selected writings by students of

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

STARK

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Writing Center Review 2005

All that we are is the result of what we have thought. The mind is everything.
What we think, we become.
- Buddha

The mind is a powerful machine and higher education is its fuel. Students who use this fuel strive to put their new-found knowledge into words, thereby creating scholarly writing. The Writing Center Review is a publication determined to showcase writers who have shown exemplary skills in this process throughout their academic endeavors.

The 2005 issue of the Writing Center Review continues to be an interdisciplinary magazine. This year we published submissions on topics as wide ranging as Political Science, Art, Education, Environmental Geology, Statistics, and English. All of the works demonstrate excellence in writing. Additionally, we have included work from varied levels of academia, publishing submissions from freshman students in entry level classes as well as seniors nearing graduation. It is our hope that this edition will foster future submissions from diverse disciplines as well as varied levels of academia to further represent the academic success of students on the Kent State University Stark campus.

As co-editors, we would like to thank the following faculty members who volunteered their time and knowledge to serve on our selection committees.

Andrea Adolph, Assistant Professor of English
Karen Dollinger, Assistant Professor of Spanish
Ann Galletta, Assistant Professor of Education
Leslie Heaphy, Assistant Professor of History
Bathi Kasturiarachi, Associate Professor of M&IS
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Brad Shepherd, Assistant Professor of Psychology
Thomas Sosnowski, Associate Professor of English
Lisa Vargas, Instructor of Undergraduate Studies

We would also like to thank all the faculty members who have supported The Writing Center Review by referring their students to participate. Without them, we would be looking at a blank page.

We again extend our gratitude to Jeff Grametbauer and the staff of The Print Shop of Canton, Inc for their technical assistance and willingness to work around our busy schedules. Dr. Jay Sloan, our Writing Center Director, also deserves recognition for his continued support and encouragement.

Finally, we want to thank our fellow Writing Center tutors for volunteering their time to coordinate committees and assist us in a variety of other ways.

Sandy Dent, Selection Committee Coordinator
Charity Gingrich, Selection Committee Coordinator and Introductions
Kim Goodhart, Selection Committee Coordinator
Michael Kelly, Selection Committee Coordinator and Introductions
Sheryl Klingbeil, Selection Committee Coordinator and Mailings
Egan Mulroy, Selection Committee Coordinator and Introductions
Lisa Stratton, Selection Committee Coordinator
Tim Yates, Selection Committee Coordinator
We look forward to further growth of the *Writing Center Review* as an interdisciplinary student journal. Congratulations to all the student writers whose work is included in this year's issue. Our appreciation is also extended to the many talented writers who are not recognized in this issue, as length restraints prevented us from publishing all of the excellent material we received. We wish all writers continued success. We hope that the expansion of their knowledge will enable them to become all that they know they can.

*Kelley Hantzsche, Summer Oyster, and Joe Schott* Co-editors
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From Four Colors to the Silver Screen: The Semiotic Similarities Between Comics and Live Action

J. Robert Novak

In one scene of Batman: A Death in the Family, a Middle Eastern terrorist is arguing with an evil American businessman over the launch coordinates for a cruise missile. Though the two are speaking Farsi, the readers know what they are saying. Meanwhile, forty feet or so away, Sharmin Rosen, Israeli agent, Judo-flips another businessman into the air. His gun goes off, loudly, startling Batman and Robin. Meanwhile, the terrorist pushes the launch button slowly, with doubt. Unexpectedly, the missile explodes on the launcher, killing the terrorist and the first businessman, while Batman and the others are thrown down a sand dune. (Starlin 40-41). This scene is a pretty standard comic scene, with the good guys coming out on top, while the bad guys get what they deserve. It’s all pretty black-and-white in its morality, and there are very few words on these two pages, letting the actions speak for themselves. To the lay observer, it may seem that the comic book is a very simple, and therefore “lowbrow” form of entertainment. What this observer may not realize is that there is actually a very complex semiotic system at work, in the form of the medium as well as in the content. Though comic books have their own specialized language of signs, they share many semiotic features with film and stage.

Perhaps the easiest way to start a discussion about the semiotics of comic books is to describe the similarities they have in common with films. Is his book, The Field of Drama, Martin Esslin says that one of the first signs viewers of stage and screen productions encounter is the frame, or the actual screen. He says, “a mystery play preformed in a church will have a different meaning from that...[if] presented at a cabaret” (54). He goes on to say that the program, brochure and the pre-publicity for the show all are symbols which affect the overall meaning of the performance that the viewers take with them.(54). Viewers perceive meaning in regards to a performance before they actually view the performance. They have certain expectations because of the theater, the advertising, etc. In other words, the packaging of the performance informs the reader. Comic books, too, use packaging to create expectation. If one reads a monthly comic, such as Batman, the experience is different than if one reads the trade paperback Batman: A Death in the Family, even though a trade paperback is nothing more than a collection of monthly issues. The format makes the book seem somehow more important. If one reads the graphic novel Batman: The Killing Joke, the book seems even more important, even though it is just a comic book written for this particular format. And it is difficult to read The Complete Frank Miller Batman, the leather-bound hardback edition, without knowing that one is reading a piece of literature. The format of the comic is like the theater, program, and press combined. The way a book is bound informs the reader of a level of importance (example: a book collected in trade format means someone thought the book was important enough to collect). Like a play’s program, comic books have credits to tell the reader who was behind the book. Trade paperbacks and graphic novels often have plot summaries printed on the back, functioning as programs, as well as a testimonial, which is advertising. An example of this is the first trade Paperback of DC/Vertigo’s Preacher, which has the quote “‘More fun than going to the movies’ – Kevin Smith: Writer/Director, Clerks and Mallrats” (Ennis cover) printed along the top. Though the quality of the content in the aforementioned books may vary, the format does signify to the reader a certain level of artistic merit.

Another symbol used on stage and screen productions is set design. This includes the colors and lighting used to evoke a mood (Esslin 73-77). Obviously, this can also be applied to comic books. Esslin states that “the whole mood and meaning of a dramatic performance can be determined by, for example, a basic color scheme ” (75, Esslin’s emphasis). Scott McCloud, in his book Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art, seems to agree with Esslin’s opinion of the power of color. He states, “Colors could express a dominant mood” (190). For example, one could look at the comic book Hellboy. In one scene of the story “The Nature of the Beast,” the eponymous character fights a dragon. Though Hellboy himself is bright red, and the scenes where Hellboy is getting hit are yellow, the use of blacks and grays on the rest of the page give a foreboding feeling (Mignola 13). Compare
this to the graphic novel Rogan Gosh: Star of the East, which uses bright swirling colors to represent an opium dream (McCarthy 7).

McCloud takes the idea of use of color one step further. He states that, in comics, “because costume colors remained the same, panel after panel, they came to symbolize characters in the mind of the reader” (188, McCloud’s emphasis). It is difficult for a comic book reader to see the colors blue, red, and yellow without thinking of Superman. Just think of how many ice cream stands offer red, yellow, and blue “Superman” ice cream.

Though comics do share the above features with the stage and the screen, they also have their own specialized language. For example, the “word balloon” is rarely seen outside of the comic book, nor is its companion, the “thought bubble.” These are the obvious sign system of comic books; most people would know what I mean if I said these terms. Some other sign systems include the use of brackets to indicate a foreign language is being spoken, caption boxes for narration, etc. However, there is a more subtle relationship between the reader and the image on the page, and this comes in the form of the panel, as well as the space between panels. In this relationship, though the images are static, comics take on an even greater similarity to film than they do with light and design.

One does not usually think about the panel, or the space between the panels, known as “the gutter” (McCloud 66). However, as McCloud says, “in . . . the gutter, human imagination takes two separate images and transforms them into one idea” (66). Look back at the example from Batman: A Death in the Family in the beginning of this essay. We know that the terrorist moves his hand toward the button and presses it, even though the pictures do not move. We ascribe motion to the act, even though the act “happens” in two static images. McCloud compares this to “closure” which he defines as “the phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole” (63). When we see a part of something, such as a face obscured by sunglasses, we take for granted that the eyes are there. We do not need to see the eyes; our mind puts them where they belong. Our minds do this to actions in comic books. The two panels showing the terrorist pressing the button represent the action by showing two important points of the act. First, he asks which button to push, then, he pushes it. Our mind, knowing that movement is implied, puts the movement “in the gutter.” The fact that we ascribe movement to the panels is evidenced by my description of the panels. I did not describe the scene as “first, the terrorist is standing, with his hand pointing towards the fourth wall; then, his finger is on the button.” Such a description would be ridiculous, and would be hard to follow as a story. Instead, I added all of the action implied by the panels.

Along with the closure in actions comes a closure in time. McCloud breaks comics down to six different types of transition, five of which imply a certain amount of time between panels. Applying his breakdown of transitions, and referring back to the example at the beginning of this essay, we see several types of transitions. Between the first and second panels, there is a scene-by-scene transition, which implies that these two panels happen at roughly the same time. The second panel, through use of motion lines (another “word” in the language of comics), we know that this panel covers the time it takes for the businessman to be flipped over Sharmin Rosen’s shoulder. The next transition, again scene-to-scene, shows that in this time, the terrorist has not pushed the button, but is preparing to. Next, there is a moment-to-moment transition, signifying that he pushes the button slowly. While the business man is flipped in one panel, the pressing of the button takes two. Finally, as the button is pressed, a scene-by-scene transition shows us the immediate consequence of the action, as well as the state of the other characters (Starlin 40-41).

Another example of the use of panel transitions, and one which will illustrate this point, is in Brian Michael Bendis’s Goldfish. On page 76, he uses a pretty standard long panel to show action in a scene. People clap, and the singer poses and thanks everyone for listening to her. Compare this to the first panel of page 84, where he breaks such a long panel into 5 smaller panels. There is still only one action (or in this case, a lack of action) in the scene, but now Bendis has broken it down. Four men sit at a poker table, waiting to see what the main character has in his hand. The breakdown of the panel into five smaller panels makes the reader’s eye slow down over the panel, simulating a pan shot in a movie. The panels, and the space between the panels, now represent a movie camera.

Because of this relationship between time and space, as illustrated by Goldfish, one can see that comic books function much like films. The panel tells us what to look at, much like the camera in a movie. We see what is in the panel, and imagine that the world exists outside that panel, just like we imagine that the borders of the movie screen can not fully contain the world of a film. Like film, the comic panel can pan and zoom. In fact, in these ways, comic books represent the movie screen. This is evidenced by the cinematic credits page of Goldfish
While at first, comic books look like a simple form of entertainment, a closer study shows a very complic­ated system of signs and symbols is at work. Though comprised of static images, comic books actually share many features with stage and film, such as framing, the use of colors, and the framing of a scene, and in many ways try to emulate films.

Works Cited
History and Overview

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (signed into law on July 26, 1990) emerged from a concern that many disabled Americans faced discrimination in the workplace. In congressional investigations, investigators found that about 43,000,000 Americans suffered from one or more mental or physical disabilities (EEOC, 1990). This number was expected to grow (and has grown) as the general population ages. Investigators had further discovered that not only have disabled people suffered from discrimination in housing, employment, and access to public services but they also had no legal recourse to address such discrimination.

The intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act (A.D.A.) was to bring parity to a group of underrepresented people. The A.D.A. became an adjunct to previous civil rights and anti-discrimination laws that go back as far as the mid 1880’s. The A.D.A. provides a national mandate to eliminate discrimination based on disabilities and provides legal recourse for its enforcement.

The A.D.A. uses the term “disabilities” rather than “handicaps” (as used in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) but only because disabilities is a more popular term. While both terms are interchangeable, additional protections are provided in the A.D.A. than those provided in the Rehabilitation Act. The Rehabilitation Act covers the federal government (as an employer) and private companies doing business with the United States government (under contract). The A.D.A. broadens the protections to virtually all companies and individuals.

The term “Americans” refers to not just United States citizens but to any qualified individual regardless of citizenship or nationality. The A.D.A. does not supplement any other law or the U.S. Constitution but provides additional protections not granted elsewhere. Consequently, any individual may pursue discrimination complaints on the state level or at the federal level. In reality, many of the definitions and terms used in the A.D.A. are identical to those used in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Because terms used in the A.D.A. are identical to the Civil Rights Act and The Rehabilitation Act, case law may be applicable to A.D.A. complaints.

The upshot of the A.D.A. is to make it unlawful to discriminate on the bases of disability in a wide range of employment activities including, job applications, hiring, compensation, promotions, discharge, and training.

Definitions

As previously mentioned, the A.D.A. covers all Americans regardless of citizenship or nationality. Adherence to the law is a legal requirement for all employers of fifteen or more employees. It also includes United States citizens employed with U.S. companies operating outside of the U.S. borders as long as it does not violate the laws of the country in which the company operates. Some exceptions are religious organizations that may employ only those of that faith and also executive agencies of the U.S. government.

The A.D.A. prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. Qualified individuals with disabilities is loosely defined as any individual with a disability who meets the skill, experience, education and other job related requirements of a position held or desired, and who, with or without reasonable accommodations, can perform the essential functions of a job (EEOC, 1992).
Since the A.D.A. does not contain many definitions and specifics for guidance in compliance with the law, much interpretation is left to the courts. The A.D.A. broadly defines the individual with a disability as one who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of his or her major life activities, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment (EEOC, 1992).

Before moving into a more detailed analysis of these requirements, it is important to note that there are individuals who are not protected by the A.D.A. Those who illegally use drugs (i.e., those who use illegal drugs or those who use legal drugs illegally) are denied protection. However, someone who has completed rehabilitation and is not currently using drugs or one who is in rehabilitation, would be covered.

The act does not recognize homosexuality or bisexuality as an impairment. Also included in the list of non-impairments is transvestism, transsexualism, pedophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism, gender identity disorders, sexual behavior disorders, compulsive gambling, kleptomania, or pyromania.

The first requirement of an individual with a disability (physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities) is difficult to define in that it is unreasonable to expect that one could list all impairments that might apply. However, the terms used in the A.D.A. are the ones that also appear in the Rehabilitation Act (EEOC, 1992).

Simply stated, a physical impairment is any physiological disorder affecting one of the body systems. A mental impairment is any psychological disorder affecting the brain, including learning disabilities. The term impairments does not include environmental, cultural, or economic conditions such as eye color, left-handedness, pregnancy, quick temper, muscle tone or a predisposition to disease. The term major life activities refers to the ability of one to care for his or her self in such ways as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, and learning (EEOC, 1992).

When the act refers to substantial limits, it refers to the ability to perform a major life activity in relation to the general population. Furthermore, while an impairment may effect an ability (a need for glasses), that is not to imply that it would constitute a substantial limit to an individual’s major life activities (Cava, 2002). The important point is that the A.D.A. is not an all encompassing list of all possible conditions representing an impairment but rather a broad based approach in generalizing possible impairments.

Other factors to be considered in evaluating an A.D.A. claim are the duration of the illness (a broken leg is short term and does not constitute a valid claim), the nature and severity of the impairment (subjective), and long term impact of the disability.

For an individual to be considered a qualified individual with a disability, one must be able to perform the essential functions of the job with or without accommodations (Mishra, 1995). Furthermore, it is imperative that the employer have a clear and concise job description which outlines the requirements of the job. An employer that changes a job description in such a manner that a qualified individual is no longer able to perform the “essential duties”, risks a law suit as this would cause one to infer intentional discrimination. Employers must be not only fair in their treatment of their employees but they must also be careful to document company rules, polices, and job requirements.

**Reasonable Accommodations**

Once it is determined that an individual is one who is qualified with a disability, reasonable accommodation must be made by the employer. Again, reasonable accommodation is rather subjective. However, the law does lay down some broad guidelines. An accommodation will change the environment such that one with disabilities will enjoy
equal opportunities. Those equal opportunities apply to job applicants and existing employees so that they may enjoy equal benefits of those without disabilities.

Some of the types of accommodations that most of us have seen include special parking places for easy access to facilities, wheelchair ramps, and disability friendly rest-rooms (Mishra, 1995). Restructuring of a job would be required unless the restructuring greatly alters the essential functions of the job. Therefore, an employer may only shift nonessential functions away from the disabled individual (Pine, 1999). Since there is a near infinite number of jobs with possible job descriptions coupled with a large list of possible disabilities, accommodations are subjective. Thus an employer has a lot of latitude in restructuring a job as long as it does not overtly (or negatively) impact an individual with disabilities.

Reassignment to a vacant position is a viable alternative for an employer with a disabled employee. However, the option of reassignment is an option only if job modification would not cause an undue hardship on the employer. Furthermore, reassignment can not be used in a discriminatory manner or in a way which excludes or reduces the disabled to an undesirable position.

Reassignment should not involve a reduction in pay or benefits unless it represents the pay and benefits of non-disabled individuals performing the same tasks. Additionally, the reassigned individual must be given ample time to master the new position. As with all other facets of the act, specifics are not established, but courts will determine the legality of such actions on a case by case basis based on what a reasonable person would expect. It is also important to note that an employer is not permitted to reassign a person if that reassignment violates a seniority provision of a union contract or a company policy which is fair and uniform (Crampton, 2003).

Furthermore, no employer is required to meet the needs of a qualified individual with a disability if that action would put undue hardship on the employer. Although specifics are once again absent, undue hardship is one which would force the employer to incur a large expense or could only be achieved with great difficulty. These factors might vary with the size and income of the employer. Congress did provide some tax relief in allowing a limited tax credit for structural improvements that would benefit the disabled (IRS form 8826).

In determining the extent of reasonable accommodations, an employer should use a standard problem solving approach. The employer should analyze the essential requirements of the job (ideally, the matter should already have been covered in a previously defined job description). The employer needs to consult with the individual alleging a claim so that they may ascertain any limitations in the performance of the job and what accommodations that may be helpful. They also need to assess the effectiveness of such accommodations. In the event of several possible solutions, an employer might be wise to consider the preference of the individual. This multi-step approach provides a brainstorming approach to determining the best way to achieve a mutual goal (Mishra, 1995).

Enforcement and Defenses

Individuals who assert a claim under the A.D.A. must do so through the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (E.E.O.C.). The E.E.O.C. will then either pursue the case on the individual’s behalf or more likely they will issue a “right to sue” letter which allows the individual to pursue the matter in federal court. Additionally, many states have similar nondiscriminatory laws and a lawsuit may be initialized in state court. Relief sought by the individual may include back pay, reinstatement, promotion, attorney’s fees, compensation, and/or punitive damages (Cava, 2002).

A disturbing trend, however, is that the E.E.O.C. has been deluged with complaints at a time when the agency is understaffed. This has resulted in insufficient investigations into complaints and may be causing many important issues to go unresolved (EEOC, 1992). Additionally, failure of the E.E.O.C. to pursue complaints then shifts the
burden of legal representation onto the disabled individual. These people are the least likely to be able to afford competent representation as the disabled are often unemployed and not in a strong financial position.

It should be obvious to any employer that actions taken by it in the form of retaliation against an individual because of asserting a claim would be illegal. Furthermore, it is unlawful to coerce, interfere, or intimidate an individual for claiming rights under the A.D.A. (Percy, 2001).

A common complaint by those who allege discrimination is that of disparate treatment. Disparate treatment is treatment of a disabled individual that is different from that of a non-disabled individual. While technically, disparate treatment is a difference in treatment that can either be positive or negative, the A.D.A. concerns itself with negative disparate treatment. Equally important for an employer is the importance of realizing that there is a difference between acting illegally in disparaging an employee and that of maintaining an employment requirement that fairly represents the essential functions of a job.

Disparate treatment, under the A.D.A., is similar to that under Title VII and case law may be applicable and provide guidance for employers. For example, an employer shows disparate treatment towards an employee if that employer excludes that employee from staff meetings because the employer does not want to see a severe facial disfigurement that an employee may have sustained. The employee is being treated differently (and negatively). The law would even extend to the point that an employee who is shunned because of AIDS, would be considered disparaged. There is a fine line between disparate treatment and workplace harassment. Case law and legal protection for those harassed is plentiful.

The employer should strive for clear and uniformly applied standards. All uniform policies must not only meet any constraints imposed by the A.D.A. but they must also be consistent with all other state and federal laws.

If an employer chooses to assert a claim that a reasonable accommodation would cause undue hardship, substantiation and evidence must be provided as mere assertion is not sufficient to defend against an A.D.A. claim of discrimination (Petesch, 1999). Indeed, an undue hardship for one employer may not be an undue hardship for another employer. The undue hardship provision of the A.D.A. has its roots in the Rehabilitation Act and employer guidance towards proper accommodation may be found there.

Employers may have several defenses to an A.D.A. discrimination claim. Cost would be a factor to consider, especially for smaller firms. Additionally, if an accommodation causes a disruption to other employees or to the functions of the business, that would be a valid defense to the refusal of a reasonable accommodation (that is, it would, in essence, be an unreasonable accommodation) (Crampton, 2003). An employer, however, can not assert a valid claim if the employer legally refuses an action while illegally refusing an alternative (viable) action.

While the cost of compliance with the A.D.A. is a factor to be considered by an employer, the cost of defending as A.D.A. discrimination case can be costly. Still, employers prevail in over ninety percent of the cases resolved in federal courts. Individuals fair slightly better in E.E.O.C. settled disputes, although not significantly (Crampton, 2003).

While many employers believe that they should have complete control in managing their businesses and workforce, accommodating those with a disability may reap benefits. If an employer has a group of employees who must lift heavy items during the course of a day, an A.D.A. complaint alleging disability with regards to the essential function of lifting, may lead to a resolution which eliminates or greatly reduces the lifting requirements for all employees. This action may reduce costs for the employer and increase productivity in addition to increasing the moral of the employees. Accommodating an individual with disabilities can be a winning combination for employers and employees. No employer should want to lose any of its greatest assets (its employees).

All of the aforementioned reinforces the belief that today’s human resources department is a complex organization
that is more attuned to the complexities of legal (national and international) issues than at any other time in our history. Each action and reaction of an employer hinges on a myriad of often undefined laws and interrelated regulations. The A.D.A. does require the E.E.O.C. to coordinate their efforts between the A.D.A. and the Rehabilitation Act so that consistent standards apply between the two. However, this does not guarantee legal clarity for the employer.

A Summary and the Future of the A.D.A.

The A.D.A. is an extension of previous laws that have been passed to bring parity and equality to all Americans. Like all laws, including the Constitution, the A.D.A. is a "living document". It addresses matters that need attention today and it is also a document that can be modified to address the needs of those in the future. Technology and changing cultural beliefs will mandate revisions in this and other civil rights laws.

The human resource department will be required to constantly monitor legislation and modify existing corporate rules to remain in compliance with U.S. laws. Employers will do themselves a great favor if they act in good faith to accommodate those with disabilities and therefore take a proactive role in establishing fair and uniform treatment for all of their employees. The A.D.A., like other laws, is not a panacea that guarantees that fairness will always occur for all people. It does provide an avenue of approach for those who are aggrieved but does not assure utopia.

Legal restrictions are required to combat the tendency of humans to often act inhumanly to their fellow human beings. It would be nice to not need these laws, but until (or if) such time as people change their inherent ways, safeguards must be in place to rein in abusive practices.

Discharges account for nearly fifty percent of A.D.A. claims. As the workforce ages and downsizing remains the norm, employers will be faced with A.D.A. claims whether or not such discrimination does take place (Crampton 2003).

Ironically enough, since the inception of the A.D.A. there are fewer disabled Americans (as a percentage) who are employed. Furthermore, the disabled are employed working fewer hours than those not disabled (Crampton, 2003). Whether this trend continues or not remains to be seen. It may represent an employer's ability to more discreetly avoid the disabled or it may be an anomaly, but only time will tell.

References


Questioning "Park on Sunday"
Julia Hahn

As I slowly walk through Lazar's Art Gallery on a Monday afternoon, my eyes take in the many different works of art surrounding me. Each one is so interesting in its own way, but there is one in particular that is begging for my attention: "Park on Sunday" by Clyde Singer. It is not the beautiful way he painted the bronze and orange leaves on the massive trees in the background or the way he perfectly made the park-goers blend in with almost everything else in the painting—it is the woman walking through this park wearing a lime green suit that seems to be waving to me as I pass her by. Her brightness catches my eye, and I begin to examine "Park on Sunday" more closely.

Standing near the opposite wall on which "Park on Sunday" is displayed, I wonder exactly which park this is and what part of the country it is in. Is this park even in America? A giant, dark statue stares down at the people in the park, and I try to remember if this is a famous statue I have seen before. Which statue is it, and does its significance have anything to do with what city this park is located in? Judging by the bright oranges and reds and yellows of the trees, I assume that it is fall, and I wonder if this park is in the northeastern part of the country, perhaps in New York City or Philadelphia. Carefully examining the painting, I notice that almost everything in the painting is somewhat blended together, as though there are no definite borders to anything. I wonder why Singer painted his work this way, and was there a purpose to this style? My eyes are again drawn to the vivid, lime green suit of the woman, and I wonder if she is to be my focal point? Her outfit and bright, blonde hair clearly make her stand out from the rest of the drab colors in the painting, and I wonder why she is so defined rather than blended. Is she to be seen clearer than the rest? Is she meant to stand out? The style of the painting seems to point her out to me, making her appear to be an important, valued person, and I wonder if the artist knew this woman and maybe even loved her. Why did Singer give no color to any of the other Sunday park-goers and why are they all wearing practically the same thing? Their outfits are those of the roaring twenties, and this observation makes me question what year this walk in the park is supposed to be taking place. If it is perhaps from an earlier decade, why is the woman's style so modern? More and more questions pop into my imagination as I stare at the painting, so I move in for a closer look.

From this view of "Park on Sunday," my attention is drawn more towards the way Singer uses light and contrast in his work. Although it appears to be a dreary, fall day, the sun is subtly featured in the painting. Its rays are shining on the woman and the spot where she is walking. Is this possibly some type of religious metaphor? Does the sun mean anything at all? Looking at the trees, I realize that the sun is also shining on the tops of them as well. Why does everything else in the painting look so dark and foreboding? Using this style of lighting technique, I wonder what Singer is trying to tell his viewer. My imagination is racing with questions about this painting, so I move directly in front of it to examine the painting more closely.

As I stand a foot away from "Park on Sunday," my observations seem to turn more towards how it is painted and exactly who the woman with the green suit is. Standing so close to the painting, I notice that it is even more blended together than when I first saw the work. How did Singer create this effect? Was there a purpose for doing this? Looking at the paint strokes, I can see that some of the objects in the painting are created with short, heavy-painted strokes while others are long, light strokes. Did he specifically choose to paint this way, and if he did, how did he choose which objects to use short strokes for and which for the long strokes? What kind of paint did he use, and what inspired him to paint this setting? Who are the people in it and does he know any of them? Pondering this question for a moment, my mind comes back to the woman. Closely examining her, I can see that she is holding something, although it is not very clear. What is she holding, and where is she taking it? Judging by her outfit, I imagine that she is on her way to work. The expression on her face is unemotional, and I wonder what she is thinking as she is walking through this park. By the way Singer has painted her hair being pushed back by the wind and her posture as she is walking, she looks as though she is in a hurry, and I wonder if she is busy. Perhaps she is a businesswoman or a lawyer, and what she is carrying is a briefcase—maybe she is late for an appointment. Is this portrayal in some way a reflection of Singer's life? Or is it a portrayal of how he sees everyone else's life?

Clyde Singer's "Park on Sunday" is an interesting, creative piece that causes curiosity in its viewers, including myself. The painting catches my eye, first with its bright orange trees, and then again by the mysterious woman in the
It is not even the many different types of strokes Singer uses. The one fact that draws me to this particular painting is my effort to avoid what John Berger calls "mystification," the process of explaining away what might otherwise be evident (112). I want to examine this painting because I know nothing about it. I want to question it and figure it out, and I want to do this only for myself. Why should I be told to look at this particular painting? Why should someone else tell me what to think about it? I have a mind of my own and I am able to ask my own questions, and I am therefore able to get my own answers. Mystification is exactly what I was avoiding by visiting Lazar's Gallery and viewing a piece of artwork that I chose myself. Many people can only examine a piece of work through mystification, with others telling them what to see. I refuse to accept mystification as a way for me to look at it—I can decide for myself that a painting is beautiful, and "Park on Sunday" truly is.

Works Cited
Cripple-Go-Round
Allen Hines

Nearly everyone has used the expression “I could just kick myself” after saying or doing something stupid. Some have even used the more extreme version: “I could just slit my wrists.” Most people just leave it at that. But for some young people, it is not just an expression; they actually do hurt themselves. I started early. At the age of eight, I felt rage at having to use a wheelchair and frustration because I could not express myself to others without an interpreter. So, I began doing what is known as “cutting.” A crafty boy, I was adept at shaping common objects, such as coat hangers and even some of my toys, into instruments of self-torture. My arms bore most of the cuts because there, they were easy to explain away as accidental scratches from crawling on the floor. I was not always lying when I told my parents this. Once, I found an exposed carpet staple and slashed my hand with it. When I cut into my skin, I felt a sense of control. The angry, red droplets seemed to symbolize my rage, and I felt better for getting them out. Three years later, I was still cutting, having found no better way to deal with my emotional pain. Then, a ride at a Pennsylvania theme park changed my life from depression to optimism.

I hear screams of people on amusement park rides and naturally turn my head toward them. The screams come from young people who are in sight one second and gone the next. Pointing toward the noise, I say, “Ooh, that one.” My family follows as I get in the queue. The marquee outside the ride excites me. “The Scrambler,” it says. “Do you have what it takes?” Rays of the sun reflect off of the metal of the machine and, for a moment, I dream of mowing people down to get to the front of the line. I decide this is unnecessary because the line is short. Soon, I am placed into the black and red contraption. I sit on one side of a car with my mother; a couple of strangers sit across from us. The strangers kiss and the man says, “Trust me honey, this’ll be great.” From a stall near the ride entrance emanates the smell of spun sugar. Long metal bars clamp down in each of the rides’ cars, more for a sense of security than actual protection. Garbled speech comes from a loudspeaker, something about remaining seated—not a problem for me. With a whine, the giant cylinder in the center of the ride begins to rotate as the ride starts. On the other side of the ride, the smell of buttered popcorn permeates the air. The spokes on top of the ride turn with the central cylinder, lazily at first, then speeding up steadily until they whistle, as if cutting the sky. Centrifugal force is felt by the passengers in the cars at the ends of the great spokes of the axle. The cylinder becomes the center of gravity with the cars orbiting like asteroids, barely missing each other as they hurtle through space. The woman across from me screams. Her cheeks flap. Her eyes bulge. And her hair floats through the air like so many tamers’ whips. Now at full speed, I inhale the best smells I can ever remember. Sweet cotton candy and savory popcorn seem to meld into one succulent aroma. We spin at a speed that blurs the area surrounding the ride, compelling me to grab the sun-warmed bar above my knees. Gravity presses on my chest, causing my breathing to become labored. At any moment, my diaphragm may fail to expand; the moribund feeling is exhilarating. I look for my father, who decided to sit this one out, but I see only blobs of color. The tallest of those blobs must be him, I decide. Suddenly, the man across from me screams. His hair is blown back, revealing a receding hairline. His face is flushed and gaining a green hue, much like a cartoon character. Then, the whirlwind slows; the ride is ending. I recognize my father again. He stands by my wheelchair grinning as the man across from me gets off the ride and hurries away, covering his mouth with his hand. The woman follows, clucking I-told-you-so’s. I turn to my mother. “That was great,” I say breathlessly, my hands still fastened to the long metal bar. The ride operator appears at my side. “Hey buddy, wanna go again?” he says, winking. “Yes!” I scream.

Though it may not seem like much to most people, the offer of an extra ride is a crucial point in my life. My life is not so horrible, I realize on the car ride back to our hotel. I roll up my sleeves and look at my arms. What am I doing to myself? After all, how many other kids get to ride twice without standing in line again? Life as a cripple has some perks after all. In another week, my family and I go home. I gather all of the wire coat hangers I have strategically strewn about my room and put them in the laundry room, where they belong. After that, I pick up all the toys that I had used to hurt myself, throw them into a cardboard box, and stow it in a dark corner of my closet. Again looking at my arms, I ask my mother for a few bandages to cover the scabs, so that I would not be
tempted to pick them. She smiles as she hands them to me, thinking I am finally giving up that nasty childhood habit. Years later, in a tearful moment for both of us, I confessed to my mother what I had been doing. I see a psychiatrist who prescribes three different mood-leveling drugs. I take them, but I do not need them. My medicine came from an amusement park in Pennsylvania, and it was a cure-all.

"People who cut themselves are often full of intense emotional pain, but they have difficulty relieving the tension this causes in the usual ways. They may think that they have to be strong, and so they may not allow themselves to cry. They may have been taught as children that expressing emotions is wrong. But the tension inside their bodies and their minds becomes almost unbearable, and they find that cutting themselves somehow relieves that tension. ... Sadly... those who cut themselves are more likely to commit suicide later if they [do not] get help with their underlying problems" (Cutting).

I was on track to be one of the thousands of young people who commit suicide each year. Yet that one question in a juvenile's mind saved me: How many other kids get to ride twice without standing in line again? This question got me to stop hurting myself, and to get help. Had I not asked this question, this piece of paper might still be blank.

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Sisters in the Spirit: Black Women Preachers Hearing the Call

Marianne Thomas-Jackson’s “Sisters in the Spirit” explores gender inequality in the African Methodist Episcopal church. Written for an independent investigation with Professor Laurie Delaney, she continues on to investigate this church’s history and the autobiographies of its first female preachers. She finds that their religious beliefs led them to change church history as well as the society around them.

“We may be debarred entrance to many pulpits (as some of us now are) and stand at the door or on the street corner in order to preach to men and women. No difference when or where, we must preach a whole gospel” (Julia Foote). In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries many black women preachers like Julia Foote found themselves barred from preaching the word of God in the church on the basis of their gender. They were refused the opportunity to become licensed and ordained officially licensing and ordination had been historically man’s domain. Because of their unflinching belief in the Holiness Tradition (the belief that God called one to preach through the Holy Spirit, by way of visions or dreams), these pioneering black women were empowered to pursue their preaching careers in spite of the lack of support from society and the derision of their black male counterparts preaching from the pulpit.

Bettye Collier Thomas says in her book, Daughters of Thunder, that “Women imbued with the doctrine of Holiness believed that no man or institution could sanction their right to preach, that this was the sole prerogative of God” (17). The western worldview of religion has historically pigeonholed women into a sphere where their voices have been muted in the church and their status in the church polity, as compared to men, has been secondary at best. Alette Hill, in her essay “Understanding Gender Shaping Institutions”, states, “Through the ages, women in western religions have been informed by male leadership, of a variety of “divine” laws that forbid them to study the scriptures, pray certain prayers, talk in church, speak to men on the street, appear in public without a veil, or have anything to do with, according to Martin Luther, “divine services, the priestly offices, or God’s word” (Hill 71).

By investigating the history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, its radical preaching women, and their autobiographies, I will demonstrate how their tenacious belief in their “call” provided the impetus to change church history, as well as societal thinking as it regards to women preachers. Though there were many black women preachers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that were certainly instrumental as pioneers, I will only focus on the “firsts” in accomplishments within the AME and AME Zion Churches. The records show, according to the census from 1870 to 1890, that the majority of African Americans were Methodists. Research by Dr. Bettye Collier Thomas, Director of Bethune Museum Archives, Inc., an institution that documents and preserves African American women’s histories, shows that the first black women evangelists to appear were affiliated with the AME and AME Zion Churches.

After escaping to the north, many slaves were drawn to the teachings of John Wesley and his Methodist Church. Methodism provided the slaves with an easy to understand doctrine and one that stressed self-improvement, and the adherence to Holiness and Sanctification. Even though Wesley allowed women to evangelize, and perform as local preachers, he did not believe that women should be ordained. This is the worldview to which Richard Allen, a former slave who was converted at the age of seventeen, also subscribed to. After purchasing his own freedom for two thousand dollars Allen found himself in Philadelphia licensed to preach to the other blacks attending St. George’s Methodist Church.

The already segregated black members found themselves mistreated and pushed aside by the white members while attempting to worship at St. George’s. They were only permitted to worship during the early morning hours before the white members arrived for their worship period. As more and more slaves joined the congregation, the white members became resentful of their presence. After witnessing some of his followers being rudely snatched from their knees while praying, Richard Allen withdrew from St. George’s along with all of the black members. In 1786, the group purchased a small blacksmith shop and moved it to a small lot on Sixth Street.

The new church, called Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church has remained in this same location, undergoing reconstruction as needed, from then until present day. It is now a registered Historical Site in Philadelphia. In 1816, Bishop Francis Asbury ordained Richard Allen the first black bishop in the Methodist Church history. Although its membership was and is all black, its doctrine and government remains Methodist. The Bethel
African Methodist Episcopal Church was the first assembly to split from the Methodist Church for reasons of racial injustice. Unlike the black members in Philadelphia, the black Methodists in New York separated from the Methodist Church in order to worship and share their spiritual gifts among themselves. These members led by Abraham Thompson, June Scott, and Thomas Miller, all licensed black male preachers, received permission from Bishop Asbury to form their own church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in 1800. Their new church was located on Church Street. The young congregation remained under the leadership of the white Methodist preachers, depending on them to lead their worship and license and ordain them as they saw fit. Unhappy with this arrangement, some of the black members began to grumble and complain. Soon, their leader, Thomas Simpkins, was expelled from the church. He and his followers left the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and purchased a small lot on Elizabeth Street nearby. This new church was called the Asbury Church. Desiring to control their own government within the church, all three new churches began to hold their own General Conferences, four times a year in order to license and ordain their own men, but not their women.

According to History of the AME Church.org., this is the mission of the AME Church:

The mission of the African Methodist is to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and environmental needs of all people by spreading Christ's liberating Gospel by word and deed. At every level of the connection and in every local church, the African Methodist Episcopal church shall engage in carrying out the spirit of Christ which the A.M.E. Church values, that is to seek out and save the lost and the needy.

During this period there were a few black women evangelists, none of whom were officially licensed to preach, let alone ordained in the hierarchy of the AME Church. These black women were pioneers in a field dominated by men and in a society that supported the notion that women should remain in their domestic spheres. The women I will discuss are: Elizabeth (records contain no last name), Jarena Lee, Amanda Berry Smith, Julia A.J. Foote, and Mary J. Small.

Elizabeth was the first black woman of record to receive her call from God to preach the gospel. Thanks to a tract printed by Quaker friends who were privy to her oral history, there is a small written biography for Elizabeth. She was born in 1766, a slave in Maryland; she was freed by the year 1796. Uneducated and unable to read, Elizabeth doubted her ability to follow her calling to preach. She was only twelve years old when she was converted and experienced a vision. Describing the experience she states that, “She felt sustained by an invisible power” (Collier-Thomas 42). Her attempts to follow God’s call were met with discouragement from both men and women. She was told that she wasn’t meant to preach and she wasn’t fit for the rigors of an itinerant life (traveling as an evangelist was the only alternative to preaching in the church for women during this period). Struggling with doubt and the traditional role expectations of women, she resisted the call to preach until 1808.

Elizabeth began her preaching career in Baltimore speaking to Quakers, who advocated for women who preached. Although she was denied entrance to many of their homes and church meetings because of their fear of being expelled from their church membership for allowing a former slave and a woman to preach, she continued because God had called her to do His will. When her authority to preach was questioned it is reported that Elizabeth responded thusly, “Not by the commission of men’s hands: if the Lord had ordained me, I needed nothing better” (Collier-Thomas 42). Elizabeth traveled all over the United States, even venturing into the south and risking re-enslavement, to fulfill her obligation to answer God’s call. Her preaching career spanned fifty years after which she retired to live among the Quakers until her death. Unlike Elizabeth, Jarena Lee was born free in 1783 in New Jersey. Lee has the distinction of being the first woman to initiate the discourse on woman’s licensing and ordination. Little is known of her childhood except that she was hired out at the age of seven by her parents to work for white families. While working for these families she learned skills as a domestic and also learned to read and write. This was also the period when she was introduced to the Methodist religion. At the age of twenty-one, Jarena had a religious awakening after which she moved to Philadelphia in search of a church family. Lee was working as a domestic when she went to hear Reverend Richard Allen of the African Methodist Episcopal Church preach. After his sermon she joined the black Methodists.

After receiving the call to preach from God in 1809, Lee went to Reverend Allen for permission to preach God’s word. Allen denied her permission to preach on the grounds that a woman preacher went against the Methodist
doctrine. Believing that God had called her to preach, Lee began her own ministry. In the interim, Jarena married and bore two children. In 1817, she approached the now Bishop Allen for permission to preach. He still insisted that there was no precedent for women preachers in the Methodist church, but since membership was much needed (by then Allen had been ordained as the first black bishop in the Methodist Church), he granted her permission to speak at prayer meetings only. Converted and filled with the Holy Ghost, Lee preached at as many prayer meetings as she could while ignoring the negative comments and derision from the black male preachers. Lee was a successful itinerant preacher for many years, but she never pastured a church. Collier-Thomas writes, “It is probable that once ministers discovered that she posed no threat to their ministry, they embraced her efforts. As a female itinerant minister and exhorter, she was a novelty and could be used to attract new members and financial support for the Church” (45). Lee wrote and published her spiritual autobiography in *The Life and Religious Experiences of Jarena Lee, A Coloured Lady, Giving an Account of Her call to Preach the Gospel*, in 1836.

Between the years 1836 and 1849, almost three thousand copies of her book had been printed and distributed. This is key to the scholarship of black women preachers. The writing and publication of Jarena Lee’s autobiography opened the floodgate for other black women preachers to document their struggle for equality in the Church. In his book, *Sisters in the Spirit*, William Andrews states that Lee’s book “launched black women’s autobiography in America with an argument for women’s spiritual authority that plainly challenged traditional female roles as defined in both free and the slave states, among whites as well as blacks” (16). One black woman who asserted her spiritual authority with her flamboyant preaching style and her own autobiography was Amanda Berry Smith. She was the first black woman preacher to gain international acclaim as a leader in the Holiness Movement.

Smith was born a slave in 1837 in Maryland. She was one of thirteen children and taught herself to read and write. Like the black women preachers before her, she was exposed to the Methodist religion as a domestic for white families. Amanda wasn’t called to preach until after her marriage to a black minister. Her husband was abusive during their marriage and Amanda found solace in prayer. During a serious illness, she had a vision in which an Angel showed her preaching to thousands of people. After surviving her illness and struggling for months over the validity of her vision and her ability to fulfill God’s call, she was converted.

Living in New York in 1870, and affiliated with the Sullivan Street AME Church, Smith began her career as an evangelist (the only avenue open for a woman preacher). Her fame as a Holiness leader spread throughout the country. In *Women of Thunder*, Collier-Thomas explains the belief in the Holiness Tradition thusly, “The Holiness Movement embraced six essential tenets. Its doctrine

- Centered around experience,
- Had roots in scripture,
- Emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit,
- Created an aura of freedom that encouraged experimentalism,
- Had a reformist and even revolutionary nature, and
- Encouraged the formation of sects” (13).

She also states, “The Holiness Tradition played a central part in the struggle of women, particularly black women, to preach. Believing in holiness was the basic source of these women’s empowerment” (12). Amanda Berry Smith spent the rest of her life evangelizing throughout England, Africa, India, as well as the United States; she risked enslavement many times traveling in the south. By the 1890’s, she was much sought after by the white feminist reformers. She was aware of her attraction as an exotic novelty in white circles, but she was also aware of the validity for her ministry that accompanied her association with these women. Some of the women referred to her as “washerwoman” instead of evangelist. It is reported that when they were around her, they felt none of the discomfort as with other more intelligent black reformers of the time. Since Amanda was uneducated they didn’t feel threatened by her. This information, discovered in her spiritual autobiography, establishes the fact that these black preaching women not only had to contend with sexism in the Church, but also racism, and classism. Amanda caused quite a stir when she was the first woman to attend an AME annual conference in 1872; the black clergymen felt threatened by her presence because they believed she was there to push for the ordination of women, which was a threat to their jobs.

In 1893, Amanda retired to Chicago where she founded an orphanage for black children and wrote her spiritual autobiography, *An Autobiography: A Testimony of the Lord’s Dealing With Mrs. Amanda Berry Smith*. By the time of her death in 1915, Amanda was known as a noted preacher, social reformer for her missionary work in Af-
Although Amanda Berry Smith wasn’t concerned with ordination, the next two black women pioneers were. On the subject of ordination, Berry wrote, “God knew that the thought of ordination had never once entered my mind, for I had received my ordination from Him, Who had said, ‘Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you might go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit might remain’” (37). The fruit of her struggle did indeed remain and provide empowerment for others who came after her like Julia A.J. Foote and Mary Small. The ordinations of Julia Foote and Mary Small in the latter half of the nineteenth century created a break in the AME Church history as well as causing bitter debates that crossed all denominational lines on the issue of women’s place in the Church.

Julia Foote was born in Schenectady, New York in 1823. After moving from New York, she became a member of the AME Zion Church in Boston. Not unlike some of the other pioneering black women preachers, Julia was at first opposed to women preachers. When she received her call to preach after her marriage, Julia did not relish the idea of preaching in such a hostile environment. But, she knew the call to preach came from God, so she began her preaching career despite the objections and conflict that arose between her and her family members. She traveled much as the women preachers before her had out of necessity. Her preaching career spanned over fifty years and she preached in California, the Midwest, the Northeast, and Canada. She spoke to thousands both white and black who filled the camp meetings in anticipation of her preaching the Gospel. Her autobiography, A Brand Plucked From the Fire, written in 1879, speaks to the feminist argument for the inclusion of women in the Church polity.

Her ordination in 1895, as the first woman to be ordained as a deacon in the AME Church and the second woman to be ordained as an elder, in 1899 gives her the honor of being the most forceful advocate for participatory equality and ordination of women in the AME Church. More importantly, the ordination of both Julia Foote and Mary Small was to change not only AME Church history, but also the history of all religious organizations withholding licensing and ordination from its women.

Upon hearing the common patriarchal argument against women preachers that “Women’s supposed spiritual, mental, and physical weaknesses made them inadequate and even dangerous religious leaders” Foote replied that “God will provide “supernatural” aid to the faithful that they might perform for Him those services for which their own feeble and unassisted powers were totally inadequate” (Collier-Thomas 60). Foote never pastured a church on her own, but she did assist Bishop Alexander Walters in the Stockton Street AME Zion church in San Francisco until her death in 1901. Julia Foote and Mary J. Small both benefited from the ecumenical gains of the black preaching women who came before them.

Unlike Julia Foote, Mary Small enjoyed the privilege and power that accompanied the wife of an AME Bishop. Born in 1850 in Tennessee, much is known of her background or her father. Her mother was Agnes Blair. It is known that she married Reverend John Small in 1873. Soon after their marriage, he became a well-known bishop in the AME Zion Church. Mary labored in the pastoral field alongside her husband until his death in 1905. Mary Small was licensed as an evangelist and missionary in 1892. She was ordained as a deacon in 1895, and made AME Church history as the first woman to be ordained as an elder. Small’s ordination as an elder created critical dialogue among the black male clergy. The AME Zion Church was the first religious organization to bestow such an elevated position on a woman. Bitter debates raged throughout the country as a result of Mary Small’s ordination as elder. The difference between Julia Foote’s ordination and Mary Small’s was Foote’s ordination was given to her at the age of seventy-one; at the end of her activity as a preacher. It was more honorary than anything else. She posed no threat. Small, on the other hand was in her prime and the odds of her actually pasturing a church was a real threat.

The position of elder was the highest of holy orders, which is just one-step away from the bishopric. As an elder, Mary Small would have authority over the male clergy in the AME Zion Church. This fact sent panic throughout the religious communities. The debate over woman’s rights in the church spilled out over into society as well. Collier-Thomas says, “In many ways, women’s gaining access to the male religious hierarchy was comparable to Black’s advancement in a white world. In other words, under pressure, token equality could be granted, but there was no expectation that the minority group would receive open access based upon objective criteria” (25).

In 1884, the AME Zion Church granted suffrage to its women members, which meant that they could vote at
conferences on legislative matters. But it was understood among the male clergy that even though some women were ordained as deacons, none would be ordained as an elder nor would they be assigned to any major churches; those very few who did receive an assignment to a church would find themselves with very small memberships in remote areas. They could only serve as conference evangelists and missionaries. Mary Small’s ordination jerked the ecumenical rug out from under the black male clergy. Small’s ordination and its resulting debate came right after the 1896 organization of the National Association of Colored Women.

These women who founded the NACW were strong AME Church women who advocated for woman’s rights within the laity, such as Hallie Q. Brown and Katherine Davis Tillman. Using their National Association of Colored Woman as a platform they created a national black female agenda for equality. The stained glass ceiling of the Church was finally beginning to crack. As empowering as the ordinations of Julia Foote and May Small were, women’s status in the AME Church wouldn’t come until later in the twentieth century. One black woman who benefited from the legacy of the aforementioned pioneering black women preachers is the Reverend Larsie Frazier of Canton, Ohio.

Reverend Frazier was born on January 25, 1925 in Alabama. She has recently retired as an AME Church itinerant elder. Her preaching career has spanned forty–five years. She is a widow and mother of five children, two of whom are deceased. She has this to say about her career as a black woman AME preacher:

I received the call from God to preach His word in 1941, at the age of sixteen. An Angel came to me one night as I slept. There was a bright light that formed in the corner of my bedroom and I could make out the form of an Angel. He spoke to me and said that, “God wanted me to go out and preach the Gospel to the lost.” I replied, “I didn’t know how.” The angel told me not to worry that God would show me how. I struggled with the vision and what it implied for me for a long time. I was afraid to tell my parents, as they were strict Baptists who didn’t believe in women preachers. My study of the Bible consumed me and I was eventually led by the Spirit to leave my family and travel to Ohio.

After arriving in Ohio, I met and married my husband and we had five children together. I didn’t begin my official preaching career until 1954 when my youngest child was a year old. I was allowed to preach unlicensed, not in a Baptist church, but the Asbury Church in Waynesburg, Ohio. I preached there for a year and a half before I was admitted to the General conference in 1955 where I was licensed to preach and offered a small church in Massillon, Second Bethel AME. I was ordained as an itinerant elder in 1960. For many years I was the only woman attending our church conferences in the third district.

During my career as an itinerant preacher, I met many male preachers who didn’t like the idea of women in the pulpit. They used to say to me, “you’re too good looking to be in the pulpit, you’ll distract the men in the congregation.” My belief, though in God’s call kept me going gave me the strength to face many challenges in my life as a woman preacher. Now that I am retired, I plan to spend my time sharing God’s love with as many people as I can on an informal basis.

When asked if she has seen the Church’s attitude about women preachers changing over the years she replied, The Church has gone from being very skeptical about women preaching in the pulpit, to an almost full acceptance of us. There are still a few churches in the AME family that don’t accept women as leaders of their church, but not many. Today, women are the majority being licensed at General Conferences compared to being the minority when I was ordained. For instance, when I was ordained as an elder in 1960, there were only three women out of nine ministers being licensed to preach and pastor a church. Just this past year, there were five ministers to be licensed and four of them were women.

As Reverend Frazier has attested to, there have indeed been changes in the AME Church. In 2000, at the General Conference held in Cincinnati, Ohio Reverend, Vashti M. McKenzie of Baltimore, Maryland was the first black woman to be ordained to the highest ecclesiastical office in the African Methodist Episcopal Church—she now...
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holds the historical distinction of being the first black women addressed as the Right Reverend Bishop Vashti M. McKenzie! It has taken 213 years to arrive at this point in the AME history.

Born in May 1947, the now fifty three year old wife and mother of three received her call to preach after her marriage to professional basketball player, Stan McKenzie. Having grown up worshipping at St. James Episcopal Church, God’s will has always been paramount in her life. After her husband retired from basketball, they returned to Baltimore where McKenzie felt the call of God on her life to preach. After a long period of fasting and prayer, she joined Bethel AME Church.

To prepare herself she attended Howard University in Washington, D.C., where she obtained a Master of Divinity Degree, and a Doctor of Ministry Degree from Union theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. In 1984 she was ordained as a deacon; in 1985 McKenzie was fully ordained and appointed pastor of Oak Street AME Church in midtown Baltimore. In 1988 she was the first woman to become pastor of Payne Memorial AME Church in its one hundred and eight year history. She held this position for ten years during which her skills as a community advocate and social reformer had many positive impacts on the surrounding community.

Some of her achievements include: an increase of membership from 440 to over 1500, the Payne Memorial Outreach Inc-a million dollar faith-based non-profit agency, computer labs in AME high schools, entrepreneurial business projects, USA & Africa teacher workshops & summits, and scholarships for clergy and students. In 1997 Ebony magazine chose her as one of the greatest fifteen black women preachers in the US. Vashti’s campaign for the bishopric has been compared to one running for the presidential office. In her acceptance speech she stated that, “I stand here tonight on the shoulders of the unordained, women who serve without affirmation or appointment. I don’t stand here alone, but there is a cloud of witnesses who sacrificed, died and gave their best” (McGill 3).

McKenzie says that during her career as a black woman preacher she has met with resistance from women as well as men. But, she says that she doesn’t have nearly as many scars as the women who came before her. She says, “It can be a scary thing to be called to preach” (Ebony). Bishop McKenzie is the author of three books: Not Without a Struggle: Leadership Development For African American Woman In Ministry, Strength within the Struggle, and Journey to the Well.

Bishop Vinton R. Anderson says about her historically significant ordination, “It makes a significant statement. It’s a signal that if it can happen in one situation, it can happen in other situations...Vashti McKenzie is an excellent role model of what women can achieve” (Ebony). As all of the AME Church’s newly appointed Bishops are assigned to areas in South Africa, Bishop McKenzie’s new appointment will take her to the eighteenth district, which encompasses the areas of Mozambique, Lesotho, Botswana, and Swaziland. McKenzie has been a world traveler and has an affinity for these areas. Her goals for the eighteenth district will include economic development, human rights, church growth, and the fight against aids, as well as addressing the social, medical, and educational needs of the area. Though her ordination has cracked the stained glass ceiling of the Church, McKenzie’s new appointment leaves the door open for more intense discourse on the history and the future of black women who answer the call of God on their lives.

By providing more scholarship on the history of black women preachers, an important literary gap will be filled and another dimension to the discourse on what has been traditionally recognized as black male history. The stories of black women, who not only challenged patriarchy in the church on the strength of their belief in the Holiness Tradition, but who also took feminist steps to eradicate inequality and sexism in religion through their preaching, teaching, and autobiographical writings is an essential piece in the fabric of black women’s literature. Sylvia Bryant in her essay, “Speaking Into Being”, attests to the value and validity of women’s writing in our culture she states,

The writing of one woman’s life...indeed remains exemplary within the traditions of American autobiography: revising conventional boundaries and expectations, making a historical place of agency within the continuum of American women’s experiences; giving us a way to name, to know, to make of use those experiences that outstrip theory, outstretch explanation, and overreach expectation, social convention, generic boundaries.

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Certainly, the initial intent of these spiritual autobiographies was to encourage and draw lost souls to God by divulging the road traveled from sin to salvation. The result though, is that we now have to include in the history of the black Church, the integral part played by black women as well as black men. Equally important is the literary contribution of these black women preachers to the scholarship devoted to black women writers. Through their autobiographical writings, we are also privy to issues of sexism within the Church, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as in society at large.

Alette Hill says in her essay, “Understanding Gender Shaping Institutions” that, “The religious tradition of western society as it applies to women has had a greater influence than any other on the development of American society to date…it is the basic structure from which people in our society build the concept of the social self and define our identity in the world” (71)

Since the inception of the African Methodist Episcopal Church by Richard Allen in 1786, there has been major ecclesiastical and social progress achieved by the struggles of black preaching women. But there is still much work to be done. Since Bishop Vashti McKenzie’s ordination in July, 2000, there have been two more black women ordained as Bishops, but when you consider that the AME Church’s membership is over three million, 70% of whom are women, and out of twenty six bishops only three are women, as well as nearly six thousand ministers with only 1% of their senior ministers being women, you can see how much labor is still needed in the fields. Bishop McKenzie has this to say on the Church’s strides for its women, “The African American Church has handled civil rights and social injustice very effectively. The African American church has been able to deal with racism, but the Church is just starting to deal with the issues of sexism and classism” (Feltz 2).

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Who Am I? My Cultural Identity: Color the World Beautiful with Only Eight Crayons
Amy Lance

What if the only colors in the world were contained in a box of eight Crayola crayons? Getting along with other cultures might be easier. Scientists and anthropologists probably would not bother studying cultural interactions or making U-curved hypotheses (Cushner, Mcclelland, & Safford, 2003), but the world would be bland and possibilities probably limited. I imagine that my interaction with other cultures would have been just as limited if my mother never decided to move from Cullman, Alabama when I was one and a half years old. When we came to Akron, Ohio, it was as if my world expanded from a box of eight crayons to a box of sixty-four. The number of people or agents that helped socialize me expanded. Instead of learning through the world solely from my mother’s odd family, I learned from my mother and new step-father. I also learned from teachers and peers who had different racial backgrounds from me. These social agents helped form my cultural identity and make me the woman I am today.

The first school I attended was Findley Elementary. I remember that the school was in a very poor area. My mother was a struggling accounting student and my step-father had a work related accident which kept him from ever working again. Therefore, my family was also very poor. Eighty-nine percent of students at Findley today are economically disadvantaged. Because of this, we all learned that we had fewer advantages than average white people, and we had to work twice as hard if we wanted to be successful adults. But, seventy-eight percent of students at Findley also had to deal with what was perceived as being another disadvantage at that time—being African American.

For the first two years that I attended Findley, I was the only white person in the class. For the most part I made friends quite quickly. We would discuss the television shows that we watched the previous night. We also talked about television during class discussion. Unfortunately, the media was a major socializing agent for many of the kids that I went to school with. With the exception of the Cosby show, most television programs showed African Americans in an evil light. My first grade teacher wanted to show us otherwise.

Mrs. Rice devised a plan to have us draw pictures of ourselves. We would than hang all of the beautiful black faces on the walls of the classroom. But the catch was that since we were not white we had to color in our faces. I just dismissed this realizing that she wasn’t talking to me. After all most teachers seemed to forget that I was different from the rest of the class and because I wanted to belong, I wouldn’t say anything about my difference.

When I began Mrs. Rice’s task, I was so excited. It was like I was in the honeymoon stage of the U-curve hypothesis which theorizes that people go through four stages: honeymoon, Hostility, humor and home when adjusting to different cultures. (Cushner et al. 2003) In the honeymoon phase everything seems fresh and new with unlimited prospects. That is exactly how I felt when I started this project. I was creating new life on paper. Somehow this drawing would convey more than just my face. It would be a portrait of my whole identity.

I was very careful with all of the details. I made sure to color the tips of my hair yellow and my roots, or burnt part as I thought, brown. I colored my eyes green with tiny brown flecks and worked very hard on my nose and mouth. When I was finished I thought that I colored a pretty attractive girl. However the attractiveness was all exterior. If I included interior attractions, I might have drawn a book or a job.

My mother was the main social agent responsible for teaching me about being a woman. According to Cushner et al. (2003) there are twelve sources of cultural identity which includes gender, race and social status that influence and shape most people. Mainstream society might actually believe that my views on women were slightly warped. I thought that women were smarter and superior to men. My mom went to college and she knew everything. My step-father, on the other hand, had to quit school in the fifth grade and help work on the farm. He lived in Birmingham, Alabama, so he never met my mother until they both moved to Akron. At the time, schools
were segregated and my father had to walk past the white school to get to the ‘for colored only’ school. The education he received wasn’t phenomenal, and even though he had made it to the fifth grade, he was illiterate.

When my brother and I had homework questions we always went to my mother for help. I didn’t realize that this was abnormal until the first time I watched Poltergeist. The children were sitting around the kitchen table and the mother was in the room. They had a question, and rather than finding out the answer from their mom, they were going to “ask dad.” I asked my mother why on earth would they ask their dad when everyone knows that women are smarter than men. My mother told me that the world viewed women differently, and that the world typically believed that men were the smarter of the two sexes. I was stunned by this. I was happy that I at least came from a more forward thinking family. That is why I was surprised when my brother and I became teenagers. Although he is two years younger than me, my brother had more privileges but I had more responsibilities. My mother said that it was because he was a boy and I was a girl. I was absolutely crushed. My mother was telling me that everything that she socialized me to believe about being a woman was a lie! In the first grade, however, I felt lucky that I was born a woman.

I would like to believe that this attitude showed when I took my picture to Mrs. Rice. However if she saw woman pride in the drawing, she didn’t say anything about it. Instead, she told me to go back to my seat and color my face.

I wasn’t completely sure what I should do. I only had a box of eight crayons, and none of the colors offered were adequate to color in a face. I wondered what color my brother would use on his face. Today I wonder, what color Shameka Collins would make her face. Like my brother Shameka is biracial. According to Cushner et al. (2003), she identifies herself with being African American only because people expect her to, much like my brother. However, she doesn’t feel black because in many ways she was raised to be white. But if Shameka said she was White, then she would be denying her African American side.

Would Shameka color herself black just because people expected it? How could she color herself and show both of her races at the same time? I was going through much of the same thing while coloring my picture. Although I am not a biracial child like her or my brother, I was raised in an interracial home like a biracial child. I believe that when I become a teacher I will be in a unique position to help children like my brother and Shameka because of my similar cultural background. Hopefully, I could help eliminate some of the confusion that they might face when trying to recreate themselves.

The only part I had left when recreating myself was picking out which color I would use. I remembered that practically every day on the playground another student would say, “I know why your (maiden) last name is White, because you are white.” I always knew this reasoning was flawed, but nevertheless I used the same reasoning when I decided to color my face. I took out the white crayon and started to color. The only problem was the white crayon didn’t show up on the white paper.

When I took my once perfect paper to the teacher, she told me to go to my seat and color in my face. I tried to color real hard, hoping that my sheer force would make the white show up. It did not work and when I took the picture back to Mrs. Rice, she once again sent me to my seat. After the third time of being sent to my seat, I became frustrated. According to the U-curve hypothesis, I was in the hostile stage. I didn’t know why my teacher just wouldn’t take my paper. It didn’t make sense to me that she kept on sending me back to my seat. I didn’t understand why she didn’t just take the picture like I expected her to do; I colored it after all. I decided that she just didn’t like the color so I withdrew the black crayon and began to color.

When Mrs. Rice accepted my picture, she wore a look of shock. I felt like I had done something wrong because Mrs. Rice requested a meeting with my mother. Another cultural identity model, the cross-cultural Interaction model, suggests that Mrs. Rice and I had been stuck in stage one, emotional arousal. According to Cushner et al. (p. 2003) people in this stage are aroused by unpredictable behavior in others and when their own behavior does not produce the desired results. I did not behave in the way she expected. And her behavior was lost on me. This was one of the only times in my life that I can recall that racial boundaries made it hard for me to communicate with others.

However, I can see where this kind of misunderstanding could happen to me again. When I do my field study at Lake Middle School, I am terrified that I might have the same problem Mrs. Rice had with me. The school is ninety-nine percent Caucasian and less than ten students in the district receive free or reduced lunches. Coming from an interracial impoverished background, this seems daunting for me. On the other hand, I should do great in a
typical class. I want to work in a poor school. I want to help students that are going through things that I have been through. I know that I could make a difference in a school with a mixed social class and a mixed racial background.

Mrs. Rice told my mother that I was confused about my racial background. Maybe she was right. My mother asked me why I colored myself black and she seemed satisfied with my answer. We even found the humor in the situation reaching the third stage in the U-curve hypothesis. We laughed at the way the black went onto the picture over the white, with neither color showing up well. We laughed about the things stubborn Amy does when she is mad. Then she told me not to worry about it.

My mother and Mrs. Rice never got along again. They both thought they were right. My mother thought that Mrs. Rice tortured me with the work, and Mrs. Rice believed that it was my mother’s fault that I was confused about my racial identity. By now both of the women have probably forgotten all about that first grade picture. And I can claim that I have finally reached the fourth stage in the U-curve hypothesis. I finally feel at home with that picture because now I realize that even though I set out to capture my racial identity on the page, I captured something even more important instead. I captured my cultural identity.

Somehow I managed to capture it with only eight crayons. Often I wonder how different my cultural identity would have been if we never moved away from Alabama and been exposed to the sixty-four colored box. I realize that if my step-father was not a major socializing agent in my life, I would probably be culturally insensitive. If we still lived in Cullman, Alabama, I might have automatically assumed that men were smarter than women. I might have even been stuck in the hostility phase when confronted with people of different races. I believe that I am an all around better person today and therefore, will be a better teacher because of the experiences and the people that have populated my life.

References
In its most elemental form, the automobile is a tool with simple intended purposes. It is a conveyance for the transport of people and limited amounts of cargo. Ideally, it should be able to do this quickly, with a high degree of safety and comfort for both its passengers and those in proximity to its passage. It should do this at minimal expense and with nominal impact on the environment. Of course, automobile manufacturers have continually improved their product, as cars can never be too safe, too cheap or too clean. In the quest for improvement, manufacturers also sought to provide the kind of improvements that they felt would suit the consumer's specialized needs while lending the product an aesthetic appeal.

In the middle of the "baby boom" of the fifties and early sixties, the consumer's perceived needs were for a vehicle that satisfied both the seating requirements of larger families and the wanderlust inspired by the endless ribbons of concrete that comprised the newly developed interstate highway system. Vacations were all about piling the whole family into a car and pointing it at a far horizon, with the desirability of the destination being measured as much by its distance from home as whatever novel attraction it hosted. Everyone's dad was a Magellan, and each needed his vehicle to be a vessel worthy of epic voyages. Into this void, manufacturers introduced the station wagon. With ample seating for six, perhaps another two in a jump seat hidden in the prodigious rear cargo area, standard roof racks to lash luggage to, a cavernous fuel tank, and a massive V-8 engine capable of loping for long, easy hours at fifty, sixty, or seventy miles per hour, it was a vehicle that satisfied both the needs of these large families and the image that they wanted to project.

Generation by generation, the perceived needs of the consumer and the substance of the projected image has changed. Magellan's boys didn't want their father's Buick, and the muscle cars of the late sixties and into the seventies were the rule through the seventies and into the eighties. In the eighties, another boom in the economy had people lusting for more luxury, power and space in their rides, and the conversion-van phenomenon was how the industry satisfied our wants. By the end of the eighties, manufacturers were perceived as overblown, tacky and too truck-like in their ride. In another moment of brilliance, the industry provided the consumer with a new design called the minivan, and incidentally came full circle. The minivan came extremely close in both form and function to the old standard station wagon — so close, in fact, that the few makers who still had mid-size versions of the classic wagon in their lineups, phased them out with the introduction of minivans. These new vehicles seemed to have it all: generous size, seating for up to eight, efficient engines, comfortable rides and car-like handling. Our too-much-isnever-enough attitude manifested itself this time in the minivan not matching the change in the size of the nuclear family, with most families (and most purchasers of minivans) not filling half the available seating in these vehicles. With the exception of occasionally hauling a sports-playing child's teammates, or performing intermittent antiquing or moving duties, most of these vehicles could be seen driving around with a single passenger or two in the front, and a sumptuously empty void behind.

Ever since Henry Ford developed the innovation of the assembly line that made it possible to manufacture motorcars in such volume and so cheaply that ordinary people could afford to buy them, Americans have developed a strange, sick love affair with automobiles. With each generation — indeed even with each new model year — that love affair has become an increasingly important part of our culture and one of the most definitive yardsticks by which we measure each other's status, class, and rank. Never a society content with "good enough," Americans have always concluded, whether it be hamburgers, bombs, or the family car, that bigger simply has to be better. The sport utility vehicle that automotive manufacturers are currently marketing to the public as what-we-should-be-driving-now is a poor choice for the consumer in that it is bad for us as individuals, as stewards of the environment, and as members of a nation vulnerable to terrorism in an unstable world.
Regardless of the minivan’s sensibility of design, it soon came to be seen as an undesirable badge of soccer-mom ubiquity. Into the vacuum created by parents seeking transport less sedate, and grown children again looking for a design markedly different from what their parents used to shuttle them about, manufacturers have only been too happy to deliver the newest best thing for us: the sport utility vehicle. Built on a truck chassis, often equipped with four-wheel drive and stupendous towing capacities, this type of vehicle is ostensibly designed to satisfy the needs of people who frequently travel where roads are nonexistent, poor, or severely compromised by the ravages of nature. This is a vehicle also designed for people who participate in sports of an extreme nature, sports that require a vehicle more rugged, more capable of hauling people, equipment and trailers to spots more remote than a standard passenger vehicle could handle. Those are the people for whom the functional capacities of these machines were designed. Most of these vehicles, however, are not being sold to people who will ever use them for their intended purpose. Most will likely never leave pavement, never have their carpets muddied, and never feel so much as a tug on their hitch. They will, however, be purchased by consumers wishing to be thought of as the kind of people who need such a vehicle, the kind born to wear the fashionably correct vehicle of the day, regardless of their actual driving needs.

Certain models of the current SUV’s offered are the largest, heaviest vehicles that have ever been licensed for non-commercial passenger duty, and there is no indication that manufacturers have reached a boundary regarding the excesses they will make available to us. In fact, if anything, they seem eager to push the boundaries. Under the headline of “Hummer Crusher,” Cycle World reports that International is promoting a vehicle called the CXT, for Commercial Extreme Truck. The equivalent of a twenty ton dump truck set up as a luxury SUV, its turbocharged diesel engine will squeak out a mere 7-10 mpg (Hoyer). It’s perhaps time to push our chairs back away from this table.

In the absence of any evidence of an actual need for the capabilities of these vehicles, most owners will cite safety as a reason for ownership, claiming that the raised height and the additional weight of these vehicles, combined with the additional traction provided by four-wheel drive, make them feel safer. Both statistics and common sense tell us that they are not safer vehicles. Statistics for 2003 indicate that the likelihood of being killed in an accident for people driving or riding in an SUV were 11 percent higher than for people driving or riding in cars (Hakim). From the common sense aspect, all you have to do is think about the simple physics of the situation. The curb weight of a Lincoln Navigator is 5760 lbs. That is within one hundred pounds of the combined curb weight of both a Buick Century (3342 lbs) and a Toyota Corolla (2502 lbs). So the driver of something like a Lincoln Navigator is in fact piloting the equivalent kinetic energy of two vehicles through traffic at all times, with the capability of injecting that energy into any accident he or she may be involved in. Additionally, the chances of drivers being involved in an accident may actually be increased by their feeling of security and invincibility because it could lull them into a degree of complacency and slow their reaction times. Further compounding the danger of this situation is the fact that twice as much weight, combined with the higher center of gravity of an SUV, makes it a fairly un­gainly and slow-to-react vehicle in emergency maneuvers, not to mention contributing to a proclivity to roll. Even the benefits of four-wheel drive can prove to be negative. Some of the systems are so sophisticated, with their abilities to sense wheel slippage and seamlessly transfer power to the wheels that are not slipping, that a driver may not even realize that roads are hazardous until he or she tries to bring the vehicle to a stop. One realizes very quickly that four-wheel drive is excellent for making vehicles go, but doesn’t do anything to improve braking under icy conditions. With all of the massive SUV’s and their oblivious, invulnerable (in their minds, anyway) drivers zipping around out there, it’s almost as though everyone used to walk around with BB guns strapped to their hips but they’ve all suddenly swapped them out for .44 magnums. It might make them feel safer to have a more potent weapon, but the potential for disaster is certainly greater, and it sure as heck doesn’t make me feel any safer.

Ecologically, there is no argument, sound or otherwise, why people should drive such a vehicle if they don’t have a definite need for the capacities inherent in its design. Heavier construction and larger engines result in higher fuel consumption over the same amount of miles traveled. Carbon dioxide, the greenhouse gas chiefly responsible for the global warming that scientists are blaming for (among other things) the increase of more violent tropical storms and hurricanes, with every indication that these things will continue to worsen, is loaded into our atmosphere primarily from automobile exhaust. In the course of a vehicle’s lifetime, a difference of as little as five miles per gallon of performance will add up to as much as ten tons of carbon dioxide. With respect to toxic pollut-
ants, SUV’s produce up to thirty percent more carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides than passenger cars (Bindler). It’s time to question the ethics inherent in choosing fashion over being environmentally conscious.

Finally, let’s address how the choice of one’s vehicle could possibly affect homeland security, or terrorism on a global scale. Energy gluttons that we are, Americans are responsible for one-quarter of all the oil used each year in the world, and one-quarter of all that comes from sources in the Middle East (Horn). This is a region of the world that has been historically unstable yet would have little income but for the vast amounts of money that are exchanged for the plentiful oil reserves situated beneath that portion of the earth. It could be argued that money wasted on gasoline to fuel vehicles with low efficiencies lined the pockets of the terrorists behind the attacks of 9/11, and may even now be financing future attacks against our country or that of one of our allies. Certainly the possibility that the oil-rich and unstable countries of Iraq and Iran might use their oil-wealth-funded capacities to create weapons of mass destruction, combined with their proximity to the Saudi Arabian oil fields, plays a huge role in the presence of our military in that region, and must bear some responsibility for the resultant loss of lives there. I’m having a hard time imagining what aspect of owning an SUV would make that justifiable.

In summary, SUV’s don’t serve the majority of people that buy them. They’re not safe. They pollute more than other vehicles that would serve most people just as well. They’re not helping us become energy independent in a fashion that helps make our country and world more secure. A vehicle’s purpose is to deliver people to a destination safely, in reasonable comfort, and with minimal impact on the environment. Ownership of a certain type of vehicle doesn’t make one a better person, but it can make a statement about a person’s ethics...or their lack thereof. People need to select and drive vehicles that serve their real needs, and not their egos.

Works Cited
Race Labels and Status Changes in Charles W. Chesnutt’s “The Sheriff’s Children”
Kurt Sampsel

In Dr. Robert Sturr’s African-American Literature (ENG 33011), students were asked to develop a reading of one of the assigned texts. Kurt Sampsel’s “Race Labels and Status Changes” takes a critical look at the relationship between race and power. He shows that as Chesnutt’s characters near the ‘color line’ in “The Sheriff’s Children,” both race and social status lose their connection to reality and become more obviously social constructions.

Charles W. Chesnutt’s The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line is a collection of short pieces of fiction that collectively addresses the experiences of African-Americans in the post-Emancipation South. Chesnutt’s stories discuss the status of African-Americans within the context of fictional rhetoric; however, his medium for communicating his message does not compromise or soften it in any way, for although his stories are rich with humor, satire, irony, and many other devices, the stories deal very directly with the social position and status of black Americans in the cultural and historical setting of the ante-bellum South. One particularly powerful story from Stories of the Color Line is “The Sheriff’s Children,” in which a young “mulatto” is accused of having murdered a local man of prominence, and after narrowly escaping a lynch mob, the accused man is shot by a girl who is revealed to be his own, all-white, half-sister. As in many of the stories in Stories of the Color Line, the terminology of racial (and indeed, racist) designation plays an important role in the depiction of the African-American character, and specifically, reveals the ways in which the white characters perceive him. Interestingly, in “The Sheriff’s Children,” the race labels that are applied to the unnamed accused man change as his status changes, and as the white characters’ perceptions of him change.

“The Sheriff’s Children” begins by introducing the murder of Captain Walker, a prominent military man who had served in the Civil War. The murder has been the first in some time in the small, isolated Southern community, and the residents of the town anxiously begin to search for a suspect. The narrator then mentions a “strange mulatto” (134) who was seen near the scene of the crime, whom some people are beginning to suspect as the murderer. Here, the racial label “mulatto” essentially means that the man has one black parent and one white parent; he is thus half white and half black, what we could call “biracial” today. As a “mulatto,” he is, in reality, neither black nor white; he essentially straddles what Chesnutt himself refers to in the title of his book as “the color line,” or the line of division between the world of blacks and the world of whites.

As suspicion of the man increases, however, his status as a “mulatto” quickly changes. He instead becomes referred to not as a “mulatto” but as a “nigger,” a word that is considerably more derogatory than “mulatto,” and that carries with it different implications of both race and status. The accused man is referred to first as a “nigger” by a “third speaker,” who, as an angry mob congregates to speculate on the identity of Captain Walker’s murderer, interjects, “I s’pose the nigger ’lowed the Cap’n had some green-backs […]” (135). Throughout this mob meeting, the accused man is referred to using racial labels many times, and each time, the members of the lynch mob refer to the suspect exclusively as a “nigger.” Even the narrator stops using the word “mulatto,” which indicates half-blackness, in favor of “Negro,” which, like “nigger,” indicates complete blackness. Essentially, it seems that as people increasingly suspect him of being Captain Walker’s murderer, his status changes from a half-black “mulatto” to an entirely black “Negro” or “nigger.”

This change in the white characters’ perception of him from half black to all black could occur because the mob wants to set up a dichotomy between the “murderer” and his “victim.” A “round-shouldered farmer” expresses this dichotomy perfectly when he says to his fellow whites, “Ef you fellers air gwine ter set down an’ let a wuthless nigger kill the bes’ white man in Branson, an’ not say nuthin’ ner do nuthin’, I’ll move outen the caounty” (136). Setting up the dichotomy of the “wuthless nigger” and the “bes’ white man” clearly serves to antagonize the crowd, and to soil and incriminate the accused man. The labels used are distorted, subjective, and clearly racist, but they are obviously more dramatic and rhetorically powerful than the truth. To proclaim that a “mulatto” killed a white man is not nearly as affecting as to say a “wuthless nigger” killed the “bes’ white man.”

Thus, largely responsible for the accused man’s status change and racial label change is the lynch mob’s own determination to incriminate him by making him seem more black, more “other,” and more guilty than he would be if they considered him to be a “mulatto.”

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Although the mob, the sheriff, and the narrator refer to the accused man using racial labels that indicate him to be all black (usually using the term "nigger"), in a scene in the jail, the narrator again reminds the reader of the suspect's true biracial status by saying that his face was "yellow," clearly indicating that he is not completely Ne- 
groid. Other terms used by the narrator in describing the scene also have significance in depicting the accused 
man's blurred, vague racial status, revealing a host of racial subtleties of which only the reader and the accused 
man himself are aware. The narrator describes the scene: "The prisoner was crouched in a corner, his yellow face, 
blanched with terror, looking ghastly in the semi-darkness of the room" (141). As mentioned before, the term 
"yellow" is racially indistinct; describing the man as "blanched" and "ghastly" looking indicates some whiteness; 
saying that he looked "ghastly" in "semi-darkness" seems to indicate a sort of whiteness trapped within darkness, or 
blackness. This description shows the reader that the accused man is on "the color line," even as the white charac-
ters perceive him as an all-black "Negro" or "nigger" as a means of rationalizing their persecution of him.

The accused man's status soon changes again, however, and to follow, his racial label changes too. After 
taking the sheriff's gun and holding it on him, the prisoner again becomes referred to as "mulatto," likely because 
he is now perceived as having power. This power is evident from the narrator's description of him: "The mulatto 
kept his eye upon the sheriff" and "The mulatto's eye glittered ominously" (144). Clearly, he has transformed from 
the powerless "nigger" who had been "crouched in a corner" and "blanched with terror." Calling him a "mulatto" 
conveys a perception of him as being stronger, which he is, now that he holds the sheriff under his power. He es-
pecially stops being completely black and begins to be half-white again; his power is, in fact, a manifestation of his 
whiteness.

In addition, in this crucial scene in the jailhouse, using the term "mulatto" helps the reader to discover the 
truth about the prisoner's relationship with the sheriff. After we discover that the sheriff is the man's father, the 
suspect remarks, "You gave me a white man's spirit, and you made me a slave, and crushed it out" (146). Clearly, 
this demonstrates the conflict in racial identity for the suspect, again revealing his status as a man walking "the 
color line." Also, the reader again begins to see that this "white man's spirit" that had been crushed as the "nigger" 
was subverted is now coming to power as the prisoner has taken the gun and wields control over the sheriff.

The suspect later says, "I learned to feel that no degree of learning or wisdom will change the color of my 
skin and that I shall always wear what is in my own country a badge of degradation" (146). Here, the prisoner fully 
expresses the misery he experiences as an inhabitant of the "color line." Specifically, however, the focus of his 
frustration is not his own racial identity (or lack thereof), but rather the prejudiced, subjective, and arbitrary percep-
tions of him by the white majority. It is his half-black "badge of degradation" that he credits for making the white 
men perceive him as a wicked person, thus compelling them to suspect him of murder and to distort his racial iden-
tity, labeling him as a "nigger" when he actually is not one. As the suspect tries to say, in spite of his education, 
eloquence, and indeed, his racial status as only half black, the fact that he is black at all allows the white charac-
ters to perceive him as entirely soiled, which is why he is referred to as a "nigger." The irony at the end of the story, 
of course, is that the all-white daughter of the sheriff (and the half-sister of the prisoner) is not to be punished in any 
way for her (virtual) murder of the suspect, and yet the suspect is dead even though the reader highly doubts that he 
actually murdered Captain Walker. Thus, essentially, the all-white murderer goes free and the innocent half-black 
man is dead.

In "The Sheriff's Children," Chesnutt uses different race labels to designate different positions of social 
status. As the white characters' perceptions of the African-American character change, the race labels also change 
to signify a change in status. The murder suspect in the story is actually a "mulatto," or half-black, half-white man. 
Although the narrator introduces him as a "mulatto," as the white characters' suspicion of him grows, he becomes 
referred to as a "nigger" or "Negro" rather than as a "mulatto," indicating that he begins to be perceived as all black 
rather than half black. In the jailhouse, however, the prisoner's status changes once again, and as he gains power 
and control of the sheriff, his latent "whiteness" emerges, allowing the white characters to again perceive him as a 
"mulatto." Essentially, the race labels applied to the prisoner change as his status changes, and his status changes 
as the white characters' perceptions of him change, indicating that both the race labels and the positions of status 
are, in fact, constructed by the white characters in the story and largely disconnected from reality.

Work Cited

Race Labels and Status Changes
The Komodo Dragon
Donna Jean Kalleker

Varanus komodensis, aka the Komodo dragon, is the largest lizard on the planet. Living on the islands in Indonesia, the dragons can weigh up to 500 pounds. This monitor lizard dates back more than 100 million years. Their numbers have declined and the reptile is on the endangered species list. Unlike most lizards, the Komodo dragon is carnivorous. They patiently wait for their prey and then attack with sharp teeth. The dragon’s bite contains bacteria that will kill the prey. They enjoy the hot morning sun but find refuge from the afternoon heat. The Komodo dragon has a life span of over 50 years.


This article addresses the genetic diversity of the Komodo dragon and its evolutionary relationships and population. The results of this study will provide information needed to maintain the Komodo dragon’s population on the island of Komodo. Written for researchers, the article outlined the method used in the research, provided charts on the findings, stated the results in a discussion format, and offered their conclusion. Information used in the article was properly cited.


This article provides in depth information regarding the clinical research performed on the Komodo dragons. Blood samples from 44 Komodo dragons from Indonesian and United States’ zoos were tested. The tests included: blood count, profiles, vitamin deficiency and screening for pesticides and toxins. The article provided detailed information on the material and methods used in the research, analysis of the data collected, and results of their findings, and tables were used to summarize the findings by category. The report had the proper acknowledgements and references. This is an extensive paper, written for professionals studying the Komodo dragon.


This article reports on a study of the annual nesting habits of the Komodo dragon. On the island of Komodo, scientists surveyed 12 major coastal valleys, examined the distribution and the density patterns of the nest, and ascertained if there is a preference for a nest type by the female dragons to better understand their breeding habits and determine the population of Komodo dragons. The article outlines the methods used in the study and their findings. This was a large undertaking and the conclusion was that the breeding population is small, and the scientist will continue to monitor yearly. The article was well-written and properly cited. The information is the most current, with the journal to be published June 2004.


This is a well-written student research paper on the Komodo dragon. The information is formatted under the following headings: A description of the species, habitat, natural history, evolutions and the distribution of the
reptile. The picture reflects the size of the dragons and maps show how the reptiles may have arrived on the islands in Indonesia and where the current (1997) population resides. The article provides an excellent overview of the Komodo dragon and appears creditable in its context. The proper citations are noted throughout the paper. It is written for students beginning their studies of the reptile.


This article provides a wonderful pictorial of the Komodo dragon in its natural habitat. The pictures reflected their enormous size, eating habits, sleeping along the river banks and relaxing as they are perched in trees. The information is now out dated but did provide the history of the reptile and the island as studied by Major P. A. Ouwens in 1912. Written for anyone with an interest in the Komodo dragon, the pictures and maps are a must see for a student studying the reptile.


This encyclopedia offers only a brief definition of the Komodo dragon, where they live and their weight. The entry was written for a beginner student, learning about the reptile.


This website was very informative regarding the Komodo dragon. It has several pictures, a play video, a map of Indonesia, a summary column providing information on the class, order, family genus, species, size, weight, life span, etc. It provides in depth information about the lizard species. The Komodo dragon is the largest reptile on the planet. When the eggs hatch, the babies climb up the nearest tree to prevent being eaten by adult Komodo dragons and live there until they are four years of age. They are currently on the endangered list. This was written for a beginner to intermediate reader wanting an overall view of the Komodo dragon. I really enjoyed this website.


The entry provided a very good summary of the history of the Komodo dragon and the islands they inhabit. The current information included the size of the reptile and their eating, sleeping and mating habits. There were several pictures in the text. Since this is a wildlife encyclopedia, it provided more information than other encyclopedias reviewed.


This website provides a photographer’s look at the islands of Komodo and Rinca in Indonesia and the largest inhabitant, the Komodo dragon. The narrative provides information on the islands which are dry, hot, and barren compared to nearby islands. They are made up of silica-rich rock whereas the neighboring islands are more mafic. Both islands are under the control of the park system and tours start at 6:00 am. There are a dozen photographs of the Komodo dragons in their natural surroundings. Information is provided about their eating habits which include their ability to detect odors with their tongues, enabling them to seek out their prey. The dragons are not venomous but their mouth is full of bacteria, and when bitten, an infection would occur, causing death to their prey. The website provided links to additional information. This website is well written and is appealing to any reader interested in the Komodo dragon.

This article reported on the study of supplemental feedings and the effects on the dragon numbers, tourists, viewing opportunities and the local community benefit. It seems that supplemental feedings caused the number of dragons to increase at the feeding sites. When the supplemental feedings were withheld, the number of dragons decreased to natural levels at the same site. In addition, with the decreased number of dragons, there was a decline in the number of tourists, causing a decline in revenue. The article was well-written, outlining the methods used in the research. It provided a site profile of the areas observed. Charts reflected the daily number of dragons, the number of feedings per month, the portion of visitors, and the villages’ monthly revenue over a six year period. The study was published in 2001 and is slightly outdated. However, it was interesting that the feeding of the Komodo dragon can have a financial impact on tourism.

CONCLUSION

The Komodo dragon has attracted much interest since the early 1900s when stories got out about the islands with “dragons” on them. Realizing the Komodo dragon is the largest reptile alive and in limited numbers, scientists and the Indonesian government have done much to prevent extinction. The five islands, in which the Komodo dragons live, have National Parks which limits as much human interference as possible. Scientific studies on their genetics and reproduction habits also help to ensure their longevity.
In "Farming in Ohio: A Historical View," Davina Main compiles a study that discusses a particular issue as well as includes statistical data as assigned by Dr. Bathi Kasturiarachi’s Spring 2004 Basic Probability and Statistics course. Dr. Kasturiarachi asked his students to evaluate a study, including its nature and methodology and then to write their own analysis and interpretation of the data presented.

Section I: Nature of the Study

Introduction/Statement of the Problem

Over the past few decades, the number of family owned and operated farms has declined, giving way to larger, more efficiently run corporate farms while the production of crops has remained constant. This paper addresses the trends and changes that happened in Ohio farming from the early nineteen forties to the mid nineteen nineties. Our objective is to explore the five major crops (hay, wheat, corn, oats and soybeans) grown in Ohio, discuss changes in the number of farms, calculate the number of acres devoted to each crop, compare the data results of Ohio to that of Iowa, and determine any similarities or differences.

In 1870, Ohio was listed as one of the top three wheat-producing states along with Iowa and Illinois. Due to the growing industries of the city, farm numbers began to decrease. As technology advanced, new farm machinery was introduced and more and more farm workers lost their jobs. Many farmers lost their land during the Great Depression due to foreclosures by banks and insurance companies. There was a steady decline in the number of farms from 1942-1996; farms went from small family-owned land to large, efficient corporations.

Research Questions

While exploring how the number of acres devoted to the five major crops changed over time, it was discovered that soybeans had the most dramatic change going from the least grown crop in 1942 to the most grown crop in 1996. As you can see in figure one, corn has remained fairly constant throughout the years. Hay, oats, and wheat have all declined greatly, and soybeans have increased the most.

The decade in which corn had the largest number of acres harvested was the 1980’s, the acreage being 37,375,000. Soybeans also had its highest number of acres harvested in the 1980’s with 37,030,000 acres. Wheat,
hay, and oats had their largest number of acres harvested in the 1950's with 17,525,000 acres, 23,688,000 acres, and 11,183,000 acres respectively. The 1980's was the decade with the largest total number of acres harvested at 102,765,000.

One way to explore how farmers' choice of crop changes over time is to look at a series of pie charts showing what proportion of the total acreage was dedicated to a given crop for certain years. By making pie charts representing the crop allocation for the decades 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1990 some changes were noticeable. Corn stayed relatively steady with its percentage staying between 32% and 38%. Soybeans grew from a mere 11% all the way to a large 35%. Wheat made a small drop from 17% to 14%. Hay dropped significantly from 26% to 13%, while oats also dropped from an already low 12% to a very low 2%. (Figure 2)

By making a time series plot of the four crop yields (bushels per acre), oats having been excluded, one can observe a few changes in the yields. Corn had a rapid, much larger incline than the other three crops. Wheat and soybeans had similar steady inclines in their bushels per acre, while hay remained relatively unchanged throughout the years with a mean of approximately 2.11 bushels per acre. (Figure 3)
The regression line of winter wheat yield over the years has shown a positive relationship between the year and bushels per acre (Figure 4). There is a linear correlation between the year and bushels per acre, and the line that the scattered points will "regress" to is \( y = 0.7174x - 1374.87 \). This formula allows anyone to predict what the bushels per acre will be during a future year.

For example, if a farmer wants to know what his predicted bushels per acre will be in the year 2015, he will find that number to be 71 (rounded up). He finds this number by entering 2015 in the formula for \( x \). That same farmer can predict his crop for any given future year by using the regression line of that crop. In this case, winter wheat yield has a very good regression line with \( r^2 = .866 \) or 86.6%.
Both similarities and differences were discovered while comparing Ohio farm data with similar farm data from the state of Iowa. Similarities include production of the same five leading crops, identical trends in total crops per acre, the largest incline happening between 1983 and 1984, with the largest decline happening between 1982 and 1983. Some differences noted relate to size. Iowa is approximately 11,000 square miles larger than Ohio. Ohio has less acreage devoted to crop production with approximately 50% less crops per acre than Iowa.

Assumptions, Limitations, Definitions
Even though the number of family owned farms has decreased to give way to larger, more efficient corporations, the production of crops has not. Farmers have started producing more corn and soybean while gradually weeding out wheat, hay, and oats. The total number of acres harvested has steadily dropped for three of the five crops, but the bushels per acre of each crop, except hay, have a steady incline.

According to the data given, the definition of a farm from 1959-1973 was a place of less than 10 acres if the sales of the agriculture products amounted, or normally would amount, to at least $250, or a place of 10 acres or more if the sales of the agriculture products amounted, or normally would amount, to at least $50. From 1974 to today, the definition of a farm is considered to be any place from which $1,000 or more of agriculture products are produced and/or normally would have been sold during the (agricultural) census year.

Summary
In conclusion, of the five major crops grown in Ohio, wheat, hay and oats have gradually been weeded out while the production of corn and soybean has increased. The number of family owned farms has seen a drastic reduction while corporate owned farms have steadily risen in number. The total number of acres harvested has dropped for three of the five crops (wheat, oats and hay) as the bushels per acre of each crop, except hay, have a steady incline. Iowa and Ohio farming have both similarities and differences relating to their crops harvested and amount of acreage devoted to crop production.

Acknowledgements
I would like to thank my fellow classmates T. Brown, Amy Reda, and Carrie Shipbaugh who worked together with me on this project.

References
In "Victorian Fashions: Exploring Edna's Journey to Freedom through Clothing," Charity Gingrich discusses how protagonist of Kate Chopin's The Awakening expresses herself through her clothing. Written for Dr. Mittlen's Literature in English II class, she shows how the gradual shedding of clothing reflects an escape from social rules.

In Kate Chopin's beautifully poetic novel, The Awakening, there is much symbolism to be found "that serves to add meaning to the text and underline some subtle point [that] Chopin is making" (Wyatt, para. 1). Many of these symbols have to do with nature and art: the birds, ocean, moon, and Edna's own interest in painting. All of these serve a purpose in the chronological unfolding of Edna Pontellier as she gradually morphs into a woman aware of what she wants and who she wants to be.

Here we see Edna, a "typical" Southern wife and mother who has tried to adopt the Creole culture as her own. We see a beautiful and intimate culture on the one hand and an isolated and stifling one on the other, especially for a woman who was as full of life as Edna was. The metaphor which Chopin brings out in Edna's clothes is a fascinating one, and one which I feel is more overlooked than the rest. There is a very unique connection between Edna and clothing throughout the book, both her own clothing and in some instances, the clothing of others. "Edna is fully dressed when first introduced; slowly over the course of the novel she removes her clothes. This symbolizes the shedding of the societal rules in her life and her growing awakening" (Wyatt, para. 5). There is a continual thread of connection between Edna and how she expresses herself by what she does or does not wear. The climax of course comes when she is standing on the beach at Grand Isle naked, and has "shed everything she has in her quest for selfhood" (Wyatt, para. 5). She defies the wealth and position that is hers through the successes of her businessman husband, who sees her as "nothing more than a household manager and nursemaid." (Telgen and Hile 51-53) whose duty it is to "perform the social duties expected from the devoted wife of a highly-respected man," which of course, includes dressing the part of a wealthy business man's wife (Telgen and Hile 51-53). As the book unfolds, the reader gets the impression that Chopin does absolutely nothing by accident; every detail, even that of clothing, serves a purpose in revealing Edna's journey to both physical and spiritual freedom.

Because Edna lived during the height of the Victorian era when women's garments were a dizzying and complicated array of fluff and nonsense, and every accessory worn was of extreme importance, it is not surprising to find that "clothes are given social significance" in the novel (Sichel 46-48). A woman in Edna's day (and especially a woman of social standing) could not randomly choose a garment from her closet when preparing for her day, but had to consider the occasion, time of day, season, color, and appropriate style. Was she going to tea? Then a "tea gown" must be worn, going "out" meant wearing a "promenade dress" for her fashionable perambulations about town (Sichel 46-47). There were recreational costumes and walking dresses, evening gowns, riding habits and bathing costumes (Sichel 46-48). Mentions of Edna's clothes include her "Tuesday reception gown," "house dress," "street gown," "white morning gown," and "bathing suit" (Chopin 43,50,54,115). Being able to dress correctly for the right occasion must have been a daunting task in itself, and one that kept women conveniently preoccupied for much of the time. Indeed, it is logical to see that for women, especially of this period, "clothing defines, limits, and joins [them] in a materially focused singularity" (McCoy). Husbands such as Edna's must have been more than happy to have their wives busily and contentedly occupied in something, anything, that would keep them completely out of the realm of "men's lives" and in their own quiet and subservient domestic sphere.

The first most noticeable intimation which signifies Edna's beginning rebellion towards a lifestyle which she considers stagnant and suffocating comes when Robert brings her to Madame Anoine's house to rest that pivotal summer at Grand Isle. Here Edna "loosened her clothes, removing the greater part of them" before falling into a luxurious sleep (Chopin 36). Here we see that Edna, "no longer trapped by her clothes [...] looks past the confines of societal roles, and sees her body as a part of her identity, not as her identity itself" (McCoy). In a symbolic gesture, she lays aside her clothes and in so doing begins both her "sensual and physical awakening" (McCoy). After this occurrence, Edna begins to realize that she is changing, and that after her "100 year nap," as Robert puts it, her "present self [is] in some way different from the other self," and like a butterfly that is being born, she is gradually
breaking free from her cocoon (Chopin 38). She begins to see her world with new eyes, “making the acquaintance of new conditions in herself that colored and changed her environment […]” (Chopin 40). The colors of her life were growing brighter as she began to break free from the lovely prison that had been constructed for her.

The next major step which Edna takes on her road to freedom comes after she and her husband have gone back to their “charming home” in New Orleans when their summer vacation is over (Chopin 50). One Tuesday evening Mr. Pontellier, who never seemed to pay any particular attention to what Edna did, (unless she is doing something which he deems strange or out of step with protocol) took notice of the fact that she was not wearing “her usual Tuesday reception gown” but instead was wearing her “ordinary house dress” (Chopin 50). Receiving guests in the drawing room every single Tuesday “had been the programme which Mrs. Pontellier had religiously followed since her marriage, six years before” (Chopin 50). It was her social duty as Mr. Pontellier’s wife to entertain the wealthy wives and daughters of Mr. Pontellier’s contemporaries in the business world, those of equal or more desirable social status than their own. It was an important part of “the conventions” which he was so intent on adhering to with all his might and main. When being told that she had not felt like entertaining callers but had decided to go “out” simply because she felt like it, his astonishment seemed to be as great as if she’d just announced a desire to grow a beard! His immediate worry was for how this would look to those who had wished to call upon her and he tells her in no uncertain terms that he hoped she had “some suitable excuse” for her aberrant behavior (Chopin 51). Poor Mr. Pontellier; he did not realize that his wife has finally tired of “the masquerade” of her life, and that she was realizing that she could “no longer ignore her own desires, thoughts, and aspirations,” even though it meant being unreconciled with the expectations of her public life (Telgen and Hile 51-53). Indeed, and instead of her growing “unstable,” as Mr. Pontellier thought, Edna was “becoming herself and daily casting aside that fictitious self which we [all] assume like a garment with which to appear before the world” (Chopin 57). It is as if Edna suddenly wads up her Tuesday reception gown, which represents her “old life,” and throws it in her husband’s face.

Amidst the transition which is going on in Edna’s life, we see an interesting contrast between the two female companions whose company she chooses to keep. First there is sweet, perfect, motherly Madame Ratignolle, who adores her children and worships her husband as a good Creole woman should (Chopin 8). Madame Ratignolle’s clothing is a picture of the woman that she is; demure, very feminine, all carefulness and ruffles and lace (Chopin 14-15). Then there is Mademoiselle Reisz, who is the complete polar opposite of Madame Ratignolle’s. She is an unpleasant woman who has “absolutely no taste in dress,” and exudes an almost palpable desire to be as out of step with the customs and fashions of the times as possible (Chopin 25). The ugly “black lace and artificial violets” (Chopin 62) that she always wears are in direct defiance of conformity. She knows she is an unattractive old maid but doesn’t seem to care, especially since she finds escape in the passion of playing her piano “ …” (Telgen and Hile 51-53). Edna is drawn to Madame Ratignolle because she knows instinctively that she is everything Edna is not. She admires her greatly but at the same time feels sorry for her and for “that colorless existence which never uplifted its possessor beyond the region of blind contentment […]” (Chopin 56). Edna also admires Mademoiselle Reisz, because she recognizes a free spirit who has chosen to march to her own music. Of her two friends’ lifestyles, Edna is most drawn to Mademoiselle Reisz’s because above all, she craves freedom, a freedom which she perceives that Mademoiselle Reisz has found in her own strange way.

Once Edna has chosen to make a clean break with her old life, which she does by deciding to move into a cozy little house all by herself, she decides to throw a “grand dinner” at the old house before the move is complete (Chopin 80). This is a climactic point in the novel: the grand and beautiful dinner party that Edna throws is both a celebration of her new life to come, as well as a symbolic “burial” of her old life. Perhaps for the last time Edna dons all the trappings which come along with being Mr. Pontellier’s wife. It is a pity that he was not there to have appreciated it. “The golden shimmer of Edna’s gown spread in rich folds on either side of her,” and the magnificent cluster of diamonds that Mr. Pontellier had sent especially for the evening sparkled in her hair in queen-like fashion (Chopin 87,89). As she sat at the head of the table, which was gorgeously bedecked with “yellow satin” strewn with red and yellow roses, “there was something in her attitude, in her whole appearance when she leaned her head against the high backed chair and spread her arms, which suggested the regal woman, the one who rules, looks on, who stands alone” (Chopin 89). Edna, though relinquishing her elevated position of being Mr. Pontellier’s wife and taking a step down in the social scale, is now free to rule her own life as she chooses. She has truly crowned herself queen of her own world, with herself being her sole subject.

In some ways it is difficult to understand why Chopin chooses to end her novel in the way that she does, with-
the impression that Edna drowns herself. Some may read the ending with a feeling of defeat, believing that Edna is throwing away her hard-won newfound freedom in life. However, it is also difficult to ignore the clear implications that Chopin gives when Edna is standing absolutely alone on the beach at Grand Isle and has finally “cast the unpleasant, prickling garments [of her bathing suit] from her, and for the first time in her life [...] stood naked in the open air” (Chopin 115). Aware of herself, her own body, and the call of the sea, Edna Pontellier feels “like some new-born creature, opening its eyes in a familiar world that it had never known” (Chopin 115). One could argue that Edna was truly “alive” perhaps for the first time in her life, and having thrown off the last vestiges of her old life through her clothing, had completed her journey to “re-birth.” With Edna’s nakedness, “the casting off of socially prescribed clothing, comes a spiritual revelation” (McCoy). What she chose to do with her new life after this journey was done is perhaps after the fact. She discovered herself, discovered freedom, and took it in the only way she knew how.

Works Cited

CONTRIBUTORS

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