The Writing Center Review

Selected Writings by Students of Kent State University Stark Campus

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Contributor Information
Editor’s Preface

*I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestioned ability of a man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor.* - Attributed to Henry David Thoreau (1817 - 1862)

The Writing Center Review is a publication determined to showcase writers who have shown exemplary skills in the writing process throughout their academic endeavors. Writers that have proven they understand how to find information they do not know and then use the information they obtain. The skills that are showcased prove that students are striving to become better student writers.

The 2007 issue of The Writing Center Review continues to be an interdisciplinary magazine. This year we published submissions on topics as wide ranging as Archaeology, English, Geology, and Sociology. 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.

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  
Beth Butler, Assistant Professor of Journalism  
Erin Farb, Instructor of Spanish  
Lee Fox, Associate Professor of Psychology  
John Harkness, Assistant Professor of Sociology  
Leslie Heaphy, Assistant Professor of History  
Molly Lindner, Assistant Professor of Art  
Joanne Malene, Instructor of Journalism  
Lori McGee, Instructor of Spanish  
Jayne Moneysmith, Associate Professor of English  
Mary Ann Rooks, Assistant Professor of English  
Carrie Schweitzer, Assistant Professor of Geology  
Brad Shepherd, Assistant Professor of Psychology  
Margaret Wick, Assistant Professor of Communication

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, Bruce Hines, 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.

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 in 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 & Timothy M. Yates Co-Editors  
Lisa Stratton, Selection Committee, Assistant Editor, & Publicity  
Derek Bailey, Publicity  
Sandy Dent, Selection Committee  
Lara Kohn, Selection Committee & Copy Editor  
Leroy White, Selection Committee  
Jeff Leadbetter, Selection Committee  
Jamie Richardson, Selection Committee  
Andrew Rihn, Selection Committee & Copy Editor
Timothy M. Yates wrote his paper “The Life of Anne Rice and Her Attempts to Cheat Death” for Dr. Sturr’s English Senior Seminar (ENG 49091). Students were asked to find an aspect of an author’s life and analyze it in comparison to that author’s work.

The life of Anne (O’Brien) Rice has been often surrounded by death, and has therefore existed in a repetitive state of bereavement. The theme of mortality is one that Rice has been unable to escape considering she lost her mother, first born child, and husband all before ‘their time.’ Rice gained fame and fortune through her characters who have proven themselves quite capable of cheating death through vampirism. Yet, in order for Rice to cheat death as her most famous characters have, she has surprisingly had to turn her back on the style of writing through which she obtained her fame.

The novels of Anne (O’Brien) Rice are autobiographical in nature. The way in which these works may be understood is to understand the cyclical process that is involved with this undertaking. A common focus of literary biography is the practice of looking at an author’s texts in regards to his/her life in order to gain understanding of both the life and the works that are a part of that life. Only by looking at and understanding both, may claims be made regarding the existing connections between an author’s life and his/her work. Katherine Ramsland, in her article about literary biography entitled “On Being Witness,” discusses this element of studying an author’s life and works stating, “Facts are malleable and the way they are interpreted will evolve with changing contexts; any aspect of a subject’s life can be exaggerated out of proportion, minimized, ignored, or suppressed, depending on the biographer’s overt or covert agenda” (94). Sometimes biographers will use the life events of an author to historically discredit, or defame that author (for instance Shakespeare didn’t really write this text because…). You will not find a hidden agenda within these pages, only claims that arose while becoming familiar with the author’s life events and written works. Granted, the scope of this assessment is limited due to the fact that Rice’s library includes 22 novels, not including the works written under her two other pen names (which, once totaled is too large of a volume of work to be analyzed and discussed within the bounds of this assignment). Yet, the analysis that is presented here is a strong starting point for the lessons that can be learned about Anne Rice and her written work through comparison.

Life Events that Contributed to, but Preceded Her First Novel

Rice was born and raised in New Orleans. Her family stressed the ideals of her Irish-Catholic upbringing, and because of this Rice attended mass almost daily from infancy through young adulthood. Raised a devoted Catholic, Anne questioned and challenged many issues regarding her family’s chosen faith. One of her early impressions regarding her faith according to the Dictionary of Literary Biography is that, “O’Brien’s [Rice’s] devotion to the Catholic Church was complicated by her sensuous response to the mass and its symbolism. The conflict between pleasure and fear of punishment led to masochistic fantasies she later developed in her erotic novels” (par. 5). Rice not only challenged the various ‘holy’ aspects of religion, but the unholy aspects as well: “There’s always been this terrible dilemma in Christianity conceiving of the devil as not learning anything. I mean he’s supposed to be extraordinarily clever, an angel, and yet for thousands of years he doesn’t learn anything?” (Mulvey-Roberts par. 43). These types of questions that Rice was beginning to ask at a young age would only gain potency when her life would be touched by traumatic events.

Rice’s mother, who was the family member that encouraged Anne to read and be creative, and called her “my little genius,” died in 1955. The death of Rice’s mother would be the first taste in a long line of human mortality that would have a profound affect on her life, “This devastating loss contributed to a fear of death that influenced her adult life and writing” (DLB par 6). This premature loss of her mother to alcoholism would give birth to the distance that would only grow between Rice and the Catholic Church. Upon reaching adulthood, this aforementioned distance would continue to grow when she met, fell in love with, and married Stan Rice, an atheist poet.
While in college, [Rice’s] curiosity led her to explore ideas that were contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church” (DLB par. 7). Life, for this newly married couple, would remain “happy” for a few years, before Anne would be haunted by bereavement once more. Seventeen years would pass between the loss of Rice’s mother and the next loss that would affect her life, yet this loss would affect her life even more than before:

On 21 September 1966, the Rice’s first baby, Michelle, was born.... In the summer of 1970, her full attention turned to Michelle, who was diagnosed with acute granulocytic leukemia.... Rice found no way to save her child. Michelle died in 1972. After losing her mother and her daughter, Rice no longer believed in God. She turned towards humanism, seeking goodness separate from religion, and she began to place more value in human experience than in abstract ideas (DLB par. 10).

Through this period of bereavement over the loss of her first child, Rice drank daily and began to write what would become not only her first, but most famous novel, Interview with the Vampire, which began her Vampire Chronicles.

Aspects of Rice’s Life and Persona Intertwined with Her Fiction

The characters that Rice would create would become her compass to guide herself out of depression as she would begin mixing her life in with her pages of that first novel. Rice’s characters within her Vampire Chronicles continue to struggle with aspects of the Christian faith that they were exposed to before they cast aside their mortal coils and stepped boldly into immortal lives as vampires.... There are parallels regarding struggles of faith between the lives of her vampire characters and her own life. Rice and her characters wish to escape death, and continue to adhere to moral codes that survive even after belief in or dedication to religion has been cast aside. In addition, Rice has lived off the sale of these works where her characters, has cheated death by living off the deaths of others, and struggle with the conscience that they must cast aside daily in order to merely survive. Also, it is quite possible that these characters were created completely from Rice’s own desire to cheat death herself.

In the article “Interviewing the Author of Interview with the Vampire” by Marie Mulvey-Roberts, Rice comments on the process of creating her first work of published fiction: “It was a very instinctive thing to write the novel, an instinctive thing to become that character Louis in the first book, and start talking about being a vampire” (par. 18). Rice and others who have written about her, discuss how autobiographical aspects recurrently appear within her fiction. For instance, the Dictionary of Literary Biography makes this statement regarding Rice’s written work:

Rice puts herself into her novels, allowing characters to live her experiences and voice her thoughts. The history of her writing is thus the history of her own journey of self-discovery. In fact, Rice has described her writing as a therapeutic process that has helped bring together a personality fragmented by several losses in her early years” (par. 1).

These biographical elements and moral lessons of a cast-aside religion have crept into and affected Rice’s work.

For Rice, it may have been easier to indulge in her creative fiction than to face her grief over the loss of her daughter in full force. Rice, by distancing herself from her grief, could decide how her character Louis would cope with similar life events that would also help the author. The characters Rice would create in that first novel would facilitate a survival of the grief process that this author has been unable to escape.

Louis, the main character from Rice’s first novel Interview with the Vampire, is the first character that Rice introduces in her series who struggles with issues of faith and morality. Louis tells his interviewer the chain of events that led up to his transformation nearly 200 years earlier. He reveals that even though he and his brother had been raised Catholic, he did not understand how potent his dear brother’s faith was: “Prayer was what mattered to him, prayer and his leather-bound lives of the saints” (Rice, Interview 6). Louis, in narration, speaks of how his brother’s life changed because of his faith. He no longer wished
to be part of the family business within their southern plantation, and he had decided to give his life to prayer and to God. Louis discusses how his brother’s life became consumed by religion, so much “That in his love for God, he had perhaps gone too far” (Rice, Interview 7).

His brother began forsaking all other aspects of his life in order to spend more time in prayer. He stopped working, eating, and sleeping. Finally, Louis engages him in an argument in which his brother claims to have seen visions of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, and thus a holy figure within the Catholic faith. Louis had but one response to his brother’s claim—disbelief. “I was Catholic, I believed in saints. I knew their symbols, their names. But I didn’t, couldn’t believe my brother. Not only did I not believe he saw visions, I couldn’t entertain the notion for a moment” (Rice, Interview 8-9). After their argument, his brother, who remains unnamed, had a mysterious fall down their stairs, broke his neck and died.

Louis hints towards two reasons of what led him towards the damnation of an immortal life of vampirism, his disbelief that his brother had been actually touched by a holy figure (the Virgin Mary, or God), and that someone like his brother who wished to be so close to God could suffer such an unexplained fate. It should be noted here the similarity between Rice and Louis. Rice (after the loss of her mother/daughter) and Louis (after the loss of his brother) both turned their backs to God because they had lost loved ones. After his brother’s death, Louis commented on his existence saying, “I saw my life as if I stood apart from it, the vanity, the self-serving, the constant fleeing from one petty annoyance after another, the lip service to God, and the Virgin and a host of saints whose names filled my prayer books, none of whom made the slightest difference in a narrow, materialistic, and selfish existence” (Rice, Interview 14). When this issue of human mortality was reinforced for Louis, similar to Rice, he turned his back on God. Indeed, he wished for damnation, a wish that the vampire Lestat was more than willing to grant by making him an immortal.

Lestat, the vampire who infected Louis into vampirism, could also be called his creator since he made Louis into a creature that was no longer human. But Lestat, unlike the creator from Catholic ideology, mocks his creation for his continued weakness. He rebukes Louis, saying, “You whining coward of a vampire who prowls the night killing alley cats and rats and staring for hours at candles as if they were people and standing in the rain like a zombie until your clothes are drenched and you smell like old wardrobe trunks in attics and have the look of a baffled idiot at the zoo” (Rice, Interview 50-51). Lestat feels as though Louis is a weak vampire, killing animals—not people—in order to survive. In return, Louis resents his creator (once again similar to Rice) saying “I hated him and wanted to leave him; yet could I leave him?” (Rice, Interview 63). Lestat, the creator of Louis, also speaks his mind regarding his view of the Creator from Catholicism: God kills, and so shall we; indiscriminately He takes the richest and the poorest, and so shall we; for not creatures under God are as we are, none so like Him as ourselves, dark angels not confined to the stinking limits of hell but wandering His earth and all its kingdoms. (Interview 88).

These passages serve as a parallel to those who struggle with their Christian faith and wish to turn their backs on their creator yet fear what the repercussions of that disobedience may be.

Any genre (science fiction, horror, romance) typically has various rules or codes to which the characters must adhere. Rice’s Vampire Chronicles are no different. In terms of the rules of vampirism that Rice establishes, Lestat, from the perspective of Louis, is a glutton. Rice’s rules indicate that a vampire within her works can survive by taking one victim per night if that victim is drained to the point of death, yet Lestat takes small amounts of blood from several victims per night, sampling blood as though he is a wine connoisseur. But Lestat, who mocks Louis’ weakness, reveals his own weakness towards human life. Lestat (who appears to not care for humans other than for proper nutrition) is revealed to have been caring for his now bed-ridden deaf and blind father. When Lestat and Louis discover that the workers of Louis’s plantation know that these men are not human and that they must flee, they realize that they cannot escape if they have to transport Lestat’s father. So Lestat requests, “Kill him... I know he’s my father! That’s why you have to kill him. I can’t kill him! If I could, I would have done it a long time ago, damn him!” (Rice, Interview 69).
This passage shows that Lestat, who claims to not possess any feelings towards his kills, still feels as though he must adhere to a blending of the fifth (thou shall honor thy mother and father), and sixth (thou shall not kill) commandments from the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Even though Louis turns his back on his mortal life as a human being, aspects of that life, conscience and guilt for instance, still flow through his inhumane body. Louis had to turn his back on his Catholic up-bringing in order to be reborn into vampirism, but the ideology of his now abandoned faith continued to seep through. After completing the act of his first kill, Louis states, “I understood the difference between us. For me the experience of killing had been cataclysmic. So had that of suckling Lestat’s wrist” (Rice, Interview 31). This passage above represents how Louis feels contempt for the manner in which he must now survive, through the death of humanity. Nevertheless, as his skills as a predator of the night grow, so does his disdain for conventions of human life and worship of an immortal God. He comments on how when he met with his sister after his transformation he, “would see her sweet and palpable before me, a shimmering, precious creature soon to grow old, soon to die, soon to lose these moments that in their intangibility promised to us, wrongly... wrongly, an immortality” (Rice, Interview 38). Louis (similar to Rice) would be tortured by death even though he was invulnerable to it. Louis would discuss how his dreams of death would continue to torture him “I dreamed of my brother, for instance, that he was near me in some state between life and death, calling to me for help” (Rice, Interview 76).

Even though his consciousness of morality is still evident within his persona, he still curses the practice of humanity believing in immortals that would grant them an everlasting life through faith and dedication to ideology. Also, it must be noted that the cursing of this ideology by Louis illustrates that he is not fully free from this convention.

A third and final character from Interview with the Vampire to whom connections can be made to Rice’s life is the character of Claudia. It is believed by some that not only are a man and woman solely involved in the conception of a child, but that God (the Creator) also has a key role. As mentioned earlier, Lestat can be viewed as Louis’s creator, which could also be said regarding Claudia since it was Lestat who infected her with vampirism. Claudia was Lestat’s gift to Louis that nevertheless served a selfish purpose. Lestat knew that Louis needed a companion that would not approach vampirism as lavishly as Lestat does, and that Louis would be less likely to abandon him if he was forced to take her with him.

When Louis first meets Claudia (in human form) the purpose of this meeting is for Louis to feed. Yet, when he approaches her he “Feel[s] such pity for her... Why do I wish to touch her tiny, soft arms, hold her now on my knee as I am doing, feel her bend her head to my chest as I gently touch the satin hair?” (73). Even though he pities her, Louis gives in to his urge for human blood, yet notices while feeding on the five-year-old that she had “not the heart of a man or an animal, but the rapid, tenacious heart of the child, beating harder and harder, refusing to die, beating like a tiny fist beating on the door, crying ‘I will not die, I will not die, I cannot die, I cannot die...’” (74). It is noted through narration that Claudia’s heartbeat was too strong and that Louis could not kill her without weakening himself. He abandoned her when he noticed that Lestat had been watching him, to mock that for his human kill Louis picks a young girl. Lestat would go back to the filthy hospital for the poor that Claudia’s body would be taken to in order to claim her as his daughter to only kill and infect her.

Claudia is a powerful killer within this text. Louis comments on her abilities as a predator, “little child she was, but also [a] fierce killer now capable of the ruthless pursuit of blood with all a child’s demanding” (Rice, Interview 96). Fierce predator that Claudia is, she struggles with the fact that even though she may mature as a hunter her physical form would never surpass that of a five-year-old child. Claudia will never grow taller, develop breasts, or enjoy living as a woman; therefore, her image is forever unchanged by time. The same could be said regarding Rice’s daughter, Michelle, mentioned above. Michelle died of leukemia at the age of six, and Rice’s image of her would also remain unchanged by time. Michelle would never grow old, develop, or mature; Michelle’s image, similar to Claudia’s, would forever remain unchanged.

Like Louis, Claudia would resent her creator because of his nature and for the information that he would continue to withhold. Her resentment and later malice towards her creator would lead to her death.
When a vampire coven would learn how vivid her hatred of her creator becomes (due to the fact that various vampires have varying gifts including mind reading) they would sentence Claudia and Madeleine (a female companion/mother figure that Claudia requested of Lestat and Louis) to death by locking them in a room that would be consumed with daylight at dawn. When Louis discovers these tragic events and sees Claudia’s and Madeleine’s ashen bodies he states: Mother and daughter in one another’s arms… these two lying under the gentle rain were Madeleine and Claudia, and Madeleine’s lovely red hair mingled with the gold of Claudia’s hair, which stirred and glistened in the wind that sucked through the open doorway… and the hand that clutched at the child was whole like a mummy’s hand. But the child, the ancient one, my Claudia, was ashes. (Rice, Interview 301)

The death of Claudia and Madeleine can be viewed two varying ways. The first way in which these plot events can be viewed is that the death of this pair could be symbolic of the deaths of Rice’s mother and daughter. The other way that these events could be interpreted is that a part of Rice died with her daughter and that is why she wrote that Madeleine, Claudia’s vampire mother figure and companion, would die with Claudia.

These examples from within Rice’s first book, Interview with the Vampire, are but a mere sampling of the textual evidence within her work that displays how her characters survive through the convention of sin, and struggle with their conscience, guilt, and recurring elements of morality.

To illustrate that this concept of continual morality is a reoccurring theme in novels by Rice we will view another book from her Vampire Chronicles, Memnoch the Devil. In this novel, we gain a view of Lestat that readers were not offered in Interview with the Vampire, Lestat’s view of himself. Lestat’s self image is that, “I maintain myself as morally complex, spiritually tough, and aesthetically relevant” (Rice, Memnoch 2). The basis for the plot of this novel is that the ‘sin business’ has become simply too busy for the devil to handle on his own, and that he now needs an accomplice. Since the devil is fully aware of Lestat’s evil deeds that have occurred since his early beginnings in 18th century France, he knows that Lestat is the one other being that could possibly become a formidable ally. In order to prove his identity, Memnoch transports Lestat back in time to events that have forever impacted the world of sin. One place that Memnoch transports Lestat is to the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. In the article, “Who Do You Love? Anne Rice’s Vampires and Their Moral Transition,” Kathleen Rout states, “In Memnoch the Devil, he [Lestat] visited the ancient past and literally drank the blood of Christ; he went literally to Hell and questioned the reason for his existence” (474). After Lestat witnesses Christ carrying the burden of the cross, the human side of this supernatural being discloses the shame and disappointment he feels for his own actions over the course of nearly 300 years. At this point it must be noted that Lestat (similar to Rice with her religious background and works of fiction) has witnessed two types of immortality in the making. Lestat has now witnessed the transition that fellow vampires make when rising from the dead into vampirism, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ into immortality.

Over the years, Rice would continue to shape and polish her world of vampires, and their moral dilemmas. Lestat, in later books, would discover a vampire community in which “the official foreign policy of vampires towards humans is to forswear the killing of all but the Evil Doers, themselves murderers of innocent human beings” (Rout 477). Rice has single-handedly revitalized the traditional vampire legend with the ten books of her Vampire Chronicles. As Rout states, “Rice has moved the vampire novel 180 degrees from Bram Stoker’s Dracula. No longer are vampires mindlessly evil, but they have adopted a moral code that allows them to coexist with the ‘good humans’ as ‘good vampires’”(478). Rice has been able, in some circles, to change how fictional beings like vampires have been perceived, due to the elements of morality that she has displayed through characters like Louis, and (at times) Lestat.

In an article entitled “The Gospel According to Anne,” David Gates from Newsweek states that Rice’s characters, “whose compulsive, conscience-stricken evildoers reflect her long spiritual unease” (http://www.msnbc.msn.com). This theme of spiritual unease, even though it inspired many works of fiction, was continuing to torture her as it had done since the death of her mother. Even in Memnoch, Rice is able
to project an idea that maybe even the devil isn’t that bad of a guy, one more symbol of her struggle with her own spirituality.

The Troubling Events that Showed Anne the Light

From 1998-2004 Rice, unlike her immortal vampire characters, has been reminded of the limitations of mortality once more; Rice’s experiences with death and near death experiences may very well have contributed to the change that she has made within her career in fiction. Even though she has been writing about those characters for nearly three decades, it may have been the changes within her own life that cemented the changes within her fiction. A number of events would soon swiftly change Rice’s life:

In December 1998 Rice acted on her growing desire to return to the Catholic Church [a place she had not been since she was 18 years old]. She was drawn back by a yearning to experience Communion [the symbolic act for what her character Lestat had actually done] and by the mystery of the Incarnation, the concept of God taking on human form in Jesus Christ. Rice went to confession, received Communion, and had her marriage to Stan Rice blessed in the Catholic Church. Two days after her Catholic wedding, Rice slipped into a diabetic coma and almost died. (DLB par. 56).

This reinforcement of her own mortality, instead of the mortality of those around her, “got the ball rolling” so to speak in regards to the changes that would occur within her life, and how her career as a writer of fiction would also require change in order to continue. Four years later another traumatic event would touch her life:

On December 9 2002 Stan Rice [her husband of 41 years] died of a brain tumor. As Anne Rice informed her readers of her husband’s death that night, she expressed the hope that whatever pain she suffered would help her be more sensitive to others, and she offered support to struggling writers. Speaking on her fan phone line about future plans, she stated, “My direction will be so strange that many may abandon me, but who knows?” (DLB par. 68).

Both of these traumatic events mentioned above occurred within a four-year period of Rice’s life; surely, these events (a near death experience, and the death of a spouse) had a profound effect on the author who is known for writing anywhere from one to two novels per year.

Within the article, “Gender Differences in Emotional Processing Among Bereaved Older Adults,” it states, “The death of any loved one is typically extremely painful, but the loss of a spouse has been found to be the most difficult for older adults... [and]... the survivor’s social, emotional, and cognitive worlds are typically severely disrupted and require reorganization” (Guinther, Segal, Bogaards, 15). One typical reorganization that typically occurs when an individual ages (or suffers a great loss) is a rededication to religion, and religious principles. Rice, who, as noted above, had changed the world of vampirism 180 degrees, had now made the same change regarding her faith in God. Is it merely coincidence that when Rice’s life would require such “reorganization” that she, the writer of conscience struggling evildoers, would then decide, “from now on I would write only for the Lord” (http://www.msnbc.msn.com)?

In order to understand the stress and trauma that would have affected Rice regarding this loss that brought about vast change, we must take a closer look at the common characteristics of individuals who suffer similar circumstances. In an article entitled, “Death of a Spouse: Illusory Basic Assumptions and Continuation of Bonds,” Ayelet S. Reisman discusses the needs of individuals who have lost a spouse to continue a bond with that person even after his/her death. Reisman states, “Higher order distress is created when people discover that, in fact, their abstract fundamental assumptions about the nature of the world and themselves are illusory...it places a trembling animal at the mercy of the entire cosmos and the problem of making sense of it” (446). It was discussed earlier that Rice has struggled with her beliefs and morals for the majority of her life, these traumatic events which occurred could have only intensified her personal struggle (which had been based since the age of 14 on a distrust in God and organized religion due to the deaths of loved ones).
Rice’s work involves multiple beings who are immortal and this aspect that appears in her writing may very well be a written wish for her own desire for eternal life. Reisman also states that, “Indeed, it is well documented in the literature that there is an increase in mortality rates among older adults following the death of a spouse, as well as higher suicide rates” (448). When Rice’s mortality was reinforced by her own medical struggles and the horrific loss of her husband to cancer, it is highly possible that her ideology about this world changed during her “reorganization” period. Reisman also mentions that most individuals who lose a spouse wish to continue a bond after the loss occurs, “Maintaining bonds with the deceased spouse is an attempt to cope with the loss of both the spouse and the “normal” illusory basic assumptions” (446).

Many are aware of the idea within Judeo-Christian ideology that by believing in God wholeheartedly that one can obtain eternal life within the Kingdom of Heaven. Rice once stated in an interview “I don’t think I could turn down immortality” (Mulvey-Roberts 54). Rice’s rededication to Catholicism may be her way to cheat death, as several of her characters have done by converting to vampirism. Another aspect within Reisman’s article discusses when events like a loss of a spouse occur we become aware of how vulnerable we truly are: “those who have experienced a great loss lose any sense of security they may have had in the past. The world becomes a dangerous place in which there is disaster round every corner” (448). This quote reinforces another aspect of Christian/Catholic ideology where we (humanity) must realize that the events of the world are out of our hands and that it is faith that will allow for each and every one of us to prevail through the trials of life on Earth. Therefore, what better way could Rice continue a bond with her lost husband than by claiming that she will never return to her vampire-based, murder-filled works of fiction that had made her famous; consequently, deciding to now only write to glorify God. Rice has hinted at the fact that the majority of her work, even though it contains elements of morality, still glorifies sin, and that in order to glorify God she can not continue to write such material similar to her previous works.

Now, Rice has already published a religious novel entitled, Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt, a book that is one title of a planned trilogy based on the life of Jesus Christ. The objective of this planned trilogy is to tell the story of Christ from birth to death, and then beyond death through resurrection. Those of Christian faith know that very little is known of the life of Jesus of Nazareth from the ages of 18-30 years; therefore, Rice once again may face criticism for the stories she may tell in the years to come. Yet, in decades past, Rice received fame for glorifying the immortal lives of immoral or evil beings who survived solely on the basis of the daily practice of sin. Now, after the changes that have occurred within the last eight years of Rice’s life, she may receive a new kind of fame. By consciously choosing to not return to her dark works, and by deciding to write to only glorify God, (In this case adhering to the Christian ideology that the word of God must be spread) Rice will still be writing about immortals, something she has done since the beginning of her career. The difference now is the fact that by writing about, and glorifying the life of Jesus of Nazareth, one of the world’s most recognized figures that embodies all that is “good,” she may be one step closer to achieving the everlasting life she has apparently desired. Through this change of lifestyle and career Rice may vary well be able to continue the bond that she had with her beloved husband that was recently broken by the trials of her mortal existence.

In an author’s note that appears at the end of Rice’s most recent work, Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt, she makes several declarations about her faith, and the journey that led to the completion of this novel. In regards to why events occurred that cleared a path for Rice back to the Catholic Church, she states: “Now why did this happen to me? Why did this love and trust [for and in God respectively] fill my heart at that particular moment in time? The honest answer is: I don’t know” (345). In addition, Rice, who now claims to understand more than she once did, is still questioning. Addressing the issue of why she was “given” this purpose to write about Jesus during her husband’s illness and death she states “Was I given the gift of purpose before this tragedy so that it would sustain me through it? I don’t know” (328). Another strange yet noteworthy quote from the author’s note is when Rice, who claims to have changed her writing 180 degrees makes a claim that Jesus, an immortal of the Christian faith, is similar to but better than the immortals she is accustomed to writing about stating, “After all, is Christ Our Lord not the ultimate super-
natural hero, the ultimate outsider, the ultimate immortal of them all?” (338). Rice makes this claim hoping that her readers who fell in love with her work based on immortal lives will follow her on her journey of fictionalizing the life of Jesus.

Katherine Ramsland, Rice’s biographer, stated in her article that “I was free to present her from a variety of perspectives, some of which did not agree with her own” (97). It is quite possible that Anne Rice would not agree with the claims being made by this essay either. To reiterate, Rice, throughout her life has been obsessed with, as well as having maintained, a paralyzing fear of death. Also, Rice’s main characters were able to escape from death (including her new works based on the life and resurrection of Jesus), an ability that she would wish for not only for herself, but for loved ones who have died before their times. Finally, if Rice is unaware of why this renewed love for God came upon her, and unaware why this purpose (of writing to glorify God) was bestowed upon her, than rededicating her life to God allows Rice to cheat death (just as the majority of her characters have) as she adheres to principles that will lay the foundation for her journey from Earth to Heaven. After all, Rice did say, “I don’t think I could turn down immortality” (Roberts-Mulvey 54).

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Lisa Stratton wrote her paper “Archaeology Laboratory Project: Nobles Pond” for Prof. Harkness' Intro to Archaeology (ANTH 18420) course. She was asked to write a descriptive essay about her experiences in the lab.

One of the things that I believe sets apart the Kent State University Stark Campus from other small regional campuses is the archaeology lab on the third floor of main hall. For me, until this semester, it has been a rather vague, mysterious room that I passed by regularly, without really knowing what was taking place inside. My imagination conjured up images of dinosaur bone fragments being painstakingly glued together, or breathtaking pieces of pottery with engraved gods and goddesses cavorting around the rim being studied in minute detail. I even daydreamed of some dashing archaeologist (okay, okay... specifically Indiana Jones!) popping in now and again with some fantastic piece of jewelry or a magical container of some kind, with an obligatory curse on it that would throw the entire campus into turmoil! So, when the opportunity arose for me to do a research project of sorts in the lab, I was thrilled at the prospect.

My assignment was to spend time working with our resident amateur (loosely speaking, as she is really quite amazing) Elaine Dowd, the Field Director and Lab Coordinator for the Nobles Pond Project. I was to spend ten to fifteen hours in the lab, and then give a brief summary and description of my journal notes to my professor. I was quite convinced that by the end of the semester, I would be Lara Croft, or even better, Daniel Jackson: an inexhaustible source of knowledge, with my days full of discovery and adventure.

The first day I stopped in to see Elaine, we spent about a half an hour discussing when would be good times for me to help her out. Curiously, I peered around the room as we spoke, looking for some blue enameled death scarab artifact, or a bullwhip hanging on a wall peg. To my surprise, there was not a skull or priceless vase to be seen. Instead, there were rows and rows of checkbook cartons, filled with tiny chips of flint, and shelves full of boxes... flat, plain cardboard-looking boxes. The walls were covered with schematics and the filing cabinets were overflowing with paperwork. We finally settled on a good time for us both, and I left with anticipation for the weeks ahead.

I stopped in the following week, on Tuesday night, the time that the local archaeological society meets at the lab to work on the artifacts gleaned from the Nobles Pond site. I was unable to stay, but I was able to make the acquaintance of six or seven people that have spent years combing over material in the lab. It was a spirited discussion, and they seemed excited at the prospect of another person joining their ranks and pitching in to help. All was going according to plan.

My first day in the lab, Elaine gave me the “grand tour.” This was primarily standing in the closet door as she described to me what all the shelves of boxes were, from natural remains (non-man-made) to itemized artifacts from the various sections of the site. From there, she gave me a quick run-down of the various schematics on the walls, and the contents of the other shelves and boxes scattered in the main work area. Then, it was time to work. Finally! I waited with my breath held to find out what my duties would be. She handed me a tiny little stack of one inch by two-inch slips of papers, and asked if I could please file these away for her. Slightly disappointed at my less than auspicious start, I put on a cheery face and set to do my task. Surely the adventure would begin soon, but the mundane paperwork must be finished first. Hope was not lost.

As I began filing, Elaine started telling me the story of the Project. In the early nineties, Garry Summer and Dr. Mark Seeman came together in a shared interest in some of the artifacts that had been uncovered, on and off since the early seventies, in the Nobles Pond area of Jackson Township. At that time, the property was owned by the Timken family, who graciously allowed them to begin excavating some sections of the site. Eventually, the Timkens sold the land to developers. After quite a bit of discussion, the developers allowed the excavators to continue with their work while the construction crews worked
around the volunteers. According to Elaine, it was quite a job, attempting to get as much material out of there as possible, before the buildings started being built on top of the site. They had thousands of volunteers helping, from adults with an amateur interest in archaeology, to schoolchildren that Elaine taught and directed on site.

Kent State agreed to let the Nobles Pond Project set up a laboratory at the Stark Campus, mostly, I think, due to Dr. Seeman’s influence as a Kent State professor. I believe they removed the last of the material from the site to the new office in 1996. Some of the artifacts are at local museums, but most of the over-60,000 pieces still remain at the University in the lab.

As I filed and helped catalogue some of those artifacts, I found myself immersed in Elaine’s tale of excitement, sacrifice, and dedication that brought her to this tiny little closet-like room. Almost three hours had gone by without me even realizing it. I was nowhere near finished with the little slips of paper, so I tidied up my mess and set it aside for my next visit. I bid Elaine farewell, with promises of my return in a few days.

Since that first visit, I’ve been back several times… sometimes for an hour, sometimes for two or three, and as of just last week, I have finally finished filing all of those little slips of pink paper. I have discovered that the excitement of being in the lab doesn’t require that I dodge phantoms from cursed relics, or avoid evil priests using ancient remains to become gods. The true adventure is discovering the simple things about people that lived over ten thousand years ago… things such as how they made their tools to survive, for hunting and eating, and making clothes. I find myself wanting to know more and more every day about what things we have in common with those long-ago folks and wishing we could have even just a glimpse of their daily lives.

One of the most important realizations I’ve had over the last months regarding archaeology is just how crucial the tiniest discoveries really are in the larger scope of things. For example, while sitting at the little worktable in Canton, Ohio, trying to fit two tiny pieces of flint together, it’s difficult to think that the work will have impact. Yet, archaeologists have traveled from multiple other Paleo-Indian sites here in North America in order to learn the accurate form of cataloging and mapping that Elaine has put into motion for Nobles Pond. All of archaeology’s little tasks lay the foundation for the flashy discoveries, like King Tutankhamen’s tomb, or Lucy.

I may not have discovered a Stargate or cracked a bullwhip, but I wouldn’t change my experience in the lab for anything. It has taught me about the warmth and camaraderie of the people that spend decades trying to understand our ancestors through sites like Nobles Pond. It’s also reminded me that average, ordinary, caring people that don’t stop to worry about things like glory or reward do the lion’s share of any given job. They do what they do because they love it, and because it needs to get done.

Oh, yeah. I’ll be back to work there this summer. And fall. And winter.
Michael Norton-Smith wrote his paper “Dimetrodon” for Dr. Schweitzer’s Earth History (GEOL 11042) course. For their final term paper, students were asked to write about an animal with a fossil record in the state of Ohio.

The state of Ohio is a rich source for fossils of ancient plants and animals that have long since evolved or died out. One such animal, Dimetrodon, was a land dwelling organism that lived roughly 280-230 million years ago during the Permian period (Col 1996). These animals were discovered by Edward Drinker Cope of the Academy of Natural Science in 1878. The name means “two-measure teeth” and describes the dental structure of the animal (Col 1996). Its complete Linnaean Classification can be found below (Dimetrodon 2004):

- Kingdom: Animalia
- Phylum: Chordata
- Class: Synapsida
- Order: Pelycosauria
- Family: Sphenacodontidae
- Genus: Dimetrodon
- Species: Dimetrodon limbatus

Though many believe that Dimetrodon and similar species are dinosaurs, this is truly not the case. Dimetrodon is one of the earliest examples of synapsids evolving during the Upper Carboniferous (Lower Pennsylvanian) and is classified as a Pelycosaur, which are characterized by a single dermal opening in the skull that permits muscles to attach to the animal’s jaws (August-Schmidt 2000). This opening in the skull is one reason why Dimetrodons are not dinosaurs. The difference is that dinosaurs are reptiles and have two of this type of skull opening. Interestingly, the only remaining synapsids on the planet are mammals. Because of this common skeletal structure, Dimetrodon and other Pelycosaurians are known as “mammal-like reptiles” (August-Schmidt 2000).

In addition, some scientists believe that Dimetrodon may have been endothermic, or warm-blooded, which means that its body temperature was regulated internally. Dinosaurs and other reptiles are ectothermic, or cold-blooded, and depend upon outside forces, like the sun, to regulate their body temperature (Florides 1999). However, researchers at the Brunel University in England say that the conclusion that Dimetrodon was endothermic is not accurate. According to G.A. Florides and his team, the blood vessels in a Dimetrodon’s bones are few in number and therefore suggest a low amount of metabolic activity (Florides 2001). This is a characteristic of present day ectothermic animals. Another aspect that separates most endothermic and ectothermic animal is the positioning of an animal’s legs. In all living endothermic land animals the legs extend from the underside of the body, but in Dimetrodon the legs sprawl outward from the body in a similar fashion to modern-day ectothermic reptiles (Lucas 1997).

In terms of physical characteristics, Dimetrodon resembled most other pelycosaurs. Full grown, it was roughly three and a half meters long and probably weighed between 200-300 pounds (August-Schmidt 2000). As previously mentioned, for movement Dimetrodon walked on four legs which were sprawled out to the side, similar to lizards. This is another trait that sets it apart from dinosaurs because four-legged dinosaurs had legs that extended out from underneath their bodies. What makes this animal unique, even from other Pelycosaurs, is its sail. Dimetrodon’s sail, which was a flap of skin that jetted one meter vertically from the animal’s back, was supported by bones that attached directly to the animal’s vertebrae (Moravec 2006).

While this feature is fairly distinctive, Dimetrodon was not the only prehistoric reptile to develop a sail. Several animals during the Permian period developed sails, and interestingly enough, this was the only period in the fossil record that sails can be found. One animal that is very similar to the Dimetrodon was the smaller Edaphosaurus. These animals in general look very similar to one another; both have the lizard-like sprawling leg structure which is common to pelycosaurs and both developed the sail. However, while they may have had similar morphologies, the
animals followed very different lifestyles. *Dimetrodon* has two sets of sharp teeth, canines and sheering, which make its diet of meat impossible to mistake. The *Edaphosaurus* on the other hand, has short stubby “peg-like” teeth that it used for eating plants (August-Schmidt 2000). Also, upon further examination of the sails of both animals, it can be seen that the sails differ in size and shape as well. *Dimetrodon’s* sail is an even arch that begins right behind the animal’s head while *Edaphosaurus* has a slight rearward slope to its sail (*Edaphosaurus* 2005). In addition, the size of the sails differed between the two animals because *Edaphosaurus* had shorter and denser sail bones. *Edaphosaurus* also has bony projections sticking out of its sail bones and *Dimetrodon* does not. This feature is unique to this animal, and paleontologists believe that these may have developed as a form of protection for this animal (White 2002). This seems plausible because it not only explains why they developed in *Edaphosaurus* but also why such a feature would not have evolved in a dominant predator like *Dimetrodon*.

While the sails developed in different ways they probably had a similar function in both animals, and indeed there are several different theories to explain what this sail was used for. Some of the early theories were that the animal used the sail for camouflage or to catch wind, but these theories have long since been discarded as being incorrect in favor of newer, more scientific theories (Florides 2001).

The first of these new theories is that *Dimetrodon* developed its sail as a way to make the animal appear bigger order to fend off predators. While this theory sounds plausible, it does not take into account that *Dimetrodon* was the dominant carnivore of the Permian period, and therefore would not have any animals preying upon it (Singer, 865). However, its smaller relative *Edaphosaurus*, as an herbivore, would have more defensive use for a sail because it may have been subject to predatory attacks.

A second theory surrounding the *Dimetrodon’s* sail is that it was used for mating behaviors or dominance rituals. According to the Brunel University researchers, “The skin of the sail could indicate a message by the pattern of the scales that could change colour during the mating season” (Florides 2001). However, since both males and females have the sails, the researchers believe that if there is a sexual use for them, it is merely a secondary function. Further, while many animals do perform such rituals, without observing a *Dimetrodon* directly, this hypothesis would be difficult to prove.

The third, and most recognized, theory is that *Dimetrodon* used its sail for thermoregulation. As previously stated, reptiles today require external forces to keep their bodies warm so they have developed a large number of physical adaptations that allow them to heat themselves faster than other animals with which they have to compete. Scientists believe that a pelycosaur’s sail is used for a similar function because a sail of a full-grown *Dimetrodon* could increase its total surface area of the animal by 44% (Florides 2001). At the University of Reading in England, C. D. Bramwell and P. B. Fellgett ran thermal tests and determined that 1.15 square meters of sail (roughly the size of a full grown *Dimetrodon*) would allow the animal to heat up its body temperature two hours faster than an animal without a sail (Miller 1978). This would allow *Dimetrodon* to be fully mobile when its prey was still warming. In addition, when one considers that this animal’s prey was mainly composed of other large animals like *Diadectes* and *Ophiacodon*, which could weigh nearly 450 pounds, the advantage of warming quickly becomes evident (Florides 2001). These animals that lacked a sail would require much more time to heat their large bodies and therefore would become easy prey for a fully mobile *Dimetrodon*.

Permian fossils in Ohio are limited and in most cases do not yield good fossils. Yet, Ohio’s deposits have been known to yield bones of amphibians, reptiles, plants, and insects (Shrake 2000). However, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the best location for Permian fossils is in the southeastern corner of Ohio and is centered around Marietta. The *Dimetrodon* fossils that have been discovered in Ohio have been limited in comparison to other states. In fact, until a *Dimetrodon* fossil was discovered by a paleontologist named E.C. Olson in 1975, they believed that this animal’s activity was centralized in the states of Texas and Oklahoma (Feldmann 295). However, additional fossils have also been found in the states of Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico illustrating that this animal was far more dispersed than was originally thought (Berman 2001). In addition to these finds in the United States, *Dime-


*trodon* also has a fossil record in Nova Scotia, Canada and Germany. In fact, when a German team found a new species of *Dimetrodon* in Lower Permian rocks in 2001 it was the first time the animal had been reported outside North America (Berman 2001).

Sailed organisms, like *Dimetrodon*, only appeared once in the earth’s fossil record. That means that any fossil that in uncovered with a sail had to come from the Permian period, and therefore any rock formations that incase it must be from that period. In addition, the sail was limited to only a few distinct animals, and of these animals *Dimetrodon* was the dominant predator. As a result it would be fairly easy to identify anywhere that it was discovered. Under normal circumstances that would make an animal a good index fossil because being chronologically limited and easily recognizable are two of the most important requirements for index fossils. However, the *Dimetrodon* is not a good index fossil because it does not have a diverse enough fossil record outside of North America. Therefore, it does not satisfy the third requirement.

One final interesting theory surrounding the *Dimetrodon* concerns its sail. It has been suggested by various individuals that the vertebral bones originally thought to support the sail, are actually designed to support a hump. The leading proponent of this theory is a paleontologist named Jack Bailey. According to Bailey, the bones resemble early bison and other humpbacked mammals. The reasoning behind a hump may have been to store extra fat for long journeys, similar to a camel’s humps. Bailey further justifies his theory by stating that Dinosaurs are now viewed “as long-distance travelers, as extremely mobile creatures, so you expect to find adaptations for a high degree of mobility” (Bailey 1998). This would also help to explain how groups of animals migrated over long distances. If Bailey is correct, the *Dimetrodon* may have more in common with mammals than originally thought, because they would in fact share a second similar skeleton structure.

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Andrew Rihn wrote his paper “No Worst?” for Prof.  
King’s Literature in English II (ENG 25002) course. 
The students were asked to choose a poem from the 
course and explicate, or unfold it, line by line.

No Worst, There Is None  
By Gerald Manley Hopkins

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,  
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder  
wring.  
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?  
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?  
My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief  
Woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing -  
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked ‘No ling­-ering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief.

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall  
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap  
May who ne’er hung there. Nor does long our small  
Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,  
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all  
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

Upon my first (and second, and third, and  
fourth) reading of Hopkins’ No Worst, There Is None,  
I found myself in complete agreement with William  
Logan, finding it unreadable, repulsive, and tasting  
“like ash in my mouth” (Logan 47). Logan acknowled­  
eges four main stumbling blocks for readers of  
Hopkins: religiosity, stumbling rhythm, compressed  
“curdling” language, and a smug, high-sounding diction.  
All four elements are evident throughout this  
poem. However, not everyone views these traits as  
complete negatives. These “Hopkinsian” traits (along  
with alliteration, repetition, compounding) can be  
used as keys to get the reader into the interior world of  
Hopkins (Curtis 38). By first learning what it is Hop­  
kins was doing in his work, the reader is able to then  
translate, or at least traverse, the poem. After mapping  
out Hopkins plan, and considering his relation to  
religion, I was able to come to terms with No Worst,  
There Is None (Christ).

Hopkins does not set up the usual lyric or nar­  
rative style in his writing. Instead, he jumps around  
throughout a reflection on the nature of Sin, using  
many different tactics of description. Hopkins pres­  
tents the emotions in an unfettered, direct way. He  
layers emotion upon emotion, phrase upon phrase,  
letting the words act upon one another and add up  
rather than letting them flow in a more linear style.

In line one, Hopkins immediately sets the reader on edge,  
distancing the reader with the words “No worst, there is none.” That is hardly even a sentence,  
let alone an intriguing hook for a poem. However,  
it sets the stage that the subject is to be set apart from  
anything else. There would, for Hopkins, be nothing worse than sin. But he also deals with the knowledge  
of original sin; that sin is lamentable yet inevitable.  
For Hopkins, this is the terrible tragedy that he writes about. He begins at the bottom, a sense of original sin,  
so the reader can only go up. This first line also clues  
the reader in for the broken syntax, or stumbling, that is going to characterize the rest of the poem. It also acts as a warning to the reader – “If you don’t like this line, do not continue.”

Hopkins moves right along, compressing and twisting the meaning and power of his words. “Pitched past pitch of grief/More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.” This line is terribly complex and convoluted to the point of William Logan’s unreadability, yet is also displays such Hopkinsian traits. There is alliteration, repetition,  
density, and repetition. The word “pitch” has several meanings, and Hopkins uses two of them in his word  
play. Pitch can mean “to throw” and it can also mean “tone” (as in musical pitch). In other words, “Pitched  
past pitch of grief” can be re-read as “Moved beyond the tone of grief.” He then begins referring to “pangs” and “forepangs” and how they can wring a person out. These pangs are the temptation, the prelude to sin. A pang is something sudden, unconscious, and painful. That humanity is imbued with original sin is beyond our control. We cannot escape it, only lament it. We will make mistakes, and even though
we may repent, and possibly learn from them, we are destined to make them over again. Schooled at forepangs, these reoccurring sins or temptations will sting even more, because we should be aware of them and feel as though we should know better. Since we know that sin is both terrible yet inevitable, a sense of looming dread can fill our days. Hopkins, in Line Four, asks Mary, the comforter, “where is your relief?” He gets no reply save the emptiness of the stanza break.

Stanza two open with another play on words; “My cries heave, herds-long.” “Herd” is a homonym meaning a large group (herd) or the past tense of hear (heard). The cries Hopkins refers to are large and herd-like. They are also loud and long; they are heard for a long time. The cries also huddle on an age-old anvil. The anvil is a sign of man’s ingenuity and progress, but conversely is not something wants to be put upon. Here the anvil represents humanity, or the human quality of life. It is that divine spark of life that offers both salvation and damnation. This reference can also be a tie between Hopkins and the Romantics with the view of the paradox of progress. The Romantics believed nature to be superior to human creation and viewed industrialization with much skepticism. Likewise, Hopkins views nature as superb because it represents the achievement of God’s gift. Hopkins again confronts paradox on the anvil because he can both “wince and sing.”

In line seven, his cries die down, and we hear the voice of Fury; “No ling-fering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief.” This line presents a series of challenges to the reader, and leaves that unmistakable impression of unreadability. Hopkins is either completely changing the rules of grammar or he is inviting us to change the text he has written. I suggest the latter. Hopkins stated he wanted his poems to be read “with the ear,” that is, to be read aloud not from the page (Curtis 38). The sound of the word trumps the textual grammar. This is how he is able to play on sentence structure and the use of homonyms. If we alter the punctuation a little and use a little wordplay, we find the voice of Fury addressing the notion of force. “No lingering! Let me befall force. I must be brief.” Force, that is, physical acts, are by definition brief in comparison to the everlasting afterlife. Worldly life is brief, no one lingers here, and yet it is so dear to us. This is another subtle paradox on the essence of human existence.

The last stanza sees Hopkins again stacking language like bricks, building them up upon one another rather than laying them out side by side, as on does in narrative or lyrical writing. It reads almost as stream of conscious; “cliffs of fall/frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed.” Here again is his use of alliteration, an appeal to the ear. In line eleven he brings forth paradox from another bit of wordplay. “Nor does long or small/durance” is to say “Our small durance does not long.” But the closer “small” and “long” are on the page the more the contradiction stands out. The last stanza acts almost as a repository or summation of all the literary tricks and games Hopkins has played throughout the poem. Line nine uses repetition of the word “mind” (also wordplay – mind can be read as “mined”). Line twelve features both strong alliteration as well as internal rhyme. In this last stanza, he draws comparisons between three disparate ideas: cliffs of the mind (stepping off to sin), the chasm of death, and the metaphor of death and rebirth that “each day dies with sleep.” Our mind is a dangerous place, says Hopkins. It has mountains with deadly cliffs we can fall from. This is the final reference to sin in the poem, and a fitting one. The image of falling from a cliff is reminiscent to the fall from grace of original sin. Line twelve states that our durance does not want to “deal with that steep or deep.” We want neither the sin nor the damnation that follows from it. Yet there they both still stand. The same is true of death. It is unwelcome but inevitable. The final line of the poem touches on that; “all/life death does end and each day dies with sleep.” It is fitting that the final line of the poem deals with the finality of death. But here again Hopkins uses his tool of paradox. Each night brings with it the rebirth of the morning. One day must end so another can begin. It is the same with life; we must die so that we can be reborn in the afterlife. And Jesus died, only to resurrect himself for us. So neither sleep nor death truly ends anything, they just change things somewhat. The same is true of the whirlwind he mentions in Line thirteen. The whirlwind might seemingly destroy a house or some possessions, but all it can do is change the structure of physical objects. It cannot destroy a person whose core is their faith. Faith transcends the merely physical, as does life.
No Worst, There Is None is considered one of Hopkins’ “terrible” sonnets, because of the morbid and depressing subject matter. It is understandable to take that position, particularly when looking at the list of terms Hopkins stacks against us; grief, pangs, cries, sorrow, wince, shrieked, fall, wretch, whirlwind, death (Dixon 35). We can add up the sum total of the words he uses and think we have the answer. But language does not follow the rules of math, and much much more can be hidden among them. In this poem, I see an underlying sense of optimism in the spiritual world. While things may be bad here on earth, while we may be tested (and fail) at every turn, things are not without purpose and through our diligence we will be rewarded. Hopkins takes a very severe, critical look at the physical, at sin, and this is not without cause. The eternal soul is a rather important subject, one to be looked at with much clarity and precision, and No Worst, There Is None does precisely that.

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Idea or Image: The Latter Prevailing – Lindsay Rybkoski

Lindsay Rybkoski wrote her paper “Idea or Image: The Latter Prevailing” for Dr. Miltner’s College English II (ENG 10002) course. Students were asked to write a paper that considered Milan Kundera’s novel Immortality and reflect on what it meant to them.

Dorothea Lange once said, “The camera is an instrument that teaches people how to see without a camera.” Perhaps after seeing images through a lens so often, we create our own limited perception of how we view a situation. We narrow our opinions and focus on the one and only solution we feel is right. When viewing the images through a lens, are we able to understand the words actually trying to be portrayed? However, is the lens so narrowly focused that we are not able to broaden our thoughts on all the scene has to offer? Who is to blame? Possibly these problems and the questions along with them can come to a wide-ranging resolution when we consider the words of Paul in Milan Kundera’s novel Immortality. Paul says, “ideology belongs to history, while the reign of imagology begins where history ends” (120). The immediate question brought to light is what lasts longer, an idea or an image?

Are we, as a people, so caught up in fancy cars, up-to-date computers, and cell phones that we forget about ideas as a whole and simply remember the billboard sign off I-77 as we drive to work or school? In order to better understand the term Kundera coins “Imagology” we must first examine how Kundera presents the term in the book and defines it, how this idea affects my life and others’ lives as well, and how imagology informs us about the culture we live in today.

Consider the first chapter in Immortality. Towards the end of the chapter the narrator says, “The essence of her charm, independent of time, revealed itself for a second in that gesture and dazzled me” (4). Perhaps the narrator chooses to include this sentence to show the absence of idealism in his thoughts. Out of everything the narrator could possibly possess; intellect, thoughtfulness, or perhaps wit we are left with the embedded image of a gesture in our minds.

No, we are not thinking of her mind, we are thinking simply of a silly gesture that leads to the laugh of a lifeguard, and the satisfaction of the man spectator. The opening scene is a perfect example of imagology. Remember, however, Paul’s definition of imagology and its entities. So now we must think in the past, because imagology is beginning at the end of ideologies history. Think back in history to the love affair of Bettina and Goethe. The childlike love Bettina shares with Goethe inevitably leads her to exchange love letters with him and eventually publish them. However, these letters were later found to be rewritten so Bettina could create an image that would flatter herself (Culik 210). What is left? History is tainted with the image of Bettina’s recreated love letters. In her quest to embed her image of immortality into each person, she leaves a tainted image of false love in the minds of everyone. We no longer remember the tale of love created but only carried out through letters and sporadic visits, we remember her image of creating falsified letters of this love. Let us look to Professor Avenarius who, in mad fits of rage against modern society, slashes tires in the middle of the night. This gesture of slashing tires is not forgotten. Do we remember the morals Professor Avenarius stood for? No; rather, we remember him running around in the dead middle of night slashing tires. Out of all of the ideas turned images, we must ask ourselves one important question: why do we create the images in our minds instead of remembering the significance behind them?

For a possible answer to this question we must go to Kundera. One of the major grievances that Kundera holds against the contemporary world is its tendency to reduce everything to a superficial, easily digestible simplification (211). Conceivably, we find it much easier to remember a simple image in our mind rather than a series of ideas, therefore we end up categorizing these images in our minds simply to make it easier on ourselves. We now have an idea of how some of the characters are affected by imagology in the novel and we have heard about some of Kundera’s thoughts, but if we look at society today, we must examine how imagology has come to have an impact on us.
The idea of imagology makes me reflect on how much of an affect it has on society today. Consider how many advertisements we pass on a simple drive to work or school; or how many commercials we have seen in a lifetime. We are enveloped in an array of imagology. Think about former President Jimmy Carter. Can one remember every issue he stood for? Most likely, we cannot. We can recall, however, the time he was jogging on television to show America that exercise was good for us and ended up collapsing. Imagology makes me think about the negative effect this has on our society. Is it necessarily a good thing that we do not remember ideas but instead replace them with images? I also feel that Kundera brings this term into the novel to show how much of an important role it plays and has played in the world for so many years. Kundera references Hitler in *Immortality* when he says, “Even Hitler had his personal imagologue, who used to stand in front of him and patiently demonstrate the gestures to be made during a speech so as to fascinate the crowds” (118). How many times when speaking of Hitler do we refer to this gesture? Many times we do. Deeply and forever embedded in our minds are the gestures of hands, movements of the body, and every other image that takes precedence to an idea. Finally, let us consider the impact that imagology has on the culture we live in today.

In order to speak about our culture and the study of it, we must begin from a working definition of culture studies. The book *Introducing Cultural Studies*, written by Borin Van Loon and Sardar Ziauddin, says cultural studies are “A moral evaluation of modern society and to a radical line of political action…thus cultural studies aim to understand and change the structures of dominance everywhere, but in industrial capitalist societies in particular” (9). I can picture myself flipping through the channels and happen to stumble upon a commercial. I catch a glimpse of a young African American boy’s face. Although a portrait, it has allowed me to see the malnourishment that afflicts him. The subtle frown of unhappiness washes across his face and I am left with this image imbedded in my mind. Can I recall what this commercial is about? Well, I can guess it is an organization asking for people to donate to needy kids in third world countries, but other than that, I have not a clue. But can we not see the power this image possesses? The image is exactly what advertisers want us to remember. If all we recall is a dreary looking face and a phone number to call and pledge dollars to this child, then the money they put into the commercial has been well worth it. We are a society of instant gratification. Must we be required to, and forgive me for saying this, think for ourselves? So then it is blatantly easier to stare at a poor child’s face and pledge money and laugh at the Commander in Chief. So how do all of these examples reflect our definition of cultural studies? Is the picture of the child aiming to understand and change the structure of dominance?

I feel it depends on what one would consider dominance. If we would like to go back to the battle between idea and image as if one is dominant over the other, we would find a direct link between dominance and images in society. However, to reach a valid and objective conclusion, I must see both sides, positive and negative, of ideas and images with respect to culture. Yes, images do play a vital role in our economy. Advertisers and marketers everywhere sell goods and obtain jobs from images. Is it right to say ideas are no longer important to our society? I think not. I feel we are somewhat, not entirely though, shed of our image-struck minds when we enter a classroom. We sit in a classroom and are told to read, evaluate, reach decisions and trust our instincts. I also feel much of our academic focus is targeted at teaching us to think for ourselves. No examples need be given to explain the impact of images on our society, but once we can find the balance between the bombardments of images we are presented, and the lingering ideas we still know exist from them, we can then become a more well-rounded individual.

Now, out of everything we have examined thus far, there is no need to rush to conclusions. Granted, there is room for change in all of us if we reflect on the information I have presented. We have considered the impact of ideas and images on characters in *Immortality* while incorporating a few of Kundera’s thoughts in the mix of my thoughts, as well as showing how ideas and images affect my life and others’ lives, and describing how imagology is a major staple in our culture. Where has society been in terms of images in the past and where is society
going with images in the future? Perhaps the decline of reading recently has led to the downfall in ideas. I do know that in order to keep our ideas in equality with images, we must keep reading and reaching our own conclusions, which can only happen when we think for ourselves. One can only speculate why this has happened. Dorothea Lange said it well when she said the camera is an instrument. However, it is up to society to use the camera as a tool and learn how to see and broaden their perceptions of life without it. Jan Culik in the Dictionary of Literary Biography points out that Immortality is a “novel as a debate” which undeniably holds true in all aspects (212). When the image of a little boy surfaces in my mind from the commercial I have seen, I will urge myself to know more than simply the face, because without the idea behind the image, it would be like a book without words, necessary to obtain information but useless if lacking a solid, self-fulfilling idea behind it.

Works Cited


Carrie Powell wrote her paper “The Brown Bag Race” for Dr. Sloan’s College English I (ENG 10001) course. Students were asked to write a paper using a rhetorical focus on analysis of the idea of a person’s “race.”

“I feel like a brown bag of miscellany propped against a wall. Against a wall in company with other bags, white, red and yellow. Pour out the contents, and there is discovered a jumble of small things priceless and worthless” (Hurston, 30-33.) Those few lines from Zora Neale Hurston’s “How It Feels to Be Colored Me,” have lingered in my mind during my delve into race. We are all the same container; hands, feet, minds, hearts. Inside, we are just as similar in the notion that we each hold things that are of no value to others but have absolute relevance in making up who we are. Race is finicky in its requirements to run with the pack. It tries to sort us into groups by the size and shape of our bags regardless of the contents within. In the beginning, I thought I had a definite sense of race. As time passed, I realized that for most of my life, I had never really given it much thought. Did I miss something? Had others gotten a head start on the path towards self-definition? My background taught me where I had descended from and whom I was comprised of. My own racial identity was not clouded, but not probed by my own conscious. With thoughts of race and what it meant to be of a particular race a ‘hot topic’ throughout my life, my sense of need to be defined by a race never developed… until now.

Born to a red-haired father and a blond-haired mother, it was safe to bet my mother was going to be able to mark “white” on my birth certificate. Why would she not? Both of my parents were white, all four of their parents were white, and all of their parents were white. We grew up in an old farmhouse outside of the city where you knew all of the neighbors even if they were ‘a ways away.’ We knew something about our descent; Dad would tell us of his French-Swiss line, and Mom told us of her German family history. Race was a word we did not hear much of. It was not as though we were totally cut off from the outside world; we did meet different people here and there. Dad worked from home and his customers came in all shapes, sizes, and colors. Mom took care of a number of the neighborhood children, and the kids we grew up with were from all walks of life. Our parents taught us the basics: manners and kindness and to be thoughtful and caring. We learned (by watching their example) how to share with each other and with those who had less, and offer to help those who could not help themselves. For the most part, everything we learned about race came right from our own home. We were taught that no matter how the “bag” looked on the outside, it was what it held that makes a real difference. Mom and Dad said that people were people whether related by love or blood. They taught each one of us that we could all be different but remain the same. I do not remember any real debates over the issue; everything they said seemed to make sense. There were no obvious issues in our community either. All nine of us attended the same small, rural school district that was definitely lacking when it came to racial variety. It was not that we lived a sheltered life, but a non-diverse existence. It was not until 1992 did our thoughts begin to expand outside our own little box. It was in that year that I befriended a German exchange student and our family became involved with the organization that brought her here. Later that fall we met our first overseas sister. For the next thirteen years our family grew and became part Japanese, Colombian, Brazilian, Mongolian, German, Swiss, and Albanian. We would make ties with so many others in so many ways that it was unbelievable how fast our family was spreading! It was in this time that we learned how unimportant race was, and the importance of just connecting as people.

Although, we never gave race a second thought when adding to our family, there were those who did. There were a few remarks and mishaps by those less inclined to learn from those who were different from them. There were no monumental incidents, but there were some eye-openers. The biggest was from a young lady whom we never got to meet. Because of the non-diverse nature of our lives, we were intrigued by the idea of welcoming...
in a student from Ghana. Unfortunately, because of our lack of multiplicity at our local high school, the district thought we would be ill-advised to bring her here. That one decision taught me how apathetic some members of our community were. Although I do not believe they thought she was in any danger, I do believe they opted out of teaching our own students what it meant to be accepting and open (it was then that I felt they should have taken their own bag and put it over their head). It was easier to deny her the chance to teach and learn than to put forth any effort it might have taken to overcome obstacles a student from a culture so different from ours might bring. It seems ironic that I became that very student our community was trying to avoid. While a high school junior, I was an exchange student to Japan. It was definitely a role reversal; I transitioned from host to student and from majority to minority. I was the only ‘white’ student and the only American in my new school. It was never a confrontational issue. I was more like a novelty. That in itself was disheartening because I wanted to absorb and learn while I was sharing myself and my world. It was hard to be taken seriously. On a daily basis, only judging by my appearance, people assumed I was American. “May I speak English?” “You have beautiful white skin.” “Do all Americans have freckles?” “How did you get blue eyes?” I felt like they thought they knew me even before I had a chance to utter one syllable (and it made no difference if it was in Japanese or English, their mind was set). Despite this feeling I can say that my experience as a whole was definitely a positive one. I learned to relate to the feeling of not belonging, of being labeled, and of being similar but not close enough to count.

Even with the chance to experience such diversity in my life, personally race seems like a foreign concept to me. I am a blue-eyed, white, freckle-skinned brunette. The key word, though, is “white.” What is it to be “white?” I do not feel “white.” Most days I do not feel like anything. Is that bad? Should I feel like I belong to some list? Is my lack of relating attributed to the “racial imagery” Richard Dyer talks about in “The Matter of Whiteness?” Is it that non-spoken inclination that all “other people are raced, (and) we are just people?” I do not think so. Did my parents do me a terrible injustice by not emphasizing our race over others? Absolutely not. I have come to believe they gave us just the right amount of “racial education.” Racially speaking, we could be classified by our skin color and our family background. They informed us of our family origins and even helped us trace some of our roots and ties. So, what is it then? What am I missing? I think it is a culture identity, not racial identity. The who and what that makes me who I am. It is the traditions and heritage that my ancestors passed on that somehow fell out of our own bag on its way down the line. There are no dresses, no special dates, and no habitual traditions that signal my race. The lack of those traditions was not the fault of my parents, either. It is something that has been spilled from the bags of families all across America. There are, however, Houmard traditions, things we have created as a family but none of which have been handed down by some older, wiser, revered generation that some cultures take for granted. Too often, I think people try to overlap culture and race. Race is used for sorting us by how we appear, not for who and what we really are. I think that is what Zora Neale Hurston means when she writes, “At certain times I have no race, I am (just) me.” Even on the days I do not “feel like anything,” I can say a lot of things about myself, and I am proud of myself for my many bits and pieces. I am proud to be a mother. I am proud to be a student. I am proud to be an American, a woman, a good employee, a friend, and a volunteer. All of these things are key in giving definition to who I am, regardless of what I may look like or resemble. Of all the things I am and all the things I do, it has never occurred to me to be proud to be white. It is not that we were taught not to; it is just that even with all the assumptions that come with that title, it does not really say anything distinct about who I am.

What, then, does race say? Does it say, “Your mother is South-African and your father is Chilean?” No it does not. Does it say, “Your father is Taiwanese and your mother is Russian?” No it does not. It does say, “Your bag is definitely different; your nose is larger, your hair is straighter, your skin is olive.” It tries to point out our dissimilarities (“hey-you are Asian”) while grouping us for our generalities (“Well, Chinese or Vietnamese- it is all the same!”) By Webster’s definition we know that race is “a category of
humankind that shares certain distinctive physical
traits” (Merriam-Webster, 2004.) That definition does
help when we need to separate ourselves by biological qualities, but it is useless in defining anything we really are. It is when we use our lives—our habits, our traditions, our inclinations—to further segregate each other and ourselves according to what we look like we may do, all in the name of ethnicity. A person is more than the sum of his/her parts. A person is thoughts, feelings, and a soul. A person learns and adapts, learns some more and adapts again, and relearns and readapts. To try to find an all-encompassing bubble to pigeonhole each individual in a world of change is futile. Continuing with the concept as inept as race only feeds the drive that we will lose some sort of identity on our diversity. It is that personal identity that makes us unique as a whole. I am not naive. No one believes that we will live in a world of peace and hearts and flowers. The idea of a non-racial world is a utopian one, but it gives hope to a better place of belonging for those who strive to advocate it. I do not believe they aim to rid the world of race, but they wish to replace it with something more meaningful and concise, and that gives us a chance to fill our bags with even more diversity.

As people try to adjust or replace the meaning of definition by race, the importance of such definitions will soon become obsolete. We can be part of a group of people whose bags contain things that link us together and separate us at the same time. We can belong to something greater than the sum of our own parts; it is all in the regard we each hold our different contents. The beginning of my journey into my own racial identity showed me how little a connection I felt towards such distinctiveness. What is it to be ‘white?’ After thoughts of my own background, looking into my own racial identity (or lack thereof), and exploring my thoughts on the concept of race itself, I do not feel any more connected to a label that my bag has been assigned. If anything, I am trying to find a new definition of myself, one that embraces my many parts and prides, and does a sufficient job of conveying who I really am. The whole point is that I am a who, not a what. I do feel as though I can change and connect myself with other people regardless of what bag they are using in their own mind. I find people more interesting for the stuff they carry around all day—the stuff that gives them weight and character. People are still people, and I am a person, too, so why not use that connection to create something as strong as our bags will hold?

Works Cited


Jessica Yotto wrote her paper “Horseshoe Crabs” for Dr. Schweitzer’s Oceanography (GEOL 21080) course. Students were asked to create an annotated bibliography.

I have always been fascinated with this particular animal. Our family has been spending summers in Maryland, on Assateague Island, for years and we always can find the horseshoe crabs all over the beach there. Doing this bibliography has given me a chance to find out a little more about and animal that is so unique and mysterious.

Horseshoe crabs are legends in Japan. They believe that heroic samurai soldiers that died in battle are reborn as horseshoe crabs—samurai helmets for shells, roaming back and forth on the ocean floor. This would account for the large amount of art and poetry written about this ancient animal in Japanese culture. Our country has yet to revere this creature as much.

It is amazing to find out that so many people are interested in this animal. Commercial fish industries use the horseshoe crab as bait to catch such delicacies as eel and conch. Bio Medical researchers use the blue blood of this living fossil to create a reagent called LaL—which helps to detect endotoxins because of its clotting capability. LaL is essential in preventing toxic shock, a sometimes fatal condition in humans. (The horseshoe crab has no antibodies in its blood so it uses this to keep the toxins out of its system.) Conservationists are interested in keeping the horseshoe crab population high because of the vast number of endangered migratory birds that rely on the eggs of the crab as a sole source of food on their long flight to the Arctic. It seems a large tug-of-war is being played out over the future of this creature. It is uncertain how things will play out. Measures have been taken in New Jersey to help replenish the crab population by putting a two year ban on horseshoe crabbing. If this is successful, it could possibly push other states on the east coast to take similar precautions to protect such a versatile resource.

Since they only reside on the east coast of continents, there are only a few places where these crabs can be found. They lay their eggs in the inter-tidal zone where they are feasted upon by turtles and migrating birds.

Another thing that I did not realize about the animal is that even though their name is horseshoe crab, they are more closely related to spiders and scorpions. Similar to spiders and other insects they have multiple, very sensitive eyes, capable of detecting moonlight from the sea bed. They also have very highly instinctive relationships with the tidal cycles. Event the horseshoe crab larvae can time their swimming to coincide with high tide so that they do not get stuck on the beach during falling tides.

There is a very interesting program in Maryland called “Just Flip ‘Em.” It is a program started by students in the area that helps people to remember to help a horseshoe crab when it is turned over by the tides on the beach. They say, though, to never pick one up by the tail because it can break easily. Just gently grasp the sides of the shell and send it on its way.

Scientists are only beginning to understand this ancient phenomenal animal. I hope they continue to find out more.

I thoroughly enjoyed going through this website. It is very detailed but easily understood. Anyone would find it interesting and informative. The topics covered are varied, well written and include clear pictures, charts, and diagrams. This website has a strong focus on conversation and makes it very easy for a person to become interested in helping their cause. They present a compelling view of this unique creature.


This article was brief but I found it to be very interesting. The author wrote about how scientists are just be-
Beginning to understand this animal. The article includes a brief history of the horseshoe crab and its uses in both the commercial fishing industry and biomedical research. The author also suggests that a dwindling population of horseshoe crabs is imminent because of over-fishing by the eel and conch industry. This well-written article would be good for anyone to read. It gives a good overview of the topic at hand and is clear and well written.


This journal article discusses the relationship between the larvae of the horseshoe crab and the tidal cycle. It includes information about how they have a special ability to time their swimming activity so that they do not get stranded on the beach during low tides. This article would be more for a professional but an advanced reader would probably be able to gain some insight into this topic from reading it. This article was well written, technical, and well documented.


This scholarly journal article is mainly about how biologists are able to formulate an estimate of the blood volume of an adult horseshoe crab. This would be helpful for the biomedical researchers to know, so that they could remove a safe amount of the blood for research before releasing the animal. This article is not intended for a general audience as it is technical in nature and fairly complicated. The charts and graphs are nearly indecipherable unless you are familiar with the subject matter. This article is well written, in depth, and well documented.


This encyclopedia CD-ROM was a bit more technical but still easily understood. Similar to the Grzimek’s Encyclopedia, this was brief and gives an overview of horseshoe crabs. It uses a lot of scientific names and references to geologic time periods. This article focuses mainly on the biology of the horseshoe crab, instead of conservation like some of the other sources I found. From this reference suite it is easy to link to other sources on-line to find out more information if needed including: pictures, articles, diagrams and charts. I find this source to be well designed and easily navigated. It is up to date and could be in depth depending on if you use the on-line links.
This website is easily navigated and well designed. It is colorful and contains many clear photographs of the subject. It mainly focuses on the basic information of horseshoe crab biology and anatomy. It briefly covers the crabs’ uses in the commercial fishing industry, medical research, and source of food for migratory birds. Beginners would find this site useful for gaining preliminary information about this topic.


This book is heavy reading material—literally and figuratively. It is most assuredly meant for a professional and not for a general audience. The technical nature of this text is difficult to follow and the size of the print is almost microscopic. There are few pictures and charts. This book focuses on the in depth, very specific aspects of horseshoe crab biology. It is an English translation of a Japanese text but is reads well and is extremely informative.


By capturing, tagging and releasing horseshoe crabs, researcher were able to estimate the total population of horseshoe crabs in the Delaware Bay. Conservationists find this information useful in managing the populations of endangered migratory birds, like the Red Knot, who rely on the eggs of the horseshoe crab as a food source during their flights to the artic. This article is intended for professionals and conservationists. It is in depth, well written, and well documented.
An Ethnography of a Classroom for Emotionally Disturbed Children ~ Lisa Dubetz

Lisa Dubetz wrote her ethnography for Dr. Hass’ Internship in Sociology (SOC 42092) course. She was to create an ethnography based on her experiences during her internship.

ABSTRACT: This ethnographic research project is an analysis of a local institution and its effectiveness in transitioning children diagnosed with emotional disabilities into society. It looks into the effectiveness and barriers of institutional policies, the advantages and disadvantages of the classroom policies, and the methods of instruction by the teacher and her aide, and the children.

An ethnography is the style of research that “seeks to understand the meanings the people under investigation ascribe to their experiences” (Maso 2001; Brewer 2000). This ethnographic research project is about the effectiveness of a local urban elementary school classroom in transitioning children diagnosed with emotional disturbances (ED) into society. Due to their inability to adapt to a regular classroom setting, they are placed in a separate classroom. Kauffman et al. (2002) found that separate settings often better address these students’ needs. These children are not integrated with the other “typical” children at any time during the school day. They are confined to this classroom for their academic learning, and they are subjected to rules and regulations imposed through a positive behavior plan, under a federally funded program called “No Opportunity Wasted” (NOW). The NOW program is a point based system for good behavior with children receiving awards based on the number of accumulated points (Personal interview, Principal 2006).

While this school utilizes the label “emotionally disturbed”, for purposes of research, I am also incorporating the terms “learning disabled” and “seriously emotionally disturbed.” The term “learning disabled” may be a better diagnosis of these children because a majority of them are on medication for ADHD. The global concept of learning disabilities includes problems in listening, concentrating, speaking, and thinking (Raymond 2004). About three times as many boys as girls are classified as having a learning disability (U.S. Department of Education 1996). This classification may be because of the “referral bias of teachers who are more likely to refer boys because of their disruptive, hyperactive behavior” (Liederman et al. 2005). “Seriously emotionally disturbed” is a classification term used by the school systems to identify children and adolescents with serious behavior and emotional characteristics. These adolescents encounter many difficulties, which compromise their daily functioning. Some of the frequent difficulties displayed include “emotional problems, behavioral deficits, impaired socialization, poor problem-solving skills, and family dysfunction” (Delermo 1995).

Although considerable research has been conducted on “behavioral interventions for children and youth with emotional disturbances” (Clarke et al. 2002; Dunlap and Childs 1996), very little research has specifically examined the “experiences of students who have ED and receive special education services” (Rones and Hoagwood 2000) or how those “experiences change over their school careers” (Wagner et al. 2006). In 2001, President Bush enacted the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. This federal initiative requires that students with disabilities have access to the general curriculum, participate in high-stakes assessment programs, be educated in the least restrictive environment, and for most, reach the rising achievement standards for adequate yearly progress that are held for students as a whole (Wagner et al. 2006). Researchers have found that in order for students with emotional disturbances to succeed in the classroom, the following interventions need to be in place:

• “A structured teaching environment, including the provision of explicit, systematic, and highly interactive direct instruction delivered in learner-friendly, memorable ways” (Boudah et al. 2000);
• “Independent learning strategies” (Deshler et al. 1996);
• “Opportunities for peer-mediated learning, including classwide and reciprocal peer tutoring” (King-Sears and Cummings 1996; Wright et al. 1995), as well as “cooperative learning” (Putnam et al. 1995); and
• "Teachers with a strong repertoire of behavior-management skills to decrease inappropriate behaviors and increase prosocial behaviors" (Landrum et al. 2003; Walker et al. 1998).

The Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study (SEELS) prepared for the Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education by Blackorby et al. (2002) is a national study of the "characteristics, experiences, and achievements of students with disabilities in elementary and middle schools, and takes a broad look at student functioning that goes beyond their disability level, including students’ health, sensory functioning, communication, daily living skills, and social skills, from information gathered from parents and guardians of SEELS students through telephone interviews and a mail survey conducted in 2000-01."

This research project will address each of the concerns noted above, along with the correlation between the findings of the SEELS and this classroom. It will also address whether or not segregating them from the rest of the children is an effective means of providing them with an education and preparing them for transition into society. This research paper will explore these concerns by describing the method used during the research, classroom setting, the teacher and her aide, and the students. The Analysis and Findings section of this paper addresses the effectiveness of the structure and rules of the classroom, the symbols the children attach to their surroundings, the psychological labeling and resistant strategies utilized, and the social disadvantages of this segregated classroom. It will also address the cultural barriers to the effectiveness of the classroom, and the institutional polices imposed upon the classroom. The conclusion of this paper will show that while the teacher’s methods are effective, there are institutional and cultural barriers that need to be addressed.

Method, Setting, and Sample

Method

The ethnography consisted of participant and non-participant observation and informal interviews with the teacher and her aide. The interviews with the teacher did not follow any type of format, but rather as questions came to mind, they were asked and answered. The questions ranged from the children’s backgrounds, their actions that led them to being diagnosed, and their behavior in the classroom during the times when I was not present. The teacher’s background, the school’s policies, the children’s services policies, her programs, her reactions to the way she is providing an education, her responses to the emotional needs of the children, and what she feels would improve her classroom were also asked. For the non-participant observation of this ethnography I sat in the classroom and observed the children. I also participated in activities with the children, such as gym time, reading time, and activity time.

Setting

The setting of this ethnography is an elementary classroom in an urban local public school specifically for children diagnosed as ED. The elementary school is a typical school with classrooms for children in grades K through 5. While the other classrooms within this school are grade level appropriate, this classroom houses kindergarten through third grade. Further, according to the guidelines established by the school system, this classroom should only have eight children, but there are ten children of different ages and grade levels for which she must provide the same educational opportunity.

Classroom

The classroom consists of a teacher’s desk and teacher’s aide desk aligned against the back wall of the classroom. In front of the teacher’s desk are two eight-foot tables side by side. These tables are used mainly for breakfast and lunch. Ten individual desks make up the center of the room. Each desk has approximately three feet around it. This area is considered each child’s space. Behind the desks are individual lockers without doors where the kids can place their coats and bookbags. There is also a TV for lunchtime viewing. Against one wall are three computers for computer work, and the wall has two blackboards with posters showing the points awarded for different behavior programs. On the opposite wall are two blackboards for schoolwork. The letters of the alphabet are displayed across the tops of the blackboards with big, colorful letters and pictures. Above the wall with the lockers are posters showing word endings and possible words in big, colorful letters.
There are two tri-fold walls to be used if a child needs to be shielded from the other children.

Sample

Teacher and her Aide

The teacher is in her thirties and has been teaching various special needs classrooms within this school system for a number of years. She is married and has two children, plus two stepchildren from her husband's first marriage. She is Caucasian from a middle class family, and she is living a middle class lifestyle in a suburb of Akron.

The teacher’s aide is a middle aged African-American woman with grown children who live outside her home. She resides in the same city as the location of this classroom, attends church regularly, and is learning about exercise and healthy nutritional eating habits. Her attitude towards the children is often negative. Her best description of the children is that “there are options today, the mothers don’t need to have these children.”

Students

The children in this classroom have similar backgrounds, live in similar neighborhoods, and the parents implore similar parenting skills. They range in age from five to nine, covering kindergarten through the third grade. The children have all been tested and diagnosed by the school psychologist as ED. These children are unable to either participate in the normal classroom setting or obtain an appropriate age level cognitive ability to be at grade level. There are nine boys and one girl in the classroom. Of these 10 children, one is Hispanic, three are Caucasian, and six are African-American. There is one child who is five years old and in kindergarten. He is developmentally around three years of age. He can neither write, read, use scissors, nor open his lunch.

Two children are in the 1st grade. One of those children has since the start of my research been integrated into a first grade classroom setting during the mornings. This was accomplished by having him integrated into the “normal” classroom setting for one-half day, one day a week. The other first grade child is on medicine. His attitude is slow and he works very slowly. He is generally well behaved; he just needs motivation.

Three children are in the 2nd grade. One of these children displays signs of dyslexia however, he has not received any further testing to confirm this theory. One is on medicine, and he has learned tricks to hide the fact from his mother that he actually did not swallow his pill. When he arrives at school on these days, he is constantly talking and disrupting the class, with the end result that he loses points on the reward system and loses activity time because he is on “red.” This child is an antagonist and knows how to push the other children’s buttons. He is constantly trying to start trouble. He has a crush on the only girl in the class.

She, like the other children, has been diagnosed as emotionally disabled. She, however, displays behavior patterns seen in schizophrenia. It may be questionable as to whether or not she belongs in this classroom setting. It was determined not to pursue any further testing by her grandparent because her outbreaks of schizophrenic behaviors are few and far between.

Four children are in the 3rd grade. One child in particular of this age group is the role model or leader of the children as a group. These role model or leadership tendencies are forced because he is big for his age compared to the other children, and he is a tough child. The other children fear him more than respect him. Children at a young age can learn behavior patterns by watching family members (Skinner 1938). While this child may have this leadership in the social control of the group of children, his educational level leaves much to be desired. He cannot read nor do basic math problems. He is reading at the first grade level. He cannot recognize sight words or read a complete sentence. Also, in class while reading aloud he seems to have a stuttering problem. One day while watching a movie, the word “rock” appeared on the screen. He immediately blurted out “rock” and he was so proud of himself. He smiled ear to ear and looked at the other children and said, “rock.” However, when the suffix “-et” was added he did not know the word “rocket.”

The second biggest child of the third graders appears to be well behaved as long as no one enters his desk space. I asked the teacher why he is not integrated because, on an emotional level, there does not appear to be any concern. I was informed that
he is on medicine, but the parents do not regulate his dosage. If they give him too much he will pluck out his eyebrows or eyelashes or bite his nails down to the core. Also, he is very computer literate, but opts to use this skill in a negative, destructive manner. A couple of times this year he has managed to erase the computer reading programs the children are required to complete. The program is set up so that you have to pass one section before moving on. When he deletes the program, it has to be reinstalled and the children have to start over again with the reading program.

The third child is an emotionally troubled child. He is an angry child with hidden emotional problems that could escalate into something out of control. For example, last year on four separate occasions he physically attacked other teachers and staff in the school. The police had to be called in to contain and control him. Whenever he feels compelled, he will get up and leave the classroom, leave the school, and walk the neighborhood. Several times the principal left the building and drove around in her car searching for him. He is a very mean, physically aggressive child with a nasty tongue.

The fourth third grader is emotionally disabled, but not like the other kids. His behavior is, at best, odd. He is probably autistic or has Asperger's Syndrome, and, therefore, does not belong in the classroom. However, his father, like the parents of the other children in the classroom, refuses to believe that there is anything wrong, and will not authorize further testing. Many, many times he has the tri fold wall around him so he does not disturb the other children. This child is, however, reading at above grade level. If this child could be tested and diagnosed with autism, he could be better served in a population that would meet this need.

Analysis and Findings

The Effectiveness of the Structure and Rules of the Classroom

The effectiveness of this classroom is in the strict regimented control imposed by the teacher, which is necessary in order to maintain a peaceful social setting due to the children's behavior patterns. This could be seen as a disadvantage because the children do not have control over any aspect of their educational or social learning. The only rights these children have are their desks and immediate surroundings, and even those rights have limitations. Because these children are segregated, they have no control, privileges, or social interaction as compared to the "normal" children in this school. The "normal" children have an opportunity for classroom discussion, playing outside with classmates, eating their breakfast and lunch in the cafeteria with other children, and attending rallies in the gym.

The rules and structure of the classroom that every child must comply with are as follows:

- Upon entering the school, the ED children go straight to their classroom for breakfast, whereas the "typical" children eat breakfast in the cafeteria. The ED children must also complete a reading assignment before they can eat breakfast. The ED children have an allotted amount of time to complete the assignment and eat breakfast.

- After breakfast, the children have eleven educational learning projects each day that must be completed before lunch. When their assignments are completed, the children raise their hands and are acknowledged by the teacher. She then instructs the children to bring their work up front and then return to their seats and quietly wait for lunch.

- In order to maintain continuity in the classroom and a quiet lunch period, the children are not allowed to raise their hand to ask a question or vocalize a need.

- During lunchtime the children may watch a movie. If there is any conversation, fussing, or jittering the movie is turned off. When lunchtime is over, the teacher instructs the children one at a time by calling out their name to throw their lunch tray away, then to pick up their reading baskets and then to sit back down in their seats.

- After this is completed, the children take turns going to the bathroom.

- Following lunch and the bathroom break is a mandatory 20-minute silent reading time. When reading time is over, the teacher follows the same routine.
and announces one at a time that the children can get up and put their reading baskets back and return to their seats.

- On Mondays, the children do not have any “special” outside classroom activities and work on a classroom project. On Tuesdays, the children have Learning Resource Center time, on Wednesdays, the children have gym, on Thursdays, the children have art, and on Fridays, the children have music.

To be sure the above routine is completed in a timely manner, and in accordance with school policy, the classroom has several ongoing award programs in place. The children earn points for good behavior. After a certain number of points have been accumulated the children earn treats or prizes. If a child is causing a continual disturbance, there are tri-fold walls that are placed around that child so his disruptive behavior does not “catch on” to the other children. One of the issues with these children is that if they think they can get away with something, it catches on, and in a very short amount of time you can have chaos.

Symbols

There are several instances between symbols and actions in the classroom. A symbol is a stimulus whose response is given in advance, and applying meaning to symbols is key because it stimulates interpretation. According to Herbert Blumer (1969), to show symbolic meaning, there is a stimulus, followed by interpretation, and then a response. Several activities in the classroom which share the stimulus, interpretation, and response motivators are:

- The children know that if they want to eat breakfast, the morning’s reading assignment needs to be done. Should a child have an emotional issue upon arriving at school and fails to the complete the reading assignment during the allotted amount of time, there is a possibility that child will not eat breakfast. When there are only a few minutes left before breakfast time has elapsed, the children quickly manage to leave their emotional baggage behind and do the assignment quickly in order to eat.

- This motivator is also applied to lunch.

- Another stimulus and response motivator is that during lunch they may watch a movie, as long as they are absolutely quiet.

- Another stimulus and response motivator is staying on “green” in the behavior award program. This award system has green, yellow, and red. If a child accumulates enough negative points he or she is put on yellow, then red. If a child is on red he or she will not participate in the afternoon activities, which are outside the classroom.

Psychological Effect of Labeling the Children

All of the children in this classroom were consistently behaving in a deviant manner that was disruptive to the other classmates. These children could not conform to the norms of society as posed in a classroom setting. Consequently, they were diagnosed by the school psychologist and labeled as ED. Thio (2006) says that once people are labeled deviant, “they tend to see themselves as deviant, which in turn leads them to continue the so-called deviant behavior.” We can apply Thio’s (2006) statement to these children, and premise that once children are labeled ED, they tend to see themselves as ED, which in turn leads them to continue the so-called ED behavior. Thio (2006) further went to say that once labeled a deviant [ED], “the individual tends to suffer a negative consequence by continuing to engage in deviant [ED] activities.” . . . It is not readily apparent when observing these children if they are “acting out” against the regimen of the classroom by exerting their individuality through their labeling as ED. If these children do not want to do their work that day, they use their labeling as ED and act out in odd ways, without severe consequences. The teacher reacts by ignoring the child, and by placing the aforementioned tri-fold wall around that child. I believe the child see this as a reaction opportunity. The child is receiving one-on-one special attention during the couple of minutes the teacher needs to put the wall around the child.

Psychological Effect when Resistant Strategies are Used

In other institutions where social control has been evident, individuals have found ways to defy the
These are resistance strategies (Foucault 1991). McColgan (2005), in her ethnography, "A Place to Sit," examined people in a nursing home with dementia, and found that these people had important issues about identity and place. She also found that residents did not generally appear to identify with the nursing home and constantly tried to dissociate, distance, and escape from it through various resistance strategies. Resistant strategies are used in this classroom setting. In my observation, this was accomplished through resistance to do assigned homework, displaying outbursts of emotional aggressiveness, and blatantly ignoring the teacher’s requests. One particular day during my non-participant observation time, I witnessed the following resistance action:

A child came to school angry and did not want to do any schoolwork. He completely missed breakfast and slept most of the day. He woke up when I walked into the classroom. When the teacher confronted him and said there was only a few minutes left before lunchtime was over, and he would not be able to go to gym until all his work was caught up, he replied, “you can’t tell me what to do.” He then proceeded to stand up to leave the classroom, but the teacher interrupted him and suggested that he sit down.

Social Disadvantages to a Segregated Classroom

Everyday life is a matter for negotiation and is concerned with strategy and image management (Goffman 1970, 1990). It can also be cooperative, “a kind of social bargain” (Lofland 1978, 44), particularly in public situations; to fail to work collectively “is to threaten the meaning system which supports us” (Lofland 1978, 45). Restricted to the confines of this classroom, there is little opportunity to integrate with typical children in a social setting, and this, in part, determines the structure of a school day for these children. For example, while other children are playing on the playground, these children are in the classroom. This classroom has its own specified gym time, and these children play by themselves on the playground. These children do not get an opportunity to play with children their own age. Further, they do not get the opportunity to see how social structure within their age is appropriately accomplished. These children do not eat lunch with the other children. Again, this is another social growth opportunity that is not achieved.

Barriers Imposed by Institutional Policies

This classroom promotes a routine structured around the teacher’s regimented control of the activities of these children and their ability to obtain an education and be integrated into society. However, the teacher, herself, is restricted to the school’s policies that are to be enforced within the classroom. Because of these policies, the teacher is limited to the amount of individual attention she can give these children. The teacher is also limited to the amount of control she can exert over the emotional outbursts by these children. For example, it is a school wide policy that there will be a 20-minute silent reading time after lunch when children read books. However, a majority of these children cannot read or read two or three grades below their level. This 20-minute silent reading time is not effective for these children. The teacher recognizes this, but must follow the school’s policy. The teacher acknowledges that this time would be better spent tutoring the children one-on-one.

On an institutional level, the children’s services division for the public school system as a whole has adopted a new reward system. The teacher is expected to change over to this award system during the middle of the school year. What is ironic with this request is that a major part of the teacher’s control over the classroom is the strict adherence to routine. Research has shown children with disabilities function better in a routine setting (Ogonosky 1995). However, the division of the public school system that is in charge of the education of all children with disabilities is making this request. The teacher acknowledges that this transition will create chaos in the classroom.

Another example of an institutional barrier imposed upon the teacher in providing the best environment for the children is that she regularly has to attend teacher education workshops. These workshops usually take the whole day, and they cover all sorts of disabilities. There may be times when only 20 minutes of the workshop teaching program relates to ED children. Again, the division of the public school system that is in charge of the education of all children with disabili-
ties organizes and enforces mandatory participation at these workshops. The teacher recognizes that while these workshops are necessary in order to keep her up-to-date on the most recent developments, she stated that breaking the routine in the classroom causes chaos, which may take days to recover from.

Cultural/Family Barriers

From my research in this classroom setting, there appears to not be an issue with the cultural backgrounds of the teacher versus the children, and her ability to effectively teach the classroom. However, I did make an observation that on one day when there was a substitute while the teacher was on vacation, and the students reacted favorably towards her. She was an African-American 'grandmother' woman with a big heart and presented tough love lessons learned from her parents and grandmother. The children reacted by behaving favorably and by giving her hugs.

A noticeable cultural boundary, however, was from the parents’ reaction to this classroom. From interviews with the teacher, the parents do not support the program and do not want their children in this classroom. Most of the parents do not recognize that their child has ED. My observations included:

- One of the children turned five and his mom refuses to believe that he is ED. On Mondays he is in a regular classroom during the mornings and returns to this classroom for lunch. If he does not behave, he gets kicked out. If this should happen the mother is notified. The mother then comes to the school and picks up the child, and will not let him finish out the day. It is odd that the very next day, this child is absent from school.

- The six-year-old has emotional outburst issues, and his parents refuse to believe there is anything wrong with him. He was on medicine last year and during that time the teacher did not have any problems with him. During the summer the parents decided to take him off of the medicine and this year there are more bad days than good.

- One of the third grader’s behavior is different compared to the ED children. He should receive testing for possibly autism or Ausberger’s syndrome. However, the father refuses to believe that there is anything wrong with his child.

- Each day the teacher completes a work assessment form and briefly describes the child’s day. The parent is supposed to read the form, sign it, and return it the next day. More than half of the parents do not.

- Most of these children are on prescription medicine for ADHD. However, the parents either do not regulate the dosage or do not give the child his medicine in the morning.

- One parent, upon receiving a letter about her son’s disruptive behavior, threatened the teacher with bodily harm. The next day, this parent along with another adult bounded together and covered themselves with a big overcoat and entered the school. Upon passing the cameras, it appeared to be one person. Upon entering the school, one adult went to the office and the parent entered the classroom and physically tried to assault the teacher. That mother’s child witnessed her behavior.

- A mother and stepfather of a child are constantly yelling and “punishing” him for his negative behavior. The mother takes her son to the store and demands that he go into the store to steal toys, presents, food or whatever else the mother wants. As a reward, she lets him stay up all night and play video games.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research project provided some valuable insight into the educational system’s policies for providing an education to children with ED. My research project was to research this educational institution to find out if they are effective in transitioning children with emotional disabilities into society. That question can be answered in two parts. The teacher’s method of instruction, the routine established, and her control in the classroom provides an environment from which the children can adapt and learn. The drawback is since these children are labeled ED and placed in this segregated classroom, they are shielded from the other children, and are not
afforded the opportunity to partake in social interaction. If one of the goals of this classroom is to be able to integrate these children into society, how is that going to be achieved when the children are not around “typical” children in a social setting?

Further, these children receive either peer-mediated learning nor reciprocal peer tutoring, which was found to be necessary for the effectiveness of integrating these children into society and providing them with a means to an education (King-Sears and Cummings 1996; Wright et al. 1995).

Because of bureaucracy within the school and the educational system, there are limitations placed upon the teacher, such as the 20-minute silent reading time. It would also seem plausible that if the school psychologist labeled these children as ED, then these children need counseling, which they do not receive. Counseling could provide a means to show these children strategies to cope emotionally. One child of concern is the child with the anger management issues. He needs someone to talk with about his problems and how to cope with them. From the background information I received, he needs love and attention and someone to bond with because he does not receive this at home. It would be interesting to follow up on this child in five or 10 years to see how his anger management issues are handled. When a child at an early age does not bond with his parents or with other children, deviant behavior patterns develop to cope with the negative feelings associated with his loneliness. An angry child matures into an angry adolescent and finally into an angry adult.

Another example of the school’s policy inhibiting growth surrounds the placement in this classroom of the five-year-old child. Because he turned five after the previous school year was complete, the federally funded preschool program will not allow him to remain in the program for another year, even though developmentally he is at a three-year-old level. He must go to kindergarten. The concern is whether or not this child is going to get pushed through each grade and would not have a chance to fully develop an appropriate cognitive level before being moved on.

Further research and observation needs to be done to understand whether or not these children can be better served by placing more decisions into the hands of the teacher of the classroom, and not into the hands of the “deciders” who are not in the classroom on a day to day basis.

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Writers create windows in fiction to bridge the gap leading to reality. In fact, many women novelists choose to focus on their experiences to pave the way for readers to become part of the stories. “Feminine thinking tends to be more concerned with the particulars of concrete situations and with a multiplicity of variable, context-dependent factors” (Simson 3-4). This idea of re-creating experiences and situations in novels has led writers to use experimental narrative forms such as the incorporation of letters and the personal “I.” These two types of writing styles can be found in Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* and Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*. Woolf, who is known as one of the most influential literary figures from the twentieth century, reiterates in her writing the need for writers, especially women writers, to draw on their own experiences by stating, “since a novel has this correspondence to real life, its values are to some extent those of real life” (Woolf 72). No matter the culture, race, or gender of the writer, some real life seeps in the story and leads the writer to enlighten readers to new truths they may not have been aware of before hand. Ali feels that women and “non-white” writers are creating a “reflection of reality” (Adebayo 349). If in fact the reader is encountering the same types of experiences that the writer is picturing, then the writing creates a community feeling where the reader is no longer alone in the experiences.

Unfortunately, narrative theories do not necessarily address the issues of incorporating the experiences of the writer that are brought up in this essay, especially in regards to culture and history. There is a “lack of emphasis on historical developments in the realm of cultural studies narratology” unless it is focused on the feminist narrative (Fludernik 331). In light of this, the narrative styles of fiction, where history and autobiography cross, should be divided into distinct genres because when studying historical questions on “narrative, one soon finds that the sheer number of relevant topics and their significance are overwhelming” (Fludernik 332).

The documentary narrative can skim the borders of fact and fiction; however, it is still too broad a genre to place either *Brick Lane* or *A Room of One’s Own*. One genre that can include both, and does fit into a division of the narrative theory, is one that I have coined and, in the past, called “fictional femoir” (Hantzsche 5). This new genre would then fix problems, like “accuracy and honesty,” in the memoir genre allowing for “what they call a ‘hybrid’ narrative, a form that frees [the writer] to image and invent as well as remember” (Clark pars 4, 5). This will ensure that “so called fictional techniques in memoir are neither lies nor embellishments” (Clark pars 6).

In regard to *Brick Lane*, it would fit into this new type of genre due to Ali’s admittance in *Writing Across Worlds* that she “was drawing on [her] own childhood, not in a way that was particularly autobiographical in any straight forward way but it was there” (Adebayo 346). We can also see Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* as being slightly autobiographical, or at least a subconscious shadowing of events is Woolf’s life. An example of this foreshadowing can be found in Woolf’s narrator’s statement that:

> any women born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would have certainly gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village,...To have lived a free life in London in the sixteenth century would have meant for a woman who was poet and playwright a nervous stress and dilemma which might well have killed her (49).

As most scholars know, Woolf ended her life after...
spending a “rest cure” in a cottage with her husband. She was obviously prone to nervous stress. No matter what she wrote about, her love of London, and her yearning to return to the city, she still succumbed to the very thing she was warning against. It definitely is ironic on the part of her writing, or maybe it is foresight because she wrote these lines long before her fateful walk to the River Ouse in Sussex (Gubar XXXIV).

In the case of Ali, her experiences drive her to preserve the stories handed down from her father (Adebayo 341). To accomplish this we can only wonder if the relationship between Ali’s character, Chanu, and his daughters is like that of Ali and her own father. Chanu has many qualities such as being an avid reader that the readers of Brick Lane can see as a connection to Ali’s own father, who introduced her to literature like “Tolstoy and R.K. Narayan” (Adebayo 342-343).

It can be assumed that it is within the father-daughter relationship that some fiction is at work, for example, when Chanu forces his daughters to recite poems and “he was more teaching than taught and the chief beneficiaries were the girls” (Ali 148).

Therefore, it can also be assumed that Ali’s use of letters within the text is a driving force to pull in the readers and move through the narrative in a new way, creating a memoir of sorts concerning the protagonist’s sister, Hasina, which may mirror the lives of Bangladesh women, whose tales were possibly told to place fear in the hearts of the young. Ali states, “we [the British Asian, Black, and non-white writers] have a different perspective, we have to tell, personal stories about migration and displacement” (Adebayo 349). The addition of letters also allows Ali to move her narrative “from one set of characters in one location to another set of characters in a different location” and also moves time forward by several years. (Fludernik 334).

These tales that Ali heard and saw during her childhood, and into adulthood of fallen women, drug abuse, the role of Bangladeshi women, abuse of power, and modernized 2nd and 3rd generation immigrants are all woven into Brick Lane. The fact that many 2nd and 3rd generation women have problems with their identities stating, “that [they] can neither shrift off [their] Britishness nor return permanently to Bangladesh” creates many conflicts (Gillian pars 27).

Ali shows readers this generational gap and conflicts that come from migration by introduction of Shahana, Chanu’s teenage daughter. When touring London, the family asks a stranger to take a picture and when he inquires about the origins Chanu promptly states they are from Bangladesh, while Shahana rolls her eyes and says, “I’m from London” (244).

Like Ali, Woolf strives to tell a story of empowerment for women; although, she states, she will make “use of all the liberties and licenses of a novelist, to tell […] the story of the two days that preceded my coming here” (5). She is using fictional stories in her speeches as examples (though only she knows how much is set in fact or fiction). Also, Woolf uses the stories to draw out her own life lessons and desires, to transport them to the listeners or, in this case, readers. She states, that the “whole of the mind must lie wide open if we are to get a sense that the writer is communicating his experience with perfect fullness” (103).

Also, by allowing the narrator to use the feminine “I” form, Woolf is basing her narrator “not in biology, but rather in cultural fearlessness” (DuPlessis 375). She is extending the experiences of the self to the narrator and creating an example of good communication with her readers. Woolf chose to experiment with narrative form to propel the words from the page into the reality of those who were always doing “work that one did not wish to do, and to do it like a slave, flattering and fawning, not always necessarily perhaps, but it seemed necessary and the stakes were too great to run risks” such as choosing not to be a slave (37).

The slave-like work not only applies to Woolf’s writing, but also transcends to Ali’s and is seen in Brick Lane’s protagonist, Nazneen, who in the end chooses to remove the cultural bondage and raise her children on her own. Here both authors are writing in “Woolf’s shorthand […] for a writing unafraid of gender as an issue, undeferential to male judgement” (DuPlessis 375). It is this shorthand that gives Nazneen strength throughout Ali’s novel to progress in London and become self-sufficient. Nazneen is bridging the gender gap and working with friends, running their own sewing/designing business. This would be unheard of in Bangladesh; however, due to Ali’s experiences in London, she can mirror them on the page for readers to access a new understanding of migrating cultures.
It is the experiences of the writer that create the words on the pages, the experiences that draw readers in, and the experiences that make readers believe. Of course writers can research these experiences, but the question then remains: will the readers extend their disbelief long enough to finish the novel? In the cases of Virginia Woolf and Monica Ali, it is clear that although one comes at the reader head on with her experiences and desires and the other merely transports the reader to Brick Lane and then creates a time and place interwoven with reality, the reader can suspend their disbelief and be pulled headlong into the narrative. This paves the way for current women novelists to incorporate new, experimental narrative styles into their own writing without fear.

Works Cited


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