# WR

## JOURNAL OF THE
## CAS WRITING PROGRAM

### ISSUE 10
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# EDITOR'S NOTE

*"What's the best piece of writing advice you've ever gotten?"*

"This is not advice, but it has certainly stuck with me. A professor of mine at Lafayette told me in 1978 that if I wanted to become a writer I could do it—that I had the ability if I wanted to put in the work. That came back to me in the '90s when I decided to give it a try, and it was important to me that he'd said that because I respected him. Writers need people they respect to believe in them. Leslie Epstein always believed in me, and it got me through some low points that people I respected supported me and what I was trying to do. My friend Chris Walsh sent "The Old Priest" to Keith Botsford at *The Republic of Letters* after it was turned down by a dozen top journals—and that led to the Pushcart. Any artist needs to have support. Even Emily Dickinson, who was so little understood in her own time, had Thomas Wentworth Higginson. One person was enough for her to get by with. So I'll give some advice to writers just starting out: You can't do it all by yourself. Whatever you write, somebody, somewhere, has got to respond."

— Anthony Wallace
From an interview by Rob Jacklosky, editor of the literary site *Bloom*, posted July 28, 2014.

This year's issue of the *WR* journal is dedicated in loving memory to our dear colleague Tony Wallace, a committed teacher and writer who gave so much of that needed response to a countless number of students. He also inspired the creation of a new award in his honor titled: The Tony Wallace Award for Writing Excellence. He encouraged aspiring writers whose essays year after year have earned a place within the *WR*. Issue 10 is no exception: Claire Howard's paper, "Howl As Literary Montage: Cinema's Influence on the Beat Generation," will be the last *WR* essay to have been guided by Professor Wallace's inspirational teaching.

Unique in their diverse topics and approach, the essays in this year's *WR* showcase the Boston University undergraduate experience in the Writing Program. Although they differ in their subject content, all WR seminars have common goals and lead students through a sequence of assignments that emphasize a process of planning, drafting, and revising based on feedback from their classmates and instructor. Our courses teach that writing is a way not only to express what you have to say but also to critically question and evaluate it. We encourage students to consider the following questions: Who is my target audience? How should I structure my writing to engage, inform, persuade, or even entertain my audience? How can I locate and evaluate sources wisely and use them effectively and responsibly? How can I clearly express my ideas?

This year, we received 500 submissions and ultimately selected 12 essays that best exemplify the goals of the Writing Program. Among our 12 selections for publication are four essays of a non-academic genre, which speaks to the exciting evolution of our program.

It was extremely difficult to decide which of these 12 impressive works would receive prizes because they are all excellent and worthy of distinction. The Tony Wallace Award for Writing Excellence went to Mari Rooney's "'Fall'n in the practice of a damned slave': Racial Ideology and Villainy in Shakespeare's *Othello*." Her research explores the racial discourse that surrounded Renaissance England.

We have also awarded prizes to the following essays. Hallie Lazaro's "The Life Cycle of A Tree: A Cultural Journey" belongs to the alternative genre category and is a collection of poetry. It begins with a critical introduction that investigates the ties immigrants bring with them to the United States and creates an argument through poetry of the struggles immigrants face and the lasting power of culture.

Miranda Melici's "Representations of Mental Illness on FOX and CNN: The Parkland Shooting," tackles the false connections between gun violence and mental illness promulgated by the media.

Yun Li's "Fighting Against Tribalism" discusses how globalization ignites a surge of cultural homogenization that poses a threat to minority languages and cultures. Li was a student in our WR 098 course that is specifically designed for multilingual writers.

The opportunity to share and engage in thoughtful discussion, planning, and reasoning with our peers creates a closer community within the Writing Program and develops an environment for true collaboration and innovative writing teaching for our students. I feel fortunate to have been a part of this process and to have contributed to this showcase of our students' talent and the leadership and fine teaching that so inspires them. But as I write this note, it feels bittersweet because it comes with a goodbye to a friend whose instruction often helped to fill these pages. I am sure I am not alone in feeling that the *WR* journal will not be the same. With so much gratitude we say goodbye, dear Tony, and thank you. Thank you for your responses, for your teaching, your writing, and, most importantly, for your friendship.

Kimberly Shuckra
Editor, *WR: Journal of the CAS Writing Program*

# FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

In WR 098, students engage in important conversations about complex issues related to globalization through their reading of numerous essays and a novel. Throughout the semester, students encounter multiple perspectives on themes such as linguistic and cultural differences, assimilation, tribalism, and definitions of home. The final paper of the course then asks them to formulate a conceptual problem and enter into a debate about one or more of those crucial themes. As international students—some of whom are experiencing living in a foreign country for the first time—WR 098 students tend to become quite invested in the course material and impassioned in the debates, establishing their own well-reasoned positions and challenging assumptions.
Yun Li's writing talent was clear from the beginning of the semester, and I could tell that she had a special affinity for words and for writing as a form of self-expression. As the semester progressed, Yun consistently challenged herself on writing assignments, demonstrated by the sophisticated evolution of her ideas and argumentation, along with her linguistic growth. She had been commenting on the realistic possibility of cultural homogenization all semester, so her decision to enter into this debate in a formal way was a natural final capstone assignment to close out the course. In the early stages of her writing process, Yun's position in this debate was quite undecided and, as a result of this lack of confidence in her point of view, her voice became rather muted in the discussion. As she continued critically engaging with the texts and her classmates, Yun came to some important realizations about assimilation and tribalism, and she was able to skillfully reorganize her argument and strengthen her voice. The result is the excellent prize-winning paper published here.

Lesley Yoder
WR 098: Academic Writing for ESL Students 2

# FROM THE WRITER

I see the experience of writing this essay as a chance to explore something I am personally related to and passionate about. As an international student myself, I have been struggling with the ambivalent impulse to fit in this westernized society and, at the same time, to maintain my original identity. As a student minoring in psychology, I have always been interested in human nature and instinct and how they determine people's behaviors on a daily basis. Therefore, I was caught by Marcelo Gleiser's point of view that the evolved and ingrained tribal tendency of human nature makes globalization unattainable. However, the contradictory cases I read in Julie Traves's essay "The Church of Please and Thank You" and in Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* resonated with me and inspired my decision to base my final paper on the debate about whether cultural homogenization can realistically occur and whether minority cultures will eventually die out without any intervention. Although I initially found the tribalism perspective plausible in every case, it occurred to me that our consciousness and rationality play a significant role in the possibility of cultural assimilation. During the writing process, I came to realize that to achieve globalization and cultural unification in a favorable way, it is important to remain aware and respectful of one's heritage, but also critical, to discern the most effective path for progress.

**YUN LI** is an international student born and raised in Shanghai, China. As a rising sophomore, she was just accepted to the Questrom School of Business but has not yet decided on her concentration. Despite her pursuit of business, which is mostly what her parents expect from her, her true passion lies in literature and psychology, which she has declared as her minor. Writing is a big part of Yun's life. Fascinated by what words can communicate and how they can heal and comfort, she takes up writing as a source of relief and as a way of expressing herself. Coming to the United States for college, away from her family and hometown, has been a giant leap for her and is a path full of unexpected challenges and hurdles. Yun is still adjusting to the foreign environment and struggling with the transition, but she is optimistic about the adventure ahead. Yun would like to offer great gratitude to her WR 098 professor, Lesley Yoder, for her patience and significant help on her papers. Only with her help could Yun achieve great improvement in her writing skills and get this opportunity to have her essay published. Thanks to Professor Yoder's warm and encouraging class environment, Yun has learned to get fully involved in class discussions and to express her thoughts with confidence.

**YUN LI**
*Prize Essay Award*

# FIGHTING AGAINST TRIBALISM

Since globalization is an ongoing social tendency that exerts significant influence and shows no sign of stopping, it raises some concerns about the threats it may impose on minority cultures and about the likelihood that cultural homogenization will eventually occur. According to Marcelo Gleiser in his essay "Globalization: Two Visions of the Future of Humanity," human tribal tendencies make a unified culture unattainable despite rapid technological developments and increasing scientific transparency. While Gleiser claims that cultural homogenization is unlikely, the lives of the main characters in Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* prove otherwise. After Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli emigrate from India to start their new life in America, they maintain their Bengali traditions and expand their Bengali social circles; yet, in many ways, they still become Americanized unwittingly and merge into their new Western environment. Moreover, their American-born son, Gogol, attempts to escape his Bengali roots and disconnect himself from his parents, which predicts further deviation from the family's Indian heritage in the long run. The contrast between Gleiser's perspective on tribalism and the Gangulis' gradual Americanization sets up the debate about whether a "global village" is possible. While I concede Gleiser's point of view that human beings do have an ingrained tribal tendency to cling to our familiar social groups, I think he overlooks the fact that human beings are active agents who are able to consciously choose to merge or fight against another culture. Moreover, the power of social influence and relationships cannot be neglected. Hence, I argue that cultural homogenization is likely to happen, which therefore endangers minority languages and cultures.

Although I disagree with Gleiser's overall claim that cultural homogenization is unrealistic, I concede that we as human beings do have an ingrained, evolved, inextricable tendency to be tribal, to remain in our own familiar social group, and to favor our in-group members and exclude outside factors. The statistical evidence mentioned in Gleiser's essay suggests that cross-cultural relations present only a limited amount of communication patterns: "International mail constitutes 1% of the total; international phone calling, less than 2%; international Internet traffic, between 17 to 18%; exports as percentage of GDP, 26%; first-generation immigrants, 3%" (9). As Gleiser shows, in real life, we do tend to approach people who are like us, in value or appearance. However, even if we do have an ingrained tendency to remain tribal, our conscious awareness has the ability to outsmart our instinct. As highly intelligent creatures, we have the agency to choose our living environment and social circles with which we want to interact. In spite of our natural tribalism, we are very likely to intentionally merge ourselves into certain cultures or societies that are perceived to be more promising and powerful.

The very action of immigration can serve as an example of people's conscious intention to merge into another culture in order to seek more opportunities. As is demonstrated in *The Namesake*, after surviving a horrible train accident in India, Ashoke feels like he gets a second chance to live and thus determines to go abroad for his engineering studies. His decision to leave the place where

he grew up and immigrate to America can be considered as an effort to pursue a higher educational degree, a better living condition and a future with more possibilities that cannot be offered in his home country: "Ashoke began to envision another sort of future. He imagined not only walking, but walking away, as far as he could from the place in which he was born and in which he had nearly died" (Lahiri 20). His impulse undeniably shows that people also have a natural tendency to move upwards and to evolve, escaping from constraints and adopting something greater, which is the foundation for the human race to evolve and develop. Since immigration is the one particular decision that has far-reaching and long-lasting consequence, not only Ashoke's family but also all the generations that follow are likely to be influenced, and therefore even the whole Indian culture will be affected in the long run.

Similar to immigration, learning a foreign language and, at the same time, adopting its cultural connotations can also be viewed as people's conscious willingness to merge into a dominant society. Nowadays, the globe has witnessed a significant growth in the spread of English, which, in my point of view, can contribute to the inevitable unification of cultures considering the inalienable relationship between languages and cultures. In her article titled "The New Language Landscape," Reshma Krishnamurthy Sharma suggests that an increasing number of Indian parents, especially professionals, are teaching their kids English as their first language instead of teaching their own local languages. According to Sharma's research, one contributing factor for this trend is that the parents "believe that speaking in flawless English from a young age, children are better equipped to work in global environments" (165). Like the Indian parents in Sharma's essay, students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Julia Traves's essay "The Church of Please and Thank You" also echo the necessity to learn English as an effort to be prepared for the globalized economy. Through her interviews with EFL students and instructors, Traves reveals people's awareness that English has westernized people from other countries both linguistically and culturally. However, while they hold a similar point of view to the Indian parents interviewed in Sharma's essay, the EFL students express their discomfort of being subjected to potential "linguistic imperialism" during Traves's interviews (174). While they are aware of the threats that English and western culture impose on their own local dialects, the EFL students acknowledge that "to survive in this kind of competitive environment I have to speak English and I have to know what English culture is" (Traves 177). Their struggles with this unpleasant ambivalence can serve as further support for Gleiser's reasoning that our tribal tendency is entrenched and ingrained; however, Gleiser fails to take into account our ability to fight against our instinct and make rational decisions based on reality. The reality is that we are now facing a globalized business society. In order to be competitive, starting from a young age, kids are educated and socialized to speak a global language, to be individualistic and to be intentionally westernized. The concern is in the air that if we are disconnected with those powerful Western countries, we are going to be hurt economically both as individuals and as a society. However, because linguistic and cultural diversity are intertwined so deeply, the global trend of speaking English as a common language can nearly predict the extinction of other minority local customs and values.

From Ashoke's immigration to the worldwide belief that learning English can lead to prosperity, we can see that when our two evolved tendencies—to be tribal and to be superior—are in collision, it is likely that our instinct to "strive for superiority" is stronger, thus driving us to consciously choose to merge into a more advanced culture, which accordingly breeds cultural assimilation. Usually those decisions we make, such as immigrating to another country (like Ashoke and Ashima in *The Namesake*) or exposing our kids to another linguistic system (like the Indian

parents in Sharma's essay), have rippling influences on the future generations, thus resulting in the vanishing of our regional languages and cultures.

What if some people's innate tribalism is too strong to be suppressed by their rational thinking? A real-life example would be what Gleiser calls "fundamentalism" (9), meaning defending one's own culture or religion in a radical way. Yet, as far as I am concerned, extremely strong tribalism can serve as a unifying force rather than as a dividing force. When people's tribal tendencies overpower their conscious efforts to be superior, they may become so rigid and conservative that they refuse to open up to new, potentially more advanced aspects of another flourishing society, which may instead lead to their own extinction. Adaptability and flexibility are the key to survival and evolution. If people from certain cultural backgrounds fail to adapt to the overall global trend or fail to assert their cultural autonomy, they are more likely to be absorbed by more powerful countries or die out because of underdevelopment or poverty.

Some people may also argue that since human beings are conscious agents, even if we choose to live in another environment that is favorable for our future development, we can still explore the resources and opportunities that an environment can offer and consciously resist the outside forces of cultural assimilation. However, I argue that the power of socialization cannot be underestimated; in other words, once we intentionally expose ourselves to another culture, some extent of assimilation is inevitable. Who we are is largely formed by our social environment and the people with whom we interact. When people choose to immigrate to another country or to speak another language, cultural influence can unwittingly penetrate into their daily life, changing the most minute detail of the way they relate to the outside world. Because human beings are adaptive and social creatures, we tend to involuntarily internalize the traits of people around us and the environment we are in. Thus, I think it is almost impossible for us to keep our old selves from being influenced by our new surroundings. For example, in *The Namesake*, Ashima follows her husband abroad in his pursuit of his studies without the intention to adopt the Western culture. At first, she brings her country with her by eating the same Indian food, wearing saris, following Bengali traditions, and approaching only other Bengalis. Just after she immigrates to America and gives birth to Gogol, Ashima is overwhelmed by a sense of disconnection and alienation as she thinks about raising a child in a completely foreign country. She compares the feeling of being a foreigner to "a sort of lifelong pregnancy— a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts" (Lahiri 49). Yet as the story progresses, we can clearly notice that her life is slowly Americanized in many ways: she has learned to do things on her own, she eats casually like Americans, and she manages to make some American friends through her job at the library. At the end of the book, after living in America for 33 years and deciding to sell the family house on Pemberton Road to spend the rest of her life traveling back and forth between her family in India and America, Ashima acknowledges herself that "though she still wears saris, still puts her long hair in a bun, she is not the same Ashima who had once lived in Calcutta" (Lahiri 276). We can see a sense of independence and openness, which are typical Western traits, grow within her and become part of her personality. Due to her husband's death from a heart attack, she is left to do everything on her own. Interacting with her kids, who were born and socialized in America, and other people around her enables Ashima to pick up some aspects of the American lifestyle over time, unknowingly being assimilated. Hence, it is hard to counter that we are significantly influenced by our social environment and the people with whom we interact. Since we are innately social and adaptive, once we enter a given culture, assimilation is irresistible and inevitable, beyond our control and even beyond our awareness.

While some behaviors of the Indian couple in *The Namesake* support Gleiser's argument that tribalism is hard-wired and ingrained in our human nature, their overall life somehow predicts future assimilation and Americanization in the long run. The contradictory perspectives lead to the question: Is cultural homogenization possible in the future? From my perspective, future cultural unification is likely to happen because the power and limitation of human being's rational thinking may work together and facilitate cultural merging—the power to overcome our tribal instinct and the lack of power in the face of social influences. So, if cultural assimilation is possible, should we see globalization as a completely negative outcome and try all means to avoid it? Or should we be open to some of its positive aspects and find an optimal balance between diversity and assimilation? Since every culture may have its favorable parts that deserve to be learned and its undesired aspects that should be improved upon or even abandoned, it is too extreme to conclude that cultural assimilation is something that should be prevented from happening altogether. It is not necessarily a bad thing to let go of some of the outdated or conservative parts of our own culture and adopt some advanced aspects of other cultures. Extremely speaking, do we have to spare no effort to save and maintain a minority culture if it is undesirable for human development in the long run? In brief, I think that what we need is the awareness of our heritage and, more importantly, the discernment to tell whether it deserves to be held so tightly.

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# FROM THE WRITER

All semester in WR 150, I had been waiting for the appropriate moment to integrate film into my discussion of modernist poetry as it is an art form I am a great admirer of. Coincidentally, my final paper on the Beat movement proved to be the best suited to the visual medium of film. I was particularly interested in how one technique or theme can be utilized across different mediums, styles, and time periods. Using the organizational device of montage as a jumping-off point for this essay, I explored how Allen Ginsberg's seminal poem "Howl" represents a multilayered cultural, social, and historical montage made up of various film styles, movements, and themes. As a result, Ginsberg, either consciously or unconsciously, uses montage to create more meaning out of what some may claim to be a rambling or even nonsensical poem, one that breaks quite radically from the more outwardly formal, academic, and elitist poetry that had preceded it. "Howl" not only resembles the cinema verite style that was becoming increasingly popular at the time, but it also captures one of the central tenets of another less mainstream film movement called Underground Film, as well as avant-garde film in general. "Howl" and the Beat Generation and style it represents address many taboo topics, such as race, homosexuality, and drugs just as Underground films of that time did. Both were completely unabashed in their disdain for and protest against formal institutions and in their ultimate call for more human understanding and equality. Underground Film and "Howl's" exploration of these sensitive and divisive topics served to jolt the reader out of their mundane and cyclical everyday lives in order to prove to them that the only reason they were so shocked was because they had hardly bothered to expose themselves to those issues before.

**CLAIRE HOWARD** is a rising sophomore in Boston University's College of Arts and Sciences intending to major in Film and Television with a possible minor in Women and Gender Studies. She grew up on the West Coast in Pasadena, CA. She would like to thank all of her classmates for their helpful and insightful feedback throughout the writing process. She would also like to thank Professor Wallace for being so open and willing to let her explore various topics and ideas outside of the immediate course material. He always expressed his passion and enthusiasm for everything he taught, and she is saddened that future students will not be able to experience one of his classes.

CLAIRE HOWARD

# "HOWL" AS LITERARY MONTAGE:
## CINEMA'S INFLUENCE ON THE BEAT GENERATION

Allen Ginsberg's landmark poem "Howl" has come to epitomize society's perception of the Beat Generation in 1950s America. The movement stands as a symbol of counterculture, completely unabashed in its renunciation of the establishment, violence and war, particularly as it applied to America's involvement in Vietnam at the time, and any external force that attempted to limit genuine self-expression. As a result of their non-conformist mindset, the people in the poem often find themselves at odds with law enforcement, academia, and even the constraints of time. Its narrative tone closely resembles that of cinéma vérité, characterized by its documentary style and often shot on a handheld camera, which added a sense of realism not found in typical mainstream films. Thematically, the poem is very similar to Underground Film, which was a term used to describe the more countercultural and experimental subset of avant-garde film.

In the poem's exploration of the aforementioned topics, Ginsberg manages to combine the styles of multiple film movements and themes into a collection of images and sensations captured through his own unique lens. What is the purpose of combining so many cinematic influences, especially in a literary medium? The answer lies in the film editing technique called montage, which was first brought to American films via the Soviets in the early 20th century. David Bordwell states in his essay "The Idea of Montage in Soviet Art and Film" that "Montage was used to build a narrative (by formulating an artificial time and space or guiding the viewer's attention from one narrative point to another), to control rhythm, to create metaphors, and to make rhetorical points" (9). "Howl" therefore finds its unity through the use of this technique, making its particular narrative more coherent while demonstrating that, like film, one of its main purposes is to serve an audience.

A question that should be answered before investigating exactly how "Howl" applies montage as an organizational technique is why it's beneficial to read the poem through a cinematic as opposed to exclusively literary lens at all. Firstly, Part 1 of "Howl" begins from a visual perspective, with the speaker saying in the first line "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by/madness, starving hysterical naked" (9). The past tense verb "saw" automatically puts the speaker in the position of a spectator who is not only watching the events of the poem unfold, but is more specifically looking back on them. Therefore, though he may at first seem like a passive observer, the fact that he has a memory of such specific details reveals that he was most likely part of the activity at the time it was happening. The retrospective nature of the poem is also significant as it relates to montage because it creates a sense of what Bordwell called "artificial time and space." In other words, the events described in the poem seem almost mythic as they are being retold and compressed within the inappropriately short length of a poem. Similarly, montages in films are used to condense events that may have taken place over the course of hours or even days into a shorter span of time.

"Howl" displays a montage made up of the influences of two major film movements, but the style and themes those film movements tackle themselves are also used in the poem to create montages of their own, though these are more thematic than structural. The use of the first, cinéma vérité, often catches the people in the poem in very private moments. In Parker Tyler's book, *Underground Film,* he states that "Cinéma vérité (when genuine rather than faked or mimicked) may be an openly announced, often publicly practiced form of eavesdropping, like asking someone, entirely without notice, to sit, walk, and/or talk for portrait" (38). Similarly, "Howl" shows the reader the people in the poem when they are "cowered in unshaven rooms in underwear" and "crying in white gymnasiums naked/and trembling before the machinery of other/ skeletons" (10, 13). Moments like these catch people in vulnerable situations, either "cowered" or "crying" while occupying seemingly vacant and the unsettling and strange spaces of "unshaven rooms" and "white gymnasiums."

On the other hand, Tyler argues that cinéma vérité is "fraudulent" if "individuals are eager to be photographed (and/or interviewed)" because "one can only assume that they wish to publicize what they do naturally, willingly, and ordinarily" (38). "Howl" is most definitely a representation of "genuine" cinéma vérité, however, because the people in the poem are completely unaware that they are being documented since the documentation (i.e. the writing of the poem) is taking place after the actual events occurred. Cinéma vérité therefore adds a sense of spontaneity and authenticity to the poem, which is strengthened by Ginsberg's own close connection to the subjects he's writing about, who one can assume are his fellow Beat friends. The singular speaker recounting the events in the poem acts just as dexterously as a handheld camera does when shooting in the cinéma vérité style.

Underground Film in the 1950s also captures a similar sense of realism and authenticity, and both Underground films and "Howl" provide the audience with an inside look into their respective movements. Tyler claims "The Underground has enshrined the camera as a wild, willful, inquisitive eye, disposed to give graphic publicity to everything that has remained taboo in the realm of popular commercial films, even the most serious and artistic among them" (35). One could just as easily use this description to characterize the central ethos of the Beat Movement that is highlighted in "Howl." The people in the poem are often described as "crazy," "obscene," and "mad," people who "distributed Super Communist pamphlets in Union/Square," "lost their loveboys to the three old shrews of fate," and "bit detectives in the neck and shrieked/in police cars for committing no crime but their/own wild cooking pederasty and intoxication (9, 12, 13, 14). The reference to homosexual love and the sadistic pleasure they get from physically harming law enforcement officials are both "graphic" and touch on topics that were "taboo" during 1950s America and, to some extent, today.

After returning from a trip to India in 1963, Ginsberg himself commented on the state of current avant-garde film, saying, "This is the film of cranks, eccentrics, sensitives, individuals one man one camera one movie—that is to say the work of individual persons not corporations ("Back to the Wall" 8), (Kane 123). His characterization of avant-garde film as being made by "one man one camera one movie" echoes the intimate documentary style of cinéma vérité, while the description of its filmmakers as "cranks, eccentrics, [and] sensitives" is very similar to how Ginsberg describes the people in "Howl."

Also central to the Beat Generation that "Howl" documents, as well as the avant-garde film movement, was a rejection of institutions and organized thought, just as he claims that avant-garde films were the product of individuals rather than corporations. From the very beginning of "Howl,"

the speaker tells us that the people described in the poem "were expelled from the academies for crazy & publishing obscene odes on the windows of the skull" and "threw potato salad at CCNY lecturers on Dadaism" (9, 18). These instances of revolt are almost certainly autobiographical, referring to Ginsberg's own expulsion from Columbia and Ginsberg's friend and the man he dedicated "Howl" to, Carl Solomon, respectively.

The people in the poem also "fell on their knees in hopeless cathedrals praying/for each other's salvation and light and breasts" (18). While their actions initially appear sincere, describing the cathedrals as "hopeless" minimizes the effectiveness of religion and the progression from "salvation" to "light" to "breasts" quickly moves away from the holy and into the sacrilegious. Instead of abiding by-pre-established authority, the people in the poem create their own. In a strange role reversal, the people in the poem "reappeared on the West Coast, investigating the/F.B.I. in beards and shorts with big pacifist eyes" (12). Here they continue to make a mockery of law enforcement by assuming those positions of authority themselves while being obviously ill-equipped to do so. The F.B.I. are described almost too casually with their "shorts" and "big pacifist eyes," diminishing whatever imposing authority they might have had before.

Clearly displaying such graphic and taboo topics could lead to the misconception that "Howl's" sole achievement is its shock value, but as Tyler says about Underground Film, "if what is shown is rare, tempting, unusual, thrilling, it is only because big commercial film has so long neglected its natural opportunities" (2). "Howl" serves the same function for poetry, making readers aware that the reason they may be so shocked by some of the content of the poem is most likely due to problems of public exposure on those topics rather than problems with the content itself.

Both Underground films and "Howl" therefore showed their audiences what everyone else was afraid to expose. Audience is an important element for both the medium of film and poetry. "Howl" in particular engaged with its audience through numerous live readings Ginsberg gave of the poem. Another one of Ginsberg's poems, "America" acknowledges the audience even more directly, saying in one of the lines, "I'm addressing you" (40). Such obvious and almost abrasive remarks immediately attract the reader's attention, making them more open to receiving the message trying to be conveyed.

However, the style in which "Howl" is written in is not entirely emblematic of the avant-garde films and their filmmakers that the poem was inspired by. Tyler notes that "…a great pride of the true avant-garde filmmaker is that he can produce extraordinary effects through manipulations that in themselves are not costly" (4). Ginsberg, on the other hand, does not use the same economy with his words in "Howl." Made up of three parts and a footnote, it is significantly longer than his other poems in the same collection, such as "Sunflower Sutra" and "Transcription of Organ Music." The extended length, however, is appropriate for the content of the poem, which is much wider in scope than the two aforementioned poems.

Ultimately, Tyler claims that the most meaningful connection between these two respective film and literary movements is their expression of "universal tolerance" (32). Besides the Beats' acceptance of people from all backgrounds, races, and sexualities, "Howl's" incorporation of various cinematic influences also demonstrates a more intellectual and ideological openness completely accepting of these different artistic mediums and styles while also being unafraid to stretch the boundaries of formal poetry. It is also important to note that Underground Film's influence on

Ginsberg and his writing of "Howl" represents just one side of a mutually beneficial artistic exchange, one that sought to "blur the lines between text and image," as Daniel Kane claims in his book *We Saw the Light: Conversations Between the New American Cinema and Poetry*(124). The result of such blurring lead to the montage that makes up "Howl."

A more minor cinematic influence on Ginsberg and "Howl" is slapstick comedy, which actually juxtaposes with the cinéma vérité style in other parts of the poem. Rather than being natural and spontaneous, slapstick comedy is exaggerated and unnatural, often juxtaposing violence and absurdity to create humor. Comic actor Charlie Chaplin was a leading figure in the genre with his famous character of the Tramp. In Susan King's article "The Evolution of Charlie Chaplin's Tramp," she cites documentarian and film preservationist Serge Bromberg's description of the Tramp as being "a character of some vulgarity, a bit violent, very funny, but very slapstick" (Bromberg). "Howl" also includes moments of "vulgarity" and violence, but the style in which they are written and even more so the way Ginsberg chose to read the poem to audiences brought out a lighter and surprisingly comedic tone.

After unsuccessfully searching for Eternity (a hopeless venture since their lives are already metaphorically contained within the confines of the poem), the speaker describes how the people in the poem:

"cut their wrists three times successively unsuccessfully, gave up and were forced to open antique stores where they thought they were growing old and cried" (16).

Somewhat surprisingly, these lines were met with laughter when Ginsberg read them to a crowd. While suicide is not typically discussed in a humorous way, the peoples' unsuccessful attempts to cut their wrists not once, but three times could be read as twistedly comedic. They were subsequently "forced to open antique/stores where they thought they were growing/old and cried," which makes a mockery of their humorously pitiful and depressing circumstances by emphasizing their dramatic reaction to the natural process of aging. Slapstick comedy is necessary in this moment in order to maintain the overall lightheartedness of the poem, whereas cinéma vérité and Underground Film might have taken this moment too seriously. Each cinematic influence that makes up the montage therefore serves a very specific purpose in maintaining the unity of the poem.

Kane also mentions that "Ginsberg's published statements on Chaplin overall suggest that he finds Chaplin anticipating the improvisatory, madcap, and nonconformist sensibility so crucial to the formation of what we can tentatively call the Beat aesthetic" (113). There is no doubt that the people in "Howl" embody the "nonconformist sensibility" predated by Chaplin, with their rejection of the establishment as illustrated previously. While slapstick comedy does in some ways seem to contradict cinéma vérité, its "improvisatory" style is actually similar to the spontaneous and unstaged quality captured in cinéma vérité. This improvisatory style naturally shows more diverse content as is the case in "Howl," with people who travelled from the streets of Manhattan to Mexico and Colorado and "wandered around and around at midnight in the/railroad yard wondering where to go," a scene that highlights their incurable restlessness (11).

Reading "Howl" illuminates how the poets depicted in the poem were striving to escape the physical, spiritual, and temporal constraints of their current world, but ultimately to no avail. In Part I, Ginsberg's "angelheaded hipsters" "threw their watches off the roof to cast their ballot/for

Eternity outside of Time, & alarm clocks/fell on their heads every day for the next decade" (16). When Ginsberg read these lines aloud, the audience again burst into laughter. Here the reference to voting with the word "ballot," which represents a uniquely democratic institution, sharply contrasts with the tendency of both Underground Film's and the Beat Generation that is described in "Howl" to reject any formal institutions. Nevertheless, they keep getting literally and metaphorically hit in the head by time itself. They appear completely out of tune with reality as if they're sleepwalking through life. Indeed, the "alarm clocks" falling on their heads seem to be an attempt to wake them up out of their idealistic dream. Lastly, the description of them as "angelheaded" also conveys the sense that they do not quite belong to the mundane earth below.

Given that one of the characteristics of a montage is juxtaposition, it makes sense that "Howl" would incorporate styles that clearly contrast with each other. Mark Reid asserts in his essay "Cinema, Poetry, Pedagogy: Montage as Metaphor" that "The juxtaposition of unrelated shots into new relations would jolt the reader out of a kind of political somnambulism and into a new awareness of the political relations of things. Montage would punch people into political consciousness" (61). Not only does "Howl" attempt to "jolt the reader," but the people in the poem as well, who sometimes aimlessly drift from one place and time to another with seemingly no purpose. The poem is able to deepen its political impact by being able to achieve something as a written art form that a visual medium such as film cannot. Ginsberg illustrates each moment in just enough detail to welcome the reader into the world of the poem's inhabitants, but ultimately it is left up to the reader's imagination to finish constructing the images in their own minds. Ginsberg therefore does not necessarily do all of the work of piecing together the montage that is "Howl" because to do so would defeat the poem's attempt at actively engaging the reader.

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# FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

As any American schoolchild knows, Abraham Lincoln rose from his humble birth in a log cabin to lead the country through its violent Civil War and proclaim the emancipation of slaves. Most of us are less familiar, though, with America's musical heritage. By exploring the overlapping terrain of these two seemingly unrelated fields, Lucas Lavoie's final essay for WR 100 "Lincoln and His Legacy" comments simultaneously on Lincoln, America's twentieth-century musical heritage, and what it means to be an American. In an exemplary synthesis of different disciplines—history, music, biography, political rhetoric—Lucas shows us how different genres can speak to one another and, if we listen carefully, to us, too.

Moving beyond the facts of Lincoln's remarkable life and times—subjects of the earlier writing in the course—this assignment asks students to trace the ways that later generations have used Lincoln's legacy. Lucas's discoveries in Mugar Library of several musical scores from the twentieth century initiated a deeper examination of the historical issues that prompted these compositions and their relevance to Lincoln's speeches and writings. By analyzing and comparing works of Charles Ives, Aaron Copland, and Vincent Persichetti, Lucas's essay argues that these composers at critical moments in history used Lincoln in musical forms to demonstrate a shared ideal of American democracy.

One important virtue to recognize in this essay is its deft command of the language for analyzing music. Even for those who may not be music scholars, Lucas's clear explanations of musical examples allow readers to follow his points of comparison. Finally, this writing demonstrates that a student's passion in one field can certainly be applied to another—as long as the student is willing to take a risk and to use their imagination.

David Shawn
WR 100: Lincoln & His Legacy

# FROM THE WRITER

Ever since I made the decision to pursue a career in music, I have done everything I can to immerse myself in every aspect of it, from performance to research. So, when I hit a dead-end with my initial plans to write an essay on the similarities between Presidents Obama and Lincoln, I turned to what I knew best. I went to Mugar at 10 p.m. on a Sunday night and pulled every music score I could find that had something to do with Abraham Lincoln. The variety of viewpoints, interpretations, and formats that these pieces held was an inspiring look into how Abraham Lincoln's legacy was interpreted musically throughout the twentieth century.

**LUCAS LAVOIE** is a rising sophomore in the College of Fine Arts, studying clarinet performance and music education. He was raised in Las Vegas, Nevada, and spent his childhood enjoying music, video games, and all the natural wonders the Southwestern desert has to offer. He would like to thank Professor Shawn for his encouragement and support on this topic, his middle and high school band directors Mr. Robinson, Mr. Irish, Mr. Seaton, and Dr. Messier for sending him down this path, and Mugar Library for their valuable collection of scores and books.

# A HARMONIC HISTORY

The popular image of a composer is that of a person who, above all else, reaches for a pure musical aesthetic. However, that is at odds with what composers throughout history have experienced. As times have grown tumultuous, composers have often felt the need to express the unrest around them through their music, and American composers are no different. Throughout the 20th century, as America defined itself to the world, its composers increasingly looked to their pasts in order to express what they wished for the future. Three leading composers—Charles Ives, Aaron Copland, and Vincent Persichetti—all saw Abraham Lincoln as the perfect vehicle through which they could express their goals. Using his rhetoric and legacy of freedom, democracy, and perseverance, these composers combined his ideas with their own musical techniques in order to construct a powerful political message, while also defining what it means to be an American.

Charles Ives is considered one of the first truly American composers. Growing up in New England, he retained close ties with abolitionist values of freedom and equality, passed down by his parents and grandparents, as well as transcendentalist values of faith in the inherent goodness of all people. As he grew, both as a person and a composer, Ives increasingly found himself drawn to the progressivism that blossomed in the early 20th century. He even became engaged in direct political action, drafting proposals for national referendums and advocating for a direct democracy. In 1912, at the height of these political ambitions, he wrote three pieces to attempt to illustrate what he saw as key tenets of a progressive democratic future, one of them titled *Lincoln, the Great Commoner.*

*Lincoln, the Great Commoner* is a setting of a poem by Edwin Markham titled "Lincoln, Man of the People." The poem is a dramatization of Lincoln's life, setting him up as a humble figure with a prophetic destiny. Ives, however, focuses on the last two stanzas of the poem, which detail Lincoln's dedication, conscience, and relationship to the people, all of which Ives greatly admired and felt were essential to a functional democracy. In an attempt to tie these aspects of Lincoln's life to the broader idea of what it means to be an American, Ives uses liberal quotations of numerous patriotic folk songs. *Battle Hymn of the Republic* plays a central thematic role, showing up only twice: as the piece begins and as the vocalist sings of Lincoln's death. Both *My Country, 'Tis of Thee* and *Hail, Columbia!* also appear numerous times, as do snippets of other pieces such as *The Star Spangled Banner* and *Columbia, Gem of the Ocean,* which are often altered to the point where they are almost difficult to hear. None of these quotations are meant to convey their specific meanings to the piece; rather, they are meant to give the entire setting a general patriotic air. Doing so ties this story of Lincoln to a broader American ideal, which is essential in order to accomplish Ives' message.

One of the most essential parts to conveying a message through music is constructing a convincing story, and Ives accomplishes this by employing many compositional techniques. From the beginning, he avoids establishing any specific key center, leaving the listener to concentrate on the words or the musical quotations he uses instead of the chordal development. The tonality of the piece does not appear until the vocalist sings "The conscience testing every stroke, to make his deed

the measure of the man…" This musical feeling of finally reaching stability makes this idea of Lincoln's conscience a notable moment in the music. As Ives continues and begins to approach the musical climax, the rhythmic patterns he employs in the beginning slow down as the chords he uses become heavier and heavier, pulling the listener into the piece. Finally, as he approaches the line "…wrenching rafters from their ancient hold," the accompaniment moves into tonal clusters, which Ives marks "Play with fists."
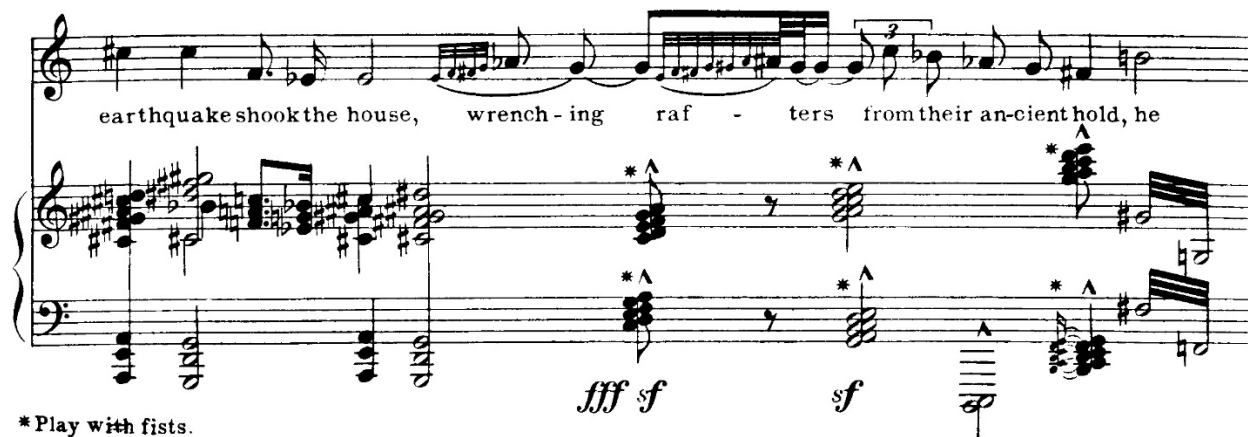


Fig. 1: Charles Ives, *Lincoln, the Great Commoner*, Peer International Corporation, 1952, p. 23.

These themes would continue to find expressive outlets as the American symphonic soundscape found one of its leading voices in Aaron Copland. Copland had been composing since fifteen, and his location within Brooklyn allowed him close connections with all the major musical stars of the time. At first, his style was defined by many earlier American composers, including Ives. However, he later studied under Nadia Boulanger in Paris, perhaps the most influential music teacher of all time. She encouraged his explorations into new harmonic techniques being explored in Europe, while also pushing him to embrace his American upbringing instead of focusing on the European classical tradition. After returning to America, both of these influences can be seen. Just as Ives did, he trafficked heavily in American folk songs, complex rhythms, and at times unusual dissonance. However, he also developed his own signature techniques in accordance with Boulanger's teachings, such as his sparse orchestration and rhythmic syncopations. This avant-garde (and at the time quite outrageous) technique works to establish the "earthquake" of the Civil War as both the most chaotic part of the poem but also the climax of Lincoln's life. From here, Ives returns to slow chordal development, eventually arriving at a final chord that spans four octaves. A final technique employed, a fortississimo downbeat paired with a pianissimo second beat which fades into nothingness, is a fitting ending, given Lincoln's violent yet fateful demise. All of these techniques work towards heightening the drama of Lincoln's life as well as drawing the listener into the text. In doing so, Ives hopes to convey that Lincoln is a politician to be looked up to, and his traits of perseverance, good conscience, and public relationship should be that which all Americans work to make commonplace.

A week after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the subsequent entrance of America into World War II, New York Philharmonic conductor André Kostelanetz sent a commission to Copland for a "musical portrait gallery of great Americans," in Copland's case specifically a great

American statesman. In his memoir, Copland states that "Lincoln seemed inevitable" (143). However, his colleague and fellow commissionee Virgil Thomson warned "no composer could hope to match in musical terms the stature of so eminent a figure as Abraham Lincoln" (143). Copland also had his own doubts about the commission, admitting that, "I had no great love for musical portraiture, and I was skeptical about expressing patriotism in music—it is difficult to achieve without becoming maudlin or bombastic, or both" (144). In order to avoid all of these pitfalls, Copland opted not to write in a purely musical language, instead choosing to utilize a narrator to read Lincoln's own words during the piece. He settled on passages from the seventh Lincoln-Douglas debate, Lincoln's second annual message to Congress, the closing passage of the Gettysburg Address, and a short writing commonly referred to as *Definition of Democracy*, which was in the possession of Mrs. Lincoln. In selecting these passages, Copland remarked that, "I avoided the temptation to quote only well-known passages, permitting myself the luxury of only one from a world-famous speech." (144). These strategies ensure that Lincoln's words remain the focal point of the piece, holding their meaning up as more important than the music. Copland, freed from these constraints, is free to write in a more conventional style, dropping overt patriotic techniques in favor of those that will serve to emphasize Lincoln's words.

The piece opens in signature Copland style, with a rolling theme based on *Springfield Mountain* moving throughout the orchestra, slowly developing over ambient chords. After reaching its height, the section winds down into solo trumpet before abruptly entering the second section, a flying allegro. Here, Copland bases his next theme on *Camptown Races*. In Copland's mind, it was, "an attempt to sketch in the background of the colorful times in which Lincoln lived." Copland is working firmly within Ives' tradition, utilizing folk songs to build a story through his music and thus draw the listener in. As this second theme is fully realized and the orchestra comes to a plodding stop, the narrator enters and the third section begins. In order for the narration to be heard, Copland scores sparsely throughout; often times only a single instrument or section is playing while the narrator speaks.



Fig. 2: Aaron Copland, *Lincoln Portrait*, Boosey and Hawkes, 1942, p. 38–39.

Using Lincoln's words, Copland is able to effect a two-way exchange between his music and the American political canon. Every excerpt that Copland chooses has one ideal in common: democracy. In his annual message to Congress, Lincoln is asking that those gathered there "think anew and act anew" (Lincoln 364) and that they work together in ending the Civil War. In his argument from the seventh Lincoln-Douglas debate, he is calling slavery the "same tyrannical principle" (193) as the monarchal rule that earlier Americans rejected. In the Gettysburg Address he is explicitly calling for a "government of the people, by the people, and for the people" (405). These excerpts were essential to Copland's goal: to inspire his fellow citizens for the upcoming fight against totalitarianism, justified through their shared goal of democracy.When the narrator and

orchestra are performing simultaneously, Copland is always careful to keep dynamics low and always relegates themes to solo instruments. In this way, he is conscious that the narrator be heard over the orchestra, allowing his message to be epitomized through Lincoln's words. This multi-step plan of first drawing the audience in through his music and then giving them Lincoln's message is crucial to keeping Lincoln as the focal point of the piece, while also allowing Copland to compose a work that musically connects to his audience.

Around the same time that Copland was advancing this new idea of an "American sound," teacher and composer Vincent Persichetti was starting to make his mark on the American music scene. He grew up in Philadelphia among the musicians of his era, much in the same way that Copland had. However, unlike Copland, he did not have a European compositional training. As such, he was heavily influenced only by the popular composers of his youth such as Stravinsky, Bartók, Hindemith, and especially Copland. Following their techniques, his music is often characterized by sharp melodic lines, a lack of tonality, and sparse orchestration, much in the same vein as Copland.

Persichetti may have been relegated to remain a cult favorite among band and choral directors were it not for a piece he was commissioned to write in December of 1972, titled *A Lincoln Address.* The Philadelphia Orchestra had been commissioned to play for the second inauguration of Richard Nixon, and their conductor Eugene Ormandy had recommended they program a work by Persichetti. It was requested that he set Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address to music, to be read by the actor Charlton Heston. At the time, there was some incredulity; in his bio-bibliography, it is reported that "despite insinuations to the contrary, Persichetti insisted that the choice of texts was not his" (Patterson 17). Looking back at it, we now understand why some were worried: Nixon's second inauguration would mark the eighth year of American involvement in the broadly unpopular Vietnam War; Lincoln's second inaugural is a general prayer that "this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away" (Lincoln 450). However, despite his doubts, Persichetti finished the work in only two weeks, utilizing themes that he had been in the process of developing.

Musically, the piece is rather unremarkable, tending to stay within established traditions. The piece is similar to many of Persichetti's other works in more than just its themes, playing off of the shifting tonalities and uneasy atmosphere that he loves. It also utilizes many of Copland's techniques, such as selective ensemble orchestration and solos during the narration. However, what is most notable about this piece is how Persichetti chooses the lines for the narration. Working within Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, Persichetti carefully edits it down to its most essential parts, removing elaborations on slavery and the war in order to focus on Lincoln's message of peace after a brutal war. Lincoln's original words are not altered in any way, rearranged, or rephrased. However, Persichetti did add one word to the speech, at the very end. As the orchestra dies into silence, the narrator repeats Lincoln's final word: "Peace."
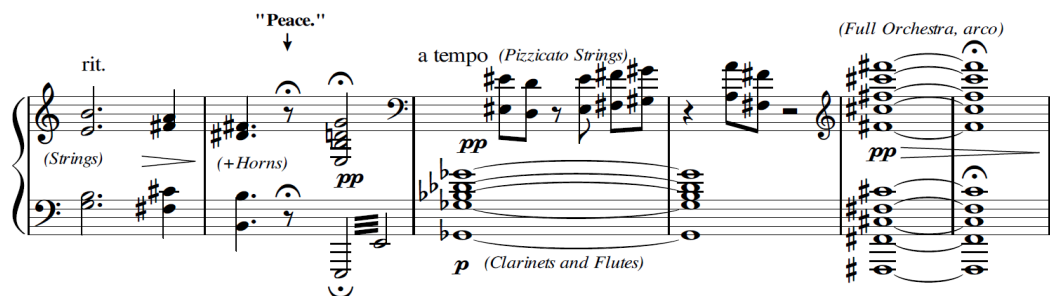
Fig. 3: Vincent Persichetti, *A Lincoln Address*, Elkan-Vogel, Inc., 1973, p. 35.

The scandal resulting from Persichetti's selective editing is perhaps the only reason this piece gained popularity. Initially after submitting the work, Persichetti told the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* the following:

> I started getting a lot of phone calls from inaugural committee members, asking me to delete certain laines [sic]. Although I'm completely against what's going on in Vietnam, I agreed to the deletions. … I agreed to cut out a line that goes something like, 'insurgent agents in the city seeking to destroy it without war.' These aides were very sensitive to lines like these. (17)

However, after receiving more requests for deletions, Persichetti said no. In his bio-bibliography, Persichetti tells author Donald Patterson that his "conscience rebelled," and he refused to cut anything further (17). Then, just ten days before the piece was to be performed, he received word that it had been removed from the program. The concert ended up proceeding with a hastily arranged work called *Heritage of Freedom*, a setting of the Declaration of Independence, replacing Persichetti's work. The committee also ended up concluding the concert with Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, a work notable for its use of a military cannon as a percussion instrument. Needless to say, a great many people were outraged. Persichetti was interviewed and ended up on the front page of newspapers across the country, including the *New York Times*. Conductors of orchestras across the nation were clamoring to perform *A Lincoln Address*.

Upon first inspection, one might think that comparing these composers is ill advised; their musical techniques seem to range widely and their political ambitions are equally varied. However, when looking at the larger context, one sees a different picture. These composers all rest firmly within an American symphonic tradition, running from Ives all the way to the modern day. Ives' use of folk songs as well as his story-telling ability was a major factor in Copland's upbringing within the music scene. Similarly, Copland's orchestration techniques and harmonic language would go on to become the backbone of the "American sound" that Persichetti was keenly tuned into. Though these pieces might sound different on the surface, the musical language used within them is very much part of a long heritage, one which continues to this day. Furthermore, though on the surface they seem disconnected, their political goals all share a common thread. The progressive movement that Ives wrote his pieces for would remake American democracy, forging a strong national sense of pride in our form of government. This pride would in turn serve as the justification for entering WWII, in opposition to the totalitarianism that threatened all that America held dear. Copland here is careful to focus on this ideal, rather than giving in to blind patriotism. These progressive tendencies would finally manifest themselves in the anti-war movement, this time opposing the government as it used the threat of totalitarianism to wage an unjust war upon Vietnam.

Besides their political goals, analyzing these three examples gives one an idea of the importance that Lincoln holds within American culture. Lincoln is consistently idealized as one of America's greatest figures, a man who guided the country through one of its most despairing moments into a brighter future. By using Lincoln as a catalyst for their works, these three composers are furthering those ideas, and building upon their own. By integrating him into their works, they are arguing that Lincoln's words are as important in their present as they were in Lincoln's day, whether they be in service of the fight for progressivism, the fight for democracy, or the struggle to end war. Their compositions add to and progress that image, placing Lincoln within a context of folk tunes, soaring melodies, and despairing chords. This process is a means by which these composers have built a musical legacy for generations, enshrined in both our musical past and our fight for a better future.

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# FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

In her paper "The Importance of Place in Contemporary Irish Photograph: Krass Clement and 'Drum'" Claire Rich interweaves analysis of visual exhibits that establish an Irish context with acknowledgment and response that effectively connects her readings to several relevant larger questions about place, photography, and art history. The paper provides an example of how students can pursue areas of great personal interest and join complex, intellectual conversations through just a small amount of meticulously selected sources.

In addition to her passion for art and art history, Claire's earlier work in this course, "Irish Imagination Now," prepared her to write this final paper. Students in the course choose three Irish cultural events to attend during the semester from a menu of over twenty options. Although students also work with textual sources, their experiences at concerts, art exhibitions, lectures, poetry and fiction readings, plays, and other events offer diverse opportunities for multi-sensory inspiration and multi-modal writing.

The ephemerality of live events demands careful attention, so writing about these experiences in her first two papers sharpened Claire's ability to absorb and choose details in her final paper. Exploring this series of photographs compellingly demanded that Claire precisely balance a focus on subtle elements in individual pictures with analysis on broader and deeper motifs that the collection expresses as a whole. Crafting the argument that she wanted to make also meant that she had to place this work of art carefully in the context of discourses about place, contemporary photography, and more wide-ranging theories about visual aesthetics. Finally, Claire managed to acknowledge and respond to key interpretations of the photographs while carving out a niche for her analysis of the images and her interpretation of the role the piece plays in contemporary photography.

Holly Schaaf
WR 100: Irish Imagination Now

# FROM THE WRITER

As the child of nomadic parents, I have had a wealth of experience concerning place, both as a visitor and calling a new place home. Being an artist myself, I am continually inspired by place, as my work is largely dominated by landscape paintings and travel photography. Seeing my own experiences and feelings reflected in my work and buying into the tradition of the capture of place, I wanted to show the importance of place as not just a method of documentation, but instead part of a deeper artistic sentiment, one that was infinitely more powerful than merely a picturesque landscape. Already being a fan of Clement's early, somber work, I was inspired to combine how he came to create this powerful series and how he pushed the envelope of photography, helping to showcase it as a valid method of revealing emotion and deeper meaning.

**CLAIRE RICH** is a rising sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences pursuing a major in Art History. In addition to her passion for Art History, she is pursuing a double minor in Visual Arts and Arts Leadership in the College of Fine Arts, with hopes of curating after graduating. Claire grew up all across the Midwest but has come to call Chicago home. She would like to profusely thank Professor Holly Schaaf for her dedication in helping her improve as a writer, reigniting her love for her Irish heritage, and for submitting this essay on her behalf. She would also like to acknowledge the support of her parents in encouraging her to follow her passions at BU, bringing her to write this essay.

CLAIRE RICH

# THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE IN CONTEMPORARY IRISH PHOTOGRAPHY: KRASS CLEMENT AND "DRUM"

While photography gained momentum as early as the late 19th century across the European continent, it did not become popular in Ireland for many more decades. After the 1970s, however, photography gained much-anticipated recognition and was used in the same manner as modernist paintings, as a vehicle for interpretation and a representation of conceptual thought (Carpenter 355). In his article "Photography: Representing the Present," Ian Jeffrey claims that "time has always been photography's particular subject" (55). In regard to time, photography can create "cruel clarity" (55) and is capable of representing the present without the softening that old painting masters could employ. This brutal, open honesty is explored and challenged in the works of Krass Clement, a forerunner in the contemporary photography movement of the time. In particular, his series "Drum" pursues "the exploration of place as a reflection of the inner psyche" (Clement). Through the analysis of Clement's work in conversation with art historian Rune Gade, a potential deeper understanding of the images can emerge. Building on the tradition of place intimacy in the Irish mindscape, Clement's work introduces a new twist on the contemporary photography movement as he adds the importance of place to the already established importance of time. Through this use of location in his series "Drum," Clement is able to simultaneously challenge and encompass the tradition of contemporary Irish photography by redefining how place can be more than physical location and is capable of also capturing the inner psyche.

Ireland was slow to come around to the idea of photography's importance. When compared to the rest of the world, the number of photographic exhibitions and galleries in Ireland devoted to photography were much, much smaller until later decades (Carpenter 355). The first photographs to gain popularity in Ireland were documents of the landscape, as "the exotic nature of Irish life attracted photographers from abroad" (357). Photographers came from both England and from the European continent to capture the mystery of the Irish landscape. This straight documentation of place was the precursor to other forms of photography in Ireland, as the early landscapes were followed by documentary projects and later, conceptual images. Artists went from documenting land and place to a "visual archive of life recorded by the communities themselves" (358). One result was the abandoning of idealistic, romantic views of the Irish landscape and the acknowledgement of sad realities like depopulation and emigration. Still depicting place, these new images drew attention to larger, more important ideas about the people within the place they were representing, marking the transition away from aesthetics to documentation.

Although the clichéd meaning of photographs is to capture a moment in time, that moment is meaningless in Clement's series "Drum: A Place in Ireland" without the contexts of Ireland and the city of Drum. In his article, Jeffrey argues that time is what is truly captured in photographs. Claiming that "[it] has always been photography's particular subject" (55), Jeffrey does not take into account the importance of setting and place in photographs. Clement's work not only captures Drum at a particular time but also captures the location, which becomes essential to his series.

Beginning with distant shots of Ireland as Clement travels, and continuing with almost haunting, foggy landscapes of power lines among small traditional homes in the distance, Clement sets the scene for the story he tells of this location. Clement's trip to Drum was in 1990, but the time period is not discernable or important to the message sent through his series. The only obvious signs of modernity through these images are the presence of power lines and dim electricity in the bar, which does not accurately represent the standard of innovation present in 1990. Even the manner in which the men are dressed allows the period to remain ambiguous. The ignorance of time makes these images appear both old and new and allows the wide net of time to make the setting and location of these images infinitely more important than the period they were trying to capture. Time is an important aspect of documentary photography, but the more conceptual nature of contemporary photography does not make it an essential aspect. "Drum" is a reflection of how time can be almost completely irrelevant to a series of photographs, and how it is possible to create contemporary work without documenting a particular time. In this manner, Clement challenges the ideas of photography as he moves forward into more conceptual work that transcends time.

Clement's series is a combination of extremely complex artistic decisions that retains specificity yet remains ambiguous through its title and its central figure of the old man. As Jeffrey points out, an entire premise of photography and more specifically contemporary photography is that "the medium both encourages and resists interpretation" (56). The idea of place is both specific and vague through Clement's work, and that dichotomy is reflected in the narrow title of "Drum" and the nonspecific nature of the subtitle, "A Place in Ireland." Through this titling, Clement leaves room for interpretation and encourages the audience to wonder what place he is truly trying to capture. Clement uses a similar approach when capturing the figure of the old man. Remaining anonymous, this figure dominates the series as he sits by himself amidst his peers drinking a tall beer. Hunched over and with a worn, deeply lined face, this man appears to be a personification of both the dingy bar and the lonely, foggy town of Drum. The man has extremely unique features with his large nose and multitude of freckles, yet despite this extremely specific documentation of the old man, the viewer may well be left wondering who he truly is and what brought him to the bar that night. The artistic decision to include a combination of specificity and ambiguity that was present in the title and subtitle combination is once again found here in the star of the series, as the old man is a similarly curious fusion of specifics and unanswered questions. Just as the viewer is left to question the story of the old man and who he is, the place referred to in the series' subtitle remains unclear, leaving room for viewers to take away the opinions they choose.
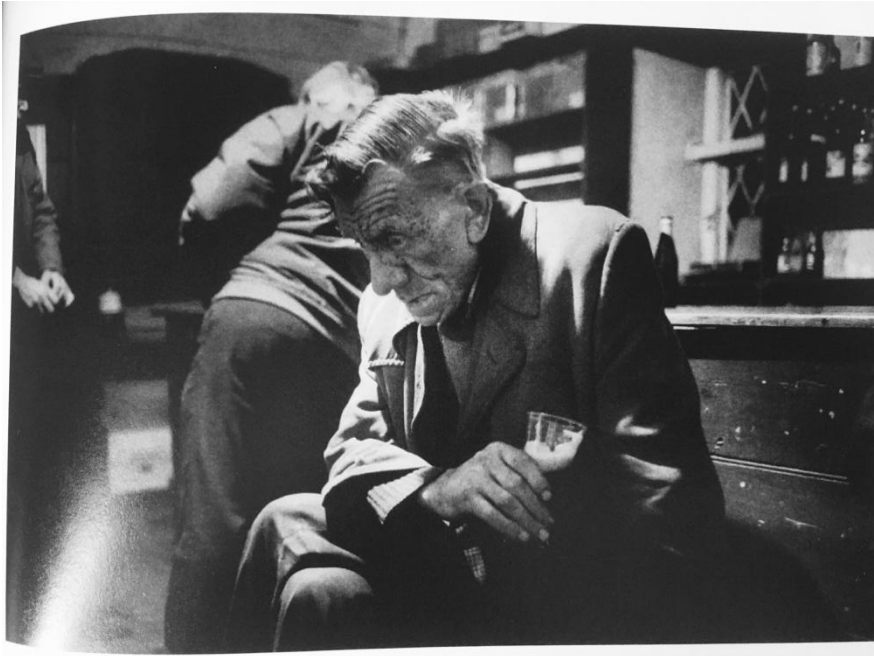
Figure 1: Image 51, Plate 27, Krass Clement, "Drum"

Clement's title and use of the old man are reminiscent of the early aesthetic images coming out of Ireland in previous years; however, as Clement challenges previous generations of photography and develops documentary goals, he moves beyond mere physical capture and begins to document the emotion tied to this specific location. It is not the medium of photography that allows Clement's work to be or not to be interpreted, but the decisions that Clement is making as an artist. As paintings or sculptures can be entirely literal or allow for more interpretations, photographs have a range of interpretative possibilities as well. It is the artist that decides to leave ambiguity and room for interpretation. Gade builds on this idea of multi-meaning by saying that the images "locate the entire suite of photographs in a symbolic and mythological space rather than a real one" (4). However, just because Clement is documenting place through the lens of the people he interacts with does not make his documentation of Drum any less real. In the manner of documentary photography, Clement aims to capture the essence of a place, and in this case, a true, specific location. In his artist statement, Clement comments on his goal to document "place as a reflection of the inner psyche" (Clement). Using the inner psyche to add an extra layer of emotional meaning and a twist of conceptual photography, Clement captures a real space, even though the characters he chooses to star in his series allow the photos to transcend place at times. While these moments showcase a more symbolic space, the series as a whole remains deeply rooted in the physical location of Ireland, which is shown through the sweeping landscapes that open his series. Through his artistic vision and decision-making, Clement expands the meaning of documentation and place as well as challenges accepted norms for the medium of photography.

While Clement's emotions shaped his choices for the specific images he captured of this place, this place is also the necessary foundation for the development of his inner feelings of solitude and melancholy. His journey to the rainy, cold country of Ireland and decision to wander into the quaint, dingy bar that dominate his series resemble a reflection of his inner psyche. When explaining his editorial process to his graphic designer Austin Grandjean, Clement says that making this series "felt like making a kind of self-portrait, documenting my own isolation…This was February or March and it was raining all the time…It was a natural choice for me to select pictures that resonated with my own experience there" (Gade 6). Using place as a tool for expression, Clement documents not only the story of the anonymous old man and the city of Drum, but also himself. He

finds shared thoughts and emotions through his choices in location and character, finding a unity within feelings of community, distance, and loneliness. Through this self-integration, Clement creates a series that is brutally honest, although, arguably, not with the "cruel clarity" Jeffrey claims photography creates (55). Through multiple layers of meaning, Clement's series is arguably anything but clear, even though the visceral nature of the old man in particular creates a clear picture of certain aspects of Drum.



Figure 2: Image 11, Plate 7, Krass Clement, "Drum"

Clement's artistic decisions intentionally cloud the meaning of his work by not only representing solitude and sadness, but also the camaraderie among groups of men. While the majority of the series resonates with the melancholy it appears Clement himself was feeling, these images are intermixed with groups of men having a seemingly good time, talking and smiling. While in ways it makes the star of the series – the sad, weathered, old man – appear even lonelier, it also creates a more complex vision of this particular place. Through this added complexity, Clement shows that places are never one dimensional, but are instead composites of multiple feelings and thoughts. Places are never simple enough to be showcased by one aspect but must be captured in more complex ways, as Clement does over the course of his series. While there is a certain dejected air about the place, there is also a particular sense of community among the members of this location.

Figure 3: Image 35, Plate 19, Krass Clement, "Drum"


Figure 4: Image 62, Plate 33, Krass Clement, "Drum"

Through this use of ambiguity in contrast to clarity, Clement once again challenges the purpose and definition of contemporary photography. Contemporary photography, as a whole, was centered around the idea of removing the tradition of previous generations of photographers. It was about reducing documentation and increasing conceptual thought, reducing staged portraiture and increasing the use of humanity to portray a certain emotion to send a certain message. While Clement self-defines as a documentary photographer, his inability to remain distant from his works and refusal to portray his ideas complicates that label. As he becomes more integrated and involved with the representation of both himself and the city of Drum, Clement displays the importance of place and the emotions tied to it.

Clement's work challenges both the tradition of photography and the ever-changing concept of contemporary work. Blurring the lines between documentary photography and conceptual photography and the established purpose of these types of photography, Clement captures a unique emotional location. Place, while being interpreted literally and figuratively, almost always remains ambiguous, but its presence is essential to the intrigue that draws the viewer into Clement's series. These strange combinations of specificity and ambiguity draw viewers into Clement's stories, leaving us to question the story of the people and places he captures. Decades after travelling to Drum with a cheap camera and only two rolls of film, Clement's work is still being analyzed and looked at by new generations of art historians, showing that the curiosity around these images remains. Questions about the meaning of the old man and the choice to enter this particular bar and use his rolls of film in this specific way are just some of the easy questions to ask. There are also harder questions such as what is the true meaning of place and how does one ever truly capture a location. But, just as viewers may never know the real identity of the old man, we will never have all of our questions about specific places answered, perhaps until we capture the places for themselves.

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# FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

This essay, the capstone for WR 100, asked students to weigh in on a debate currently confronting U.S. Indigenous communities. In her essay, Danielle Slawny chose the rich topic of casinos run by tribal communities. She researched and analyzed the arguments on both sides before presenting her own nuanced—and yet clear and powerful—point of view.

One of the things I like best about Danielle's essay is the way she threads the case study of the Seneca Nation throughout her essay: it gives unity to an essay that is chock-full of data on a wide range of subtopics. And yet, Danielle doesn't let this approach become too rigid; she draws on examples from communities in New Mexico and Wisconsin to amplify and broaden her argument, and as a result, her use of the case study feels natural and unforced. It was a pleasure to think alongside Danielle throughout the drafting process, and her essay's elegant prose and engaging, complicated ideas make it a pleasure to read again now, many months later.

Marie McDonough
WR 100: Indigenous Culture and Politics of Resistance

After a semester of reading articles and watching documentaries, the WR 100 class "Indigenous Cultures and the Politics of Resistance" left me with the understanding of how the U.S. government attempted to erase, silence, and exploit Indigenous peoples, as well as other subsequent shortcomings of U.S. government policies. While researching Native American gaming communities, I discovered that these policies have long-term consequences that influence the effectiveness of gaming as a tool to revitalize Indigenous communities; there is a web of subtle hardships plaguing Indigenous communities that must be considered when Native American tribes introduce casinos as an economic tool.

**DANIELLE SLAWNY** is a rising sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences majoring in political science and minoring in statistics. She was born and raised in Madison, Wisconsin. She would like to thank Dr. Marie McDonough for her support and insight when writing and revising this essay.

DANIELLE SLAWNY

## TAKING A GAMBLE: CONSIDERING POTENTIAL PROBLEMS
## AND EFFECTS ON INDIGENOUS GAMING COMMUNITIES

In 2002, the Seneca Nation united to open their first casino, pushing back community fears about degrading Native culture, risking tribal tensions, and eroding healthy lifestyles in favor of pursuing profit opportunities for the tribe. Their motivations mirror those of many Native American communities today: tribes often face enormous obstacles to economic and social success, including high rates of poverty, domestic abuse, drug abuse, and exploitation. In this light, legalized gaming on reservations seems like one potentially lucrative source of income. The story of the Seneca Nation, with their eventual financial success and their subsequent community problems, illuminates the nature of the relationship between Native Americans and casinos: although gaming is believed to help Indigenous communities prosper economically, few tribes have dramatically improved in economic status by using casinos, while most remained at or near the same economic level (Riley). This economic plateau exists because without considering cultural and social obstacles, Indigenous communities continue to face a poverty crisis even with the addition of casinos to their economies. While Native American gaming has the potential to help tribes on a monumental scale, urging greater regulation and consideration for potential cultural and social problems is necessary to make gaming a truly viable long-term solution.

Native American communities view casinos as promising with regard to eventual profits and other economic gains. After studying tribes in New Mexico, Thaddieus Conner and William Taggart conclude in their essay "The Impact of Gaming on the Indian Nations in New Mexico" that casinos have overall lowered unemployment, created consumption, and encouraged development for many Native tribes. In comparing data taken from 1990 and 2000, Conner and Taggart found that in gaming communities, the decrease in unemployment was 3.22%, while in non-gaming communities, unemployment decreased only 1.57% (58). In this way, the quality of life available to Indigenous peoples increased due to the introduction of casinos and gaming. Specifically in the Seneca Nation, Naomi Riley reports in "The New Trail of Tears: How Washington Is Destroying American Indians," casinos have produced $1 billion since 2002, with the average annuity to adults standing at about $8,000 every quarter, plus a $30,000 payout for children when they graduate high school (Riley). With the introduction of gaming, the financial assets of tribes and tribal communities increased in a way previously unattainable. This massive potential for economic gain has obviously proved extremely attractive to many Native American communities, who are often strapped for cash and consider financial need as a key barrier to tribal success. Critically, however, Native American communities often face enormous hurdles in successfully translating gaming's profit potential into poverty reduction and a better community.

For one, Katherine Spilde and Jonathan Taylor note that there are often rampant tensions between tribes and state governments in terms of regulating casinos (25-26). States can believe that gaming activity on reservations detracts from economic activity in surrounding regions—by shifting the consumption onto reservation land—thus decreasing the economic activity taxable by the state

(Spilde and Taylor). To address these tensions, the federal government passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) in 1988, which upheld tribal autonomy with regard to gambling and made tribes answerable only to the federal government but encouraged the development of contracts between state and tribal governments to implement casino-style gaming on reservation land. These contract negotiations and the tensions between states and tribes sometimes pose a critical challenge for Native American communities because they have led to state encroachment on tribal sovereignty, lack of political capital for programs to address Indigenous issues, and discrimination toward Native American tribes. For example, Wisconsin tribes clashed with Governor Tommy Thompson during contract negotiations in 1996 when Thompson forced tribes to pay annual fees for their hunting and fishing rights, eroding tribal privileges and degrading the tribe's political power (Rausch 426). Spilde and Taylor, however, clarify that this tension need not exist, because under their investigations state revenue and economic activity have increased in the long-term after gaming development; what's more, they find that IGRA regulatory frameworks help encourage investment in casinos because they make the legality surrounding them more predictable (26-28). In this way, successful implementation of gaming continues to require states and tribes to work together to reach mutual understanding and implement casinos in a way that encourages economic activity for both parties.

Even in cases of highly successful tribe-state negotiations, however, many casinos in Indigenous communities fail due to market conditions, lack of local demand, or poor management, which wastes the valuable money that the tribe invested. In particular, poor management of casinos often leads to disastrous consequences for tribal finances. James Schaap argues that while some tribes rush to capitalize on gaming because of the high nation-wide demand, many times these tribes neglect to properly adapt their expectations to the economic conditions of the immediate area and fail to have a successful long-term marketing and management strategy (378). The location of many tribes in rural, economically underdeveloped areas often makes reservation casinos inaccessible to mass consumers; many successful casinos are found in or near metropolitan areas. Finally, even successful casinos can fail to impact their community based on the success or failure of the payout structures for each tribe, which can either generate growth and infrastructure investment or merely band-aid poverty, lack of education, lack of jobs, and drug addictions. In the case of the Seneca Nation, the tribe implemented a payout structure for their casinos; unfortunately, because of the lack of structural and educational support for Native youth, many tribal members often had no financial literacy and thus could not fully benefit from the money. Specifically, youth would often spend their money on big purchases all at once without considering the long-term implications, or fail to properly budget and sustain their income, with the result that the casino payments left them more financially troubled than before (Riley). In this way, Native casinos are subject to a minefield of potential disasters, each of which can substantially harm the welfare of the tribe.

These underlying social and community obstacles are not to suggest, however, that gaming is doomed to failure as a scheme for Native American revitalization; instead, it is clear that more regulatory support from tribal, state, and federal governments is needed to correctly implement casino-style gaming. As in the case of IGRA negotiations, *all* stakeholders— including tribal community members—need to be involved in the process to create successful structures for profitable gaming. In the Seneca Nation, tribal leaders implemented a financial literacy program for young adults (Riley). Although the program is seeing mixed returns, as teenagers refuse to take it seriously at first, engaging them as stakeholders is critical for helping them navigate responsible and sustainable financial management. What's more, the Seneca Nation's casinos have encouraged those

tribal members with college degrees and specialized talents to stay on reservation land in involvement with the gaming management, slowly ending "brain drain" from Indigenous territories and encouraging professional class growth (Riley). By universalizing policies such as these, it can be possible for tribal citizens, tribal leaders, specialized professionals, and even state governments to come to mutually beneficial terms to spark infrastructure growth. The key is simply making sure that every stakeholder understands their responsibility in the process, so that the proceeds from casinos can benefit the community as a whole.

Making all stakeholders responsible for their part in the casino's success is a process more easily said than done, however. In particular, these stakeholders can only be engaged in a more meaningful way than currently unsuccessful attempts if the deep cultural attitudes towards community involvement in casinos are changed. As Lane Thompson observes in "Solving a Paradox of Indian Gaming: Cultural Solutions to Problem Gambling in Native American Communities," one root of current social problems surrounding casinos lies in the systematic failure in Native American communities to inform tribal members of the potential dangers of reservation gaming, including gambling addictions and increased drug traffic, which is critical for shaping the way tribe members see their role in the community (Thompson 358-362). A primary way to do this is by educating children at a young age on the separation of traditional tribal beliefs—such as folklore surrounding luck and spirit guidance—from practical wisdom in order to help avoid proclivity toward gambling and excessively wasteful spending of money (Thompson 363). Emphasizing financial responsibility and obligation to the community will teach children their role in the casino's success as well as in the larger tribe. Finally, adult stakeholders must be engaged in the solution as well through tangible changes to the management and payout structure of reservation gaming. Ensuring that community members not only share economic rewards from casinos but also the group responsibility of making the casino successful will allow previously negative attitudes to change and all community members to actively participate in the casino's success. If education outreach programs or community oversight boards composed of tribe members were to be implemented in response to the social problems that stem from casinos, it could be emphasized that a tribal member's responsibility doesn't end once they receive a gaming paycheck and that every tribe member's collective effort is needed to make the reservation a better place.

Therefore, consideration of gaming in Indigenous communities requires a multifaceted approach, taking into account a broad range of cultural, social, and political problems. Tribes must be prepared to engage all stakeholders in making reservation casinos a success, including non-tribal state actors who must agree to and benefit from the negotiated IGRA compact, tribal youth who must be given a sense of their financial and community responsibility in handling payouts, and the tribe's adults who need to be actively engaged in casino and community management. The Seneca Nation casino outlines exactly what issues may arise when gaming communities neglect necessary actions to ensure the success of the casino. Changing attitudes from being passive payout recipients to active tribal leaders, supporting each other, and working to make the casino a success will be no easy task. But all stakeholders must maintain an active and positive role in the gaming process if Indigenous tribes are ever to turn a casino's pure financial success into true improvements to the quality of life in Indigenous communities.

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# FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

In WR 150, "Climate Change: Science and Action," students grappled with the questions of how and whether our global society can mitigate and adapt to climate change. One of the greatest challenges of the course was for students to examine a real-world problem over which they as individuals have little control. It can be difficult to conceive of an original persuasive argument when you know from the outset that significant sociopolitical barriers stand in the way of implementation. While students weren't required to present possible solutions, many did. A number of these solutions, Gregory Bond's among them, were feasible, plausible, and expressed in a way the average educated adult could grasp without specialized knowledge.

Because of this accessibility, "Reforestation and Sustainable Investments" is more than a student's successful assignment: it also exemplifies some of the real-world applications of classroom writing skills. Furthermore, this essay illustrates the author's evolution, from a non-expert undergraduate student concerned about the topic and invested in learning more, to a knowledgeable science writer laying forth a fresh perspective on climate action.

Greg's essay is a model of the kind of simple, clear logic necessary to bridge the gap between scientific inquiry and public understanding. This piece makes a complex subject simple and comprehensible. Greg worked hard over the semester to reach the point where he understood the nature and breadth of the problem, could synthesize an original approach from multiple sources, and could lead the reader to see exactly why a multifaceted approach to global warming mitigation could be, and perhaps one day *will* be, effective at stabilizing atmospheric carbon dioxide levels.

Sasha Vivelo
WR 150: Climate Change: Science and Action

# FROM THE WRITER

Throughout my life, I have always had a passion for being environmentally friendly and for spreading environmental awareness to others. Thus, when my professor approached our class with our final assignment of the semester, I knew I wanted to spread awareness yet again, synthesizing articles from class as well as research about climate change I had completed on my own.

This paper is a culmination of my 1 a.m. brain blasts, consistent frustration, and endless excitement. Through this research process, I learned much more about the impact humans have on our planet, and the seemingly endless challenges that climate change creates. Despite these problems, however, my paper aims to showcase how humans can reverse these effects if we simply think a little differently.

**GREGORY BOND** is a sophomore in the College of Fine Arts studying Painting and Graphic Design. Born in Clarksburg, West Virginia, and raised in Walpole, Massachusetts, Gregory enjoys acting and singing within the Boston University community. In the future, he hopes to cultivate his artistic pursuits further. He would like to thank both Professor Lacey and Professor Vivelo for their constant support, guidance, and passion for teaching.

GREGORY BOND

# REFORESTATION AND SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENTS: EXPLORING SOLUTIONS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Imagine this scenario: a "tropical storm…[dumps] more than 20 inches of rain on Florida" (McKibben). At the same time, "the largest fire in New Mexico history [burns] on, and the most destructive fire in Colorado's annals [claims] 346 homes in Colorado Springs" (McKibben). Shortly after, "a heat wave across the Plains and Midwest [breaks] records that had stood since the Dust Bowl" (McKibben). No, this scene is not from another post-apocalyptic movie—it is from Bill McKibben's article "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math" and is a description of true events in present-day North America.

With these effects of climate change becoming more apparent every day, researchers, scientists, and climatologists alike are studying new methods to mitigate global warming before it destroys the planet. A handful of scientists—such as Shaun C. Cunningham from Deakin University in Victoria, Australia—believe that humanity already has the methods it needs to stop this imminent threat, through either reforestation efforts or sustainable investments. However, studies show that reforestation attempts on their own do not sequester enough carbon and do not last long enough to halt and reverse the effects of climate change. Similarly, in existing research, sustainable investments do not work fast enough or produce enough energy to reverse global warming. In addition, there are currently not enough resources to successfully execute policies to directly reduce man-made carbon emissions. However, instead of attempting to mitigate climate change through reforestation or sustainability separately, scientists should utilize the effects of a combination of reforestation efforts and sustainable investments in order to save the planet from further temperature increase, and furthermore, humankind. Individually, these reforestation and sustainability efforts are not strong enough to reverse climate change; however, when utilized together, these attempts may yield promising results.

Researchers believe that reforestation efforts could potentially mitigate the effects of climate change through carbon sequestration. In his 2014 study "Reforestation with Native Mixed-Species Plantings in a Temperate Continental Climate Effectively Sequesters and Stabilizes Carbon within Decades," Shaun C. Cunningham researched the ability of native mixed-species plantings to reverse biodiversity loss and sequester carbon in Victoria, Australia. Cunningham found that in a "medium rainfall area, native mixed-species plantings provide comparable rates of [carbon] sequestration to local production species, with the…additional benefit of providing better quality habitat for native biota" (Cunningham). Cunningham's results highlight how "using native-mixed species plantings is an effective alternative for carbon sequestration to standard monocultures of production species, [as]…they can effectively store carbon, convert carbon into stable pools, and provide greater benefits for biodiversity" (Cunningham). Through his study, Cunningham seems to find an effective route in creating a successful reforestation method while also sequestering carbon and providing habitat for native fauna. Thus, reforestation sites that model Cunningham's mixed-species sites should be able to sequester carbon from the atmosphere, effectively combating climate change.

However, these Australian reforestation sites are not lasting as long as researchers expect—in fact, they are shrinking relatively quickly. In his 2016 study "Models of Reforestation Productivity and Carbon Sequestration for Land Use and Climate Change Adaptation Planning in South Australia," Trevor J. Hobbs researched the productivity and carbon sequestration abilities of 264 reforestation sites in South Australia, similar to the location of Cunningham's study. Hobbs discovered an added layer within Cunningham's study: the ability of these mixed-species reforestation sites to mitigate climate change depends directly on the amount of rainfall in the area. For example, in a mixed-stratum (50% trees) area where annual rainfall is greater than 750 mm, there was a mean total carbon sequestration rate of around 43.79 ($CO_2$-e Mg ha$^{-1}$ year$^{-1}$) over 65 years (Hobbs). Alternatively, in a mixed-stratum area where the rainfall zone is only 251-350 mm per year, there was only about a mean total carbon sequestration rate of around 2.82 ($CO_2$-e Mg ha$^{-1}$ year$^{-1}$) over the 65-year span (Hobbs). In addition to this added layer, however, Hobbs discovered that the amount of plants in each reforestation area decreased over time, despite their ability to sequester carbon in high rainfall zones. In the same mixed-stratum area with a mean annual rainfall of 750 mm per year, the initial mean plant density was 2233 (plants ha$^{-1}$), but after 25 years, this density dropped to 1281 (plants ha$^{-1}$)—almost half the original amount (Hobbs). Therefore, although Cunningham's mixed-species reforestation areas hold promise in sequestering carbon effectively, Hobbs' study shows that these areas consistently shrink in size over time. Reforestation attempts are thus ineffective in mitigating climate change in the long run, as these areas shrink relatively quickly, proving unable to sequester carbon for long periods of time.

Alternatively, some researchers believe that sustainable investments—such as bioenergy plantations—could sequester enough atmospheric carbon to reverse the effects of climate change. In Julia Rosen's article "The Carbon Harvest," climate change scientist Naomi Vaughan from the University of East Anglia argues in favor of these bioenergy plantations. Vaughan states that in order "to limit warming, humanity…needs negative emissions technologies (NETs) that…would remove more $CO_2$ from the atmosphere than humans emit" (Rosen 734). These technologies, Vaughan states, "would [also] buy time for society to rein in carbon emissions" (Rosen 734). Rosen highlights one specific negative emissions technology, where the idea "is to cultivate fast-growing grasses and trees to suck $CO_2$ out of the atmosphere and then burn them…to generate energy" (Rosen 734). However, instead of "being released back into the atmosphere, the…carbon would be captured and pumped underground" (Rosen 734). This sustainable negative emissions technology holds promise—if successful, these fast-growing plants could sequester enough carbon to reverse the effects of carbon emissions.

Unfortunately, however, this specific negative emissions technology would require an abundance of resources that humanity may be unable to offer. For example, in order to remove "half of [the carbon that] humans have emitted since the…Industrial Revolution," the bioenergy crops would need an area "at least as large as India and possibly as big as Australia" (Rosen 735). Furthermore, "cutting down trees to make [this] new farmland…[would] release far more carbon into the atmosphere than bioenergy crops can sequester" (Rosen 737). Additionally, in order to "sequester 3.7 billion tons of $CO_2$," crops would "use almost as much water as is in Lake Michigan," and "many scenarios require that much carbon or more to be removed each year" (Rosen 736). Water is already "a scarce commodity in [places like] Montana, [where] irrigated crops are…the biggest consumer of [water]" (Rosen 736). Although these sustainable negative emissions technologies have potential, the sheer amount of resources required to execute these technologies makes them unrealistic, as creating these crops would release irreversible amounts of carbon in the

atmosphere, and maintaining the crops would use up large amounts of fresh water. This type of sustainable investment alone is thus not an effective route in mitigating climate change, as humanity is unable to provide the resources to successfully grow these crops.

Another sustainability effort that could possibly combat climate change is more obscure: creating policies on livestock rearing. In his study "Climate Change Mitigation Through Livestock System Transitions," researcher Petr Havlík found that approximately "30% of the global land area is used for livestock rearing, and expansion of the sector is a major driver of land-use change" (Havlík). For example, "between 1980 and 2000, 83% of agricultural land expansion in the tropics occurred at the expense of forests, and livestock were a major contributor" (Havlík). However, not only do these livestock contribute significantly to deforestation, but they also contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. Havlík states that "livestock contribute…80% of all agricultural non-$CO_2$ emissions, [making] them responsible for…12% of all anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions" (Havlík). With livestock contributing to both deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions, the solution seems simple: governments should create policies to curb the detrimental effects of livestock rearing. However, the livestock industry is essential to many governments, in addition to many peoples' diets, making any kind of policy difficult to execute. On the individual level, "livestock are the source of 33% of the protein in human diets," meaning that many people would have to find alternate sources of protein in their daily life if governments were to create livestock policies (Havlík). Furthermore, livestock "provide many…services such as traction, manure, risk management, and regular income" (Havlík). Because of the essentiality of the livestock industry, any sort of policy change would require the global cooperation of individuals as well as governments—a difficult task to achieve. Therefore, curbing livestock rearing is an unlikely solution to mitigating climate change, as these policies would require the cooperation of many on a global scale.

Alternatively, in order to combat climate change, some legislators have introduced policies to reduce man-made carbon emissions. For example, in the article "The 80% Solution: Radical Carbon Emissions Cuts for California," Jane Long states that "in 2005, the governor of California issued an executive order requiring the state to reduce its CO2 emissions to 80% below the 1990 level by 2050" (Long). This order consists of four steps, which include "[decreasing] the demand for fuel, [increasing] the demand for electricity, [and using] low-carbon biofuels" (Long). Long also discusses possible measures that could make technology much more efficient, such as "[demolishing] or [retrofitting]…current buildings to much higher efficiency standards, [creating] new buildings…to much higher efficiency standards, [and developing] automobiles…to average over 70 miles per gallon" (Long). Through this government policy, legislators hope to reduce the amount of carbon emissions that humans produce. If these steps to reduce man-made atmospheric carbon are successful, legislative policies could possibly result in cleaner forms of fuel, thus mitigating the effects of climate change.

However, according to current expectations, there is neither enough time nor enough resources readily available to complete this California policy's emission reduction goal by 2050. Jane Long addresses this problem in her study, stating that California "is expected to be able to produce or import enough biofuels to meet only about half of its requirement for fuel" (Long). Unfortunately, if this expectation is accurate, "the remaining [fuel] demand would…be met with fossil fuel, which would generate emissions that would total about twice the state target" for 2050 (Long). Furthermore, this plan to reduce man-made carbon emissions would "require substantial

infrastructure [that is] likely to be expensive," in addition to the development of "a biofuel with no net emissions" (Long). With neither enough biofuel to fulfill the state's fuel requirement nor a biofuel with zero net emissions, the chance that this California policy will mitigate climate change is unlikely. Additionally, without enough funding, updating current buildings and creating new buildings to be energy-efficient will be extremely difficult. Therefore, unless states can produce sufficient amounts of funds and clean fuel, policies reducing man-made carbon emissions are ineffective in reversing the effects of climate change.

Thus, these reforestation and sustainability efforts—as separate entities—are not effective enough to mitigate climate change; however, when scientists combine the effects of these investments, the outcome yields promising results. In his TED Talk, *How to Green the World's Deserts and Reverse Climate Change*, Biologist Allan Savory discusses one potential combination of sustainability and reforestation efforts. Savory states that the buildup of carbon in the atmosphere is due, in part, to the fact that "two-thirds of the land on Earth is beginning to desertify"—the process of fertile land turning into desert (Savory). People often attribute this desertification of grasslands to overgrazing, and thus usually "take livestock off of this arid land" to allow the area to regrow (Savory). Taking cattle off of this arid land, however, does not result in reforestation—rather, this removal of livestock further promotes desertification. Savory points out that "large herds [of animals] dung and urinate all over their food, and they…keep moving, [preventing] the overgrazing of plants, while the periodic trembling [allows] for the covering of soil" (Savory). When humans remove livestock from arid land, there is no cover of urine and dung on the soil. This bare soil cannot hold water, and "allows for [immediate evaporation and] runoff—the cancer of desertification" (Savory). Therefore, Savory proposes a combination of sustainable behavior and reforestation efforts to create a seemingly unusual solution: to increase the level of cattle and grazing in order to promote the reforestation of these arid regions.

Although increasing grazing levels seems counterintuitive, Savory argues that this method could reverse the effects of climate change. By "increasing the cattle and grazing by 400%" and making sure that these large herds keep moving, these animals would cover the arid "soil [in] dung and urine," allowing the soil to "absorb the rain" (Savory). Through this cover of excrement, the arid land would be able to retain rainwater. Furthermore, this retention of rainwater would allow previously desertified land to become fertile. With these large areas of arid land transforming into fertile land, there would be new areas for the growth of plants that would "store carbon," reducing atmospheric carbon levels (Savory). Scientists have tested this method in Patagonia, Argentina, where the planned grazing of "25,000 sheep" resulted in a large amount of excrement covering arid soil, which allowed the soil to hold rainwater once more, bringing "back 50% of [the] land" (Savory). Furthermore, when herds do not feed upon these grasslands, the plants sometimes "shift to oxidation" rather than decaying biologically, which results in "woody vegetation and bare soil" (Savory). People usually burn off these oxidized plants; however, this burning "still leaves the soil bare and releases carbon" into the atmosphere—giving off more "damaging pollutants than 6,000 cars… [for every] hectare" burned, and people burn "almost 1,000,000,000 hectares…every single year" in Africa (Savory). Therefore, despite being inefficient separately, this combination of sustainable efforts and reforestation methods could potentially sequester enough carbon from the atmosphere to mitigate climate change. This combination would furthermore reduce an abundance of man-made carbon emissions, as people would no longer have to burn thousands of hectares of oxidized plants. Savory states that through this method of livestock increase and planned grazing, humans can "take enough carbon from the atmosphere and store it in the soil to return climate

change back to pre-industrial levels" (Savory). This livestock increase would thus act as a negative emissions technology, similar to the bioenergy crops that "The Carbon Harvest" discusses. Thus, by combining these two pre-existing methods of climate change mitigation, scientists could effectively reverse the effects of global warming and save the planet.

Furthermore, employing these strategies together would not demand the resources and global cooperation that these strategies require individually. For example, Julia Rosen previously states that in order to sequester enough carbon to mitigate climate change, these crop areas would require as much water as is in Lake Michigan. According to Savory, however, planned grazing creates fertile land that would not require immense amounts of water, as the excrement of the livestock would allow the soil to hold rainwater. Additionally, the movement of livestock would ensure that the entire area has a cover of excrement, efficiently securing rainwater within the soil. Rosen also introduces the notion that these crops would require an area of land "the [size] of Australia," and many also question whether global cooperation will be necessary to make increased livestock policies possible (Rosen 735). These crops, however, would only use land that is currently desert, ensuring that no human relocation would occur. Additionally, Australia is currently mostly desert, meaning that if scientists carried out Savory's study in Australia, the country could be reforested completely over time, thus fulfilling the land requirement Rosen proposes. By keeping the practice within one country, the demand for global cooperation also disappears, as Australia has enough area to sequester enough carbon to mitigate climate change for the planet. Australia has also supported reforestation policies in the past, reinforcing the possibility of practicing Savory's study within the country. In his paper, *Reforestation Incentives in the UK and Australia: A Comparative Evaluation*, Dr. Steve Harrison states that in 1982, the Australian Prime Minister "announced the establishment of the National Tree Program," which aimed to "increase tree cover, [promote]…action….to conserve plants and regenerate trees, [and develop] public awareness of the value of trees" (Harrison 10). Thus, based on its past interest in reforestation attempts, Australia would likely implement Savory's study in its deserts, eliminating the need for global cooperation. Therefore, a combination of reforestation attempts and sustainable investments requires fewer resources and less global cooperation than that of an individual strategy.

Thus, reforestation efforts and sustainable investments, when separate, are not effective enough to reverse climate change; however, when scientists combine the two, the outcome is promising and powerful. Although numerous reforestation studies demonstrate an effective sequestration of carbon, these reforestation areas are shrinking fairly rapidly. Similarly, sustainable investments such as bioenergy crops or livestock policies seem like they could effectively combat climate change; however, these investments require an abundance of resources or global cooperation, respectively, making them ineffective. Additionally, the use of governmental policies to directly reduce man-made carbon emissions holds promise, but the lack of biofuel resources makes this method unsuccessful in mitigating global warming. When scientists like Allan Savory utilize these methods together, however, the results hold promise in combating desertification, and thus, climate change as a whole. This combination of methods also requires fewer resources and less global cooperation than any strategy requires individually. With scientists such as Savory experimenting with and combining pre-existing methods of climate change mitigation, there may be a possibility of reversing the effects of global warming, and furthermore, saving the planet for humanity.

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# FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

When the shooting broke out in Parkland, Florida, last February 14, Miranda was already underway with research for an essay about *A Beautiful Mind,* a 2001 film about the schizophrenic mathematician John Nash. Continuing with that worthy project would've been the easiest way for her complete the assignment. But in the wake of Parkland, Miranda's motivation to understand the power of media representations of mental illness gave her the courage to change her approach midstream and to dive into a controversial political issue. Her choice paid off with the compelling and timely essay you are about to read. In Miranda's words, "It is possible to start somewhere and then end up in a completely different place, and that is sometimes the best way to develop a project."

On March 24, as students across the country gathered for the March for Our Lives, Miranda was making the last round of revisions to her prizewinning essay "Representations of Mental Illness Within FOX and CNN: The Parkland Shooting." It too can be understood as a form of civic engagement. In this paper, Miranda presents new data she collected about news coverage of the Parkland school shooting and uses the kind of critical information literacy skills that are essential to responsible citizenship. In doing so, she contributes to both scholarly and public conversations about gun violence and mental illness.

Her portfolio makes the connection between scholarly and public discourse explicit when she describes how she drew on knowledge from her research to respond to an acquaintance's Instagram post blaming gun violence on mentally ill people in especially derogatory terms. Miranda reflected, "With news media constantly projecting this image of the mentally ill as violent and committing crimes, it is no surprise that this post showed up on my newsfeed." I am thrilled that Miranda's essay was recognized by the editorial board, but if it generates more thoughtful conversation about this topic through the *WR* readers she reaches here, that will be the best prize.

Sarah Madsen Hardy
WR 150: Representing Illness

# FROM THE WRITER

As a student mostly interested in science and math, I have always thought of writing as something I simply was not good at. This WR 150 class, "Representing Illness," altered my view of what it truly means to be a writer. In the beginning, I was terrified of coming up with my own topic, carrying out my own research, and ultimately, attempting to write on an issue that I did not only believe to be important, but also relevant. I originally went down a few different paths, getting a bit lost in the large realm of mental illness, a topic I knew to be extremely interesting. After meeting with our class librarian, Ken Liss, I began to discover my interest in uncovering the misrepresentation of mental illness in our society. I slowly immersed myself in the current news stories of the Parkland shooting, and in formulating my research topic, I learned that I am much more passionate about writing than I had thought. I have begun to understand that writing is not as hard as I imagined it to be, and that even if you are not sure what or where you are going with something, in simply starting it, you are already on the path to success, no matter the road you take to getting there.

**MIRANDA MELICI** is a rising sophomore from Basking Ridge, New Jersey studying Health Science in the College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences at Boston University. As a student hoping to pursue a career in medicine, Miranda has always been interested in culture surrounding diseases and illnesses. She would like to thank Professor Madsen Hardy, Ken Liss, and her peers for their endless and wonderful guidance, support, criticisms, and kind words throughout WR 150.

MIRANDA MELICI
*Prize Essay Award*

# REPRESENTATIONS OF MENTAL ILLNESS ON FOX AND CNN: THE PARKLAND SHOOTING

According to the National Center for Health Statistics in a gun homicide study, less than 5% of 120,000 gun-related killings were committed by people diagnosed with mental illness. (Metzl 241). Despite this statistic, many Americans still believe that those with serious mental illness are dangerous, perpetuating stigma towards persons affected by mental illness (McGinty 498). These beliefs are widely influenced by mass media, specifically news media. Communications research provides evidence that the public's attitudes towards specific groups of people are "heavily influenced by news media portrayals," especially if they have "little experience with the group in question" (McGinty 406). With the recent school shooting in Parkland, Florida, the influence of news media portrayals of violence in association with mental illness becomes more relevant. News sources have covered and continue to cover this event, framing and reframing the facts of the mass shooting with relation to mental illness, influencing public perception of the event. Currently, scholars discuss the misrepresentation of persons that are mentally ill as violent and criminal within news media, and the resulting perception of the mentally ill as dangerous (McGinty 401). However, the Parkland shooting raises the question of the relationship between political views of news outlets and representations of mental illness. With the audience members of FOX and CNN labeling the sources as conservative and liberal, respectively (Allsides), the different "leanings" of news media outlets may significantly impact the representations of those with mental illness, which may further perpetuate stereotypes and stigmatization, skewing public views of gun violence and mass shootings as associated with mental illness. With an increase in stigmatization comes poorer treatment rates and less recovery (Wahl 10), along with the false belief that denying the mentally ill access to guns will decrease the likelihood of mass shootings significantly (McGinty 431). As demonstrated by the coverage of the Parkland shooting, FOX News perpetuates the belief that mental illness is the main reason for gun violence and mass shootings more so than CNN, leading to an increase of stigmatization of the mentally ill and a distorted belief of the relationship between gun violence and mental illness by their viewers, which has serious negative consequences for those affected by mental illness.

As Stuart Hall, a cultural theorist, political activist, and sociologist, argues, "we give things meanings by how we represent them" (Hall xix). Hall places the importance of representation above all else, claiming that representation constitutes the very essence of the thing that one is trying to present (Hall xxi). Thus, nothing has meaning until it is represented. Susan Sontag furthers this argument of representation as constituting meaning with regards to illness. Sontag analyzes the representation of illness as a metaphor, "the disease itself becom[ing] a metaphor", and "adjectival." She notes that feelings of "evil are projected onto a disease" (Sontag 711). And because disease is represented in a way to give it meaning, the disease is then "projected onto the world" (Sontag 711). Sontag emphasizes the negative connotations that society has towards specific diseases, simply because society has given these diseases meaning. Within the world of news media, representation

becomes especially crucial. News media outlets give the general public the necessary information they need about the society they live in, such as weather, stocks, politics, and crime. As such, news media viewpoints influence watchers and readers, as an "agent of socialization that critically shapes an individual's perceptions and beliefs" (Bunting 3). News media represents these events, thus giving them meaning, and providing the public with a sense of what they are supposed to know and feel. In the case of disease and illness, news media thus shapes societal perceptions of people affected by these illnesses, and the viewpoints that these media outlets take on further public opinions.

Previous research on the representation of gun violence in relation to mental illness focuses on news media coverage and the public's perception of mass shootings in previous years. Emma McGinty and her colleagues conducted three studies with regard to public perception of mental illness and violence, one in 2013, one in 2016, and one in 2018. McGinty's study in 2013, with the title "Effects of News Media Messages about Mass Shootings on Attitudes Toward Persons with Serious Mental Illness and Public Support for Gun Control Policies" had alarming results. The study analyzed public views of events involving mass shootings in relation to negative attitudes towards persons with mental illness by distributing news stories involving gun violence by a mentally ill perpetrator, and surveying respondents to determine their attitudes towards the mentally ill. A baseline was established for the views of the public, which revealed that before respondents even read stories involving mental illness and violence, forty percent of the survey respondents believed persons with mental illness to be "far more dangerous than the general population" (McGinty 496). This baseline is already concerning, considering less than three to five percent of crimes in the United States involve persons with mental illness (Metzl 241). After the respondents read the news stories involving gun violence and mental illness, they illustrated "heightened negative attitudes" towards those with mental illness. Respondents also reported a "higher perceived dangerousness of persons with serious mental illness" (McGinty 496-497). McGinty concluded that news media representations of mass shootings by the mentally ill "play a critical role in influencing…negative attitudes towards persons with serious mental illness" (McGinty 498).

McGinty's second and third studies, conducted in 2016 and 2018, "Trends In News Media Coverage Of Mental Illness In The United States: 1995-2014" and "News Media Framing of Serious Mental Illness and Gun Violence in the United States, 1997-2012" respectively, touch more deeply upon the media's role directly in relation to public discourse. The study conducted in 2016 found that, generally, news stories covering the mentally ill "emphasized interpersonal violence", and found that "dangerousness was the most common theme in coverage" (McGinty 1122). Even further, news media that covered interpersonal violence and mental illness "focused on gun violence and mass shootings" (McGinty 1125). The coverage that continues to connect interpersonal violence with mental illness is extremely "disproportionate to actual rates of such violence" within the United States (McGinty 1128). The results of the study conducted in 2018 continue to support the notion that the public is regularly presented with information that connects those with serious mental illness and gun violence in mass shootings. The findings suggest that the connection within news media coverage between serious mental illness and violence contributes to negative public views of persons with mental illness, which leads to a whole host of issues for those with mental illness, including lack of support, increased stigma, and lower treatment rates (McGinty 410). The public may also view mental illness as a cause of gun violence, with the study providing evidence that a "higher proportion of news stories mentioned dangerous people with SMI [serious mental illness]" more so than dangerous weapons as a contributor to gun violence (McGinty 431). The results of Emma McGinty's three studies consistently showcase the persisting negative attitudes and stigma

surrounding those with mental illness, emphasizing the news media's role in perpetuating stereotypes and beliefs about the mentally ill that do not reflect their actual non-violent tendencies.

Despite the existing studies on news media coverage of gun violence and its effect on public perception of the mentally ill, McGinty does not comment on the differing political biases that may affect the representations of mental illness within different news media sources. These news sources typically cover similar events, but may reflect and emphasize different parts of the story. An example of such an event is the Parkland shooting. On February 14th, 2018, Nikolas Cruz shot 17 students and faculty at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida. There were 14 children and 3 adults killed with a semi-automatic AR 15, making it one of the deadliest mass shootings in American history. Because of the intense nature of the event, news outlets covered this story at length. The coverage of the Parkland shooting reached many different media sources, including the networks Fox Broadcasting Company (FOX), and Cable News Network (CNN). FOX and CNN both reach millions of viewers, ranking first and second overall in number of audience members, as of March 22nd, 2018 (Adweek). FOX news is typically regarded as a right-leaning network that caters to a conservative audience, whereas CNN is often referred to as the opposite, with a more liberal demographic (Allsides). Because of these political biases, the information that they present to their audiences may differ. In the case of the Parkland shooting, the networks' differing political affiliations affect the way they represent mental illness with relation to the shooting. When examining the coverage of the shooting across the two networks, it becomes apparent that FOX overemphasizes the connection between mental illness and violence, specifically within the context of mass shootings, more so than CNN.

As a way to study the different styles of coverage, twenty-two Fox News transcripts were analyzed through the website "Nexus Uni," along with twenty-two CNN news transcripts. The transcripts were selected by a search of "Parkland Shooting" within the database. The methodology includes an analysis of the average number of times the word "mental" is used per transcript, and also analyzes the syntax and diction within the transcripts themselves. The general terms to describe the syntax and diction will be a positive, negative, or neutral "slant" to the words within the transcripts. A positive slant means that mental illness is mentioned in a way that supports the mental health community and provides a positive image of those with mental illness. In other words, they do not attribute the shootings to a mental health issue. A neutral slant refers to the idea that mental illness is mentioned in a non-harmful way and does not have any positive or negative connotations — or example, simply mentioning that the shooter had mental health issues, but not describing it as a cause for the mass shooting. Lastly, a negative slant indicates that mental illness is mentioned in a way that harms the image of those with mental illness, and that may increase stigmatization of the community, and that the source identifies mental health issues as the cause of mass shootings. These three categories allow for a complete and simple understanding of how news media represents mental illness with regards to gun violence. As Hall notes, representations will thus provide insight to how the public interprets the event, and as Sontag argues, these interpretations will allow for an understanding of what meanings and connotations are given to mental illness by society.

Within the news transcripts that are related to the Parkland shooting, FOX News transcripts have shown to represent mental illness with a greater connection to the shooting and gun violence than CNN. FOX mentions the word "mental" 7.27 times on average per transcript, with 15 transcripts with a negative slant, two neutral slants, and one positive- and negative-slanted transcript. There were four articles that did not mention the word "mental" with a connection to the Parkland

shooting. CNN mentions the word "mental" 2.95 times on average per transcript, with eight transcripts with a negative slant, six neutral, and four positive slants. There were four articles that did not mention the word "mental." As is evident by simply the number of times the different news sources mentioned the word "mental," FOX News mentions the word 2.5 times more than CNN does per article. This evidence is substantial in the sense that the public will hear that mental illness is related to the shooting, regardless of the specific positive and negative slants to the articles. When considering this in conjunction with Hall's and Sontag's notion of society adapting meanings to things as they are represented, it is not surprising that people would identify mental illness as constitutive of the shooting. Sontag even further develops this representation of diseases as evil, with society giving the diseases meaning, and cementing these representations as "definitions" (Sontag 711).

Along with the number of times the word "mental" is mentioned within the transcripts on average, the specific positive and negative slants are extremely important in determining the effect of political biases on their representations of mental illness and the connection to the Parkland Shooting. FOX News has 3.75 times more articles with a negative slant than does CNN. Within the 22 FOX transcripts analyzed only one of the transcripts had a positive slant to it, though it still began with a negative characterization of mental illness. The reporter for FOX specifically mentions that the "one commonality between the gunman" and various mass shootings, is "mental health issues," along with mental illness (FOX, "Missed Warning Signs"). This statement leads the public to believe that there is a correlation between mental health issues and mass shootings. The negative slants of the FOX News transcripts in general will produce a stigmatizing representation of the mentally ill, furthering the belief that the main cause of gun violence and mass shootings is in the issue of mental health. FOX News transcripts covering the Parkland shooting repeatedly quote President Donald Trump, who makes the statement that he is working with legislation to "help secure our schools" and additionally, to "tackle the difficult issue of mental health" (FOX, The Day After). This direct quotation from the President of the United States reaches the audience of FOX, which is reportedly the top viewed basic cable network, as of March 22nd, 2018 (Adweek). The negative slant of the President's statement is obvious—he attributes gun violence and mass shootings to a lack of regulation on the mentally ill, specifically stating that that this "difficult issue" must be dealt with so as to keep the schools safe. And as the President of our country, his opinions of an event become even more vital to society's understanding of it; he is supposed to represent the American population.

In contrast, CNN news transcripts have four times as many positively slanted transcripts as FOX transcripts. One of CNN's positively slanted transcripts mentions that the gun violence issue is not "because we have more mentally ill people," it's "just absolutely not true" (CNN, Trump Focuses). This transcript makes a point of demonstrating that the mass shootings are not singularly due to mental health issues. The transcript also mentions multiple other causes of gun violence, taking the cause of the shooting away from the mentally ill, referring to the availability of "extremely lethal weapons," and the lack of regulation among "control[ling] the access" to these "widespread" and "available" weapons (CNN, Trump Focuses). CNN presents a radically different picture of the connection between gun violence and mental illness. In another positively slanted article, the reporter mentions that there has been a lot of focus on the mental health issues of the shooter, but then asks, "is that fair to focus on?" (CNN, Mueller Charges). Evidently, from not only the lower average number of mentions of the word "mental," CNN also has significantly more articles that are

positively slanted than FOX, which may be due to their more liberal slant, as opposed to FOX's more conservative slant.

FOX News promotes the connection between gun violence and mental illness more than CNN, which leads to an increased stigmatization of persons with mental illness. This results in the skewed belief that a major cause of gun violence is mental illness, which has extremely negative consequences for the mentally ill. Increased levels of social stigma leads to lower rates of treatment seeking, and creates a multitude of "negative outcomes," like "homelessness, unemployment, and criminal justice involvement" (McGinty 1128). Additionally, the higher levels of stigma contributes to less "public support for policies that benefit" the mentally ill (McGinty 1128). Those with mental illness are also living with an increased amount of anxiety, and may experience more "discomfort, shame and loss of self-esteem" with an increased amount of stigma, as they feel that they are working to keep their mental illness a secret. This may lead to "chronic stress" that will "undermine both their mental and physical health" (Wahl 10) The negative view of the mentally ill will not only increase social stigma, but also lead to a view that those with serious mental illness are a "threat to public safety" (McGinty 2018). And because most persons with mental illness are nonviolent (Metzl 241), FOX News's representation of the mentally ill is not representative of the population, leading to political decisions that may not reflect the actual necessary decisions that will legitimately decrease gun violence.

The news' political leanings are especially important in determining the roots of misinformation and misrepresentation that leads to social stigmas demonstrated by this study. It is vital that these news outlets recognize that the mentally ill are not to blame for gun violence. This will increase support for policies that help the mentally ill and also will help to lessen stigma against them, leading to increased treatment rates and less anxiety. It is important that further research focus on the actual public responses to these different news media framings of conservative and liberal sources, so as to determine how the differing viewpoints are actually being interpreted and spread throughout society.

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> shooter, examining the different attributions given to the shooter based on race. The results
> found that the media attributed the shooters motivation to internal or external causes based
> upon race. Mental illness was a frequently cited attribution given to Caucasian shooters.
> Serves as a background and introductory source for my research, and also as a source that
> emphasizes the importance of media as a source that shapes public perceptions and beliefs.

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> News source, transcript. Provides coverage for events that are relevant to the public. The
> transcripts cover the Parkland shooting, reporting the facts of the event, policy, and politics.
> The twenty-two transcripts selected from CNN will serve as the liberal side of the spectrum
> for the research project, analyzed with respect to their use of the word "mental" and
> negative, neutral, or positive slants to the transcripts. They are exhibit sources, and are the
> other half of the primary source of research for the project.

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> Scholarly article. Research intends to discover the effects of news stories that cover mass shootings on public attitudes towards the mentally ill, along with support for gun control policies. The results concluded that news stories generally exacerbated negative attitudes towards persons with serious mental illness. The research also mentions negative attitudes and stigma as linked to poor treatment rates, with a call for future research on mental illness and news media coverage to lessen stigma. The source is extremely useful, as it provides a framework for existing research on the effects of mass media in relation to gun violence and shootings.

McGinty, Emma E. et al. "News Media Framing of Serious Mental Illness and Gun Violence in the United States, 1997–2012." *American Journal of Public Health* 104.3 (2014): 406–413. *PMC.* Web. 21 Mar. 2018.

> Scholarly article. Research analyzes news media framing of the relationship between serious mental illness and gun violence. The results concluded that the public is more often exposed to mental illness and gun violence framed in the context of mass shootings. The article touches upon the serious consequences of this exposure, including less support for treatment of mental health issues and policies and false information about the main causes of gun violence. This serves as a resource that frames my own research, serving as background information on the existing news coverage in connection with mental illness and gun violence.

Mcginty, Emma E, et al. "Trends In News Media Coverage Of Mental Illness In The United States: 1995–2014." *Health Affairs (Project Hope)*, vol. 35, no. 6, 2016, pp. 1121–9.

> Scholarly article. Research on the trends of news coverage of mental illness through a period of 19 years. Results found that the coverage of mental illness has trended down since 1995, and that the content within these stories has stayed relatively similar. The research found that the most frequently mentioned topics within mental illness coverage included violence, suicide, and treatment of mental illness. This serves as another source of background information within the scholarly community that analyzes the existing news content, and discovered the link between coverage of mental illness as including violence.

"Media Bias Ratings." *Allsides*, AllSides, 2018, www.allsides.com/media-bias/media-bias-ratings.
	Accessed 29 Mar. 2018.

	Website article. Collected data on the different biases thought to impact news coverage.
	Rates the biases of each network, and then has a public response to these ratings, where
	Americans can vote on their opinion of the biases. Evidence shows that CNN is liberal and
	left leaning, and FOX is conservative and right leaning, rated both by the Allsides experts
	and the public. Extremely important to the project as it provides a framework for my
	research question of whether political bias affects news coverage of mass shootings in
	relation to the mentally ill; I must have information about which networks are biased, and in
	which ways.

Metzl, Jonathan M, and Kenneth T Macleish. "Mental Illness, Mass Shootings, and the Politics of
	American Firearms." *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 105, no. 2, 2015, pp. 240–9.

	Scholarly article. Analyzes the connection between mental illness and gun violence.
	Discusses the relationship between mental illness and mass shootings within the context of
	politics and gun control. Provides evidence for the beliefs held by Americans about the
	causes of mass shootings, and the actual statistics of mental illness in relation to gun
	violence. Important in determining the prevalence of mental illness as it relates to mass
	shootings, with actual data to support the notion that mental illness is not a primary cause of
	mass shootings.

Otto F. Wahl. "Stigma as a barrier to recovery from mental illness". Trends in Cognitive Sciences,
	Volume 16, Issue 1, 2012, Pages 9–10. ISSN 1364-
	6613. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2011.11.002.
	(http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S136466131100235X)

	Scholarly article. A source that analyzes how stigma affects treatment and recovery from
	mental illness. Describes how stigma negatively impacts those with mental illness, including
	issues with anxiety, chronic stress, and lower treatment adherence and acceptance. Serves as
	a source for understanding the wider significance of misrepresentation of mental illness
	within society. Provides information on stigma and how it affects those with mental illness at
	a personal level.

Sontag, Susan. "'Illness as Metaphor.'" *Susan Sontag: Essays of the 1960s & 70s*, edited by David Rieff,
	Library of America, 2013, pp. 677–719.

	Book. Analyzes illnesses and the metaphors associated with them. Provides information
	about the harmfulness of metaphors with regards to specifically cancer and tuberculosis, but
	also reaching out to diseases in general, and how they carry meaning with how we represent
	them. Touches on the evils of metaphors in describing illness, and the longevity with which
	these metaphors last. Useful for my own research as an argument for the harmfulness in
	misrepresenting illness, and the general consequences socially that occur.

# FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

In crafting this masterful essay, Mari Rooney used her skills as a researcher and analyst to revitalize persistent questions about *Othello* and offer some intriguing new answers. I would bet that you have read or seen *Othello* and have some opinions about it—but have you read the contemporary Renaissance tragedy *All's Lost by Lust* that similarly represents "Moorish" men? Or George Best's 1578 account that "I myself have seene an Ethiopian … taking a fair Englishe woman to Wife"? What about the bizarre descriptions of northern Africa from a German encyclopedia that Londoners read in translation after 1581? With impressive firsthand research into texts like these, Mari reinserts *Othello* firmly into its original historical context, and thus she arrives at a deep understanding of the ways the play responds to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century discourses about race, gender, nationalism, and more. That research (impressive enough by itself) provides raw material for her own imaginative interpretations, and that's what allows us all to see the play anew; in her argument, Iago emerges as more than just Shakespeare's skillful portrayal of jealousy and villainy. Instead, Mari's essay demonstrates how the complex psychology of the character creates an ideological force-field where broad cultural problems intersect with old narrative tropes to fashion new socio-political possibilities. According to her argument, the play uses Iago to not merely *represent* racist prejudices, masculinist insecurities, and rhetorical constructions of non-Englishness, but to test them, critique them, re-evaluate them, and even weaken them.

Liam Meyer
WR 150: Shakespearean Controversies

# FROM THE WRITER

Many critics focus on the use of monstrous language and the inclusion of racist ideologies in Shakespeare's *Othello* (a play I have studied previously and thus grown to love) as an indication of the play's desire to emphasize Othello's status as a Moor and a foreigner. However, my paper examines the antagonist Iago and, specifically, how his characterization as a villain criticizes the racist ideologies, racial stereotypes, and xenophobic fears he expresses in the play. I claim that the play condemns early modern English perspectives on race by presenting Iago as a villain and then placing racist language in his mouth and citing racist ideologies as the motivation of his actions. As the sixteenth-century audience's hatred for Iago grew, the play compelled them to question the validity of the mechanisms Iago employs to destroy Othello and thus, to reevaluate their own beliefs on race, miscegenation, and foreign peoples. I believe the play possesses continued relevance today as we grapple with the ongoing challenges of racism and xenophobia across the globe.

**MARI ROONEY** is a rising sophomore majoring in classical civilizations and minoring in computer science and archaeology. She grew up in southern Connecticut and lived for two years in New York's Hudson Valley. An ardent Shakespeare devotee, she enjoys reading, watching, and performing in his plays. Hoping to travel the world one day teaching English while learning about other languages and people, Mari finds issues of cultural exclusion and xenophobia extremely concerning. She would like to extend many thanks to her high school writing instructors Carolyn Huminski and James Thompson for their guidance and support. She would also like to acknowledge her WR 100 professor, Lilly Havstad, for introducing her to college writing and, in some ways, inspiring the focus of this paper. Lastly, Mari thanks Liam Meyer, her extraordinary WR 150 professor, from the bottom of her heart, for being encouraging and helpful and, most importantly, for urging her to enter this contest.

MARI ROONEY
*The Tony Wallace Award for Writing Excellence*

# "FALL'N IN THE PRACTICE OF A DAMNED SLAVE": RACIAL IDEOLOGY AND VILLAINY IN SHAKESPEARE'S *OTHELLO*

In a chapter from his book *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama*, Jack D'Amico asserts that some Renaissance-era plays encouraged their predominantly white European audiences to reevaluate their own views on outsiders, particularly Africans, as well as the validity of their belief in their own superiority. I suggest that Shakespeare's *Othello*, more so than any of the plays D'Amico discusses, similarly sought to challenge the racial and xenophobic ideologies of its audience and, by extent, Renaissance England. My analysis of select examples of 16th century discourse*s* on race and Africans illuminates the foundation of these racist and xenophobic ideologies, namely: since Renaissance England's sense of social order demanded the supremacy of white men, any cultural space for black male empowerment seemed dangerous. Moreover, according to these texts, such as George Best's *A True Discourse of the Late Voyages of Discouerie*, miscegenation posed the worst threat since mixed children jeopardized white homogeneity and superiority. These documents demonstrate how white men employed racist language to emphasize the otherness and inferiority of Africans, creating an ideological justification for their own superiority and thus maintaining societal order. In contrast*,* the play criticizes the racist and xenophobic ideologies of Renaissance England by associating them with the villain, Iago, an immoral and corrupt representative of white male identity.
Therefore, *Othello* ventriloquizes racist discourses, but ultimately reveals the flawed nature of the societal order that such discourses and ideologies attempt to uphold or restore.

In her paper on the role of cosmetics in the creation of racial identities in Renaissance England, Kimberly Poitevin suggests that Renaissance England's "preoccupations with … the penetrating powers of blackness gesture toward a larger concern about the vulnerability of English or European borders to foreign goods and persons" (Poitevin 80). Reports on Africa and Africans from the 16th century reveal how stories regarding "the penetrating powers of blackness" fueled concerns about Europe's "vulnerability" to outsiders and the consequences of miscegenation. Best, an English chronicler, includes the following anecdote in his 1578 book *A True Discourse of the Late Voyages of Discouerie*:

> I myself have seene an Ethiopian as black as cole brought into Englande, who taking a fair Englishe woman to Wife, begatte a Sonne in all respectes as blacke as the father was, although England were his native Countrey, and an English woman his Mother: whereby it seemeth this blacknesse proceedeth rather of some naturall infection of that man, which was so strong, that neyther the nature of the Clime, neyther the good complexion of the Mother concurring, coulde any thing alter, and therefore we cannot impute it to the nature of the Clime. (29)

Best's explanation for the cause of blackness, though no less erroneous than the hypothesis it seeks to disprove (that black skin comes from overexposure to the sun), reinforces the supposed

inferiority of black skin and its potentially dominating qualities. His use of the term "infection" suggests that black skin possesses both negative and contagious properties. Furthermore, his claim that the "infection" of the father's blackness consumed the mother's "fairness" and "good complexion" corroborates the belief that blackness had the potential to dominate whiteness. Thus, as Kim F. Hall asserts in her book *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*, "Best's anecdotal evidence … articulat[es] the cultural anxieties—about complexion, miscegenation … and, above all, 'Englishness'—brought out by the presence of blacks" (Hall 11). Hall explains these cultural anxieties, stating that the English associated fairness and whiteness with "Englishness" and blackness with the racial "other": a black person could *not* be English. Therefore "to include" a miscegenated child "in the nation [England] would be to break the desired homology between land, skin, and group identity, thereby overturning the associations of England with whiteness and fairness" (Hall 12). Moreover, to accept such a child as genuinely English posed a threat to the contemporary white-dominant system as the child, despite being partially black, would possess white status. Thus, miscegenated marriages represented the possibility of white dilution and black empowerment, both of which imperiled white English men's sense of societal order: their own supremacy.

In the play, Brabantio voices the belief that miscegenation will lead to the decline of white superiority when he claims that "if such actions" (i.e., the marriage of Desdemona and Othello) "may have passage free, / Bond-slaves and pagans shall our statesmen be" (1.2.121-3). Though the meaning of this line may be interpreted in many ways, I suggest that Brabantio expresses his fear that mixed marriages, particularly between black men and white women of the higher classes, would lead to a disordered government controlled by men descended from slaves and non-Christians. Building on the fears Brabantio expresses, Iago bemoans Desdemona's choice "not to affect many proposed matches / Of her own clime, complexion, and degree, / Whereto we see in all things nature tends" and claims that "her will, recoiling to her better judgment, / May fall to match [Othello] with her country forms / And happily repent" (3.3.269-73). Iago's words belie the early modern English belief in the unnaturalness and chaos of miscegenated marriages. Furthermore, he states the necessity of Desdemona's unfaithfulness as it will allow her to "happily repent" from the sin of her miscegenated marriage and reestablish the proper order of English society in which white women do not marry black men. Thus, Iago's mission to destroy Othello appears as both a personal vendetta and a perverted attempt to salvage white hegemony.

The early modern English sense of order, in which white men possess the highest level of sociopolitical power, stood in stark contrast to the perceived disorderliness of the African continent. Hall explains that travel accounts from Renaissance England emphasized the disorderly landscape of Africa and the chaotic characteristics of its black people, creating a "new nervousness about skin color and cultural 'disorder'" (28). The 16th century encyclopedist Konrad Lykosthenes, in a description of the so-called African *anthropophagi*, or those "who doe eat mans flesh," writes that "they have no lawes, neither is there any judge among them, but live at their own pleasure" (Lykosthenes 7). Lykosthenes' portrayal of Africans as lawless peoples who engage in taboo activities perpetuates the image of Africa as a place of chaos—a place where people did not obey the "lawes" of nature *or* society. Due to such reports of Africans, African-ness and "blackness beg[an] to represent the destructive potential of strangeness, disorder, and variety" (Hall 28). Miscegenation would bring African disorderliness directly into English society and allow for the empowerment of black men, therefore mixed marriages themselves represented a challenge to societal order. The English felt threatened by the presence of "disorderly" Africans in England, a fact corroborated by

several royal proclamations, issued at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which mandated the immediate deportation of "Negroes and blackamoors" ("Licensing" 221). One proclamation from 1601 states that a "great number of Negroes and blackamoors…are fostered and powered here [England], to the great annoyance of her [the Queen's] own liege people that which covet the relief which these people consume, as also for that the most of them are infidels having no understanding of Christ or his Gospel … shall be with all speed avoided and discharged" ("Licensing" 221-2). The document illustrates the intensely negative feelings the English possessed towards Africans. Furthermore, the proclamation reveals that these feelings stemmed from the belief that the apparent enfranchisement and empowerment ("fostered and powered") of Africans would jeopardize the dominating authority of the white English. Additionally, the complaint that they "hav[e] no understanding of Christ or his Gospel" further demonstrates the English fear of African disorder—these "Negroes and blackamoors," because of their status as "infidels," could not fit into the structure of England's Christian society and they must therefore be removed from it.

Iago's intention to, in a sense, remove Othello, whom he perceives as a political and sexual rival, parallels with the early modern English elite's desire to deport the "blackamoors." In the opening scene of the play, Iago complains that Othello has chosen another man as his lieutenant and maintained Iago as merely "his Moorship's ancient," a term the Folger editors define as "the lowest-ranking commanding officer in the infantry" (Mowat fn. 35 on p. 8). Iago cites this denial of his political ascension as the reason for his hatred of Othello and his wish to "serve [his] turn upon him" (1.1.45). Later, in Act 2, Iago reveals his secondary reason for his hatred: "I do suspect the lusty Moor / Hath leaped into my seat" (2.1.316-7), an allusion to Othello sleeping with Emilia, Iago's wife. Thus, Iago's intentions of "put[ting] the Moor / At least into a jealousy so strong / That judgement cannot cure" (2.1.322-4), fueled by his insecurity in the face an empowered black male, indicate a determination to ruin and potentially eliminate Othello.

Iago, in his attempt to disempower Othello, depicts him as bestial and animal-like, drawing on the cultural misconception of Africans as monstrous and subhuman. This misconception appeared as the result of 16<sup>th</sup> century literature on Africans, such as Konrad Lykosthenes' 1581 book *The doome warning all men to the iudgemente*, which reports that "Aethiops" were (allegedly) "black men [*that*] have four eyes" and were "mouthed as a Crane, the other part of the heade like a man" (Lykosthenes 6-7). By describing these "Aethiops" as part animal, Lykosthenes contributed to the image of Africans as monstrous and "deformed" (7) creatures, rather than people. Moreover, suggesting that the "Aethiops" have "strange" (7) and animal-like characteristics perpetuates the belief in their supposed inferiority. Lykosthenes' use of the word "that" where a modern writer would have used "who" reveals his conception of black people as non-human and further indicates a desire to separate these Ethiopians from Europeans.

According to James Aubrey, the play utilizes monstrous imagery for the same purpose as Lykosthenes does: to emphasize the otherness of Africans—in the case of the play, Othello. However, I argue that *Othello* includes the imagery to scrutinize how Iago uses contemporary associations between monsters and Africans to denigrate and discredit Othello, much as white English men employed the same imagery to disparage and alienate Africans. Iago warns Brabantio that "an old black ram / Is tupping [his] white ewe" and thus "the devil will make a grandsire of [him]" (1.1.97-98, 100). Iago employs contemporary associations between Africans and animals in calling Othello a "ram" and, a few lines later, a "Barbary horse" (1.1.125), and he demonizes Othello by referring to him as "the devil." Iago couples these associations with the dichotomy of "black

ram" and "white ewe" to emphasize Othello's otherness, the racial difference between him and Desdemona, and the unacceptability of their socially-disruptive marriage. The racist ideologies Iago voices coming from another character would fail to strike the audience as anything other than commonplace. However, because of Iago's obvious villainy, his use of these ideologies, and the ideologies themselves, appear questionable, even deplorable.

*Othello*'s scrutiny of racial stereotyping, racist language, and xenophobic ideologies belongs to a genre-wide shift that occurred in Renaissance-era dramas, which were beginning to encourage their audiences to reconsider their society's perceptions of Africans and the validity of white superiority. D'Amico claims that another 16th-century play, also starring a lead "Moorish" character, *All's Lost by Lust* "[made] a tentative step toward representing a complex society of which the Moor is a part, and toward opening up the audience to more challenging ways of imagining their relationship to the outsider" (D'Amico 98). D'Amico argues that *All's Lost by Lust* offers its audience a brief opportunity to reflect on themselves by providing the perspective of a Moor, who makes a negative, but logical, assessment of Europeans. However, D'Amico acknowledges that *All's Lost by Lust*, despite its momentary reversal of societal perspectives, continued to perpetuate negative depictions of Moors, thus contributing to preexisting beliefs of African bestiality, disorderliness, and inferiority. I argue that *Othello* extends *All's Lost by Lust's* fleeting attempt at subversion by vilifying Iago, a mechanism which also serves to oppose the prevailing negativity towards Africans that persisted in *All's Lost,* amongst other plays. Much as these other plays equate African-ness with villainy to discourage miscegenation and black empowerment, *Othello* associates racially motivated hatred and xenophobic ideology with Iago, who embodies immorality and masculine insecurity, to undermine the legitimacy of this hatred and ideology. Furthermore, Iago's status as a white European and his close relationship with the audience suggest that he represents the populace of Renaissance England, and thus as the play condemns Iago's deeds it scrutinizes the xenophobia and racial stereotyping of Renaissance English society.

The revelation of Iago's villainy in the final act presents the culmination of the play's subversion: by displaying the other characters' criticism of Iago's actions towards Othello, the play condemns not only villainy, but the racist ideology associated with that villainy as well. Lodovico calls Iago a "viper" (5.2.335) and a "Spartan dog" while Montano refers to him as "a most notorious villain" (5.2.286) and "a damned slave" (5.2.290). Furthermore, though Othello has just murdered his wife, the play emphasizes Iago's culpability rather than Othello's. Lodovico asks Othello, "O thou Othello, that wert once so good / Fall'n in the practice of a damned slave, / What shall be said to thee?" (5.2.342-4), to which Othello responds, "An honorable murderer, if you will, / For naught I did in hate, but all in honor" (5.2.346-7). Lodovico's words acknowledge Iago's responsibility for Othello's actions, thus attributing the blame to Iago rather than "good" Othello. Of more significance, Othello's claim that Iago's crimes stemmed from his "hate," rather than honor, creates an association between Iago's method, the use of racist ideology, and hatred and dishonor. A sense of this hatred and dishonor color Lodovico's final words, spoken to Iago: "Look on the tragic loading of this bed. / This is thy work" (5.2.426-7). As Lodovico invites Iago to "look on" the victims of his machinations, the play invites the audience of Renaissance England to examine the consequences of an attempt, driven by racial bias and xenophobia, to reestablish their society's sense of order: white supremacy and homogeny. While Iago's successful elimination of both Othello and Desdemona may represent the restoration of order within the play, the play itself disrupts the order of Renaissance England by questioning the morality of a society that values an order which subsists on racially motivated hatred and xenophobia.

My reading of *Othello* contradicts earlier interpretations of the play as a cautionary tale about the threat of race-mixing and the inherent evil of Africans—I recognize the profound subversive work the play performed within the context of 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe and acknowledge the foundation of its continuing relevance. *Othello* provides insights on the racist ideologies and xenophobic attitudes of early modern England; however, the play suggests that these ideologies and attitudes, while prevalent, did not enjoy universal support. The play employs compelling characters and creates sympathetic situations as a matrix in which to explore the possibility of more positive, progressive views on foreigners and otherness, while condemning the contemporary negative perspectives on the subject. Due to the diverse and extensive audience *Othello* attracted in early modern England and Shakespeare's ability to write authentic characters, the play possessed a profound power to shape audience perspectives and challenge societal standards.

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# FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

Mariel wrote this paper midway through her "Race, Class, and Gender in the U.S. Today" WR 100 seminar for multilingual students in Spring 2018. Like all WR 120 classes, this section of WR 100 invited students to write in a genre other than the standard academic essay for a portion of the course. Our class studied Op-Eds, the short-essay form of opinion writing common in newspapers, and then students chose their own topics related to the overall themes of the class. Mariel circled around and around her topic at first, not sure where she wanted to go with it, not sure exactly what she wanted to say. She had a lot of fun experimenting with voice in this paper, and I think you can see from this final product that she both found a strong, appealing Op-Ed voice and also found what she really wanted to say.

Christina Michaud
WR 100: Race, Class, and Gender in the US Today

# FROM THE WRITER

I love Twitter. It's a place where people can both enjoy silly jokes and engage in serious discourse. A lot of the time, the jokes and the discourse come together and create conversations about real issues. It was on Twitter that an interaction between a student and a local celebrity sparked one such conversation about colorism in Philippine media. It was this conversation by Filipino netizens that dominated my Twitter feed for a few days and left me thinking about the issue of colorism for a few weeks. During this time, my class was given one of our major assignments for the term: an op-ed about a topic related to race, class, or gender. I knew then exactly what I wanted to write about. Colorism in the United States, a country with multiple ethnicities, usually lives in the shadow of the more immediately visible issue of racism, but it is still very present. By contextualizing colorism in a country where it is prevalent, I hope to make it more visible to an American audience.

**MARIEL DE LOS SANTOS** is a rising junior at Boston University who was born and raised in the Philippines. She is majoring in Biology, and no, she is not a pre-med student. Her studies focus on Ecology and Conservation and she has a keen interest in life under the sea. She hopes to pursue a career in science writing.

# FULL-COLOR TELEVISION

On Valentine's Day, thousands of people flocked to their nearest cinemas to see the newest Marvel superhero movie, *Black Panther*. The movie was highly anticipated by many and quickly established itself as one of the highest-grossing movies in the already successful Marvel franchise. It's not hard to see why this is so—in many ways, *Black Panther* is a love letter to black America by a culture that has constantly been putting it down.

*Black Panther* envisions an African country that has never been colonized. The fictional Wakanda flourishes with its advanced technology, its lack of poverty, and its unapologetic celebration of African culture—a culture that, for the longest time, has been suppressed in America. Most importantly, the protagonists are black. Black people are not relegated to one-sided roles of sidekick, or comic relief, or bad guy, or gangster, or whatever stereotype they are usually cast as. The characters are complex and human. Each character gives black audience members the space to find themselves on the big screen, perhaps for the first time in their life.

At the same time, on the other side of the world, a new television series was premiering in the Philippines. The series, *Bagani*, has a premise that was similar to *Black Panther*'s in many ways: it is a vision of a world that was never colonized, and draws inspiration from Philippine mythology. Women are warriors and leaders, and tribal influence is evident in the costume design, the hairstyles, and the face paint. However, while *Black Panther* took care to finally shine the spotlight on black actors who have long been shunned, *Bagani*'s leads are mainly half-white actors, with darker-skinned actors only playing minor characters. This is the route taken by most Filipino *teleseryes*, as light skin and Western features are considered the beauty standard in a country where brown skin is the norm.

Colorism, or the preference of lighter skin over darker skin, is rife in Philippine culture. You see it in the alarming frequency of commercials and billboards advertising whitening creams, whitening pills, and whitening treatments. You see it in comments from close friends and relatives telling you to cover up when you go out in the sun so your skin doesn't tan. You see it in the desire of young Filipinas to marry a Western foreigner and have light-skinned kids.

And of course, you see it in the media's obsession with lighter-skinned actors and actresses, who are almost always the stars of movies and television series, while darker-skinned actors are relegated to supporting roles.

Such was the criticism *Bagani* faced on Philippine social media. I had not seen any trailers for it, which were the main source of the backlash, but I understood the frustration. It was only when I visited my grandparents in New Jersey last week that I saw firsthand what that frustration was about. We were watching the Filipino channel when *Bagani* came on. It followed the usual recipe that every *teleserye* follows: ridiculous plotlines, overdramatic cut-scenes, and draggy pacing. The main stars were Filipino actors Liza Soberano, who is half American, and Enrique Gil, who is half

Spanish. The pair, together known as LizQuen, is currently one of the hottest loveteams in Philippine showbiz today. On *Bagani,* they play the tribal leader Ganda ("beauty"), and the warrior Lakas ("strength"), respectively. Had the controversy about the show not been on my mind, and had I not watched Black Panther the weekend before, I probably would've watched the show indifferently, after all, it was just another *telenovela,* something I'd seen a million times before. I would have dismissed how five out of the six main characters were light-skinned and foreign looking, something that made them stand out against a background cast of brown-skinned Filipino actors, who only served as foils for the main cast. I would have dismissed the producers' attempt to make Enrique's skin darker by piling on a lot of bronzer on him—something that just ended up making him look very strange. I would have dismissed the fact that Liza's character, the only girl with Western features in their fictional tribe, was constantly referred to as "the most beautiful." It was all these seemingly mundane things that made me crave something more for the show: a show that highlighted dark-skinned, or *morena,* beauty, instead of perpetuating the Eurocentric beauty standards we have now.

In the middle of February, a tweet from a Manila local expressed disappointment about Liza and Enrique's casting, describing that they weren't even Filipino. This tweeter was wrong in questioning the ethnicity of the two actors—of course they were Filipino—but the tweet expressed the very real frustration of the constant shunning of darker-skinned actors in the media in favor of foreign-looking ones. Liza tweeted back a defense of her Filipino ethnicity, how her dad was Filipino, how she was raised by two Filipinos since she was young, how she "loooooves Sinigang," a popular Filipino dish. Her tweet quickly became a viral meme, likely because of two reasons: one, the wording of her tweet and her whole defense was ridiculous; two, Liza had missed the point.

It's hard to see injustice from a position of privilege. Haitian-American feminist author Roxane Gay writes that "one of the hardest things [she's] had to do is accept and acknowledge [her] privilege" (16). This is true for most of us—we feel that recognizing the privileges we do have negates the hardships we've experienced in life, which isn't true. Liza and all the other light-skinned actors are privileged in Philippine media, and light-skinned people are privileged in Philippine society. It is a privilege that they should recognize. According to Gay, "You need to understand the extent of your privilege, the consequences of your privilege, and remain aware that people who are different from you move through and experience the world in ways you might never know anything about" (17). There needs to be a change in the way Philippine culture defines what is beautiful, and, with their influence over the general public, these actors have the power to instigate that change.

In an interview last February with CBC Arts, Amandla Stenberg, an actress most recognized for her role as Rue in *The Hunger Games* and star of the recent movie *Everything, Everything,* reveals that she was one of the contenders for the role of Shuri in *Black Panther.* Stenberg decided against continuing to fight for the role, as the rest of the cast would be darker-skinned, while she was lighter-skinned and biracial. She recognized that colorism was prevalent in Hollywood—lighter-skinned African Americans were favored for African-American characters. Stenberg acknowledges the privilege she has, and she knows the importance of representation. Lighter-skinned Filipino actors should do the same and work to help promote their *morena* counterparts.

The real power lies with the television producers. The main reason they cast these light-skinned actors in starring roles is that that's what sells to the public. It's a cycle: they take advantage of a beauty standard that already exists, which leads to the perpetuation of that beauty standard. The

key to breaking this cycle is by taking small steps. Producers could slowly cast more and more darker-skinned actors along with lighter-skinned actors. They could give darker-skinned actors characters who are more complex and real. They could get rid of the skin-whitening commercials altogether.

Changing a national beauty standard is no easy task, but real change can be made by changing the dynamics of the characters we see on television. Maybe one day, Filipino culture will become an environment where kids aren't teased for having dark skin, and young girls won't feel the need to bleach their skin or hide from the sun to feel beautiful.

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# FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

The final project for WR 150 "Poetry Now" asked students to translate some aspect of their academic research paper into a collection of poems for a non-academic audience. A caveat was that the poems present a sufficient argument or aesthetic experience, such that readers of the poems need not have also read the research paper for the poems to make sense. Hallie Lazaro more than rose to this challenge. Her research focused on the cultural silences and hidden shames surrounding gender discrimination and immigration, as these topics are depicted in Monica Ong's highly visual poetry collection, *Silent Anatomies*. Hallie's poetry project uses Ong's book as a model both for creating meaningful intersections between words and images and for contextualizing family history in a larger narrative.

In "The Life Cycle of a Tree: A Cultural Journey," Hallie's stylistic choices and varied forms reveal how immigration is a constant and complicated navigation for Lazaro, the narrator based upon her father. Slight linguistic variations enact large emotional shifts, as in the first poem where the meaning of *Lazaro,* "Help of God," becomes a plea: "Lazaro is foreign soil on the tongue. / Wet and choking. / God help Lazaro." Hallie's poems also present powerful images. In "Growth" a Narra tree grows from Lazaro's back, a metaphor for the difficulty of assimilation. In the next stanza we see how otherness is often pathologized: Lazaro's doctor "prescribed [him] an axe and / told [him] to cut down [the tree] and bury it / in the backyard." As I re-read "The Life Cycle of a Tree," I was struck by how timely these poems are. When the very humanity of immigrants is being questioned and reduced by the language of policies such as "catch and release," we need texts like Hallie's to remind us that immigration always involves a specific individual's experiences.

Jessica Bozek
WR 150: Poetry Now

# FROM THE WRITER

When prompted to complete the task of writing our own collection of documentary poetry that reflects a political or social issue, I was floored. My initial thought was: *How can I possibly come up with an* original collection *of poetry?* I looked to Monica Ong's *Silent Anatomies*, my literary muse for the semester, for guidance. I felt inspired by the intimacy of *Silent Anatomies* and decided to openly discuss the difficulties of immigration by telling my father's story. Writing poetry was a struggle, but with scrap paper and my father's stories in my pocket at all times, I made it.

**HALLIE LAZARO** is a rising sophomore at Boston University's College of Arts and Sciences. She is majoring in Neuroscience and is on the pre-medical track. She was born in Manahawkin, New Jersey, a small drive-by town. Hallie has a love-hate relationship with writing but has come to admire the intimacy poems have to offer. A hobby of hers is collecting antiques and her dream is to become a doctor. She would like to thank Professor Jessica Bozek for her infinite patience, encouragement, and critique.

# CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

The objective for this collection of poetry is to expand upon immigration and cultural silences as Monica Ong does in *Silent Anatomies*. This project will explore the cultural ties immigrants carry with them to the United States and their struggle to assimilate into a new culture while clinging to, or rejecting, their past. Culture, as these poems will argue, stays with us, and can either empower us or hinder us.

Like in *Silent Anatomies*, where many of Ong's poems are spoken through the voice of Medica, most of the following poems will be spoken through the voice of Lazaro. Lazaro, in this context, represents an immigrant of Filipino background. The content of some of these poems draw on personal stories of my father's immigration to the United States and his struggle to assimilate into American culture. The themes of the poems stem from the unintended tradition my father and I started. When he cooked fish and rice, he told me stories of his life in the Philippines as we ate together. These stories filled my head as a child and gave me an intimate feeling of what Filipino culture is. They have urged me to return to my roots and inspired the common symbol of these poems: the Narra tree. The Narra tree is the national tree of the Philippines because it is resilient and strong. It is meant to represent the cultural pride that every Filipino immigrant may carry with them. Many of the times, I write about how a Narra tree grows out of Lazaro's back, making his culture "noticeable." For many immigrants, not only is their physical appearance noticeable to Americans, but also their mannerisms that stem from their culture.

This project begins with the poem "Lazaro." The original idea stems from how people could not pronounce my father's last name when he immigrated to the United States. The style, therefore, follows Lazaro's identity in his home country and how he struggles to adapt in the United States. The poem is meant to introduce Lazaro to the reader and orient them at the beginning of Lazaro's journey. The poems following Lazaro incorporate several poetic styles. "Mag Iñgat" is written in prose, some are coupled with photos, and many poems contain phrases in Tagalog and Spanish. The different styles are meant to engage the reader with imagery, as Ong does in *Silent Anatomies*.

As it comes to a close, the project questions whether immigrants should forget their cultural roots and accept American culture as their own or acknowledge their cultural roots and integrate them into their new lives in the United States. There is not a wrong answer, but Lazaro will show us the pieces of culture many of immigrants choose to embrace, as well as forget.

**HALLIE LAZARO**
*Prize Essay Award*

# THE LIFE CYCLE OF A TREE: A CULTURAL JOURNEY

Lazaro

Lazaro.
Pronounced "*lá-sah-row*"
Meaning: Help of God.

Lazaro is from the earth,
deep roots, dark and knotted.
Lazaro comes from *patría adorada,* pearl of the orient.

Lazaro is ~~freedom.~~                            *escape*
Lazaro is the sound of wind ~~roaring~~                    *running*
Flying over seas.

Lazaro.
Pronounced "*Lah-zza-row.*"
Lazaro is foreign soil on the tongue.
Wet and choking.
God help Lazaro.
[1]

*Mag Iñgat* [2]


The winter of 1982 was the first snowfall for Lazaro. November chills shocked the *Narra's* [3] roots, unused to the chill. Shouldering branches and unburdened baggage, Lazaro steps off the plane. Cadiz gave him 5 dollars. One crumpled dollar curled from the cold in his pocket. *It will have to do. I will be fine.*

No one told him that the streets weren't paved of gold, the dirt paths in the village seemed freer. No one told him that white ghosts would threaten to swallow him whole,
or that the snow would seep into his salted bones and run them dry.

*I will be fine.*

Last of nine, Lazaro was the first to plant our seeds in the snow.

And they grew into a forest.

*We will be fine.*

Girls aren't supposed to swim.
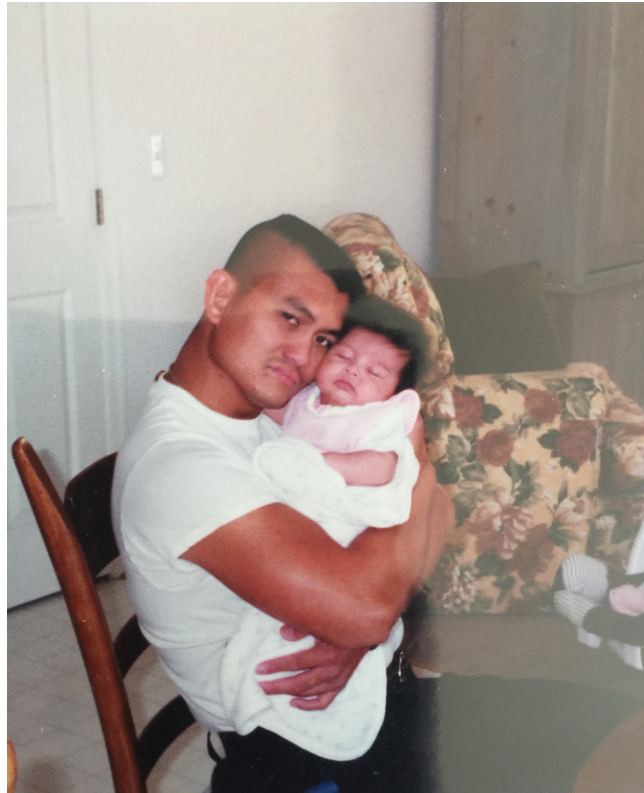


[4]

I want you to sail the Ocean.
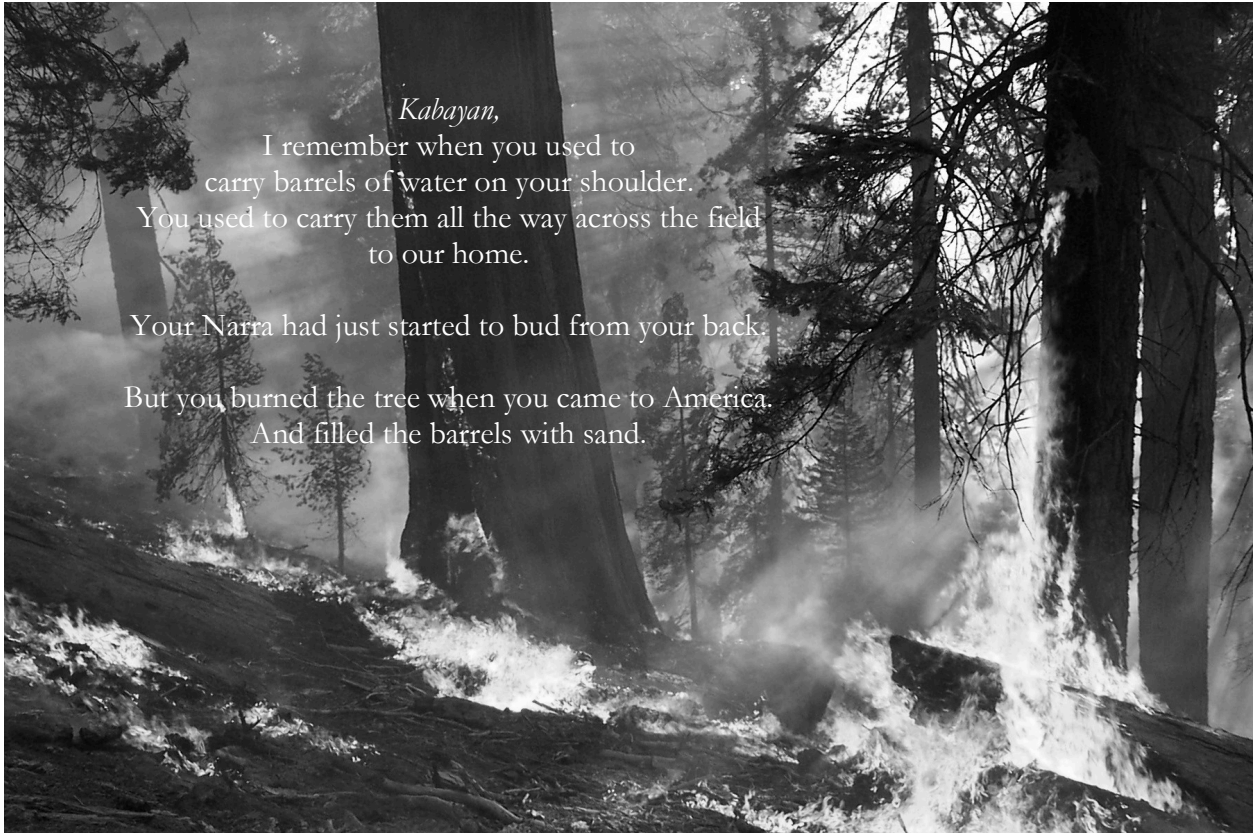
*Kabayan,*
I remember when you used to
carry barrels of water on your shoulder.
You used to carry them all the way across the field
to our home.

Your Narra had just started to bud from your back.

But you burned the tree when you came to America.
And filled the barrels with sand.

Growth

When I came to America,
a Narra tree grew from my back.
Its gnarled roots became one with my spine.
Its leaves tickled my ear, and told me stories
I tried to forget.

I went to a doctor
because I was getting a lot of stares.
He prescribed me an axe and
told me to cut it down and bury it
in the backyard.

When I did, the Narra sprung from the earth.
And I watered it.

## Q & A

When they ask you
*"Where are you from?"*
Answer with,
the same place as you,
home.

Maybe then the ghosts will leave you
alone.

For Them


One Nation under God, indivisible,
with Liberty and Justice for ~~all~~.          *them*

But not for *us.*

Cloudy Days are Better than Cloudless Nights


My sister's skin was the sky at dusk.
Ugly with its shades of color.
Hideous with its intense depth,
scarred,
like tilled soil in the sugarcane fields.

She wanted her body to be a cloudy day.
All white.
So she scoured her skin
with a machete,
And scrubbed away the night sky.
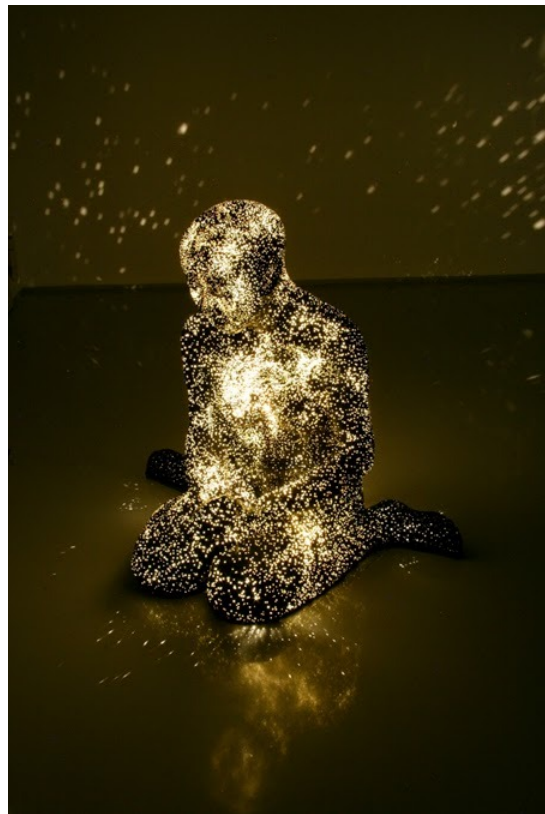
Dawn is Better than Dusk


My Daughter, your skin is the sky at dawn.
Beautiful with its shades of color.
Wondrous with its intense depth,
scarred,
Like bark.

The Moon is jealous,
and tries to scorn you.
Do not listen to Her.
For the Sun is more interesting
than the Moon.

When I was a sprout,
My *Inang* [5] would let me sit
under the ironing board
as she worked.
She would talk to me,
and fill my canopy with stories,
and tell me of the past.

When I was a sapling,
My *Inang* would tell
me that I, the youngest son,
would inherit the land.
She would say this as I
recited a poem about
an old, yellow dog.

When I grew tall,
*Inang* whispered to me less.
I no longer recited a poem about
an old, yellow dog.
I did not inherit the land.

I moved my roots.

**My Night Sky,**
**Sit next to me.**
**I will give you some of my**
**leaves and sew them into your**
**canopy.**
**Let us talk together.**

**Dearest Daughter,**
**Do not let anyone**
**snatch the forest I cultivated**
**long ago.**
**Care for it. It is yours.**
**Sing *Mi Último Adiós***
**to it.**

**When you grow tall,**
**Do not listen to the whispers**
**that tell you to be silent.**
**Sing your poem.**
**Cultivate your forest.**

**Stand your ground.**

Ancestry


Stories are best told with rice.
When you wash the rice, pour the water
over the Narra out back, it likes it best.
Fill the pot with rice and water, use your thumb.

Rice is best with fish.
Watch me pull a fish from my ear,
I'll wrap it in banana leaf and steam it.
Watch the steam, it will tell stories
from my *inang bayan.* [6]

When you ask me
if these stories will be forgotten,
I'll give you *siopao.*

Be careful.
In the middle,
is a Narra seed.

# NOTES

1. *Patría adorada* translates to "beloved country," alluding to the poem *Mi Último Adiós* by José Rizal. Rizal is known as the Philippines' national hero.

2. *Mag Iñgat* is a phrase in Tagalog that roughly translates to "safe travels."

3. The Narra tree is the national tree of the Philippines.

4. My Father and I, 1999.

5. *Inang* translates to mother.

6. *Inang bayan* translates to motherland.

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# FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

Alan Shain's essay "Odette's" was composed for WR 100 "Creative Nonfiction," a special WR section associated with the "Creative Composition" cluster of courses within the larger WR curriculum. In addition to studying the writing of renowned essayists such as James Baldwin, E. B. White, Jamaica Kincaid, Adrienne Rich, and Ta-Nehisi Coates, students had to compose their own creative nonfiction stories, centered on real memories and experiences, but directed in a way that also underscored a larger point or idea. Alan's "Odette" is a masterful example of the power of Creative Nonfiction as a genre, but it also highlights some of the unique challenges of writing Creative Nonfiction pieces. As opposed to a more traditional academic essay built upon a central claim supported through analysis of evidence and engagement with argument sources, Alan had to write about his experience in a way that seemed more conversational, though not too informal. This required inventing a logical and controlled structure for his essay without recourse to the typical rhetorical moves of academic writing. Alan also struggled with—and succeeded in resolving—some of the same challenges that all essay writers encounter, such as how to introduce and conclude an essay. Alan ultimately decided to avoid a clichéd, overly sentimental ending, and instead to finish on the sound of the ringing phone. The image is powerful because it is restrained. It takes one step towards the reader, but invites the reader to take a step as well, giving the reader something to think about even after the essay has finished. In this way, "Odette's" also represents a wonderful irony of creative nonfiction writing: the most intimate and personal essays can also be the most universal and relatable precisely because of—rather than in spite of—the specificity of their details.

Christopher McVey
WR 100: Creative Nonfiction: Personal, Collective, and Public Memory

# FROM THE WRITER

Ironically, Odette has never read this essay nor heard any attempted translation from English to French of its contents: she claims that hearing about herself bores her. Therefore, I never asked my grandmother how she wanted to be described in an essay. While our relationship obviously mattered to me, I had a difficult time in the drafted versions making the deep personal connection between my grandmother and me seem exciting to people who have never met Odette. I hope that I described her accurately and that I relayed the enthrallment of every moment with my grandmother into my writing. This essay is best read while sitting before a balcony table: one hand holding the printed paper and the other gripping a cup of tea. So, sit back and let me bring you a sip of Odette's.

**ALAN SHAIN** is a rising sophomore in Boston University's College of Arts and Sciences, studying Chemistry. He was born and raised in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, but took a gap year in the Middle East. Alan cannot thank Professor Christopher McVey enough for his unending encouragement and his deep inspiration. Alan considers this piece as much Professor McVey's as it is his own.

# ODETTE'S

There's an apartment on the 19th floor of a high-rise by the water, situated in Israel but not actually located in The Middle East. Whenever I drag my luggage to my grandmother's apartment, Mami Odette (as I call her) finds ways to hand me French biscottes smeared with butter, jars of homemade jam, and slices of lemon-saturated Poisson. These foods always accompany nana mint tea with some tarot cards used in order to play a well-known family game. Odette claims that the French kings of old played this game, but by this point our family has altered most of the rules. The apartment itself has three bedrooms although my grandmother lives alone. There's a generous two-person kitchen and a small clothes-drying balcony. She also uses a larger sitting balcony, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, upon which she eats a light breakfast every morning after exercise.

If one were to classify the apartment's style, one could say the apartment had a European layout with shades of 1930's North-African culture. Upon further examination, the pictures and trinkets are really trophies of Odette's adventures. She has a picture from the time she traveled to Thailand and allowed an elephant to pick her up by the trunk. She has a picture of her and her mother standing before the grave of my oldest-known ancestor who moved from Spain to Morocco during the 1500s. She also proudly displays varyingly large photographs of her favorite grandchild, my sister, on the mantle, the bookshelf, the living room, her bedroom, and in other little corners of her miniature France.

On the rare occasions that I come to my grandmother's house, I break my teeth on the broken bits of French I can recall without having practiced as she asks me questions, encouraging me to speak her language. Regardless of how hard I try, we ultimately switch to Freebrew: a mixture of French and Hebrew in which I am able to supplement my broken French with my more confident Hebrew and she can reinforce her broken Hebrew with a slow, soft-spoken French. As the visit progresses, my French improves just enough to have a real conversation. By that point, the visit usually ends and I return home to forget whatever pieces of culture my grandmother attempted to bestow on me.

I remember one visit in particular last year. I travel to Israel for a gap year to volunteer in various communities and to experience the land. When I arrive in the country, I drop off my luggage in an apartment I am renting in Jerusalem. My grandmother calls me and invites me to her house. She tells me in French: you are going to come every weekend. I tell her, "yes, of course." I know in my heart that as an eighteen-year-old on his own in a foreign country full of opportunity, I will probably not spend too much time at her house. But, as a gesture of good faith, I knock on my grandmother's apartment door the second Friday after I arrive.

The visit transpires just like all the other visits: I can barely speak and we switch into Freebrew until I am comfortable enough to slowly ease my way into basic French. On Saturday night, I escape to

downtown Tel Aviv, dancing the night away with some friends in a club whose name we can't really remember.

That summer I only visit her once more. Fall feels the same as summer and I find myself preoccupied with meeting new people and dealing with the excitements of living on my own. Despite the Middle East's warm climate, some moments feel very cold. Particularly after a hard day working the ambulance shift and a long night out on the town, I feel longing at the 5 a.m. sunrise-buzz. I miss home. Not in the sense I want to go back at all—every new day brings the best day of my life—but in the sense that all these new responsibilities of laundry, cooking, buying toilet paper, and the late nights only matched by earlier morning alarms have overwhelmed me only a little: I feel like the arrow of a compass thrown between magnets and I can't decide which way to turn. During one of these particular moments, I decide to turn to my grandmother. On a last-minute decision on a Friday afternoon, I hop on a bus and tap some numbers into my cell phone, "Mami Odette, *j'arrive ce soir pour dîner. C'est bien*?"

An hour later, I stand at the door to my grandmother's house, and find a biscotte in my hand, smeared with homemade jam and creamy butter. Since I have practiced my French a little, the whole weekend my grandmother and I speak French. We actually start talking. Not just about what I should buy at the store for her to prepare (which is usually what we talk about), but about the real things. At least, what seems real enough to her and about which she cares enough to ask. Odette asks me whom I'm dating, how my shifts are going on the ambulance, and if I need to take any food back to my apartment. The exchange lasts only a few minutes, but its magnitude extends far more than its duration: it is perhaps our first real conversation.

Over the course of the weekend, Odette banters with me in French: She has a very distinct, masculine sense of humor. In particular, I ask her if she's "excité" to go swimming at the pool and she tells me that at her age, she no longer gets "*excité*." Later in the day, I ask her "*Ou est-ce que je vais coucher ce soir*"—where am I sleeping tonight (in which bed)? She smirks, "*Pas avec moi*"—not with me. By the end of the weekend, she tells me that I can invite some friends over if I want for dinner one day. Two weeks later, I bring two of my French-American friends and we have dinner on the balcony as Odette makes lighthearted jokes about my poor French to the laughter of my friends. I smirk and answer in a poor accent that I do actually understand her.

Yet I want to understand more. I visit frequently and ask her questions. Why did she move from Morocco to France? Why did she leave my grandfather? Why did she move from France to Israel at the age of seventy-five? We have longer tea-filled chats and I eat more salmon and tilapia than the fishermen can haul to port. My grandmother recalls bribing her brothers to let her and her sisters go out partying as teenagers in Morocco. She puts her hands to her neck as if she's choking to transmit to me the feeling of an oppressive marriage. Odette lays cards on the living-room table, reenacting the conversation with her friends that galvanized her to leave the country in which she lived for most of her life. One day, I sit on the couch, computer at hand, and I ask Odette for the Wi-Fi password. "Odette1932." I suddenly realize that's when she was born.

I readily devour each new fact along with the jelly and biscottes of the morning breakfasts. I imagine the hair salon that she opened in France. I see the wine grapes she planted back at her home in southern France as she describes the vines growing along a fence. I learn about the mysterious disappearance of my uncle Gilbert, who grew up reckless and managed to stay that way his whole

life. I attend my second cousin's circumcision, a major event in Judaism for a newborn boy, and meet more than fifty of my extended family members alongside my grandmother. I observe as Odette acts as the matriarch of the clan, directing conversation with an authority that only the wise and powerful possess.

These moments accrue into a trust. Through each conversation I build a better environment for Odette to share her knowledge with me. At the end of this yearlong visit, I contemplate staying and actually moving to this wonderful country that has fostered the most cinematic episodes of my life. My grandmother sits me down and we discuss. She explains to me that life is hard here. As much as I can perform CPR in perfect Hebrew, the everyday life-activities in a foreign country require more than fluency with a defibrillator. Odette explains to me that without money I will not be taken seriously. But if I go to college back in the United States and become wealthy, than all my life, people will open doors and say "Mr. Shain."

I based my decision to return to America on the conversation that I had in Odette's apartment. Now that I'm in college, I find myself rushing around campus to the point where I often skip breakfast. In those moments, I hunger for a biscotte with jam, a freshly cooked fish, and some tea. Sometimes when I hear French around campus, I miss my grandmother.

After a hard night's work writing a college paper, I gaze at the clock. It is 2 a.m. in America, but the sun has only risen across the sea. I open my phone and dial a familiar number. The phone rings.

# FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

In the capstone project for WR 150, "Diverse Disciplines: Childhood in Three Disciplines," students selected the discipline, genre, audience, and scope of the final project based on the research and writing they accomplished throughout the semester and through the study of a self-selected childhood item. Skylar began her project by bringing in part of a childhood costume to the first day of class: a cape. Through her examination of that cape, she explored writing in Art History, Film, and Marketing before finally deciding to write within the discipline of Film and in the form of a TED Talk.

Skylar's engaging and persuasive presentation on the correlation between superhero costumes and real-world conflicts is not only enlightening, but also relevant to current and ongoing conversations about film, representation, and the political climate. As a written text, Skylar's script for her talk articulates an eye-opening argument in regard to how the super hero costume has, thus far, not been read as a visual text for real world politics. However, to see Skylar deliver her talk is to fully get a sense of this project's magnetism, importance, and its future-leaning perspective.

Anna Panszczyk
WR 150: Diverse Disciplines: Childhood in Three Disciplines

# FROM THE WRITER

The release of *Black Panther* in February of 2018 sparked a nationwide conversation about the film's cultural impact on the African American community. I was intrigued by the correlation between modern political events such as the Black Lives Matter movement and a fictional superhero movie, *Black Panther*. As I looked back on the last 40 years of superhero films, I discovered a clear interconnectedness between plot and political climate. Others had discussed how with shifting politics came alternate plot lines; however, no one had explored the impact shifting politics had on superhero costumes.

I found myself discussing my research with whoever would listen while flipping through pictures of hero costumes. This made a TED Talk seem like a natural choice for my presentation style as it allowed me to use numerous visuals from superhero cinema along with the accompanying commentary I'd already been unknowingly rehearsing.

**SKYLAR SHUMATE** is a rising sophomore studying physical therapy at Boston University's College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences: Sargent College. Born and raised in the small mountain town of Estes Park, Colorado, she has enjoyed exploring the city of Boston and hunting down its best coffee shops. She would like to thank her WR 100 professor Jessica Kent for encouraging her to pursue arguments not yet presented and her WR 150 professor Anna Panszczyk for showing her that just because the academic essay is not your cup of tea doesn't mean writing can't be. She would also like to thank her mother for answering the phone at all hours for a brainstorming session.

## CAPES, COLOR AND CULTURE:
## CONNECTING SUPERHERO COSTUMES AND SHIFTING POLITICS

There are several instances throughout the following Ted Talk script where in order to remain in the tone and style of a Ted Talk quotes or paraphrasing used to provide background information or establish functional definitions of costume elements are not book ended with the source's information. Please refer to the corresponding footnote for information on the author and source.

**<u>Slide 1</u>**

Have on screen at the start of the video, but no commentary is necessary.

 I would like to start off by having you close your eyes and visualize your favorite childhood superhero from a movie. (pause) What colors are they wearing? Do they have a cape? How about a mask? Do they have any exposed skin? Where? Can you see their face? (Pause) You can open your eyes.

Depending on your age, the visual and hero that came to mind may be incredibly different than that of the person beside you. Over the last forty years since the Superhero film genre first soared to new heights, superheroes and their costumes have evolved and adapted countless times. There have been color changes, technological advancements, shifts in what are considered heroic qualities and dozens of new superhumans have taken to the big screen.

The hundreds of superheroes we know today are incredibly diverse and could be talked about for hours, but I figured most of you wouldn't like it if I kept you here past midnight, so I will focus on a specific demographic of heroes: male, human-like protagonists who I feel best exemplify the relationship between United States politics and American superhero cinema[1].

**Slide 4**

While these types of superheroes had been featured in comics and on a handful of TV shows prior, it was the release of Richard Donnar's *Superman – The Movie* in 1978, which grossed over $134 million dollars setting it apart from any prior superhero cinema[2] – that marked the take-off of what would grow into the wildly popular, multimillion dollar Superhero film industry we know today. But how did this story about "an alien orphan…sent from his dying planet to Earth" resonate with so many and become so widely loved[3]? And why then?
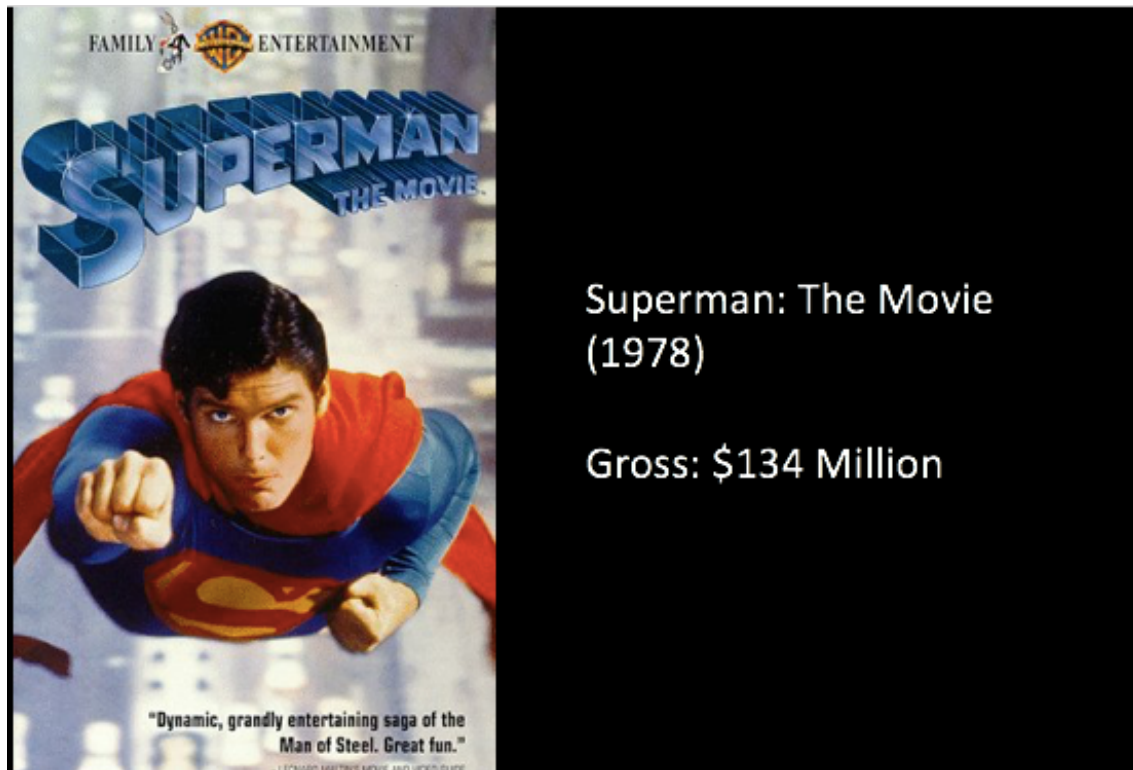
The 1978 release date of *Superman: The Movie* placed it at a turning point in the Cold War roughly halfway through the conflict[4]. Spanning from 1945 to 1991, the Cold War marked "a period of 'non-hostile belligerency' primarily between the USA and the USSR" immediately following World War II and continuing until the fall of the Soviet Union nearly fifty years later[5]. While no physical attacks ever occurred, these two countries with the support of their allies went head to head for the title of dominant world superpower and the right to declare their governmental style, communism versus democracy, superior. Marked not by bullets but the threat of such violence, the conflict lead to several major historical conflicts and tensions such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, Berlin Wall and Vietnam War[6]. For citizens of the United States, any communist became an enemy, space became the new frontier yet to be claimed and nuclear warfare became reality.

Prior to the release of *Superman: The Movie*, westerns had been the film genre of choice with films like *Blazing Saddles* (1974), *True Grit* (1969) and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly (*1966) bringing in millions of dollars each[7]. But as the relationship between the United States and the USSR grew colder it became apparent that these horseback riding, gun slinging heroes of the Wild West were no match for the new nuclear weapons and foreign threats the country faced.

 Superheroes like Superman on the other hand now offered a protagonist who was more than capable with the aid of superhuman strength, high speed flight and deeply rooted patriotism to fight off enemies thousands of miles away equipped with powerful nuclear weapons and corrupt morals.

Superman embodied the ideal American and offered audiences the success they so deeply craved after thirty-five years of political tension and the corrupt presidency of Nixon just four short years prior[8]. Craving an honest and worthy leader in the face of communism, audiences flocked to theaters to have Superman satisfy this desire. Lots of historians and researchers have explored the strong correlation between political climate and superhero cinema in regards to plot, character development and villain motives or methods as the genre has expanded and evolved[9], but the superhero costume also reveals a lot about American society at the time of the film's release.

The early superheroes were catered to audiences who desired the defeat of enemies oceans away who posed a very localized threat, and their costumes reflected these political conditions. The technological advances that arose from World War II and the Nuclear Arms race that was well underway at the time made interactions between distant countries like the USA and USSR possible in ways it never had been before[10]. Conflicts like the Cuban Missile Crisis and construction of the Berlin Wall presented very localized conflicts thousands of miles from home. The nuclear arms race made an ocean of space seem insufficient to provide safety. How does one stand a chance against missiles capable of spanning hundreds of miles? Offer an equally capable opponent: superheroes.

When it comes to battling your distant yet localized enemy, it helps to have a cape to fly you there.

Throughout my research I began to identify the two primary purposes of capes in superhero cinema. The first is to enhance "the spectacle of…tremendous speed, creating the illusion of motion" and the second is to distance the hero from their "meek" alter ego[11]. The mobility that the cape provided for heroes like Superman was incredibly valuable when facing the geographically distant USSR. Meanwhile, the red cape, which is very similar to Julius Ceaser's crimson battle cloak, marks Superman as the clear leader to be confidently stood behind as he single handedly defends and protects.

World War II was still fresh in the mind of Americans during the Cold War, and at the time of *Superman: The Movie*'s release the prospect of remaining comfortably at home while another who could come to no harm himself defended you was appealing to audiences. Nationalism ran strong in the blood of Americans in the face of communism. To not proudly announce your Americanism could mean you were a communist and thus an enemy.

And nothing says American like adopting the colors of our United States flag in a bright blue full body suit and a large, flowing red cape blowing in the wind much like the United States flag would.
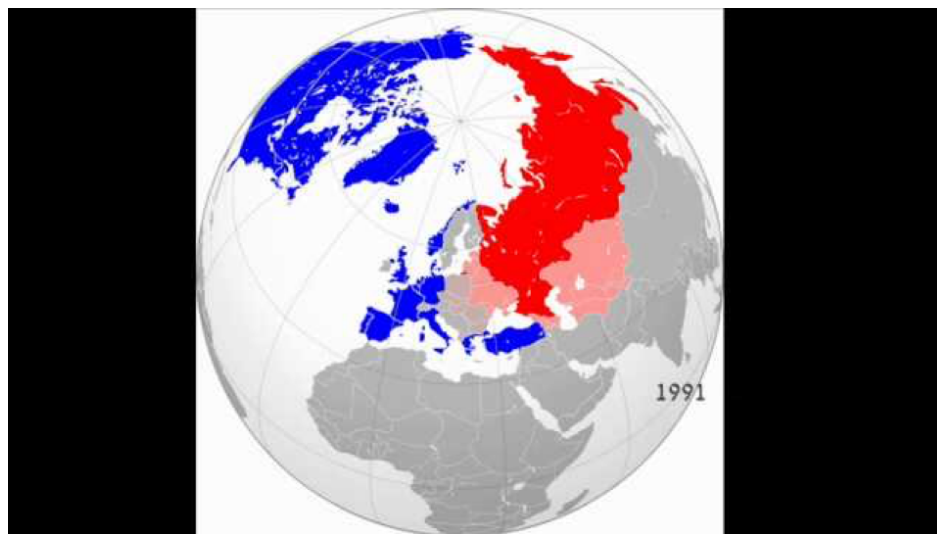
Captain America and Wonder Woman would later adopt a similar United States flag- inspired look. Superman's bold color choices make him difficult to miss, leaving pedestrians gawking in city streets, and this sense of transparency is reflective of the democratic system the United States represented in the Cold War. "While a villain may carry out his crimes in the shadows, Superman positions himself at the center of attention". The villains of course were the communists in this narrative.

The eighties and nineties brought sequels, new heroes and the end of the Cold War in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Then, on September eleventh 2001 the tragic attack on the World Trade Center completely altered the United States' political climate and rewrote the definition of enemy. In his Master's Thesis, George Briggs writes that following 9/11 the United states began "defining the enemy even more broadly than had been done during the Cold War. The war on terror was a total war that was to be fought not against a state, but against an ethos"[12]. We were no longer fighting countries easily spotted on a map, we were fighting lone rebel groups capable of spanning borders.

Threats to the United States have become significantly less localized in the 21$^{st}$ century as enemies like Isis have developed a relatively small but globally dispersed presence.

With no localized threat to fly to, the superhero cape has grown less relevant and began fading from superhero movies and the costumes of post 9/11 superheroes.

The 21st century has also brought about an exponential growth of technology and as more and more of our lives and personal information have gone digital, that too has been a target for attack. Identity protection has grown increasingly important and we no longer aim to proudly announce our personal views and values as was expected during the Cold War and instead strive to maintain some secrecy. These shifts in political ideals can also be seen affecting the 21st century, post 9/11 superhero cinema attire.

The bold colors previously used to announce the presence of the hero and proclaim a sense of national pride and pure Americanism have given way to darker, less pronounced color schemes that cloak the hero in secrecy and allow for more mystery as to what lies beyond the costume.

And the mask, whose primary purpose is identity protection, is far more prevalent as Americans have grown to value personal information even more. Cyber-attacks and increased technology have begun to remove elements of the life that were not in the public eye prior but are now available at the click of a button. Even heroes have something to lose now, their identity, and this chink in the armor has grounded them. We share the fear of lost privacy with the protectors of today and this relatability brings them down to the level of citizen making their success appear achievable. Yes, the 1978 Superman had a secret identity, but any onlooker would have made the connection. Superman was untouchable and so far above mankind that the risk of recognition was not relevant. On the other hand, modern heroes go to great lengths to make themselves unrecognizable and their existence as everyday humans empowers onlookers to see themselves as a potential hero. This concept of potential greatness is a common theme among today's youth and can be found in nearly every college pamphlet or application essay. No wonder it has begun emerging in cinema as well.

By recognizing the correlation between politics and cinema we are able to access a new type of timeline that allows us to glimpse into the values and desires of past generations in relation to the shifting politics of the day. And moving forward, we can begin to predict the types of heroes that will appear in our future.

But what will these heroes of the future influenced by current political standings look like? I predict to see one of two options. Under the current administration, it would be unsurprising to witness a backslide to the heroes of the Cold War era. Leaders are again demanding their presence be boldly announced and perceiving themselves to be on a level higher than that of typical citizens, and as a result the red cape and bold colors may reemerge and the glimpses of humanity seen in today's heroes may fade away. However, the second and in my opinion more likely option paints a very different picture of future heroes.

I predict to see a unification of heroes that rebel and push back against a common opponent

an increase in diversification

## Slide 21

 and generational inclusivity

and empowerment

and more and more glimpses figuratively and literally into the humanity of our heroes (point to tears in costume)

who are maybe not as different from the rest of us as we thought. Thank you.



Live Video of Audience

1. While political and cultural climate impacts all subcategories of superheroes in one way or another, my selected demographic of male, human-like protagonists best showcases my claim that a decline in capes and bright colors and increase in dark colors and masks is reflective of political turmoil the United States faced at the time of the movie's release. For female characters, gender roles and stereotypes have a more prominent impact on costume evolution and while they are still influenced by political threats that is clouded by the gender elements also at work. I also felt the need to eliminate characters like the Hulk who do not appear human-like in their superhero form. Rather than representing the ideal man, these individuals often take the role of outsider and cannot imbody the ideal citizen in the way human-like heroes can.

2. "Superheroes on screen 1937–2020." *IMBD*. Created February 18, 2017. http://www.imdb.com/list/ls062973270/?sort=list_order,asc&st_dt=&mode=detail&page=2

3. "Superheroes on screen 1937–2020." *IMBD*. Created February 18, 2017. http://www.imdb.com/list/ls062973270/?sort=list_order,asc&st_dt=&mode=detail&page=2

4. Because there were no physical altercations between the United States and the USSR during the Cold War, historians sometimes disagree on the exact dates of the conflict. My conclusion that 1978 fell roughly halfway through the conflict marks the start of the Cold War in 1945 when Germany and Japan were defeated in World War II and marks the end of the Cold War as the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. In the mid to late 70s, China and the United States had "established diplomatic relations" according to the timeline cited below in footnote 5 and President Nixon had recently resigned leaving the country craving an honest and trustworthy leader.

5. Linda Alchin, "Cold War Timeline," *Dates and Events*, retrieved February 2017 from http://www.datesandevents.org/events-timelines/03-cold-war-timeline.htm

6. Linda Alchin, "Cold War Timeline," *Dates and Events*, retrieved February 2017 from http://www.datesandevents.org/events-timelines/03-cold-war-timeline.htm

7. "Most Popular Western Titles," *IMBD*. Retrieved April 23, 2018 from http://www.imdb.com/list/ls062973270/?sort=list_order,asc&st_dt=&mode=detail&page=2. *Blazing Saddles*grossed $119.50 million, True Grit grossed $31.13 million and The Good, the Bad and the Ugly grossed $6.1 million.

8. Linda Alchin, "Cold War Timeline," *Dates and Events*, retrieved February 2017 from http://www.datesandevents.org/events-timelines/03-cold-war-timeline.htm

9. For example, in her conference proceeding *"No Capes!" Uber Fashion and How "Luck Favours the Prepared". Constructing Contemporary Superhero Identities in American Popular Culture*, Karaminas states "Superman might have been fighting communists in the Cold War of 1950s, but by the beginning of the twenty-first century he was confronting societal fears of technological doom and battling a super computer as well as taking on global fears such as the nuclear arms race and atomic testing". Vicki Karaminas, "'No Capes!' Uber Fashion and How 'Luck Favours the Prepared'. Constructing

Contemporary Superhero Identities in American Popular Culture," (In *Imaginary Worlds: Image and Space International Symposium. Symposium Proceedings,* Sydney: University of Technology, 2005.,) pp. 1–19.

10. George Briggs, "From Cowboy Hats to Capes: Popular Conceptions of American Heroism," (master's thesis, Dartmouth College, 2011),p 13.

11. Barbara Brownie and Danny Graydon, "Superman: Codifying the Superhero Wardrobe." In *The Superhero Costume: Identity and disguise in fact and fiction*, 11–26. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Accessed March 11, 2018)

12. George Briggs, "From Cowboy Hats to Capes: Popular Conceptions of American Heroism," (master's thesis, Dartmouth College, 2011), p19.

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=2.

# Honorable Mentions

## WR 097

Unreliable Narrator 1948, or Why I Don't Always Trust Twelve-Year-Old Boys
XINGYU WANG

## WR 098

Identity and Place
CUIYING FENG

## WR 100

Now I Am Become Death, The Creator of Worlds
ROXANNA ALTUS

Spiritual and Physical Death in Louise Glück's *Averno*
DAVIS DAVIDSON

The Special Case of Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence
JUSTIN FOGLIASSO

Frankenstein and Dracula: The Purpose and Future of 19th Century Science
ALAN PERRY

Guns and Whorehouses: Violence and Gender in *True Grit* and *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*
FELIX PHILLIPS

Looking Up: How Robert Frank Questioned the Containment Narrative
SHAUN ROBINSON

Passive Princesses: How Fairy Tales Explore the Feminine Experience…Or Don't
MADELINE SCHMIDT

## WR 150

An American Tradition: How the Societal Conditions which Shaped the Populism of William Jennings Bryan also Shaped the Populism of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders
KIM HUGHES