fulfillment of a career, the problem with the room is a lack of support. Another current successful novelist describes how fortunate she felt to receive a fellowship from a major university, where she:

“had an office, air conditioning, interesting companions for lunch, [and] a computer. I dropped off the kids at school, went to the office, picked them up at the end of the day. Heaven. When that year ended, I cried. I asked my husband, “What am I going to do?” And he said, “Shut up—because nobody even gets what you did.” But he can go into his office at home, and shut the door and work. I can’t do that. Even when he’s taking care of the kids, they call and need something, and I go to them. I can’t not do that.” (DeSanti 10-11)

In Room, Woolf examines this conflict of balancing the demands of motherhood with writing when she relates the fictional story of Mary Seton and her mother, who had 13 children. Woolf is unable to reach a solid conclusion on this point, because she proposes the catch-22 of needing time and energy to write yet desiring to produce daughters that could also have a chance to write (Woolf 2452-3). Demonstrating the continuity of this issue today, Piirto states in her study that “some of the writers who were mothers viewed themselves as abstracted, distant mothers because of their conflict between wanting to write and their family duties” (Piirto 9).
Because Woolf seemed so intent on unattainable female literary genius and the quality of the work of women writers—she contemplates “all the women’s novels that lie scattered, like small pock-marked apples in an orchard, about the secondhand book shops of London”—it is important to consider the identity of the successful modern woman writer. The subjects in Piirto’s study were classified as successful based on their listing or eligibility for listing in the 1993-1994 Directory of American Poets and Writers. Qualifications depended on their amount of published work. Then there was the issue of lowbrow literature against highbrow literature to consider, which could more accurately be rephrased as popular low culture versus critically acclaimed high culture, to keep pace with today’s standards. According to Carole DeSanti, vice president and editor at large at Viking, the novelist with the fellowship noted above somehow “managed the uncommon, enviable feat of both pleasing influential critics and rising on the best seller list” (DeSanti 10). According to Melissa Sullivan, Woolf had strong opinions on the notion of the “middlebrow” writer, and this idea elicits further complications when applied to women writers. She points out that Middlebrow writing can have negative connotations of “prejudice towards the lower middle classes, the feminine and the domestic, and towards narrative modes regarded as outdated” (Sullivan 15).

The crux of the issue of sorting out Woolf’s Room for modern women readers and writers is that Woolf seemed torn between two strongly opposed personal forces and therefore unable to take a firm stance on either one, often contradicting herself in the process of her thoughts. On the one hand, Woolf wanted to elaborate that centuries of male oppression has set creative women writers behind and given them a disadvantage that is extremely difficult to recover from. On the other hand, Woolf’s stress on the fictionalized character of Judith Shakespeare, past and future, is telling of her impatience for women to suddenly produce works of genius. As Sullivan puts it, “A Room of One’s Own is, in fact, one of Woolf’s most sophisticated theorizations of women’s middlebrow culture, yet this aspect of the essay is often overshadowed by its call for a rebirth of “Shakespeare’s sister” (Woolf 2477) and for more elite
forms of women’s literature” (Sullivan 16). Sullivan goes on to say that in Room, “Woolf carefully avoided direct engagement with the ‘battle of the brows,’ perhaps because relegating any of her female contemporaries to the middlebrow sphere would not have particularly pleased them, and would have thwarted her efforts to support the cultural capital of women’s writing” (Sullivan 16).

Woolf’s essay is ambiguous and somewhat contradictory in other ways. She claims that writing of the best quality is gender neutral or includes both genders—she says it is actually fatal to think manly or womanly when writing, one must instead be “woman-manly or man-womanly” (Woolf 2472). She also makes allusions that ultimately man and woman must come together, such as when she compares the sight of a man and woman getting into a taxi together to “the unity of the mind” (2468). And yet Woolf seems to think that women writers must think more like men, instead of writing their true selves. For instance, she contends that it is also fatal for a woman to let any of her strife, grievances, or rights to justice into her writing. In other words, Woolf writes, it is fatal for a woman to “in any way speak consciously as a woman” (2472). Yet elsewhere in her essay, she reiterates on the necessary mind of the greatest [male] writers, as being able to completely empty their fullness of intellectual thought onto the page, as when she speaks of Shakespeare’s mind as being entirely incandescent and unimpeded (2460). This sentiment does not seem very encouraging to modern woman writers, as it suggests holding something of themselves back when actually freeing their minds is what leads to excellence.

Was there any way, then, that Woolf could have reconciled her two strongest passions: literary genius in which the ‘androgynous’ writer accomplishes a complete “fullness of expression,” a complete convincing of their own truth to their readers, an unparalleled “incandescent mind,” set against her very gendered calling-out of women’s oppression and stunted or altogether absent opportunities for growth? And how should the modern woman writer take Woolf’s conflict of interests?

In her article, The Haunted Room, DeSanti argues that, despite the progress that has been made on the issue, women writers are still impeded
by superficial support networks. She explains that “As far as I can see, women writers need, want, and deserve everything that writers have ever had, but those who can provide it are in short supply” (DeSanti 10). In a creative nonfiction piece about finding and facing demons in her “room”, Lindner explains the effect that Woolf’s essay has on the modern writer in that it adds pressure to an already stressed situation. She clarifies that today’s male writers face the same conflicts, but “because they don’t hear the most brilliant writer their gender produced whispering that ‘A Room of his Own’ will empower wise writing, they are less apt to blame blocks on the places they write in” (Lindner 310). In trying to find the right mental and physical space to write, while comparing her tribulations to other women writers, Lindner found that, in the end, she would “given four walls false power”.

Woolf’s paradox within A Room of One’s Own, which was aptly addressed to budding women writers and continues to have a profound effect on them today, was that she was expecting too much from them without giving them enough credit for what they were accomplishing. Her legendary essay has been beneficial and thought-provoking in many ways, but it is dangerous to expect it to be able to erase women’s complex writing anxieties and enable creative genius all while encouraging them to empty their mind of their female sex in order to create the brilliant writing required to rival that of Shakespeare. As Lindner puts it, “Once the voices proclaiming ‘Women can’t do this and shan’t do that’ were hushed, the Room that represented freedom and power transformed into a different space—interior, psychological, apt to bring forth the difficult memories, doubts, and fears that emerge in the personally demanding task of writing” (310). There will always be obstacles of some kind for those stupid yet clever enough to turn to writing, but the beauty in it is that the best writing takes these obstacles and uses them to create masterpieces.

It is not happening tremendously fast, but woman’s writing is steadily gaining more and more recognition. Elaine Showalter’s well-known book A Literature of Their Own has done much to bring awareness to otherwise forgotten women writers of the past. An organization called the VIDA Count is working to bring awareness to
publishing discrepancies between men and women writers. VIDA’s mission as a research-driven organization is to increase critical attention to contemporary women’s writing as well as further transparency around gender equality issues in contemporary literary culture. It can be observed that women writer’s greatest challenge today does not come from outside in the form of male oppression, but those effects linger instead inside the woman writer’s mind in the form of self-doubt. Despite producing best-sellers and highly received works of literature, many women speak of feelings of not deserving or really earning their success. Leigh Stein explains in her article, Poet, Writer, Imposter, that many women writers today suffer from imposter phenomenon, those sneaky feelings of inadequacy, in the face of actual evidence of professional success. Unfortunately, modern women writers often feel like frauds despite their successes, and Virginia Woolf may be partially to blame for that.

As DeSanti points out, there is a bit of a fascination today with asking writers how they write, as Woolf echoed when she yearned to ask Charles Lamb and others how they wrote their essays (Woolf 2445). Woolf indeed paints a vivid and influential picture of the processes of many men and women writers of the past. However, Margaret Ezell blames Woolf’s now legendarily poor historiography for enduring misunderstandings about early modern women and their writing when she states that Woolf “is a great novelist, an inspired analyst of the process of literary creation—but she is not a great historian and it is unfair to demand that she act in such a role” (Eardley 272). Woolf’s ambivalence about the problem of women and fiction must be taken into account by modern women thinkers. Ella Ophir warns of “a tension in A Room of One’s Own between Woolfs call for historiographical “reclamation work” on the one hand, and her investment in and ideal of literary value on the other—between a conviction about the significance of ordinary women’s life writing and a felt imperative to move contemporary women decisively beyond it” (Ophir 26). Therefore, the modern woman writer should appreciate Woolf’s conflicted attitude and remember where it came from, while using the urgency and pressure of her message to push themselves forward, instead of
stagnating in the overwhelming presence of the continuing "problem" of women's literature.

To conclude, the issues Woolf brings up in her essay have not been solved, but it is essential to keep in mind how much they have changed since Woolf first penned *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf calls freedom and fullness of expression the essence of the art, (2466) but I question whether she would be aware of contemporary women writers' full expression simply because it has not had years and years of celebration and recognition. We do not need a Judith Shakespeare at all. We need, (and, as Woolf failed to notice, already have) a woman writer, or better yet, *writers*, that will make their own names for themselves and inspire others with their creative insights and power with words. There has by no means been a rapid and complete transformation of the problem of women and fiction since Woolf's time, but there has been progress that deserves acknowledgment and new challenges as well. For a woman who argued for the sexless, androgynous mind as a necessity of pure creation, why sell women short yet again with a peroration that calls for the female *equivalent* of the man many regard as the finest writer ever?

Women's writing is going to be somewhat different from men's writing, because in some ways women *are* different from men. It need not be better or worse, because one of its best qualities is its uniqueness. Woolf knew that this uniqueness deserves to be celebrated, but she could not quite get past her conflicted feelings that were a product of both her creative genius, and her appalled consciousness of what it has meant to be a woman and a writer.

**Works Cited**


"I Felt as Though I was Helping Her Torture Him" – Intersectionality & Black Feminism in Octavia Butler’s "Bloodchild"

John C. Polles

Write an essay applying a sociological concept to a piece of science fiction literature read in class. This assignment was completed for Dr. Katrina Bloch and Dr. Stephen Neaderhiser's Sociology of Science Fiction.

Writers Michelle A. Gibson, Jonathan Alexander, and Deborah T. Meem define “intersectionality” as a “complex awareness that we inhabit—are inhabited by—multiple categories of identity and that our experience of several identities taken together may be emotionally, culturally, and materially different than the experience of any one particular identity category by itself” (201). Legal scholar and race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw developed and introduced intersectional theory, and applied it to the experiences of black women specifically by writing that “black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender” (140). Similarly, Patricia Hill Collins, associating similar concepts with “black feminism,” asserts that “black women possess a unique standpoint on, or perspective of, their experiences” with the intersection of both their race and gender (S16).

Octavia Butler’s short story, “Bloodchild,” focuses on an extra-terrestrial society in which Terran males are used as hosts for the eggs of the parasitic dominant species, the Tlics. Because of the subjugated nature of the Terran’s role in the narrative, many interpreted it as an allegorical representation of slavery, and thus applied a post-colonial reading to the story; Butler herself, however, argues that this is not the case, and that it is instead a “reverse-metaphor for patriarchal oppression” (Thibodeau 271). Both of these interpretations can easily function independently from one another, but, given how strongly present elements of both are within the narrative, I am arguing that they are inextricably connected. This connectedness, by extension, then allows the story to be placed well within
the related concepts of black feminism and intersectionality.

Alyson Buckman writes that "Butler demonstrates that the coherent, unitary, static human form is as fictive as the ‘truths’ of that body.” As examples of these “fictive” understandings, Buckman names the ideas “that women are inferior physically, mentally, and emotionally to men”; “that women and peoples of color are aligned with a devious nature and white men with orderly and logical civilization”; and “that women and peoples of color are beasts which must be tamed, dominated, subdued, and/or exterminated” (202). While Buckman does not include “Bloodchild” in her analysis, it is easy to apply these considerations to the story. Applying the interpretation which substitutes the patriarchy with the Tlic and women with Terrans, it is easy to see the perceived superiority of the Tlic. For example, in “Bloodchild,” the Tlic are clearly physically stronger than Terrans, as shown by their ability to entirely encase a human body within their multiple limbs (163). In addition, they are able to subdue Terrans through intoxication, both by stinging them and feeding them eggs which control their emotions (162). Not only is this an effective method of physically subjugating Terrans, but it also indicates a detachment from—and perhaps a distaste for—human emotion. This reinforces Buckman’s assessment that Butler’s writing is critical of the idea that women must be “tamed” and “subdued.” These characteristics firmly place this story in the realm of a feminist critique of patriarchal society.

Compounding this, Amanda Thibodeau has written about “Bloodchild” from a queer theorist’s perspective, chiefly focusing on how Butler has used the story to subvert the construction of gender and challenge related binaries. She notes that, in the story, Tlic “males have little impact on the society,” aside from their (minor) role in reproduction (269). This, then, broadens the allegory to include not simply individual species as representative of different genders, but also the genders of the Tlic themselves. Because female Tlic have lifespans vastly longer than their male counterparts’ (and, indeed, Terrans’), and because of their significant size difference, it is possible to interpret this society as matriarchal, rather than patriarchal (Thibodeau 269). This swapping of genders subverts the typical
heteronormative patriarchal binary in a number of ways, including challenging the perception that women, because of their “submissive” role in reproduction, are incapable of taking an active role in society. For the Tlic, reproduction—the only purpose for which Terrans are present—is of central importance within their construction of society and thus those who are more proactive in this become the dominant gender. Since the female Tlic must impregnate a male after their eggs are fertilized, and must use their physical strength and emotional/psychological manipulation to do so, they have taken on a much more dominant role than the male of the species in reproduction, and are thus the dominant gender. However, Butler still positions them as “female,” as they still produce eggs which require fertilization. This suggests that, since female Tlic are viewed as more dominant in reproduction, this is a cause for their dominance in society; if Western society viewed women’s role in reproduction as less submissive, then, perhaps, women would be viewed as less submissive in society generally.

The “birth” scene is also centrally relevant to this analysis of gender as it operates within “Bloodchild.” Thibodeau describes this scene as a “horrifying re-imagining of a Caesarean section” (269), and Butler’s visceral description of the process reinforces this parallel:

His body convulsed from the first cut. He almost tore himself away from me. The sound he made ... I had never heard such sounds come from anything human. [...] I felt as though I was helping her torture him, helping her consume him. I knew I would vomit soon, didn’t know why I hadn’t already. I couldn’t possibly last until she was finished.

She found the first grub. It was fat and deep red with his blood – both inside and out. (169-70)

Beyond the obvious surgical removal of offspring from another, the emphasis on blood, Gan’s physical reaction, and comparisons to torture make very specific commentary about the nature of reproduction itself: The process is reduced to pain and bodily fluids, divorcing it from any societal meaning that has been placed on the so-called miracle of childbirth. The recasting of offspring, not as the host’s children, but as parasites which, left to their own devices, will kill their hosts is also
significant. This is reflective of a cynicism surrounding, if not childbirth and parenthood itself, how society constructs motherhood and how it is expected of women, often without considering their own desires and preferences.

This study of gender and how it functions within Tlic society provides a solid foundation for a feminist reading of the piece; however, much exists to expand upon that reading and emphasize the intersectionality of the story. Writing critically of feminist discourse dominated by white women, bell hooks asserts:

> If the white women who organized the contemporary movement toward feminism were at all remotely aware of racial politics in American history, they would have known that overcoming barriers that separate women from one another would entail confronting the reality of racism, and not just racism as a general evil in society but the race hatred they might harbor in their own psyches. (375)

This implores white feminists to not simply consider their own experiences with gender and patriarchal oppression, but also how it often intersects with race and how that influences an understanding of how that intersection manifests itself. The same concern with intersectionality holds true in analyzing "Bloodchild." During the previously discussed exposition of the physical strength of the Tlic, as well as their utilization of intoxication, Butler also writes that the Terrans live on a "Preserve" (162), which would evoke images of American Indian reservations for many readers. Due to this association, it fits into Buckman's analysis that people of color are also often dehumanized and thought of as "beasts" in need of containment. Gan states that Terrans are "parceled [...] out to the desperate and sold [...] to the rich and powerful for their political support" (162). Though they are being given and sold for the purposes of reproduction rather than physical labor, the commodification of beings in this sense evoke images of slavery in the American South. So while Butler is depicting these individuals as being subjugated in manners which readers would more closely associate with racial oppression, there are also several ways in which they are oppressed in a more gendered sense as well. The presence of these elements
so early in the short story—in its opening pages—makes it apparent that both forms of oppression are at play in the narrative, which compels the reader to consider Crenshaw’s argument that “any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which black women are subordinated” (140).

The closing pages of the story fully integrate these concepts. In a conversation between Gan and his brother, Qui, regarding the latter’s decision to run away from home rather than be impregnated, Qui states that he was “running inside the Preserve. Running in a cage” (173). This again associates dehumanization with the Preserve, and by extension, racial oppression. Similarly, in an argument with T’Gatoi about whether or not Gan’s family should be allowed to keep their gun, Gan states, “Leave it here! If we are not your animals, if these are adult things, accept the risk” (177). This forces T’Gatoi to acknowledge the dehumanization that occurs on her planet.

This is quickly followed by T’Gatoi declaring that she “must do it to someone tonight,” whether they are willing or not, in reference to depositing an egg (178). Gan observes that “there was nothing in Hoa’s room that she could have used. She would have done it to Hoa on the floor” in reference to the possibility of T’Gatoi implanting the egg in Gan’s sister instead (178). Gan notes that “the thought of her doing it to Hoa at all disturbed [him] in a different way now” (178). The language used here evokes an image of rape, the possibility that Hoa, without her knowledge of the birth process, was not in a proper position to give consent. Thibodeau notes what she refers to as “clichéd erotic language and imagery” within the final scene of the story, and writes of this: “The traditional gender roles are here reversed: the female penetrates the male, who appears virginal and inexperienced, though versed in expectations. The female comforts and reassures with promises to care for the male and their children” (271). Though her analysis is moving toward the goal of a queer reading of Butler’s story, it can easily be applied to my purposes as well. Thibodeau’s noting of yet another gender swap further shows Butler’s attempts to subvert gender binaries as they apply to reproduction. The fact that this emphasis on subversion of the
binary, along with the suggestions of the possibility of rape, exists in such proximity to the dehumanization of Terrans, suggests that they are not oppressed in ways simply comparable either sexism or racism, but in ways that are similar to both.

Taking these elements into account, an “either/or” approach to analyzing “Bloodchild” is not a fully realized analysis. To address the allegory within the story that deals specifically with gender while ignoring the racial elements is reductive; the same is true of doing the opposite. Through analyzing the story from the perspectives of race- and gender-based oppression, and utilizing general black feminist theory as well as criticism of the story itself, it becomes apparent that an intersectional approach must be taken to get the most complete interpretation of the text.

**Works Cited**


Abstract

In Vine Deloria Jr.'s book *God Is Red*, he gives an extensive view of western, Abrahamic religions (namely Christianity) as viewed through the lens of, as well as in contrast to, Native religious beliefs. This contrast highlights several perceived problems with western faiths in their application to the real world and its inhabitants. An important difference that is explored in detail is the way that Abrahamic faiths are tied to historical events as opposed to sacred places, something that causes some serious issues for western religions in the modern western worldview, being one that favors science over all other testaments to truth. This in turn creates further problems when trying to universalize western religious events into universal truths, ones allegedly to be held in a sacred manner by people of all religious backgrounds. I will explore Deloria's vision of western religion in detail, with a spotlight on Christianity. Using his reasoning, we can determine a conclusion towards their validity in a modern society that is far removed from the historical aspects of Abrahamic religions.

Vine Deloria Jr. On Western Religion

Throughout his career as a writer and philosopher, Vine Deloria Jr. has written about several subjects, but one area he is particularly adept at is religion. In his book *God Is Red*, Deloria takes an in-depth look at religion in the western tradition, through the lens of someone brought up in the often underrepresented worldview of the Native peoples of the now United States. His personal experience with this worldview allows him to highlight, compare, and contrast several of the differences between these traditions. While he does take time to discuss other Abrahamic faiths such as Islam and Judaism, his focus is primarily on the religion that has been dominant throughout the history of the United States, Christianity. While several aspects are considered, one that I find to be especially important is the way in which Christianity both finds itself at odds with and fails to keep pace with
several of the conclusions reached by the modern world. This is of particular significance when one is to consider the troubles that arise from the religion’s ties with a temporal, historical scheme. Given that the various accounts in the Bible are all allegedly historically accurate, this is a problem for the religion, and using Deloria’s observations, we will explore this.

To unpack the potential historic validity of Christianity, let’s begin where it all begins, the creation event. Deloria correctly states given that Christianity offers and relies upon a specific historical timeline, its existence within that timeline is of particular importance. Without adherence to the events spoken about in the Bible as being historically accurate, the validity of the faith begins to erode. “Christians are thus stuck with the assertion that the account of Genesis is an actual historical recording of the proceedings whether or not some of the theologians consent to such an interpretation” (85). The creation event not only explains how we arrived on Earth and where the universe came from, but also why we need to adhere to the “sacred facts” put forth by the Bible. I’m speaking of not just the idea of being saved from hell, but also our supposed need to be saved from our own transgressions. Deloria states that “the importance of the creation event is that it sets the scene for an understanding of the entrance of sin into the world” (78). When Adam chose to eat the apple from the tree of knowledge, it marked the moment when the first betrayal of God’s wishes occurred, and sin was first introduced to the world, “Adam being a surrogate for the whole of creation” (79). It is this “sin” that we must be saved from. Luckily for Christians, that is exactly what God intends to do for us. Deloria calls this the singular “major thesis of the Christian religion” (78).

Our sins, ones placed upon us from simply existing in a world tainted by sin, are what get us in deep water with God, and can result in our everlasting suffering in hell after death. Deloria notes that theologians have struggled to explain why such a thing could have happened in a perfectly conceived universe, but that matter is yet unresolved. An olive branch is mercifully extended to us by the very person looking to punish us for things outside our control however, that being Jesus Christ. This means “it is for the redemption of man that the atonement of Jesus of Nazareth is considered to
make sense” (78). Why we must be forgiven by a surrogate of God, for a situation created by the very same God, under circumstances that were entirely under his control anyways, is not explained.

The essential component to the Christian faith is the “fact” that Jesus Christ not only lived as a human two thousand years ago, but more importantly, his birth from a virgin mother, and after his crucifixion, his resurrection and rise to heaven. Science has never been able to replicate these happenings, and things of this sort have never been reported to have happened since, but let us put that aside. These miracles all were relevant because this man was not just Jesus Christ, but actually God himself in human form. The events of Jesus’ death and resurrection are considered to be the singular most important event of the Christian belief structure, as this personal sacrifice was God’s way of showing both his commitment to, and love of his prized creation, humanity. If one is to believe these claims as beings not metaphorical, but historically accurate, it further cements the idea that Deloria proposes, which is the conflict of tying these stories to time as literal past events, an essential component to why they should be considered important (or even relevant) in the first place. “If religion is tied to a sense of time, then everything forming a part of it must have some validity because it occurs within the temporal scheme. Christians are then stuck with the assertion that the account of Genesis is an actual historical recording” (85). Not only is the book of Genesis or the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus confronted with this need to be historically valid, but every part of the Bible, as the “events of the Old Testament were seen as actual events of history in which a divine purpose was gradually unfolding” (103). This includes miracles, great purges of life, the great flood, and various other things that have never happened in the time since they allegedly occurred during the timeframe expressed in the Bible. If this tradition is to be taken seriously, it should give a realistic account of nature that science and the modern world could discover through other means. Once again I must point out however, the miraculous happenings of the Bible have yet to be replicated outside of the stories in the book, and therefore brings into question if they ever happened in the first place.
Deloria, during his comparison of Native religious traditions verses the western, Christian tradition, finds that while Native religion imposes no real demand for conformity, the Christian religion is supposed to be a universal, historical, and truthful account of the spiritual happenings of a time now two-thousand years in the rearview mirror. Much of this stems from the difference between viewing the world from the importance of places existing in space, or events happening in time. This difference is a fundamental one in Deloria's view, and much of the differences in worldviews can be traced back to this: “American Indians hold their lands-places-as having the highest possible meaning.” This puts the actual space occupied by a group or place above when an event may have happened in said place. Deloria states of the western world, that those within this tradition “review the movement of their ancestors across the continent as a steady progression of basically good events and experiences, thereby placing history-time-in the best possible light” (61). As previously stated, when one views their religious tradition with this importance placed upon the factor of time, they are left with the necessity of something happening during a definable place in the timeline of human history. There is something of deep importance when considering the space versus time focus that separates these two worldviews. That is when an Indian actually goes to a sacred place, there is the possibility of having a tangible, immediate experience of the sacred, or of what a westerner might consider the “supernatural”. Followers of historically-based religions do not have this luxury. Their only way to experience a sacred occurrence is through events that have happened in the past, which are, at this point in time, a long time ago. So distant in the past are these events, that all that remains is an abstracted conceptualization of the sacred events they build their religion from. Deloria questions whether or not “religious experience can be distilled from its original cultural context and become an abstract principle that is applicable to all peoples in different places and at different times” (65). This is in opposition to the Native Americans that seek a religious experience through a sacred place, who have no concern for the cultural context under which the original people to find said place found themselves. “It is not what people
believed to be true that was important but what they experienced as true” (66).

In Christianity, given that it assumes itself to be the ultimate truth and the accurate version of reality, the followers of the faith give the timeline expressed in the Bible special favor. When people find themselves at odds with this timeline for whatever reason, be it that they are of another religion or what have you, they become the “deniers” of the faith. This is how Christianity attempts to universalize itself, and have its followers become the sole vendors of historical fact. The focus in the Old Testament is placed upon the experiences of the Hebrew people in the deserts of the Middle East. So if we accept that what is being said is true, we are still left with the question as to why no other groups in the other parts of the world are allowed to tell of their experiences, when every one of them has stories, myths and a developed culture of their own. After stating that the notable occurrences within the lives of the Hebrews have no real reason to take precedence over those in the lives of other peoples, Deloria notes that the Earth is filled with “ruins of incredible proportions relating hardly at all to the history of the Hebraic-Christian peoples.

Yet these ruins are passed off with casual and hardly credible explanations” (108). One would think that if humans were truly the chosen species of God, crafted in his own image, he would have either found a special place for each group in the historical timeline of the Bible. Or perhaps each group’s culture would more closely resemble the Hebraic-Christian model. Unfortunately for Christianity, this is not the case, and the vast differences found amongst the cultures of the world’s peoples and not represented in any way in the story of the God who created (and eventually died for) them. This certainly appears suspect when Christianity is supposedly the universal truth of all humans living on Earth.

Presenting this absolute nature of the Bible’s historical accuracy is bound to cause problems when presented to non-believers. Deloria points this out when he presents the story of Natives sharing their creation story with a Christian missionary after he tells them about the account in Genesis. The Christian man tells a group of Natives about the creation of the earth across six days, the fall of Adam after he chooses to eat the apple forbidden him by God, and following that, the entrance of sin into
the world. They listen closely and politely, without doubt or judgement. After hearing the story from the missionary, they return the favor by sharing an origin story of their own, one explaining the origin of maize. The Christian believes not that he was sharing a story of his culture with those from another, but instead exposing the Natives to the true history of the creation event, and was upset with his listener's inability to accept what he believes to be the truth (85).

The previous story of the missionary and the Natives illustrates the recurring issue between those who take their religion to be factual and those who take it either to be of personal importance or of symbolic significance. The Natives were satisfied with their story serving their own purpose for their culture, as it was only significant to them and they understood this. It was a story shared by their elders, tied to an experience that had significance for the tribe. “At no point,” Deloria points out, “does any tribal religion insist that its particular version of the creation is an absolute historical recording” (87). The Christian however, must struggle with proving to nonbelievers that his creation story is the correct one, as it allegedly happened during a definable time in actual human history. While making these kinds of claims might cause problems during the process of deeper analysis, it serves well to ensure that your culture can claim superiority over those who do not admit to the higher value of your sacred truths. Given the success of imperialism over the past few centuries, (mainly perpetrated by European countries with a strong tie to the Christian or Catholic faith), you can see how well this worked in the minds of the conquistadors and others. We do not see this across North America pre-Columbus, however. While there was likely conflict similar to the wars of the western world over this and that, there was not a drive to force an agenda of religious truth on anyone: “Differing tribal accounts were given credence because it was not a matter of trying to establish power over others to claim absolute truth”. Deloria mentions that there were large confederacies in the Native’s America, serving to claim military control over certain regions. They were made up of large groupings of various tribes with differing religious stories, and while there was no doubts floating amongst smaller groups within the confederacies about who ran the
show, there was never any attempts made to convert the smaller groups to the controlling faction’s religious beliefs (99).

Since Christians claim the Bible contains the true version of reality through a historical context, it shouldn’t be too much of a claim that we would find evidence for this amongst the non-Judaic cultures. Unfortunately for the followers of the Bible, this is not the case. According to a 2012 study from the Pew Research Center, there are many different religions in existence today, and when they attempted to find the religious demographics of the world they were forced to combine many different groups into “Other Religions” and “Folk Religions”. Even when simplified, we are left with 8 major kinds of spiritual beliefs, all varying in different ways (Pew Research Center). Each one of these, other than the category reserved for the non-affiliated, is bound to have its own myths, stories, and take on what happened when the universe came into existence. Deloria challenges Christianity’s claim of the absolute nature of its historical interpretation in “The Spatial Problem of History” in God Is Red. “When one confines religious history to the Old Testament, the short period covered by the New Testament, and the two thousand years of Western European history, then obviously a majority of societies and religions have been left out” (113). The events occurring in the Bible did not leave the small area surrounding modern-day Israel, (Bible Geocoding) so why would they have relevance for people half the world away? Given that hell awaits those who refuse to accept the version of history in the Bible, how could those people who are nowhere near the Middle East be reasonably expected to drop their own religious beliefs and accept the testaments to truth within Christianity? Deloria points out that the ties with the Israelites is not outlandish in the world of religion. He reveals that “the idea that religion was conceived as initially designed for a particular people relating to a specific god falls well within the experiences of the rest of humankind and many conceivably be considered a basic factor in the existence of religion” (204). If Christianity is the ultimate religion, one should be able to show what puts it above the realizations made by other cultures concerning spirituality.

The western world found its religious beliefs challenged greatly when they discovered the new world. Human
history, through the lens of the Christians, up to this point had found a place for most of the groups of people across Europe, Asia and Africa (Stearns). Non-believers in Africa and other places were simply waiting for the good-natured conquerors to come along and put an end to their “barbaric”, non-Christian ways. This gave them some kind of place within the Christian worldview. However, no one suspected the discovery by Columbus of the Americas, two large continents that the western world was not prepared for fitting into the then settled vision of the world: “The trauma of discovery of the New World for the Christian theologians was immense” (257). If the Europeans held the knowledge of the one true religion, how did these millions of people living happily without it for years fit into that worldview? Of course, this challenge to the absolute nature of their faith was to fall short of a massive awakening on the Europeans part. This new discovery was simply another place to exploit, and was filled with tons of Native peoples just waiting to be stripped of their current belief structures in order to be indoctrinated with the supposedly truthful, Christian way. Even if you excuse the need for

European nations to claim these lands for their own in order to strip them of their resources, you’re still left with the need for the Christians to “save” these Native Americans from hell, even if that must be done with warfare and chaos. If they were to refuse the Christian model of truth, the good Christians of Europe were failing them: “Again the use of Christian doctrines served to justify the actions of the Christian nations” (259).

In conclusion, Deloria has made several interesting points concerning the nature and validity of Christianity. The creation event, while lacking the evidence modern science demands for consensus, is necessary for Christians to adhere to as having historical accuracy. It begins the timeline that peaks as Jesus Christ is reborn after his crucifixion. As we understand this to be a definable event that serves to bring importance to the entire religion, we must also find all other events on this timeline to be of similar importance. Deloria does well to point out the obvious issues with this, the incompatibility with both western science and also with the myths of other cultures. Speaking on other cultures, when you bring non-Christians together with a believer attempting to
universalize his concept of history with those who have no way to truly relate to it, it is bound to create conflict. This conflict is evidenced not only by the general inability of varying religious groups to coexist in North America, but by the inability of Christians to accept any other worldview outside of their own. Native Americans have in large avoided these problems when dealing with others, given that their spiritual beliefs have no need for universalization. In closing, Deloria has provided us with some insight as to why this adherence to a historical timeline can cause serious problems for a religion, especially one that expects every living person to accept it as a truthful rendition of history. When you compare this method of spirituality to religious beliefs that place importance on actual tangible places and experiences, ones that have nearly exclusive importance to the one (or group) who is having these experiences, the flaws of the former begin to show.

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Hidden Heroes:  
A Review of Alex La Guma’s In the Fog of the Seasons’ End  
Jennifer Sveda

Write a book review that analyzes the major themes of a work, its contributions to its field, and the author’s credentials. This assignment was completed for Dr. Thomas Sosnowski’s African Civilizations.

Alex La Guma’s book is a powerful look at the inhumanities suffered by black South Africans under the laws of apartheid. In this novel, La Guma follows the underground resistance movement as it struggles to organize and fight for change. Though the book switches perspectives, the main narrative follows a man named Buekes and his efforts to undermine the Afrikaner regime. The story is only a brief look at the everyday actions of these freedom fighters, yet it manages to capture all the terror, determination, and righteous anger of the oppressed.

In the Fog of the Seasons’ End is a novel revolving around the secret apartheid resistance movement in South Africa. The novel occasionally jumps forwards or backwards in time in order to establish context for its characters and their situation; however, the majority of the story takes place in the mid-twentieth century. The narrative follows one main character named Buekes, currently on a mission to distribute anti-apartheid pamphlets and encourage the workers to strike. The novel, written in the third person limited point of view, sometimes switches narrators to other characters that play roles of varying significance: Isaac, Elias, and a nursemaid. By interweaving the stories of different times, places, and characters, La Guma begins to paint a detailed picture of life under the apartheid system. In writing this novel, he attempts to expose the ugly and violent racism that pervaded this era as well as to venerate the average, everyday heroes who, by actions both small and large, helped end this abhorrent system. Though the span of time covered by the novel is relatively short – the main narrative takes place over a few days – La Guma is able to both establish the context of the apartheid system as well as offer a message of hope for the reader, who knows that apartheid will eventually end in real life, if not in the story.
The book begins with an unnamed black man being arrested for actions against the government. This type of "anonymous" story will be repeated in several ways across the span of the book. Perhaps the most powerful example comes from a story about a protest of the passes required by all black citizens; the passes were necessary for black South Africans to work, travel, or live in any area. The protest features vague characters such as the Washerwoman, the Bicycle Messenger, the Outlaw, and the Sergeant. Though originally a peaceful gathering, the police begin shooting into the crowd, killing or injuring most of the protestors. The lack of specific names of people or places in this gruesome scene gives the impression that such violence could and did happen anywhere.

Another example of this technique is used when the author describes the pass system. The system is explained through a hypothetical conversation between a police officer and a black citizen. Though originally a peaceful gathering, the police begin shooting into the crowd, killing or injuring most of the protestors. The lack of specific names of people or places in this gruesome scene gives the impression that such violence could and did happen anywhere.

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La Guma’s use of this storytelling device effectively contextualizes the situation for the reader and encourages him or her to feel indignant or even enraged on behalf of the oppressed citizens.

Though the novel includes multiple character perspectives and delves into memories of past events, the main narrative follows an underground resistance member named Buekes. Buekes is a firm believer in the cause he fights for, occasionally spending time in jail for his actions. Throughout the novel, he is attempting to distribute anti-apartheid pamphlets in his assigned section of the country. Because apartheid protests and other anti-government actions are highly illegal, Buekes must operate discreetly and carefully. The story captures the frustration and determination of Buekes and his cohorts to reestablish an organized resistance movement within the section as well as beyond the control Afrikaners held over their black counterparts. The rules put into place by the apartheid system virtually gave the Afrikaners the power to approve the very existence of black South Africans.

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1 Alex La Guma, *In the Fog of the Seasons’ End* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2012), 101-03.

2 Ibid., 80-82.
nation's borders. La Guma's book shows the intricacy of the resistance system through this short glimpse into one member's life. The use of codenames and the constant alertness of Buekes impresses upon the reader the severity of the situation, while the seemingly-ubiquitous police presence throughout the novel gives a sense of the urgency and danger faced by those involved. Buekes interacts with men of varying commitment to and involvement in the movement, from his friend and sometimes errand-boy Tommy to his accomplice and the novel's other protagonist, Elias. This shows how many people played a role in ending the movement, even those who did not openly or aggressively fight. The novel is a look into everyday operations and the everyday people who ultimately became heroes by their willingness to help in small ways. La Guma's rich descriptions and unflinching depictions of the darkest moments of this period draw the reader in and, despite its limited time frame, gives the reader a thorough understanding of the struggles faced by anti-apartheid rebels.

Alex La Guma was a black novelist born in South African in the early twentieth century. He experienced the apartheid system firsthand and was also one of the brave people who fought against its tyranny. La Guma was chairman of the South African Colored Peoples' Organisation and even spent time under house arrest for his inflammatory writings. He eventually left South Africa in 1966. He has written other works about apartheid, including four other novels on the subject.

Though La Guma's firsthand experience gives him a unique and invaluable perspective on the realities of the apartheid system, it also somewhat limits his credibility as a narrator. By virtue of his position, he can only write about his own experiences or the experiences of others he has heard secondhand. This means that his book cannot fully cover the topic of apartheid, as it undoubtedly varied from place to place and therefore allowed for a wide range of different experiences. La Guma also does not cite any sources for his work; though the book is a work of fiction and therefore does not

necessitate a bibliography, it does leave the reader wondering if his novel is based solely on his own experiences and knowledge of the time or if he incorporated the stories of other South Africans as well.

The book uses language that may be confusing to some readers. The conversations between characters include a mix of untranslated Afrikaans, slang, and vernacular misspellings of English words. Though this certainly adds to the realism of the character interactions, it may impede the understanding of readers who are unfamiliar with the Afrikaans language or the culture of the region. It does not significantly obstruct the flow or readability of the novel, however, and to most readers would likely prove to be only a minor annoyance.

The author set out to provide a detailed narrative of the apartheid system, and in that regard he certainly succeeded. In some instances, the novel may even suffer from a surplus of details, as some parts of the book – for example, Buekes' memory of the carnival where he met his wife – do not advance the main narrative. However, the details are also where the story comes alive, where the horrors of apartheid are exposed, and where the personal risk of those involved is fully understood by the reader. The novel provides a good, human-centered introduction into the daily realities of apartheid in South Africa, but for readers looking for a general history or fact-heavy analysis, a different book might be a better choice. Overall, however, Alex La Guma offers an insightful and powerful look at a dark time in human history through the eyes of someone who experienced it firsthand.

Bibliography


The Extinct Dunkleosteus
Katherine Sherry
Make a pamphlet about an extinct organism with fossils found in Ohio. This assignment was completed for Dr. Carrie Schweitzer's Earth and Life through Time.

[Pamphlet appears on following pages.]
The Writing Center Review

The book uses language that may be confusing to some readers. The conversations between characters include a mix of translated African, English, and vernacular misunderstandings of English words. Though this certainly adds to the realism of the character interactions, it may confuse the understanding of readers who are unfamiliar with the African language or the culture of the nation. It does not significantly obstruct the flow or readability of the novel, however, and most readers would likely prove to be only a minor annoyance.

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Killing Machine

The fish was alive and had an excellent protective body. It could reach up to 10 meters (Williams 1). Its head region was covered in plated armor, making it a resilient foe (Van Valen 259). Even with these remarkable adaptations, the Dunkleosteus’ most well-known feature is its jaws.

There have been experiments done on recreating the jaws of the Dunkleosteus. Research has found that the jaw-closing power was extremely strong, with an estimated maximum bite force at over 6000N in the front of the jaw, and 7400N in the back. The bite force is one of the strongest bites in animals, including modern sharks and fish (Anderson and Westneat 251-262). The rapid gape expansion and strong bite force allowed the jaws to pierce through plated armor, making the fish able to eat anything (Anderson and Westneat 251), including armored animals (Williams 1). It could even eat other placoderms, including other Dunkleosteus (Anderson and Westneat 251).

Bibliography


The Extinct Dunkleosteus
Giant Force of Nature

Katherine Sherry

When one thinks of the scariest ocean predators, they typically think of giant sharks. However, there was one oceanic predator that was just a fish. A fish with massive jaws unlike any aquatic animal, and with a bite force to match.

The Dunkleosteus was a massive fish that lived in the late Devonian Period (Boucot et al. 691). The Dunkleosteus was a placoderm fish, meaning that its head and upper body were encased with heavy armor plating. It was the top predator of the seas between 360 and 415 million years ago (Williams 1). The fish is famous for its powerful bite force and its large size.


Dunkleosteus was one of the earliest big predators, coming before the time of the dinosaurs (Williams 1). Considering its fearsome anatomy, it makes sense that it would have been at the top of the food chain.
**Writing Center Review Vol. 22 Submission Form**

*The Writing Center Review* is an interdisciplinary journal containing select assignments written by Kent State Stark students. It is published each spring by the Writing Center staff as a way to showcase excellence in academic writing. We accept submission from all subjects and at all levels. We would love to read your writing!

**Deadline: February 2018 (check monitors or Writing Center for date)**

**Submission Guidelines:**

1. The piece of writing must have been written for a Kent State Stark course during the Spring, Summer, or Fall semester of the previous calendar year.

2. A professor (either the professor who assigned the work or the professor who acts as your advisor) must nominate your work for consideration by signing this submission form.

3. We generally like to see papers between 750 and 4000 words (3-12 pages). We will consider shorter or longer works, but longer works (exceeding 4500 words) must be exceptional to merit inclusion. We must consider space limitations.

4. Any written assignment is welcome, regardless of subject or course level.

To submit, you will need the following:

1. A copy of your assignment sheet or paper rubric. If you do not have this, we need as much detail about the assignment provided on its own sheet of paper.

2. An electronic copy of your submission. This should not have your name on it. The title must appear on the first page. You may submit it via email in Microsoft Word format to writing__gst@kent.edu. Your name and title should be the only text in the body of the email. Place “WCR Submission” in the subject line.

3. This form with the information on the back filled out completely. Submissions without completed forms will not be accepted.

After you have the assignment sheet/description and this completed form, place them into a large envelope. Do not forget to email your electronic copy. Address the envelope to the Writing Center, MH202. After that, you need only drop it off at the window on the fourth floor of Main Hall, or at the Writing Center in Main Hall, Room 202.
Please fill out the following form completely. Do not forget your signature, it gives us permission to print your work upon acceptance. All information must be provided if your work is to be considered. Please print.

Name (as you would like us to print it):

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Detailed Description of the Assignment (you may use the assignment sheet of the rubric instead; both options need the professor’s name, the course number, and the class name):

_____________________________________________________________________________

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Professor’s Signature:

________________________________________  ___________________________

Name Date

Student’s Signature:

________________________________________  ___________________________

Name Date

Note to the professor: This signature indicates that you support the student’s work and recommend it for publication in the Writing Center Review. Note to the student: This signature gives the Writing Center Review permission to publish your work in this journal, both in print and on our website.