Masthead

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Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the twenty-sixth edition of Spectrum, the journal of undergraduate writing across the curriculum at Saint Mary’s College of California. By publishing this year’s six award-winning student texts, we celebrate the elegance of language and the mindful practice of critical thinking through writing. We invite professors and students to use these six pieces as models for the power of language to construct knowledge—to facilitate the learning, expanding, and sharing of ideas.

The 2014 edition marks Spectrum’s third sponsored by CWAC: Center for Writing Across the Curriculum. We are honored to carry on the tradition begun by the English Department, whose students and professors deserve praise and appreciation for launching Spectrum and publishing and championing the journal and contest for twenty-three years.

This year’s difficult task of narrowing the stack of blind submissions was accomplished through much serious deliberation by our diverse panel of judges, consisting of both professors from many disciplines and student Writing Advisers of CWAC. We deeply thank the judges for their time and devotion. Likewise, we thank all the professors who guided their student writers to express well and to learn through the process of communicating. All of these efforts culminated in a collection of winning pieces that represent a broad variety of genres, as well as discipline-specific citation styles, across the curriculum.

This is our third year utilizing a staged editing process for finalists, mirroring what occurs when writers work with professional publications. We invited each finalist to meet three times with a CWAC Writing Adviser to review issues at both the organizational level and the sentence level in order to refine and then resubmit the piece. Winning texts were selected from among the revised pieces.

This also marks the second year students from the practicum course Communication 190 produced the journal, applying principles of copy-editing and design learned in the classroom. Communication 190 fosters a creative environment for Saint Mary’s students to produce this publication, and we are grateful for the collaboration and support of the Communication Department, particularly Chair Ed Tywoniak, in helping us shape this course.

We are grateful this year for a new collaboration, with the Department of Art and Art History. The student artwork in these pages was selected by a jury of professors, headed by Peter Freund, and we salute both the jury and the student artists for their generous participation. The department welcomes art submissions for the 2015 Spectrum, due Dec. 5, 2014 in the Digital Art Lab.

Submissions of writing for the next Spectrum are due on Dec. 31, 2014 to waccenter@stmarys-ca.edu. Please see the back of this journal for guidelines for both art and writing.

Spectrum has always been a student-driven journal; it would not exist were it not for the tireless work of students who are CWAC Writing Advisers or enrolled in Communication 190, in addition to the student writers themselves. We extend our gratitude to all the students who submit-
ted their writing, produced during the 2013 calendar year for any course, any discipline.

The six award-winning authors produced engaging and significant examples of writing across the broad spectrum of disciplines. We have asked the winners to share their idiosyncratic experiences of writing, submitting, and revising via “Author’s Notes,” which appear here at the closing of their essays, in order to inspire others to keep working toward the most skillful use of language, deepening the exploration of ideas.

Our cover, *Under the Skin* by Ryan Lee Moore, represents the framework on which all great writing is based: engaging the reader through sound argumentation. The essays in *Spectrum* represent a diversity of voices, methodology, and scope through various disciplines. Yet under the skin, the writers of these various pieces all serve the same higher purpose: to share their perspectives in an attempt to show readers why their viewpoints are important to all of us. It is in this spirit of shared perspectives that we offer these representations of the world we live in, as seen through the eyes of our fellow travelers.

Jeff Chon & Tereza Joy Kramer
26th Annual Spectrum Award
Honorable Mentions

Noe Andrews
*JAN 119: Staging America’s Families*
David DeRose

Susan Bowes
“Manifesting God”
*LEAP: Critical Perspectives II*
Pamela Thomas

Gabriella Carroll
“Androgyny, Affliction, and Atonement”
*ENGL 175: Shakespeare*
Hilda Ma

Marielle Coyne
“The Second World in Tragedy: Othello”
*ENGL 175: Shakespeare*
Hilda Ma

Jaquelyn Davis
“All Works of the Gods are Ephemeral, Even the Redwoods”
*JAN 026: Bay Area Wild*
Molly Metherd & Janice Doane

Larissa Del Carlo Estrada
“Argument: The Organic Hype”
*ENGL 005: Argument & Research*
Marlene Mahoney

Sofia Milunovich
“A Spring Misunderstanding”
*PERFA 184: Dance in Performance*
Cathy Davalos

Reyna Olegario
“Papalists vs. Royalists: Battle of the Evidences”
*TRS 102: Medieval Christianity*
Zach Flanagin

Heather Rikic
“You Say You Want a Revolution”
*LEAP: Critical Perspectives II*
Pamela Thomas

Sarah Sirota
“The Five Stages of Grief”
*ENGL 100: Advanced Composition*
Rosemary Graham

Terry Taplin
“Towards a Lyric of the Spheres”
*ENGL 262: Craft Seminar in Poetry*
Brenda Hillman
# 26th Annual Award Winners

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The film *Vertigo* surveys the life of former detective “Scottie” Ferguson after he is hired to follow Madeleine Elster, the wife of his prominent friend Gavin Elster. What Scottie, played by Jimmy Stewart, is unaware of is that he is not following Gavin’s wife at all but a hired actress: Judy, played by Kim Novak. Throughout the film, Scottie never actually meets Madeleine, nor do the audience members ever see the real Madeleine—it is always Judy, or Judy playing the role of Madeleine. After following her for some time, Scottie observes that Madeleine has a fascination with the tragic death of a woman in a painting, Carlotta, to whom she might be related. As Scottie learns about Madeleine’s obsession with Carlotta and her life, he falls in love with her, and she with him. Tragically, the two are parted due to Madeleine’s untimely death: flinging herself from the top of a bell tower. This is where Madeleine’s life ends, and Scottie’s obsession with her begins. It is not until halfway through the film that the audience
most connected to the Real, it makes sense even meets Judy, who would be a dead ringer for Madeleine if not for her brunette hair and coarse mannerisms. Scottie becomes obsessed with making Judy into Madeleine and with recreating the woman he loved, never realizing that Judy was Madeleine all along. The Madeleine he fell in love with never actually existed except as a creation of Judy and Gavin Elster.

Kim Novak’s role as Judy involves the complex duality of not only Judy playing the role of Madeleine Elster but also that of Judy attempting to stay true to herself while Scottie tries to change her back into Madeleine. It is not Madeleine’s identity that the reader questions, but that of Judy and her sincerity as one woman, a stylish and graceful blonde, or as the other, a coarser and more abrasive brunette. As can be seen in many other Hitchcock films, the use of the mirror is employed to reveal true identities—in the three scenes I will examine, there is the sense that Judy is attempting to retain control over herself. Unfortunately, she is losing miserably as the reflection of her alternate personality, Madeleine, reaches out to envelop and take over Judy’s identity, forcing Judy to become Madeleine once more, thus resulting in her death. Theorists, such as Laura Mulvey, have written works on the film Vertigo that closely analyze how Scottie confronts his feelings for the two women (who are in fact one) and how it is his gaze that shapes the spectator’s gaze of Madeleine/Judy. However, Judy’s gaze into the mirror and how she sees herself reveal just as much to the spectator as Scottie’s looks towards her do; he is certainly her voyeur, but he is not the only character whose gaze is worth considering, particularly when applying the Lacanian theory of psychoanalysis to how Judy regresses back into Madeleine.

Vertigo is generally considered a film that emphasizes how women are portrayed to exist solely beneath the male gaze, giving the power to the men who watch them, and consequently, to the male spectator who inevitably identifies himself with the male protagonist. Laura Mulvey’s explanation of the dominant male gaze and the female’s role under it emphasizes, “Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman” (834). This indicates that the only position women have is given to them by men, as opposed to having the ability to create their own meaning or control how they are seen and whom they choose to be seen by. Mulvey’s argument gives no power whatsoever to women: men control the gaze, the camera, and thus control the spectator’s point of view, causing the spectator to associate with the male gaze.

Although she elaborates on the idea of the male gaze, Mulvey fails to fully analyze how the female gaze can factor into this film. She continues to describe the association between spectator and male lead by saying, “Hitchcock’s skillful use of identification processes and liberal use of subjective camera from the point of view of the male protagonist draw the spectators deeply into his position, making them share his uneasy gaze. The audience is absorbed into a voyeuristic situation within the screen scene and diegesis which parodies his own in the cinema” (841-842). She acknowledges that though the subjective gaze is normally directed by Scottie, one instance is directed instead by Judy in a flashback to Madeleine’s death. Judy watches as Madeleine is thrown to her death from the top of the bell tower while Scottie only sees what he is supposed to see—her landing. However, the view through the camera lens is not always the only important aspect to consider; what is taken in during the objective scenes motivated
by neither Scottie nor Judy are also important. These scenes reveal the couple to the spectator, and in these instances, Judy’s gaze provides the spectator with a realm of focus.

Most important in these objectively motivated scenes is the stress placed on Judy’s gaze into the mirror. This relates to the Lacanian theory of psychoanalysis, which emphasizes that there are three stages of human reality: (1) the real or natural stage, (2) the transformative or Imaginary stage, and (3) the cultural or symbolic Stage (Dayan). The first stage is most closely connected to pre-birth and death; it is the stage in which there are no signifiers and no understanding of self. The real Stage is represented by wombs or by death and is not a stage where actual humans can exist in, unlike the third stage. The cultural stage is the most tangible stage, easily understood as that which “gives its structure to human reality—it is the level of the symbolic” (120). This level connects to Mulvey’s idea of the signification that women represent; however in this level all things are signifiers and everything has some sort of meaning. Mulvey places women in the position of holding meaning, ultimately aligning them with the third realm that Lacan describes. In the third realm, things and objects are given and retain meaning—women are treated as objects and holding the meaning that the patriarchy puts upon them, whether as the virgin, the whore, the housewife, or something else altogether. The third order is the symbolic level because of signifiers, like women, that are used to form connections. This leads to the idea of a shared language of symbolic connections and the understanding that language is the ultimate signifier.

The intermediate stage between these two is what will be most concentrated upon in this essay: the Imaginary stage, or as Lacan calls it, “the mirror phase” (Dayan 120). This mirror phase is the point of development in which the child receives its sense of being, of self, from the mother. The child sees the mother as having complete control of her limbs and body, making “the notion of a unified body… fantasy before being reality. It is an image the child receives from the outside” (121). Lacan’s notion of self as it pertains to the child is one step towards reaching the cultural level. The Imaginary stage is a transition phase, in which the child begins to base its movements and understanding of its own body on the mother. This development proceeds from the real stage to the Imaginary stage, where the mother provides a template of the symbolic for the child to project its own identity upon. The child learns how to behave according to the mother and her movements; she acts as a mirror and a reflection of the finalized result that the child must eventually attain. With respect to Judy, Madeleine plays the role of the mother; she is the figure Judy must emulate in order to please Scottie.

With respect to Judy, Madeleine plays the role of the mother; she is the figure Judy must emulate in order to please Scottie. Since Madeleine is the part of Judy’s identity most connected to the Real, it makes sense that Judy’s movement through the three stages would be the reverse of the normal.
to understanding Judy’s reversal into Madeleine and her inability to identify as both women. Since Madeleine is the part of Judy’s identity that is most connected to the real stage, it makes sense that Judy’s movement through the three stages would be the reverse of the normal. Judy is in the third stage, and she cannot proceed any further into that realm, particularly when her mother figure (Madeleine) is in the real/death stage. To become what Scottie wants, she must recreate Madeleine.

Based on Lacan’s interpretation of human reality, Judy’s reflection in the mirror does not merely represent her as herself; she is still connected, to a certain extent, to the realm of the imaginary. She is still dependent upon Madeleine as a pseudo-mother figure to govern her movements and her actions. Madeleine is less a mother figure than the projection of what Judy should aspire to become. However, “Madeleine Elster … does not really exist; she is only an image, a creation of Gavin Elster’s imaginative powers and of Scottie’s Oedipal desires. Elster sets her up as the object of Scottie’s gaze and then allows Scottie to create her for himself through the exercise of this gaze, through what Mulvey calls his fetishistic scopophilia” (Hollinger 22).

Judy, as a full physical and real-life woman, is introduced to the spectator as only someone who looks like Madeleine; however, as the story continues, Madeleine’s ghost draws her back from the cultural order into the imaginary. The mirrors that Judy looks into reflect her devolution back into Madeleine and the second stage (and eventually, the first). Scottie is already too far gone in his fetishized attempts at recreating Madeleine, making it so “Scottie can neither accept nor even really see the ‘real’ Judy: all that holds him to her is the ghost of Madeleine that lurks within her” (Wood 102). Madeleine’s existence is never planted in the symbolic realm (reality) because she does not exist except in the imaginary stage, where she acts as the mother figure to Judy, who understands her role to Scottie when she sees he wants her to be Madeleine, or in the real stage, where she represents death. Judy’s reflection as she becomes more and more like Madeleine displays the regression from the symbolic realm through the imaginary realm because she must learn to imitate a woman who never really existed; Madeleine is never in the third order.

As Clifford T. Manlove expounds upon the differing responses to Mulvey’s article, he brings up the Lacanian theory of psychoanalysis. Mulvey’s article is highly regarded for its analysis of the male gaze and Freud’s scopophilia; however, many of its responses were as critical as they were positive. Manlove states that “Todd McGowan argued that Mulvey’s use of Lacan misses the role of an essential element in the gaze, what Lacan describes as the ‘objet a’” (87). The objet a in Lacanian analysis is an object of desire becoming a fixation. Over obsession with the objet a can lead one to develop a fetish for it, as is so clearly the case with Scottie: his obsession with the objet a is the recreation of Madeleine. The objet a is associated with the mirror phase—only through release of the obsession does one move on to the final stage of human reality. Scottie connects to the Imaginary Level in his obsession with Madeleine, who can never be replaced despite attempts to recreate her within Judy. This causes him to lose contact with the version of his self that is fit for society. The spectator sympathizes with Scottie for the first half of the film, but when he begins reverting back to the sublevel, he is no longer as easy to identify with.

Judy, the real flesh and blood woman who becomes the object of Scottie’s fixation, is far easier to identify with. Judy merely wants Scottie to love her for who she is. She does not recognize that Scottie is no longer attached to
reality until he begins making her over as Madeleine. Mulvey is accurate in the assessment that, “He reconstructs Judy as Madeleine, forces her to conform in every detail to the actual physical appearance of his fetish” (842). Scottie’s fetish is finding something to replace his Madeleine as his objet a. This forced acquiescence of fulfilling Scottie’s desire to retain her leaves Judy to confront her ulterior self—she must acknowledge Madeleine, who reaches out from beyond the grave to re-insert herself into Judy’s life.

By attempting to recreate Madeleine, Judy must go through a regression, devolving from the cultural stage through the Imaginary and into the real. It is not entirely of her own volition that this occurs but because of Scottie’s fetish and fantasy that she is attempting to fulfill. She becomes the replacement Madeleine because he cannot obtain the actual dead Madeleine; however, Judy can never replace Madeleine, Scottie’s objet a. Her attempts at recreation force her to confront the only model for Madeleine she has: what she sees in the mirror as she becomes more and more like Madeleine is the mother-model that she bases her retrogression upon. In this manner, she undergoes a Lacanian regression, a reversal of the normal stages a human develops through. While in most cases the symbolic level is the goal, Judy’s goal is to become Madeleine, an exercise that ends in death and a return to the first stage rather than the third. She unconsciously accepts that she is not the one who controls herself; it is Madeleine who controls her.

Judy allows herself to be made over into Madeleine but only out of her love for Scottie; she fears becoming Madeleine to the point where she no longer exists as Judy. In his analysis of Vertigo, Robin Wood states, “In a sense, it is Madeleine who is the more ‘real’ of the two, since in Madeleine all kinds of potentialities completely hidden in Judy find expression. The pretence was that Carlotta was taking possession of Madeleine; in reality, Madeleine has taken possession of Judy” (97). This threat is very real to Judy because while her identity is consumed she transforms back into a dead woman; she ceases to exist on her own, instead acting as a replacement for someone who never existed in the first place. Despite Wood’s idea that Madeleine is the more real of the two, Karen Hollinger argues that Judy is “represented as a real woman, not as an ideal image like Madeleine, and thus she fills the space in the diegesis left vacant” (24). In an ideal world, Scottie would have his Madeleine, and Judy would have her Scottie, but neither can have what they want. Judy is the more real of the two women, but Madeleine is the more real in the sense she exists within the real realm. Only one can truly exist because of how strong and overwhelming the distinct personalities are. Judy must conquer Madeleine or vice versa. Two personas cannot live in the same body if they continue to identify themselves within different stages of human reality.

Judy, before her regression, has already moved beyond the mirror phase; despite this, she is constantly engaged with the mirror and, by association, with Madeleine. For the last third of the film she sees herself becoming progressively more like Madeleine every time she looks into a mirror. The spectator knows what she knows and is complicit in the secret she keeps from Scottie. Her secret becomes our secret, and her guilt becomes our guilt. In this respect, it is not Scottie’s gaze we identify with, though it is he who controls the original half of the film with the insertion of Judy’s flashback and her ability to direct the camera. It is not necessarily a subjective shot because the camera does not look through her point of view; however, her looks into the mirror are just as indicative of where the spectator should focus. The duality...
of Judy confronting Judy, and once more confronting Madeleine, in these mirror shots is key and her inability to identify as both women. She cannot exist as two halves—the mirror version of herself and her physical self; she must allow one to overwhelm the other. This is where Madeleine, the ghost or mirror self, becomes a stronger, more forceful character. Judy’s acceptance of becoming Scottie’s objet a causes her to lose who she truly is in order to satisfy his need to recreate Madeleine. But it is important to note that while Judy does this to placate Scottie, his gaze is not the focus; it is her confrontation with herself in the mirrors that is essential to understanding how she interacts with the Imaginary Level.

Possibly the most intriguing mirror image in this film is one that initiates Scottie’s attempts to turn Judy into the perfect Madeleine. Unwilling to engage with the ghost of her past, Judy realizes exactly what Scottie is doing and tries to leave the room in the store where they get the grey suit. As she turns away to a 90 degree angle, she faces herself in the mirror, but the reflection is not of her: the half facing the mirror is Judy, and the half that looks back at her is Madeleine. She is on the precipice of becoming both women, but they cannot share full possession of her body. Her distress increases in this moment, and she almost flees the scene, so terrified of facing her alternate persona. The camera follows Scottie as he approaches her, saying, “Do this for me” (Hitchcock), while almost pinning her against the mirror. He and his reflection are on either side of Judy and her mirror self, forcing her to confront what is right in front of both of them. She has no alternative but to face herself in the mirror. There is no escape from Scottie’s obsession. The camera closes in on the Judy and Scottie as part of their own world, yet their relationship is more than the two of them. Madeleine’s ghost lives in their relationship, confronting Judy whenever she glances into a mirror. Try as she might to deny it, Judy knows her face is Madeleine’s; because of Scottie’s fixation with the replacement of his objet a, Judy is forced to face Madeleine’s ghost within their relationship and continues to face it out of her love for him.

In a following scene, Judy returns with newly-dyed blonde hair; however, it is not styled like Madeleine’s. Scottie makes her go into the bathroom to fix her hair and when she comes out, she is bathed in an ethereal glow, looking exactly like Madeleine. When Judy walks out of the bathroom dressed as Madeleine, she is cast into a hazy glow because Madeleine does not exist in reality. Her form is somehow more insubstantial from becoming more like Madeleine. However, she cannot change her personality from the real-life Judy, who wants “big beautiful steaks” and speaks far more coarsely than the well-bred Madeleine. Hitchcock goes so far as to have Kim Novak speak in different registers for the two different women she would be playing (Lippe). Carlotta, who looks like Madeleine, is even further detached from reality.

As she turns away to a 90 degree angle, she faces herself in the mirror, but the reflection is not of her: the half facing the mirror is Judy, and the half that looks back at her is Madeleine. She is on the precipice of becoming both women, but they cannot share full possession of her body.
She only appears in paintings and in Scottie’s dreams but never in reality; each woman exists on her own individual plane of being. Carlotta is the least tangible and Madeleine has some connection to reality through her bond with Judy, but she is also representative of the “Imaginary Mirror Stage.” Judy is the most physical, the most tangible, and the easiest to identify with on the screen. Some version of Madeleine exists, even if it is merely a facade of the real Madeleine, while Judy is fully proven flesh and blood. This relates to Judy’s deprogression to the “mirror phase” as she becomes more and more like Madeleine. If Madeleine is the Imaginary Stage, then Judy becoming her is indicative of how every time she looks into a mirror she takes another step towards the mirror phase. What Scottie sees, what the spectator sees, and what Judy sees when she looks into the mirror is none other than Madeleine.

The final image of Judy replicated in the mirror is a pivotal point of the film, where Scottie finally realizes what he has hoped for all along: the Madeleine he knew is still alive. Well, not necessarily the Madeleine. The woman before him contains elements of Judy, Madeleine, and Carlotta. Judy has been transformed into the Madeleine persona reluctantly, but she chooses to put on the Carlotta necklace. All along the recreation of Madeleine, Judy has been careful not actively try to become Madeleine; however, “although she has stopped consciously trying to fight Scottie’s demand that she sacrifice herself to meet his feminine ideal, her real personality’s unconscious struggle for survival is expressed narratively when she inadvertently put on” Carlotta’s necklace (Hollinger 25). Seemingly a subconscious decision, the entirely revitalized Madeleine puts on the necklace almost instinctually, without forethought or understanding what her actions mean. Judy adorns herself as Madeleine would—it is not just Scottie making her into Madeleine but Madeleine repossessing the body she once inhabited. The lines between Madeleine in death and Judy in life have been blurred; for this scene they can both exist momentarily, though death is coming quickly. When Scottie wants to ‘muss’ her, she refuses to go to him, instead saying, “Too late, I got my face on” (Hitchcock). It sounds like Judy and acts like Judy, but the woman in the shot is Madeleine. Despite her reluctance before and during the change, she is totally fine with looking like Madeleine at this moment because it means she has Scottie’s love. She consciously changes herself for him, and in doing so changes herself for Madeleine, making it far easier for Madeleine to steal the focus from her, even going so far as taking the one gaze that Judy had. Judy’s gaze is not overwhelmed by Scottie or the male gaze but by Madeleine, who controls her look and fills the mirror to replace Judy’s own image.

Ironically, Judy addresses the idea of Scottie’s male gaze right before the moment he realizes that she is not only Judy but Madeleine as well. He asks how to fix the clasp, and she responds, “Can’t you see?” (Hitchcock). This is not just a response to his inability to clasp her necklace; she is imploring him to look closer, to see her for who she is. In the entire third act of this film, Judy attempts to make Scottie love her as Judy, but she has let herself become forgotten in his need to make Madeleine alive again. The fact that the camera doesn’t dolly in on the real necklace, but on the one in the mirror, only further emphasizes that it is not Judy he is looking at: it is her reflection. He looks at Madeleine in the mirror—not Judy. Even worse, what looks back at him is tinged with Carlotta’s possessive spirit: as the camera dollies back out it leaves the painting of Carlotta with the necklace, not the actual necklace itself. This jump back to the time when he stalked
Madeleine drives the connection even further in the audience’s mind that Scottie is not looking at Judy, but Madeleine. She is everywhere to him, especially as he looks at Judy in the mirror. Judy is complicit in Madeleine’s death, so it makes sense that she would be haunted by Madeleine almost as much as Scottie. While Scottie tried to stop the woman he thought was Madeleine from jumping to her death, Judy knew the entire time what was going to happen. From the beginning, she was responsible for Madeleine’s death. This connection to death is related to Lacan’s first stage of human reality: the order of nature, or of the Real Realm. Judy’s final moments in the bell tower reflect her fear of Madeleine taking over her body. If one takes the idea that, “According to Lacan, the gaze extends into the symbolic and imaginary from the real, a third order, prior to the others” (Manlove 90), then it is easy to understand how Madeleine’s gaze back at Judy from the mirror influences Judy to the point where she feels the need to recreate Madeleine’s death. Here it is even more evident that the female look, Madeleine’s gaze from the real realm, is what should be most important to the audience and to Judy. She did not see Madeleine looking back at her from the mirror, convinced of the woman’s death. Madeleine exists within Judy to an almost tangible point, and in this scene, a shadow rises up from the stairs, and Madeleine takes a solid shape, at least in Judy’s mind. She is so connected back to the real stage that she is death, even as she flings herself from the tower. She must recreate Madeleine’s death to return back to the real, and this shadow provides the impetus to do so. She needs to fulfill Madeleine’s death to engage in the comfort of repetition because “according to Freud, the ‘compulsion to repeat’ is as primary to the subject as the tendency to seek pleasure seems to be … That which ‘sees’ in the human subject, according to Freud and Lacan, looks through the drive, ignoring pleasure for the sake of repetition, even unto death” (Manlove 89). Even without Scottie to encourage her to turn back into Madeleine, Judy’s association with her other half is undeniable; she slips on the persona of Madeleine without any effort at all, and by slipping on the features of a dead woman, she inevitably invites death to come to her once more.
Works Cited


When you write anything, you have to be prepared to make sacrifices. Kill your darlings and all that. Perfection, for instance. Never go in search of perfection. I didn’t try for perfection in this essay, and I certainly didn’t wind up with it. What I did get, though, is an essay that makes me proud. Perfection, in all its glorious and most well-crafted forms, gets boring. It gets old. It ceases to have any meaning behind it. So why would I ever try for perfection when I could write a flawed essay on one of Alfred Hitchcock’s greatest films? Even his films have flaws, but you wouldn’t want to change them.

My first exposure to Hitchcock’s *auteur* collection came when I was very young. After a family trip to Bodega Bay, we sat down to watch *The Birds*. This was followed over the years with *Psycho*, *North by Northwest*, and *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. I’ve always loved film and movies and the whole experience of immersing myself in the lives of the characters playing across the silver screen. But Lisa Manter’s class just about did me in with the amount of Hitchcock to which we were exposed. We attentively watched a movie every week, taking copious notes; we read through dozens of articles and essays about the art and structure of film—not to mention the psychoanalysis sections and bits about what I like to call the “secret conspiracies” of Hitchcock’s films. This class showed me how to delve into film analysis to a level I’ve never even considered. Hitch and I became very close during this semester, to the point where I’m pretty sure I saw that pointy-nosed little silhouette shape hovering at the edges of my dreams a couple of nights, probably plotting to kill me.

When I wrote this essay, I knew I wanted to use Jacques Lacan’s theory of psychoanalysis, even though, at the time, it still confused me. Thankfully, I didn’t attempt an analysis using any of Raymond Bellour’s criticism: I might still be figuring my essay out. These theories stuck out to me because they challenged me, and because I don’t take guff from any theorist who thinks he’s going to end an essay and leave me without any understanding of what he was talking about.

That’s why I’m glad I had Lisa Manter teaching this class and helping us get through the theories. And I’m glad Koko and Erin were just as confused as I was when we first started the readings. And I’m super grateful to my friends and colleagues at the Center for Writing Across the Curriculum for selecting and working with me on my essay to make it better and more clear for the people who didn’t struggle through the class with me. Cheers!

Bridget Hanna
Zoe Loos, “Hidden on a Windy Day”
As the Valedictorian of both my eighth grade and high school classes, the Academic Commissioner for my college’s Honors Program, and an avid, book-a-week reader (yes, even in my free time), I would be lying to you if I said that I didn’t meet the “brainy girl” criteria in more ways than one. You all know the one I’m talking about here; it doesn’t take much imagination to conjure up images of the plain-looking, bespectacled girl at the front of the class, hand perpetually in the air, who has more cats than friends. I’ll admit it, in so many ways, I’m that woman. I read when I get up in the morning, and before I go to bed, and at many points of the day in between. I find writing essays bearable, if not downright pleasurable. I like talking about literature and poetry. Okay, that’s a lie. I love it. In some ways, I fit so cleanly into the “smart girl” stereotype that it’s just laughable.

Well, here are the ways I don’t. Those libraries I’m supposed to love? I think they’re musty and depressing. I would far rather think in fresh forest air like Thoreau than confine my thoughts to a dusty library. The cats obsession? Dogs are so far superior to cats it is not even worth arguing. And yes, I have human friends too. Also, I don’t need glasses because my vision is flawless, and my collection of clothes rivals my collection of books.

I understand that this does not fit into the spinster librarian image reserved specially for female academics. I know that I am supposed to be lonely and homely, destined forever to be in the company of long deceased literary men rather than living, breathing ones. I know that I am not meant to be bold or interesting or funny because the world doesn’t know what to do with women who are brilliant in more than one way. I also know, however, that I am not willing to accept how I am supposed to be.

I know what you’re thinking: Is she really complaining about this right now? Leave it to a snotty white girl to bemoan the fact that no one is paying attention to her. Admittedly, this claim is somewhat valid. Of all of the horrible things that come from stereotyping, my observations about being more than just “the brainy one” are not particularly weighty on their own. However, they hint at something far more pressing than my individual complaints.

This isn’t about just me. A study published last year by The Chronicle of Higher Education analyzed two million academic articles on online databases, published anywhere from 1665-2010, for the author’s gender and the article’s subject matter (“Women...”). From 1991 to 2010, 1.1 million authors were analyzed. Of the 1,765 fields and subfields covered in the articles, ranging from the hard sciences to philosophy, only seventeen subfields had female authorship of 50% or more. These subfields included early childhood learning, minority students, feminist history, pregnancy outcomes,
and gender. Even in an age when women are more empowered, studies like this one make it clear that the supposed overwrought cry for female equality is still one that needs to be heard. It is impossible to believe that my observations about stereotypes of smart women are frivolous while women in academia are still so clearly boxed in by what they are supposed to be good at (i.e., having kids and raising them).

What happens, then, when women step out of their traditional roles and expand their interests beyond motherhood and teaching? Take the business world, for example. To make sense of women in positions of power, who obviously display intelligence, confidence, and other traits celebrated in men, we assume that they must be deficient in some other way to justify their extraordinary qualities. An article published in 2011 on Forbes.com, titled “The Top Ten Worst Stereotypes about Powerful Women” includes labels like lonely, weak, cold, and, most tellingly, masculine (Goudreau). This isn’t a phenomenon isolated in random studies or articles, though. For an example, you need not go further than typing “Hillary Clinton” into Google. The potential presidential candidate has been at the center of debates about feminism for decades, but a recent cover of Time magazine is the hottest topic. The cover portrays a woman’s leg in a navy pantsuit with a tiny man dangling from the tip of her modest black heel next to the words “Can Anyone Stop Hillary?” (Von Drehle). To the Huffington Post’s Marianne Schnall, “This cover is a potent visualization of some of the concerning cultural obstacles and stereotypes that continue to hold women and girls back from positions of power.” Perhaps the most “concerning” of these is the fact that the cover transforms the powerful female into a giant on a rampage. Having it both ways isn’t possible for women; there are only two mutually exclusive options. The first is to be intelligent and powerful, but lonely or, in Hillary’s case as I’ve heard it put, “abrasive” and emotionally imbalanced. The other option is the obvious flip-side of the first: you are stupid and submissive, but cozily married and domestic. Apparently, there is no being intelligent and powerful and attractive and happily married. That would be simply disastrous to a world that compartmentalizes in order to make sense of a reality that is impossibly complicated.

The outrage over Marissa Mayer’s Vogue photo shoot last September is another example of the panic that is incited when a powerful woman embraces the fact that she is both sexy and smart. Many people were violently disapproving of the fact that a woman as high-powered as the Yahoo CEO would play up her sexuality in a fashion magazine. In a CNN article titled “Sexed Up and Smart,” Grace Chan, vice president for product management of Wanderful Media, ex-plained that “[Mayer’s photo shoot] is something I wouldn’t personally do because I believe if you want to be treated equal, you shouldn’t take advantage of your physical assets” (Wallace). Others argued that the photos, in which Mayer reclines on a chaise lounge in

To make sense of women in positions of power, who obviously display intelligence, confidence, and other traits celebrated in men, we assume that they must be deficient in some other way to justify their extraordinary qualities.
a form-fitting blue dress and heels, reveal that it is popular media that portrays women as sex objects. Others still claim that the photo shoot only proves her weakness as a business woman. In the end, I’m not so sure all of these different arguments matter. The fact that there is an argument at all reveals that there is something wrong. As Mary Cook, CEO of CallSocket.com, asked, “When she ‘took office’ did she also park her sense of fashion, personal interests, and humor at the front door?” (Wallace). These criticisms demonstrate how women are pigeonholed on a daily basis. Mayer’s beauty does not detract from her intelligence, in the same way that her power as a CEO doesn’t make her ugly.

What if we started thinking of all women in this multidimensional way? Consider that cheerleader we all hated in high school with the perfect hair, sparkling smile, and gorgeous quarterback boyfriend. What if she had a knack for calculus? And what if her sense of humor wasn’t just at the expense of the geeks in the lunch line? We would have to, God forbid, acknowledge the fact that she couldn’t just be that cookie cutter girl we love to hate. She might actually have qualities that make her interesting, even likable.

By now, I’m sure you get it. I am more than just smart. Yes, when I show up to class in the morning, I will have scrupulously done all of the reading and will be prepared to contribute intelligently to the discussion a number of times, but I’ll be damned if I haven’t put just as much care into putting together an outfit I love. As Walt Whitman would say, “I contain multitudes.” All women do. So let us be.


Author’s Note

My model for this essay was “Paper Tigers,” by Wesley Yang, in which the author explores stereotypes about Asian-American men. After reading his essay, my professor, Rosemary Graham, invited us to write about stereotypes with which we’ve had personal experience. I was pretty daunted by this task. How could I, an upper-middle-class white woman, discuss stereotypes in a way that wasn’t completely frivolous in comparison to really problematic stereotypes about race and class? After staring blankly at my computer screen for an hour, I realized that the due date was nearing, and I had to at least get something on the page. I knew that I was a geek by most standards, so I went with it and attempted to mimic the authoritative, yet humorous voice Yang employed in his essay. After reading the draft aloud to my class, Rosemary encouraged me not to be afraid of playing up my unapologetic voice, even if it wasn’t necessarily one that I would use in real life. Still, I found my self-consciousness nag in the back of my mind throughout the revision process. You sound arrogant. You sound uptight. You sound abrasive.

This fear was easy enough to dismiss when I handed the assignment in to Rosemary, who had already encouraged me to write with such attitude. When I was notified the piece was a finalist for Spectrum, however, the insecurity was revived. What if I am just lumped in with Hillary, Marissa, and all the rest as “bitchy” or “one-dimensional”? Did I really want the entire school to hear this voice with my name attached? I let those thoughts echo around in my head for a few days. Then, I saw a post on my Facebook feed about actress Alice Eve, who was interviewed about her role as Dr. Carol Marcus in a recent Star Trek film. The interviewer asked, “Aren’t you a little too beautiful to be a science officer?” To this, Eve replied graciously, “I’m flattered, but I didn’t realize those things were mutually exclusive.” This response made something click for me. Those initial fears about sounding too powerful are exactly what my essay is about. I had been criticizing myself for using the exact same sexist rhetoric I had worked so hard to condemn in my essay. I was afraid of being the woman who had written the piece to empower. My original question rang out again. Do I want this argument to have my name on it, too? Absolutely, resoundingly, yes. I didn’t write this essay to get sympathy for my own insignificant struggles. I didn’t write it to make myself sound “holier than thou.” I wrote it because it needed to be said, especially because I was scared to say it.

Holland, Audrey, and Tereza at the Center for Writing deserve many, many thanks for all their help in improving this essay. It would not be what it is without all of their suggestions and support! Thanks are also owed to Rosemary Graham for encouraging me to challenge myself and pursue the revision of this piece.

Jaquelyn Davis
In the year 1781, Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II called in the composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to commission a Turkish themed opera that would entertain the visiting Russian diplomat Grand Duke Paul Petrovich. For the occasion, Mozart created an opera called *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (1782). The opera, which is based on Christoph Bretzner’s story *Belmont und Constanze*, follows two European men who attempt to rescue their stolen women from a Pasha’s harem while dodging the palace’s mean-spirited overseer, Osmin. While it was meant to entertain Petrovich, the opera was partially meant to incite the Russian guest to fight the Ottomans. The Emperor hoped it would make Petrovich more likely to accept a secret agreement, thus allowing Russia and Austria to claim regions of the Ottoman Empire for themselves. Mozart’s opera was immensely popular on its premiere, drawing in audiences with its twisted and fascinating display of polygamy and imitated exoticism (Hoeveler). Mozart’s *Abduction from the Seraglio* acts as an archetypal manifestation of the trend known as *turquerie*, which is a trend that steals seemingly exotic fragments from an ethnic group and uses those shards of a rough sketch with total indifference and irreverence towards the actual lifestyles, beliefs, and realities of the people they supposedly depict.

In order to fully understand *turquerie* and the popular appetite for Turkish stories and luxuriousness developed in Europe, one needs to understand King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella’s revival of the Spanish Inquisition in Seville, which forced Muslim rulers out of power. This was a time of stark contrast for Muslims because they ruled over Spain for over seven hundred years and were now being deported (Hoeveler). During this time, the Ottoman Empire was considered dangerous. Authors usually referred to the inhabitants as barbarians or heathens who sought to conquer all Christian civilization: a race meant to be both ridiculed and feared (Meyer). Although most Europeans would not admit it, their fear was partially caused by the Arabs being more mathematically and technologically advanced as well as offering a nearby, alternative culture (Hoeveler). As a legitimate threat, the Ottoman Empire did not make for light popular subject material.

The Ottoman Empire and the ideas surrounding it changed definitively in 1683, when the Turks attacked Vienna and were defeated on the famous “Twelfth of September,” pushing them out of Transylvania and Hungary (Meyer, Wolff). Johann Pezzl, an eyewitness, was there for the one-hundredth and last anniversary cele-

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1. The original, non-translated name is *Die Entführung gus dem Serail*.
2. The Muslims lost power over Spain after Catholic monarchs defeated Granada, the last Moorish stronghold, in 1492.
3. The inhabitants were referred to as Turks, Arabs, or Moors.
bration of the Turks’ defeat, about which he said, “the cowards of Istanbul are no longer worthy of the gunpowder exploded in their memory” (qtd. in Wolff 148). This suggests that the commemoration could be forgotten since the Turks were no longer politically significant. This may have been a common sentiment that Mozart shared, which is why he could represent the Turks in light operatic comedy for a Venetian audience. Turquerie became even more apparent later in the 1800s when Tsar Nicholas I described the Ottoman Empire as the “Sick Man of Europe.” Really, the use of the “Ottoman menace” in literature, opera, and ballet seemed to come up most when the threat had drifted safely in the past. 4

Turquerie was Europe’s way to claim dominance over the Orient by remaining nationalist and labeling the Moorish ways as inferior while continuing to feed the desire for colonial acquisitions, a wealth of commodities, and the richly exotic. This led Europeans (mostly the English and French) to produce depictions of “cross-cultural encounters and conversions that sought desperately to define English identity in an increasingly unstable context” (Vitkus qtd. in Hoeveler 47). This might explain characterizations such as the “the renegade, the convert, or the shepherd turned emperor, ‘all figures that embody cultural flexibility...’” (Hoeveler 49). One example of this paradox is the character Pasha Selim in Mozart’s opera. He is portrayed at various times as the passionate Turk and the demanding dictator. At one moment, Pasha is threatening Constanza, and the next, he claims to only want her devotion and love (Meyer, Mozart). Another example is when Pasha is shown as the vengeful and violent barbarian when he has the son of his worst enemy in his power, and then at another time, he is seen as a forgiving and magnanimous ruler when he rises above his hate: “You are mistaken. I despised your father far too much ever to follow in his footsteps. Take your freedom, take Constanza” (Mozart). This fulfilled the trend of demoting the role of the cruel Turk to that of a subordinate (in this case, Osmin) and praising the kind, enlightened pasha (Meyer). By using character conversion and other plot tricks, nationalism and colonialism acted as perfect compliments to each other within works of turquerie, and the audiences’ growing appetite for these pieces was insatiable.

In eighteenth century Europe, everything that was considered “Turkish” was in vogue. There were “Turkish” operas, plays, and ballets, along with “Turkish” themed parties, costumes, novels, clothing, and candies. Theaters were packed with showy scenic backdrops and designs for the mosques, harems, and gardens. Every conceivable foreign character was paraded for the audience, and humorous scenes consisting of Europeans disguised in Arab garb delighted the masses. The past menace of the Ottomans, and their attempted siege of Vienna, provided dramatic, emotional material, and “passionate tales of seraglio intrigue introduced a sensuality and luxuriousness that had been lacking in Western literature” (Meyer 474). The “Turkish” culture nourished an elaborate fad that required endless magic, fantasy, sumptuousness, grand escapades, and sexual and physical perils. The resulting genre dedicated to fulfilling this need was immensely popular. For instance, the “Turkish” ballet Grétry’s La Caravane du Caire (1783) received five hundred performances in Paris between 1783 and 1829. As artists moved to cater to the masses, authors of heroic dramas and adventure novels turned away from traditional Western rulers as characters and replaced them with Eastern emperors, tsars, and sultans. Similarly, operatic librettos
turned less to archaic myths for storylines and began to follow contemporary fiction which was filled with new Oriental romances full of uninhibited passion and religious conflict (Meyer).

Feelings of religious superiority also played a large role in fueling turquerie, which often revealed elements of Christian anxiety and anti-Islamic sentiments. From the perspectives of many Europeans, Islam was a cult established by a false prophet: the exact archenemy of the true Catholic Church. It was “demonized as the dark and yet seductive and attractive ‘Other’ to Christianity, reflected in a variety of literary texts as if in a distorting funhouse mirror” (Hoeverel). The Muslims were seen as irrational extremists because they refused to convert in order to possess ever-fresh virgins in the afterlife. Also strange to Westerners was the idea of religiously sanctioned polygamy as well as the trade of women as sexual slaves because Europeans thought Islam led Muslim men to believe females were soulless (Hoeveler). Examples of Christianity or more genteel ethics triumphing over Muslim barbarity appealed to Western audiences and were used in fictional Turkish tales.

There are copious turquerie examples that followed similar trends, but the most reflective and typical of the times and culture is probably Mozart’s *Abduction from the Seraglio*. This particular turquerie happens to contain some of the most commonly used plot devices and themes. Europeans were entranced by the bizarre Oriental institution that created tension and suspense with its various sexual and social implications. Even more archetypal was the abduction and rescue of a lovely young European woman from the harem. Generally, the story would begin with a girl who is captured for a sultan. A rescue attempt is made by a lover or relative, who usually fails until the sultan is either outwitted or shows his generosity by liberating his captives (Meyer).

Another conventional way Mozart appealed to audiences was with his characterizations of both the Turk-buffoon and seemingly independent Western women. The palace guard Osmin is unreasonable, always threatening to use barbaric torture, and easily befuddled: “Do my eyes deceive me? You two? Just you wait, you rascally Pedrillo. Your head must part company from your shoulders, as sure as I am a Muslim” (Mozart). When the European Pedrillo asks why Osmin is such a cruel fellow, Osmin’s fitting reply is, “Your face is fit for the gallows, that is enough. [You’ll be] first beheaded, then hanged, then impaled on red-hot spikes...then burned, bound and drowned and finally flayed” (Mozart). Osmin does not seem to care much because by the time the first torture is over, Pedrillo would be too dead to care what new suffering Osmin has in store. If this brusque manner were not enough to make Osmin utterly ludicrous, the music and costuming make him an absurd character. In September 1781, Mozart wrote a letter to his father that “Osmin’s rage is rendered comical by the use of the Turkish music,” which loses itself in its own violent excitement (Meyer). In one production, Osmin is painted dark, with a rotund belly and slowness that comes across in his deep voice. His cartoonish beard sticks out far on either side of his face and a tight cap showcases his large ears and bushy, expressive eyebrows that make his very person laughable. The audience cannot take Osmin’s religion seriously, especially when Pedrillo tricks him into drinking wine so that he will fall asleep: “PEDRILLO: Mohammed has been asleep for ages, and he has got better things to do than to worry about your bottle of wine. OSMIN: Shall I drink it? Can Allah see me? …Now I have downed it; I do declare, that’s brave!” (Mozart).

In contrast, the Western women are

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5 In this production, Osmin is played by Kurt Moll.
shown to be admirable. Konstanze’s love for her European lover Belmonte is constant. Her servant Blonde is the embodiment of Western ideals of refinement and independence. She often clashes with Osmin because of his outlandish commands. Near Blonde’s aria in the second act, she tosses a tray into Osmin’s arms. “BLONDE: Do you think, you silly old moor, that I’m a trembling Turkish slave? OSMIN nods dumbly. You can’t treat European girls like that; you have to behave quite differently. BLONDE prods him with the broom, making him carry the tea.” In the end, Osmin sings, “O Englishmen, what fools you are. To let your women have their own way!” and he rushes offstage before Blonde can abuse him further (Mozart).

Mozart’s operas were widespread because the performance was not meant to depict the Arabs accurately since turquerie was a stereotype that the audience wanted to be true. The Moors might have Oriental names, but they would speak and act like European courtiers. Similarly, though male “Turks” wore turbans, sashes, and long caftans, foreign women’s clothing was almost never authentic; performers simply wore what was fashionable in Europe, and native color and intricacies were only hinted at with minor ornamentation. No one minded that the songs were not ethnically authentic (despite the availability of ethnic songs) and no one minded that non-Western persons danced the gavotte, minuet, and other formal court dances. Most productions did not even use genuine Turkish phrases but would contain samples of gibberish or exaggerated mimicking of various foreign tongues. To the discriminating Western ear, actual Turkish music, with its wavering pitches, unique scale systems, and arabesques, was primitive and disagreeable. The Easterner’s single melodic line was second-class to European music that used harmonization and could be in multiple keys at once. Nevertheless, “Turkish” music was required, and it was simulated with repeating melodic intervals that resembled the Turkish military music *mehter* performed by the Janissary.⁶ Turkish Janissaries actually affected regimental and orchestral music permanently by bringing in more percussion instruments, whereas before, only kettledrums were used in the orchestra. Batterie Turque went viral in various countries’ armies, and classical composers would later include such instruments, along with the piccolo, which was similar to the high, shrill Turkish fife. Mozart himself utilized this trend with a chorus of Janissary men heralding the coming of the pasha, a piece that he described as “short, lively, and written to please the Viennese” (Meyer). Like many others, Mozart wrote his turquerie in a way that was always concerned about how to best please his audience.

The impact of turquerie created a way for people across the world to use the Ottoman Empire as a metaphor. Catholic Cardinal Jósef Mindszenty referenced the Ottoman menace around twenty years after the Empire fell, when he actually was attacking the “antireligious menace of Soviet-style communism” (Meyer). Croatians around the same time in Yugoslavia made a connection between the Ottoman menace and Serbian domination in Belgrade. Some scholars theorize that some turquerie, with its demonization of Arab institutions and religion, was used to distract Europeans from their own society’s blemishes, like social and sexual discrimination, while the empire still existed. In calling for constitutional government to rise above both failed systems in the East and West, philosophers of the French Enlightenment such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, com-

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⁶ They avoided using actual Turkish tunes and used Hungarian or gypsy dance tunes instead (Meyer). The music used had a hypnotic quality to it made using intervals of thirds, added grace notes, sharp shifts between major and minor keys, and sharp accents.
pared what they saw in the Orient as corrupt and selfish opulence to Western despotic monarchies. Mary Wollstonecraft described a husband, in what became known as “feminist Orientalism” as “[lording over] his little haram,” and women whose poor educations led them to be “only fit for a seraglio,” as dreaming away their lives, content to play dress-up with themselves for a living (Hoeveler).

There came a point when the Oriental tale was so overdone it became a blank template for whatever meanings, images, or beliefs a particular artist wanted to convey. The Orient served as an “abjected territory, an alien Eden that was fallen, sinful, and perverse (Hoeveler).” In this manner, Europeans could, “project their own particular political, social, religious, or sexual anxieties” (Hoeveler) onto the Turkish Empire, and Mozart was no exception.

Mozart’s *Abduction from the Seraglio* reveals that he was a genius composer ahead of the curve and one who used a stereotypical image found in turquerie that would best appeal to a European audience; however turquerie depicts the Muslim or Arab culture inaccurately. It follows that any art piece, especially one that portrays an “other,” does not tell so much about the particular group labeled foreigner but rather about the artist, and his audience.
Evan Falco, “My Face”
Bibliography


When Martin Rokeach said he was sending in the essay I wrote for his Jan Term, he did so with the disclaimer that the ones he sent in had never been chosen. Though I was very proud with how my paper had turned out, after that semester came and went I figured it was safe to say, “Well, it was worth a shot,” and leave it at that. Few people were probably as surprised as me. A summer, a semester, and another Jan Term had passed before I got an email requesting that my essay be resurrected. Though I was aware this meant dear Mozart and his *Seraglio* had to undergo a supervised editing process, I was not expecting the flood of memories that were suddenly ushered center stage while I re-read and outlined my arguments.

Among the recollection of the extra hours spent eating pizza and watching various operas from *Carmen* to *The Marriage of Figaro* was one crucial moment in lecture which served as the basis for my paper. Mr. Rokeach (everyone calls him Marty) was gesturing at the front of the classroom and said something I thought was so insightful and applicable to life that I grabbed a scrap of paper and jotted it down. In essence, he said that we learn more about the artist from an artwork than about what the artwork portrays. In other words, what we ascertain from a “masterpiece” is more about the “master” than the “piece.” At the time, he was reflecting on a rather idealized painting of two Native American chiefs riding horses, and conveying disgust that a group of people had been so mistreated, conquered, and then used to create art that showed the “majesty of their people,” which in all reality had been stolen from them. In short, the painting was stereotypical, possibly contained historical inaccuracies, and profited in some ways off of the pain of Native Americans. These are the ideas which I brought into perspective while analyzing the Turkish trend in Europe in the 1800s and Mozart’s particular opera *Abduction from the Seraglio*. My writing advisor CJ greatly helped me shift the emphasis in my essay and make these themes of cultural appropriation a more evident conclusion to be drawn from my thesis.

Amelia Chantarotwong
IDEA Reauthorization: Fighting for Equal Rights for Students with Disabilities
Lauren Williamson

A Review of the Literature
This paper examines the many reauthorizations of The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) since its enactment in 1975, known then as The All Handicapped Children Act (1975). Prior to IDEA, children with disabilities were denied equal-education opportunities and were often sent to state institutions that provided no formal education. In the last few decades, however, this cycle has shifted as more rights and opportunities have been presented to children with disabilities. The purpose of IDEA is to gain and protect education rights for students with disabilities and help them acquire equal opportunities in pursuit of the American Dream. Whether the disability is mental or physical, the student is provided with an equal education in the least restrictive environment possible. Through its many reauthorizations, IDEA has evolved to provide these students and their families with equal and protected rights and also contributes to their versions of the American Dream.

While a person with a disability may not be able to perform in the classroom without a specialized teacher aid or walk down the street without the usage of a wheelchair or other device, that does not mean that their wants and desires are fundamentally different. IDEA deals directly with this idea as it attempts to break down the walls between those with and without disabilities. Adams (1931) described the American Dream as “a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position” (p. 404). The importance of this quote rests in the phrase, “fortuitous circumstances of birth” because these students have a disability by the chance of their birth, rather than something they had done themselves. Similar to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, in which African Americans fought for their equal rights that were denied to them due to the color of their skin, these students were denied basic rights due to circumstances that were out of their control. Just as African Americans, or people of any minority ethnic group, cannot elect the color of their skin, these students are not able to decide their mental or physical handicaps. While some may feel that it is unrealistic to assume that these students with disabilities are going to experience the same lives as people without disabilities, it is not fair to put them in the position where they are not even given the opportunity to try.

The articles chosen offered the most unbiased opinions on the legislation. In her article “What is the American Dream?” Hochschild (2013) wrote, “Members of a denigrated group are disproportionately likely to fail to achieve their goals; they are blamed as individuals…and they carry further stigma as members of a non-virtuous group” (p. 58). Those with disabilities were looked down upon due to their inability to achieve the success of the American Dream, which they were always denied. In this context,
the American Dream is connected to IDEA because students with disabilities were not able to achieve their own versions of the Dream since they were refused an education and the tools for success. Johnson (2006) described privilege as existing “when one group has something of value that is refused to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they’ve done or failed to do” (p.21). Johnson explained that these students have not done anything to be excluded from the privileged group of white, heterosexual, non-disabled males, but were denied the right to an education via passive oppression, which is defined as a process that causes “oppression to happen simply by doing nothing to stop it” (p.106). Unless members of privileged and non-privileged groups work together towards stopping this type of oppression, there will be no progress made towards equality amongst all. In order to fully explore IDEA, a historical approach must be taken to look at the reasons that these students were denied an education and how the act has improved the lives of disabled students.

Brown vs. the Board of Education (1954) segregated public schools for black and white students; however, the Supreme Court ruled the case unconstitutional. Before IDEA’s passing, public schools in the United States only accommodated one of five students with special needs. As for students who were blind, deaf, emotionally disturbed or had an intellectual disability, they were denied an education entirely. IDEA ensures that public schools provide a special education program that is divided into four parts. Part A lays out the foundation of IDEA, Part B improves the education of students with disabilities between the ages of three and 21, Part C addresses children from infancy to age three, and Part D describes national activities that can improve the education of students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, IDEA, 2004). Families of children with special needs and special needs organizations are both involved with IDEA, helping fund the act so programs can be provided to garner future success. The act helps fulfill the American Dream, so that all people, including those born with disabilities, are given the opportunity to achieve their goals.

Some schools forgo giving students with disabilities an equal education by refusing to hire special aides or refusing to buy additional equipment that would give these students the necessary tools for classroom success. Two of the most urgent issues regarding IDEA include funding and school compliance with the guidelines. The research questions that will be addressed are the following: (1) Why do schools and/or parents of non-disabled students attempt to deny these students an equal education? (2) What more can be done to improve the rights of students with disabilities and their families? Both questions are inspired by the ideals of the American Dream and the concept of equal opportunity to receive a quality education.

Equal education has not always been guaranteed, as highlighted in Shaeffer’s (2010) article “The History and Reauthorization of IDEA.” He discusses the importance of the act for students who participate in any type of special education. The article begins by addressing the reality of a child with special needs prior to IDEA’s passing in 1975. These children were not successful because they were denied the benefits of special education services and, as a result, were usually dependent on caretakers instead of becoming independent adults, causing them to struggle educationally, if they were provided an education at all. Students who were misdiagnosed or not diagnosed with a learning disability ultimately fell behind because they were not given the correct Individualized Education Plan (IEP). After the passing of IDEA,
those who needed special education services were granted access.

While IDEA was successful in increasing early detections of disabilities, a 2008 Congress report titled “The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): Overview and Selected Issues” addressed current flaws within the act and paid special attention to IDEA’s funding and its alignment with The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). For instance, the adequate yearly progress (AYP) still applies to students with disabilities, in order to correspond with NCLB. The Education Department acknowledges that not all children with disabilities can be expected to achieve the desired proficiency; therefore, schools and local education agencies are allowed to calculate the AYP on an alternative standard. This allows students with disabilities to still be assessed without any penalties applied to their school if they perform under the desired proficiency level.

While the act still contains shortcomings, IDEA’s success can still be adequately discussed, as seen in the article “History: Twenty-Five Years of Progress in Educating Children with Disabilities Through IDEA” (Office of Special Education Programs, 2007). Since IDEA’s enactment, six million children have benefited from the act and are now able to attend their neighborhood schools. According to the article, IDEA has improved graduation rates, post-secondary school enrollment and post-school employment. The advancement in early screening and intervention for students with disabilities contributes to this success because inaccurate testing leads to inaccurate teaching, making it harder for the children to thrive. Transition planning, which begins at age 14, and vocational transition programs that help ease them into life post-schooling contribute to IDEA’s success. Through education, these individuals can become informed and active members of society.

Although IDEA has improved the lives of millions of students, the 2013 article “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): Early Preparation for Reauthorization” discussed the major issues that still exist within IDEA and the changes they hoped to see in the future (National School Boards Association). Although the government agreed to pay 40 percent of the per pupil expenditure excess needed for a child with a disability (Apling & Jones, 2008), Congress has not been following through (National School Boards Association, 2013). During the 2010 fiscal year, $23.8 billion was authorized but only $11.5 billion was appropriated for this program. This caused concern, as more funding was needed in order for the students with disabilities to have an equal opportunity and education that is supposedly guaranteed to them under IDEA (National School Boards Association).

In order to research IDEA further, literature that demonstrates how IDEA aids students in their pursuit of the American Dream was examined. The legislation has evolved since its enactment, and each reauthorization brought about more amendments to protect the rights of people with disabilities. However, there was a lack in funding, and local school districts need to make up the difference. For further research, funding distribution of students with disabilities versus those without and the affect on their education experience will be examined.

Considering the reviewed material, I believe that the Office of Special Education Programs and the National School Boards Association’s articles are the most useful for this argument. Both articles show the act’s evolution and progress throughout the years and offer solutions to any shortcomings it currently has. In order for these students to achieve success, multiple groups must be involved and invested
so that the students are given the proper tools. IDEA protects the individuals with disabilities who were once denied an education and segregated from their non-disabled peers. Johnson’s definition of privilege sheds light on the inequalities because the students with disabilities were discriminated against simply because they were disabled and characterized as different from the privileged, non-disabled students. Active advocacy is essential for the success of this act, as people need to support equal opportunity and protection of rights under the federal law.

Methodology

Students with disabilities, their relatives, and everyone who interacts with the students are affected by IDEA. Those who strive for equality and opportunity are also involved because IDEA’s main purpose is to give these individuals an education in the least restrictive environment and help them transition into adulthood. Those who are passionate about equal rights for people with disabilities are at the forefront of the legislation’s fight for equality, as they provide pressure for government agencies to pass amendments to strengthen this vital bill.

As “privileged” groups of white, heterosexual, non-disabled males receive benefits based on their social identity, Johnson (2006) argues that passive oppression leads to continued discrimination. In order to help the oppressed members in society, tyranny must be actively fought against rather than silently accepted as society’s unspoken principles. During the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans took an active role in fighting against the laws and the people who silenced their voices, letting their declarations against the inequalities be heard. In contrast, some of the individuals IDEA protects may not be able to voice their opinions because they are not only under-age but also physically or mentally unable to do so. By providing an education, IDEA helps by giving these individuals the tools they need to start standing up for themselves and voicing their own opinions and concerns. For example, special education and transitional programs teach many life skills so that the students can take steps towards a more independent life. These life skills include speaking and writing skills as well as other skills such as cooking. Also, by gaining these life skills, these individuals will be able to become self-advocates for the disability rights movement. With the help of IDEA, these students can let their own voices be heard as they fight against the labels that had previously defined their role in our society.

Hochschild’s (2013) view of the American Dream mirrors that of Martin Luther King Jr.’s. As a leader of the Civil Rights Movement, King fought for equality amongst the different races. In his famous “I Have a Dream” speech (1963), King said, “I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed—‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.’” King dreamt of a world in which everyone was equal and opportunities were not limited based on one’s social identity. By segregating groups of people, some obtain more opportunities and freedom than others. Prior to the passing of IDEA, students with disabilities were either segregated into schools that provided a limited education or improperly evaluated and placed with teachers who could not accommodate their special needs. Depending on the severity of their disabilities, some were deprived of an education entirely, thus limiting their chances of achieving their American Dream.

Students with disabilities are capable of performing the tasks and can exceed expectations, if given the opportunity. Based on my experiences working with children who have spe-
cial needs, I found that many of these students have the same fundamental desires as everyone else and should not be denied basic human rights because of their mental and/or physical capacities. Unfortunately, there is a large disconnect in the schools, as they do not always provide students with disabilities with the same quality of education. These students are ostracized by a society that does not understand their individual needs and their infinite potential to grow and learn. Denying them a proper education and equal opportunity is not only undemocratic but also un-American, if we truly strive to be “the land of opportunity.”

**Data Results and Analysis**

Throughout the years, millions of American students have benefited from IDEA. According to IDEA (2004), a learning disability is defined as

>a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. (U.S. Department of Education)

Given the inclusive nature of this definition, the number of students covered by IDEA has more than tripled since its enactment in 1975. During the 2000-2001 school year, 2.9 million students between the ages of 3 and 21 were served under IDEA, according to Schaeffer (2010). In 2010, 50% of the 6.3 million students enrolled in special education were served under the act (Schaeffer, 2010).

Unfortunately, not all students are able to benefit from the services provided by IDEA because the identification process of learning disabilities is flawed. Sadly, many children are not diagnosed until they fall behind in school. This late diagnosis is known as the *discrepancy model*, which “measures the discrepancy between a child’s academic performance and his intellectual ability” (Schaeffer, 2010). This model is also called the “wait-to-fail method” because educators and/or parents wait until the child falls behind in school before properly diagnosing him or her with a learning disability. Currently, early intervention programs and services have helped almost 200,000 infants and toddlers who were given access to diagnoses long before they enter preschool (Office of Special Education Programs, 2007). An example of how crucial early detection and intervention is to a student’s success can be is highlighted in the story of Allan. At birth, Allan was left on the steps of a “mental retardation” institution in the late 1940s. By the time he was 35, Allan had lost his vision and was often observed sitting in the corner of the room slapping his face and humming to himself. After the passing of IDEA, he was properly assessed for his disabilities and was found to be of average intelligence. His blindness was from imitating the other residents’ self-harming behavior and the lack of a proper education. After his diagnosis, attempts were made to increase Allan’s independence and intellectual capabilities but, unfortunately, a major portion of his life was lost and he would never be fully rehabilitated (Office of Special Education Programs, 2007).

Allan’s story is not unique; misdiagnoses and assumptions are common when it comes to intellectual and developmental disabilities and mental illness. Inaccurate testing or lack of testing can leave these students with limited opportunities and stories that are similar to Allan’s. IDEA promises that these students are given access to proper testing and adequate resources to ensure their success in their life pursuits, instead of leaving them undiagnosed or misdiagnosed like Allan. Because of IDEA, the United States is now the world’s leader in early intervention and preschool programs for children with disabilities. These programs help prepare these
young children to meet the academic and social challenges they will experience in school and later in life (Office of Special Education Programs, 2007).

Access to reliable diagnoses is one of the rights of an American citizen, as is a quality and enriching education. Through IDEA, each student who is diagnosed with a disability is given a counselor who will aid him or her through the transition process from grade school to adulthood. This Individualized Education Program (IEP) “must include transition plans or procedures for identifying appropriate employment and other post school adult living objectives for the student” (Office of Special Education Programs, 2007). Outlined in the 1997 amendments of IDEA’s reauthorization, these transition plans should begin at age fourteen. These IEPs are safeguards so that the student can be provided with adequate community agencies and resources to find job placements and other services. In alignment with the quest for equal opportunity and civil liberties, these programs help to smoothly transition students with disabilities into their post-schooling lives. Between 1984 and 1997, high school graduation and employment rates rose by 14% for these students as they were given the proper curriculum to help them finish school. Secondly, students with access to IDEA’s benefits are twice as likely as older adults with similar disabilities to obtain post-school employment (Office of Special Education Programs, 2007). Their success is attributed to the intervention and services brought on by IDEA, as these students are not misdiagnosed and do not fall behind their peers during the crucial years of intellectual development.

While these early intervention programs were created to decrease the chance of a disability going undiagnosed, placing students with disabilities into the general curriculum with their peers was done to ensure equal opportunity and success. Rather than segregate the students based on their perceived intellectual capacity, “IDEA must build on its previous support for equality of access and continue to expand and strengthen its support for quality programs and services” (Office of Special Education Programs, 2007). These inclusive programs include offering the general curriculum to students with disabilities in order to provide a free and equal education. Complete integration of every student is unrealistic, but the objective is to offer the same opportunity regardless of one’s disability. A child who relies on a ventilator may be unable to physically participate in a physical education class or other similar classroom activities, but the purpose of IDEA is to give this student an equal education based on his or her unique needs. The focus must be on teaching and learning in ways that are most conducive.

To comply with the NCLB, students with disabilities are placed in the regular classroom but are held to a reformed standard. Knowing that many of these students will be unable to participate or achieve proficiency in standardized testing, Local Education Agencies are able to calculate adequate yearly progress for small percentages of children with disabilities based on an alternative scale (Apling & Jones, 2008). While IDEA is concerned with the individual child and his or her IEP, NCLB places more emphasis on closing gaps in achievement and raising the general standardized test scores. Since the goal is to improve standardized scores and have each student reach proficiency, many vocational and career programs have been cut from schools. Vocational programs were essential transition programs for students with disabilities. These resources were utilized in their transition towards post-schooling life because they taught life skills that could be used for fu-
ture employment opportunities. These programs also helped students gain a high school diploma. During the 2010 graduation year, 45,907 students with disabilities dropped out and 26,909 left with an IEP certificate. If vocational programs had been available to them, many would not have dropped out or possibly could have received a high school diploma. (Learning Disability Association of America, 2012).

Finally, IDEA is responsible for any additional costs these students may require in order for them to receive the benefits of an equal education. When the act was passed in 1975, the cost of educating children with disabilities was about twice the cost of educating other children. Given the additional cost, those involved with IDEA decided that the federal government would pay up to 40% of the excess cost required to educate the students with special needs (Apling & Jones, 2008). However, the cost of special education students versus general education students has dropped. A large part of this decrease is due to an increase in low-cost disability diagnoses. According to the IDEA Budget Report (2013), “the growth rate of spending per pupil for students with disabilities between 1985-86 and 1999-2000 was 1.7 percent after inflation, lower than the 2 percent growth rate in spending per pupil for all students” (New America Foundation). The government was about $1 billion below the authorized levels for the fiscal year 2010 (National School Boards Association). IDEA’s lack of appropriated funding places limitations on youth with special needs. Without the proper funding, students are not given the necessary equipment or trained teacher aides to guarantee their success in the classroom.

Concerned parents of non-disabled students may argue that IDEA should not be enforced because they fear that their own children will suffer from a lack of attention from teachers or that these students will use up the funds allocated to the school. However, the integration of students with special needs into the classroom does not cost more money. According to state standards, these students are allocated the same amount of money as general education students (New America Foundation, 2013). All extra expenses needed to provide an equal education are covered through IDEA (Apling & Jones, 2008). While IDEA is underfunded, there are still funds available for teaching aides and other resources so that students can receive an education that is equivalent to their peers. Parents should not be concerned about teachers being preoccupied with helping the students with disabilities in the classroom because IDEA provides these students with teacher aides and nurses. Other students in the classroom will not be disrupted and still get adequate attention from their teachers. Parents have no reason to worry that having special needs students in the classroom will be a detriment to their own child’s education.

Hochschild (2013) talks about how success can be measured in varying ways. Hochschild writes, “achieving the American Dream consists in becoming better off than some comparison point, whether one’s childhood or...anyone or anything that can measure oneself against” (p.49). These students will have achieved the American Dream because they have become more educated than the people with disabilities from previous generations. Looking back at Allan’s story, he was denied an education and his potential was lost because of his limited access inside the mental institution. Students who received help from IDEA are better off than the previous generations because they had access to formal schooling. Prior to IDEA’s passing, these students were blatantly told that they would not participate in the public school system due to their disabilities. However, it is important to point out that “no one prom-
ises that dreams will be fulfilled, but the distinction between the right to dream and the right to succeed” is fundamentally flawed (Hochschild, 2013, p.54). Although the mental and physical capacities of these individuals may differ, their underlying desires do not.

Everyone has his or her own definition of the American Dream. Some may believe that the dream is to go from “rags to riches” while others may focus more on family or equal opportunity. People with disabilities are able to obtain a job to support themselves while others may want to find the love of their life and start a family. So, in their individual ways, they are fulfilling their definition of the American dream. The difference between the right to dream and the right to succeed is echoed in IDEA because it gives the students the chance to dream and be successful. The importance of IDEA lies not only in its inclusion of persons of all mental and physical capacities but also in giving them the hope that they, too, can participate in the pursuit of the American Dream.

Conclusion

Although IDEA has made great advances in providing opportunities for disabled students, there are still improvements that can be made. IDEA’s next reauthorization, which has now been delayed for five years, needs to address adjustments to classroom behavior and protocols, such as guidelines on evaluations and assessments of each disability. The hope is that the evaluations will be conducted using a variety of assessment tools and strategies to give the students the best IEP possible (Learning Disability Association of America, 2012). The cornerstone of IDEA is that students receive a quality education in the least restrictive environment possible and alternative placements are readily available if a school is deemed incapable or unwilling to provide the student with an equal education. Concerns about the elimination of vocational programs students with disabilities often use as a resource during their transition into adulthood employment also need to be addressed. As IDEA continues to help these students, changes must be made to ensure that they are given the tools to be successful in their adult lives.

As a group regarded as “oppressed” and “not privileged,” these students have to work to overcome the social identity the rest of the world uses to define them. By utilizing IDEA’s resources, students can overcome any obstacles placed in their way and learn not to be defined by their disabilities. These students are able to break away from the passive oppression surrounding people with disabilities and work towards equality. Hochschild’s (2013) idea of the American Dream remains prominent because these students should be able to live to their full potential without being denied access to the dream of equal opportunity.

IDEA’s purpose was to break down the social barriers that kept students with disabilities segregated from the general education system. Since many were locked away in mental institutions and did not receive a proper evaluation or diagnosis, their potential was limited by the ignorance of a nation that did not want to adapt the curriculum to their specific educational needs. Increasing evaluations, adjusting IEPs to benefit the students, and reinstating programs that give them prospective job placements is essential to ensuring success in their pursuits of the American Dream. IDEA’s benefits have increased the likelihood of success for eligible students, helping them go beyond low expectations previously held for someone with a disability. IDEA has served its purpose of increasing equal opportunity and education for these students who are now able to pursue the American Dream.
References


The senior year of college is often greeted with many emotions. Although graduation is only a few short months away, students still have to complete projects, interviews, homework assignments, tests, and, for some, the dreaded senior thesis. As a culmination of our undergraduate career, the thesis sums up our previous courses and declares what we believe and is our opportunity to prove it.

When deciding on my thesis topic, I chose the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) because I have personally worked with special needs children. I felt that the topic would be not only interesting but also something I wanted to learn more about. As a Liberal and Civic Studies Major and English Minor, I could take course theories and make connections between the American Dream and related historical events.

While I was correct in the assumption that IDEA would be a fascinating topic, taking on such a lengthy paper was still intimidating, to say the least. I spent countless hours finding resources to support my thesis and had too many revisions to count. One of my greatest concerns when writing about such a sensitive topic, in regards to special needs children, was trying, to the best of my ability, to consider how my thesis would be perceived by these individuals and their families. I can only hope that I am successful in my pursuits.

I would like to give a special thanks to Ms. Rashaan A. Meneses for nominating my piece and for all of her helpful advice throughout the writing process. I would also like to thank family and friends who not only supported me in my thesis journey but also helped me edit and provided feedback on how to improve. The Exceptional Needs Network and Camp Arroyo should also be given credit as they have given me the opportunity to work with special needs campers and sparked my interest in looking into IDEA.

This thesis is truly the product of my previous Saint Mary’s courses and Saint Mary’s inclusive community. Everyone should be given the opportunity to pursue their version of the American Dream regardless, of what ever makes them different, even a disability.

After I graduate from Saint Mary’s, I will apply the knowledge I have gained throughout the past four years into my future pursuits towards equal educational opportunities for all.

Lauren Williamson
From their advent in European folklore to their prevalence in cinematography today, vampires have been depicted as “scary,” characterized by sharp fangs, blood-red lips, ghostly skin, hypnotizing eyes, and telepathic abilities to control their victims. The vampire poses a constant threat; one never knows when this monster is lurking in the corners, waiting to feed off the blood of innocent humans. Bram Stoker’s 1897 gothic novel, Dracula, is arguably the most famous representation of this “vampire identity.”

Gothic fiction has continually been recognized as subversive literature, as the genre constantly seeks to overthrow, undermine, or critique established social systems. Throughout Dracula, Stoker utilizes the vampire to represent the eroticized force responsible for catalyzing the rise of the New Woman in Victorian society, which ultimately portrays the New Woman as frightening to men; the result is male panic, as men attempt to control and prevent this force from disrupting the stable, patriarchal, and supreme Victorian society.

I. Fresh Blood: Emergence of the New Woman

Who exactly was the New Woman in Victorian society? The term was officially “christened” in 1894, when Ouida extrapolated the now-famous phrase from Sarah Grand’s essay, “The New Aspect of the Woman Question” (Ledger 9). In her book, The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle, Sally Ledger states that the New Woman as a category “was by no means stable,” and that the “New Woman writers themselves did not always agree on who or what the New Woman was.” What was certain, however, was that she was “dangerous,” and a “threat to the status quo” (11).

According to Ledger, one of the defining features of the New Woman discourse at the fin de siècle was the “supposition that the New Woman posed a threat to the institution of marriage” (11). In the late nineteenth century, women’s civil rights surrounding marriage had indeed improved. The Married Women’s Property Act of 1882 was the first comprehensive piece of legislation to grant property rights to married women; later, in 1891, an act was passed which “denied men ‘conjugal rights’ to their wives’ bodies without their wives’ consent” (11).

However, despite these civil advancements, there remained the nineteenth-century concern regarding the “considerable number of so-called ‘surplus’ or ‘superfluous’ women.” The census for 1891 reveals that that there were just under 2.5 million unmarried women in a “total population in which there were approximately 900,000 more females than males”; this concern of superfluity partly derived from
a “fear that the existence of large numbers of unmarried women would threaten the image of women as dependent and protected” (11). This desire to defend marriage as an institution—and to keep women subservient—was “underpinned by a belief that, without conventional marriage and domestic arrangements, the social fabric upon which Victorian society was based would begin to crumble” (12). Women—in their singleness—could therefore participate in sexual activity outside the confines of marriage, which ultimately threatened the Victorian social structure and men’s ability to control female activity. It is this association between “free love” and the New Woman that led to her label as a “sexual decadent” (12).

Although they had little in common ideologically, Leger states that the New Woman and the decadents of the fin de siècle were “repeatedly lumped together,” as they “both overtly challenged Victorian sexual codes” (Ledger 94-95). In Carol A. Senf’s essay, “‘Dracula’: Stoker’s Response to the New Woman,” she explains that, though financial independence and personal fulfillment as alternatives to marriage and motherhood were important characteristics of the New Woman, these activities are not responsible for the New Woman “becoming a symbol of all that was most challenging and dangerous in advanced thinking”: the crucial factor was sex. The New Woman “was more frank and open than her predecessors”: she felt free to “initiate sexual relationships, to explore alternatives to marriage and motherhood, and to discuss sexual matters such as contraception and venereal disease” (Senf 35). The New Woman identity overtly challenged the typical female conventions of passivity and dependence.

This breach of sexual codes raised alarm in Victorian society. The nineteenth century reveals a deep Victorian obsession with taxonomy, for categorization and labeling elicit power, organization, and control. Therefore, to scientifically classify and to medically analyze sexuality was “institutionally to control it,” revealing how Victorian sexual repression and prohibition actually went hand-in-hand with the “discursive explosion around the subject of sex” (Ledger 95). The trials of Oscar Wilde in 1885 (in which he was convicted of committing acts of “gross indecency”) acted as a turning point for the general cultural psyche, for these trials raised awareness of the threat both the decadents and the New Woman posed to society—and the “immediate result was an attempt both to ridicule and to silence them” (95). Through a subversive reading of Stoker’s Dracula, we become exposed to the rise of this sexually deviant New Woman and the panic she creates among the men of Victorian society.

II. Flushed Cheeks & Pumping Veins: Reversal of Sexual Roles in Dracula

In the beginning of the novel, the prevalent Victorian sentiment of what a woman “should be” is introduced in Chapter III. Jonathan Harker resides in the “portion of the castle occupied by the ladies of bygone days,” characterized by furniture that has “more air of comfort than any [he] had seen” (Stoker 36). He sits at a little oak table where he imagines that
“some fair lady [once] sat to pen, with much thought and many blushes, her ill-spelt love-letter” (37). With “sense of sleep” coming upon him, Jonathan remains in this room lit by “soft moonlight,” where “ladies had sat and sung and lived sweet lives whilst their gentle breasts were sad for their menfolk” (38). Senf explains that this “moonlit setting is conducive to Harker’s romantic notions about women and to his belief in their sweetness, gentle mien, and passivity—behavior which he contrasts to that of their warlike menfolk” (40). Through this illustration, women are portrayed as fair, vulnerable, uneducated, and dependent on men for happiness. However, this characterization is soon thwarted for Jonathan. Upon awakening from his slumber, he finds that he is not alone, but in the presence of “three young women” with “brilliant white teeth that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips” (Stoker 38). He feels both “longing” and “deadly fear,” and notices in his heart “a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss [him] with those red lips” (38). One woman bends over him with a “deliberate voluptuousness;” lowering her head and licking her lips “like an animal,” then fastening them onto his throat (38-39). Jonathan feels her “soft, shivering touch,” and “closes his eyes in a languorous ecstasy,” waiting in anticipation (39). He has ultimately become the seduced, rather than the traditional male seducer. Senf comments on this scene, recognizing that it focuses on the reversal of sexual roles—a crucial characteristic frequently associated with the New Woman (40). Coyly watching from behind half-closed lashes, Harker is “nearly ravished” by these women, and he recognizes the danger of this role-reversal in his statement of feeling both “thrill” and “repulsion” (Senf 40, Stoker 38). Through this example, Stoker reveals that the vampire represents the eroticized threat the New Woman poses to societal sex and gender roles, as well as male power.

III. Lucy’s Anemia: Threatening Infusion

In his novel, Stoker reacts to male Victorian horror regarding the rise of this sexually awakened New Woman through the character of Lucy. Lucy is first revealed as embodying the New Woman in her second letter to Mina as she writes, “Why can’t they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?” (60). In this statement, Lucy explores the idea of possibly having sexual relations with more than one man—a disruption of the Victorian marriage model. However, she recognizes that the implications of this desire are not socially acceptable, as she quickly rebukes herself, proclaiming that “this is heresy, and [she] must not say it” (60). Yet Senf recognizes that Lucy’s “desire for three husbands suggests a degree of latent sensuality which connects her to the New Woman of the period” (42). As the novel progresses, Lucy’s interactions with Dracula—and subsequent transformation into a vampire herself—directly mirror the sexual transformation of the New Woman that ultimately threatens Victorian society. It is in Chapter VIII that we first become aware of Dracula’s influence on Lucy. Upon finding Lucy’s bed empty one night, Mina runs outside to find her friend seated in a churchyard, breathing “not softly as usual with her, but in long, heavy gasps, as though striving to get her lungs full at every breath;” Lucy “moans and sighs,” putting “her hand to her throat” (Stoker 93-94). The next day, Mina notices that the skin of Lucy’s throat is pierced with “two little red points like pin pricks,” and that a “drop of blood” is on the “band of her nightdress” (95). This depiction of Lucy’s encounter with Dracula strongly parallels a woman experiencing her loss of virginity, for the “gasps, sighs, and moans” can be attributed to the sexual climax, with the “drop of
blood” on Lucy’s nightdress similar to the bleeding that results from a torn hymen from penile penetration. Just as Dracula unleashes the voracious monster in Lucy, who becomes hungry for blood, so does the loss of virginity catalyze a woman’s sexual awakening and appetite for desire.

Senf states that, after meeting Dracula, the “conflict between social conformity and individual desire” becomes more apparent for Lucy (42-43). Dr. Seward writes in his diary in Chapter XII:

It struck me as curious that the moment she became conscious she pressed the garlic flowers close to her. It was certainly odd that whenever she got into that lethargic state, with the stertorous breathing, she put the flowers from her; but that when she waked she clutched them close. (Stoker 160)

In her conscious state, Lucy clings to the garlic flowers, which protect her from the corruptive influence of Dracula. This is just how patriarchal society establishes and directs the “role” of women in order to “protect” the female from erotic desires—which in turn safeguards male power and influence. In her “lethargic” state, however, Lucy drops the garlic flowers. Lucy’s abandonment of the garlic flowers (in the most literal sense) parallels the “deflowering” of a woman who engages in sexual activity, therefore unleashing desire. This passage proves representative of Lucy’s struggle between her conscious and conforming side, the side that feels guilty for her liaison with the vampire, and her unconscious side, the part that desires freedom from social constraints that the vampiric condition entails (Senf 43). Through her relationship with Dracula, Lucy becomes autonomous and responsive to her innate desires, establishing her as a New Woman and causing male hysteria.

IV. Van Helsing the Vampire Slayer: Panic, Power, and Posterity

As discussed earlier, the Victorians were known for their obsession with categorization and taxonomy; this power of classification was in the hands of men, as patriarchal Victorian society established the dichotomy of “the dominant man and passive woman.” Sex and gender were therefore areas reserved for men only: women were not “supposed” to feel desire, but were to be subordinate and tame. However, Lucy proves to deviate from this classification, which ultimately threatens male power.

Just as Dr. Van Helsing embarks to destroy Lucy’s vampiric identity, so does his character represent the Victorian male’s attempt to obliterate the sexually voracious New Woman. Senf describes Van Helsing as “an excellent scientist, with Vatican connections...emblematic of the two chief patriarchal and dominant institutions of Western culture” and thus the “logical person to fight for traditional values” (44). In Dracula, Van Helsing is depicted as a medium of righteousness, as he “turns Lucy’s body into a moral battlefield” (44). In Chapter XII, the vampiric Lucy asks Arthur in a “soft, voluptuous voice” to kiss her; when Arthur bends “eagerly over to kiss her,” Van Helsing “swoop[s] upon him,” and “catching him by the neck with a fury of strength ... hurl[s] him almost across the room” (Stoker 161). Van Helsing stands between Lucy and Arthur “like a lion at bay,” exclaiming: “Not for your life ... not for your living soul and hers!” (161). Here, Van Helsing emerges as a “salvific” figure through his “rescue” of Arthur from Lucy’s dangerous vampiric advances. Because the vampire represents the eroticized force which catalyzes the New Woman, Van Helsing is subversively convincing his fellow men that Lucy, as a New Woman, has experienced an “awakened sexuality”—and that her attempts to reverse the traditional sexual roles of women can cause male hysteria.

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“are threats to them all” (Senf 44).

In addition to threatening sexual roles (and thus patriarchal power), the vampiric identity also proves to raise panic surrounding the New Woman’s influence on the stability and substance of the Victorian people as a whole. Upon finding Lucy in Chapter XVI, Van Helsing notices her lips to be “crimson with fresh blood”; Lucy then draws back “with an angry snarl,” and flings to the ground with “careless motion” a child she had been clutching to her breast (Stoker 211). It is this very same day that Lucy is destroyed. This connection between Lucy’s pursuit of children and her dreadful annihilation is no accident, as Lucy’s attack of children represents how offspring produced by the New Woman threaten to “poison” the English race. This anxiety can be attributed to the emergence of the “educated female,” which also often describes the New Woman. Ledger cites Charles Harper, an anti-feminist commentator who figured “education as a masculine endeavor which would blight women’s biological mechanisms” (18). From Harper’s perspective, the threat of the New Woman is this:

Nature, which never contemplated the production of a learned or a muscular woman, will be revenged upon in her offspring, and the New Woman, if a mother at all, will be the mother of a New Man, as different, indeed, from the present race as possible, but how different, the clamorous females of today cannot expect....[There is] the prospect of peopling the world with stunted and hydrocephalic children....and ultimate extinction of the race. (18)

Therefore, Lucy draining the children’s blood ultimately represents how the New Woman is “sucking” the “Englishness” out of Victorian citizens. Britain’s women needed to raise up a strong British “race”—embedded in discipline and traditional values—to sustain the “nation’s supposed supremacy.” The New Woman, in her deviant sex and gender role, thus “posed a threat to this national need” (18). The New Woman not only has the ability to cause the demise of individual men, and all men, she also holds the power to incite the fall of England.

V. There Will Be Blood: An Attempted “Staking” of the New Woman

Stoker’s male characters reveal that the only (apparent) way to assuage this male panic is to completely destroy the cause. Van Helsing explains to his fellow men that the Un-Dead are cursed with immortality; they “cannot die, but must go on age after age adding new victims and multiplying the evils of the world, for all that die from the preying of the Un-Dead becomes themselves Un-Dead” (214-215). Just as the vampiric identity is infectious, so is that of the New Woman; by following the example of the emerging New Woman identity, Victorian women hold the power to start a movement of female individuality and sexual freedom, thus overturning the patriarchal social structure. For the male race, the only way to combat this threat is to fully exterminate it, as Van Helsing states that only when the “Un-Dead rest as true dead” will the soul of Lucy be saved (215). “[Instead] of working wickedness by night and growing more debased in the assimilating of it by day, she shall take her place with the other Angels” (215). Once the Victorian woman is returned back to her traditional role of passive “angelic” dependent, patriarchal Victorian society will be truly safe again.

It is Arthur who takes the “stake and the hammer,” and strikes Lucy through her heart “with all his might,” destroying her vampiric identity (216). From here, the coffin no longer holds “the foul Thing that [the men] had so dreaded and grown to hate” but the Lucy as they had “seen her in her life, with her face of un-
equalled sweetness and purity”—she has been successfully restored to her “rightful” place of immaculacy and subservience. The air is sweet, the sun shines, and the birds sing as if “all nature were tuned to a different pitch”—order is restored (217). Arthur thanks Van Helsing for his leadership, stating, “God bless you that you have given my dear one her soul again, and me peace” (217). By destroying the New Woman, men no longer have to worry about their power being usurped, their gender role being undermined, and all men being tainted. Throughout Dracula, Stoker subversively reveals the males’ horrified response to the New Woman in Victorian society, and the threat she poses to their collective power and identity. Yet no matter how many stakes of oppression men drive into the hearts of Victorian women, the innate, erotic desire of the female can never be extinguished, forever coursing through the blood in her veins—and always lurking in the dark corners of the frightened minds of men.
Works Cited


Author’s Note

I have loved to write ever since I was a little girl. I remember being in the 7th grade and sitting at our old garage computer for hours upon end, making sure that my African folktale on “how the lion came to be” was perfect. I would lie on my bed, green notebook in hand, frantically transcribing the stories about horses I had contrived in my young head. And that was only the beginning. My passion for writing took off: from putting my whole heart and soul into each essay I was assigned, to authoring a monthly column in my town’s newspaper, to being published in *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Just For Teenagers* my senior year in high school. Needless to say, writing is a huge part of who I am!

I am an English and Theology double-major; however, I consider myself an “honorary” Women’s & Gender Studies student, because topics surrounding this subject really get me fired up. I cross-list with WaGS whenever I can—almost all of my English essays revolve around the topic of gender, and I even chose to research Queer Theology for my final Liberation Theologies project. So, when I was able to register for Professor Grayson’s Gothic Fiction class, describes my feelings as “excitement” would definitely be an understatement.

Writing this essay was an interesting process; it was my last assignment before the start of Christmas Break, and I was panicking. My points were scattered, my metaphors and parallels were misaligned, and the essay as a whole just wasn’t cohesive. I was so interested by the topic, and I knew what I wanted to argue, and to show my readers; but nothing was working. I noticed that many of the authors I read for my research organized their essays under headings, and I figured, why not try that? I knew it was a dangerous move structurally, away from the “typical” paper: but this organization method worked wonders, and finally everything came together. I was able to draw clear parallels from the spread of the vampiric identity in Stoker’s novel *Dracula* to the rise and expansion of the “New Woman” identity in Victorian England, getting my WaGS fix and utilizing my creative voice along the way. I truly enjoyed writing this essay, and I hope that it opens a whole new outlook on the story of *Dracula*.

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The novelist and playwright Thornton Wilder is considered to be one of the great modern authors of the early twentieth century. Robert W. Corrigan, drama educator and critic, groups Wilder’s brilliance with that of other great dramatists such as Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams, “yet his reputation is based on only three full-length plays and was made on one” (1). Though his oeuvre is small, Wilder’s impact on theatre today is massive. *Our Town*, the play that built Wilder’s reputation, is the most produced play in America. In the 2010 news segment “The Lasting Impact of Our Town,” reporter Mo Rocca notes
that “at any given time, Our Town is playing somewhere—four thousand productions in the last decade alone.” David Cromer, director of the longest running production of Our Town, identifies the key to Wilder’s popularity: “Most of us are gripped by the very small details of our day” (“Lasting Impact”). With a play as popular as Our Town in his oeuvre, Wilder’s attention to the details of day to day life within all of his works must appeal to the masses, and his work must project a thesis that his audiences have believed for the past century.

In the plays Our Town and The Skin of Our Teeth, Wilder comments on the role of mankind and its relationship to the universe; however, understanding Wilder’s critiques of theatre during the early 1900s is necessary to understanding his portrayal of mankind as united with the universe. As fantastical and mystical as his plays may be in content, Wilder’s plays reveal a truth about mankind in a way that is more believable than the dressed up plays of his time: Wilder shows the small, yet eternal, qualities of mankind and our relationship to the expansive universe by creating a sense of suspended disbelief, which he does through the simplicity of the set, plotlines common to the audience, and the double vision created by his time manipulation.

In the preface to his collection Three Plays, Wilder identifies theatre during his time as problematic because of his inability to relate to plots and the human condition that was meant to be reflected by its characters. For Wilder, theatre is meant to reveal truths to the audience; however, the productions fell short of this goal:

Toward the end of the twenties I began to lose pleasure in going to the theatre. I ceased to believe in the stories I saw presented there. When I did go it was to admire some secondary aspect of the play, the work of a great actor or director or designer ... I felt that something had gone wrong with it in my time and that it was fulfilling only a small part of its potentialities. (Wilder, “Preface” XXV)

Wilder originally found joy in theatre because he was able to relate to the stories presented and he believed them to be true to his own nature; however, Wilder’s ability to find truth within these theatrical productions ceased. Rather than admiring the work of the dramatist, he focused on the work of those who attempted to bring it to life: the actors, the designers, and the directors. Like Wilder, we focus on the actors as people performing a part rather than the characters we are supposed to relate to. We’re distracted by the costumes and the props instead of looking at the actors who use them. We admire the director who runs the entire show, pulling our attention even further from the characters by directing them off stage. The further we get from the characters, the further we get from the core of the play, thus forcing us to drift even further away from whatever sense of the human condition may have been engraved into the play in the first place. Since Wilder emphasizes the smallness of man and the commonness of human nature, grand props and intricate costumes counter Wilder’s beliefs about theatre, which make the characters and events within theatre productions appear larger than they do in day-to-day life.

Wilder hypothesizes that these theatrical distractions originate from our fear of recognizing the truth of our human condition. To Wilder, the purpose of a play is to be reminded of ourselves: “Of all the arts the theater is the best endowed to awaken this recollection within us” (Wilder, “Preface” XXVI). According to Wilder, we should be able to see a piece of ourselves within a play’s characters and plot. The plays Wilder preferred are supposed to make us see both the ugly aspects of our own human nature and the vulnerable ones. The theatre should remind us of the horrors of the human condition
as well as the magic behind it. Instead, all of this is buried by unnecessary theatrical additions. Specifying the theatre through props or overly complicated plots numbs the audience from the action of the play. We escape the aspects of our human condition which we originally fear, but we lose them at the expense of the magic and enlightenment the theatre originally had to offer.

The Smallness of Man

*The smallness of man presented and exaggerated through the use of plot*

Wilder’s *Our Town* keeps true to a simple plot that circles around the day-to-day events in Grover’s Corners, a town that is representative of mankind. The play functions under the assumption that we will associate ourselves with events in the play because we are part of small towns—regardless of whether we live in a big city or a rural countryside; the few people we may interact with on a daily basis can be considered the towns or communities in which we reside. The play begins with a character called the “Stage Manager,” who acts as a force to move the play along. He sets the stage by bringing out a couple chairs and tells the audience the general set they should imagine and narrates between scenes, telling actors to move on and off the stage, and he interacts with the audience by asking us questions or giving us a summary of the town’s history or geological composition.

The Stage Manager also gives insight into the structure of the play that Wilder as a playwright does not: “This is the way we were: in our growing up and in our marrying and in our living and in our dying” (Wilder, *Our Town* 35). *Our Town* is split into three different acts, each one presenting a different aspect of life in Grover’s Corners over the span of about thirteen years. In the first act, we get a glimpse of daily life, and we see two of the main characters, George Gibbs and Emily Webb, as children. In the second act, we see George and Emily’s love story from the first time they admit their feelings to one another, and we end with the exchange of their marriage vows. The final act takes place in a graveyard after Emily dies in labor. Within these three acts, Wilder covers aspects of life that most of his audience has or will experience which creates a summary of mankind that all can recognize as their own lives. When Wilder trivializes the average person’s life by segmenting it into these three sections, he is able to fit the entirety of someone’s life into a three act play. Wilder makes mankind seem small and unimportant by compacting over a decade of someone’s life into a two hour play, thus forcing the audience to reflect on the averageness of our own lives and the lack of eventfulness within it.

*The smallness of man presented and exaggerated through the use of celestial bodies*

Wilder purposefully makes his characters common so they can relate to the audience, but he then continues to place them against images of celestial bodies, making Man seem small and insignificant at first glance. In *Our Town*, the Stage Manager calls Professor Willard to the stage to share some historical information about Grover’s Corners: “Grover’s Corners lies on the old Pleistocene granite of the Appalachian range. I may say it’s some of the oldest land in the world. We’re very proud of that….anthropological data: Early American stock. Cotahatchee tribes…no evidence before the tenth century of this era…” (23-24). Wilder places the image of mankind in contrast with that of the Earth to emphasize the smallness of Man in the context of the world’s history. While the town lies on some of the oldest land in the world, the age of man residing on that land is tiny and young in comparison. Mankind has resided there for a couple hundred
years, yet the dirt has been around for millions. The data presented by Professor Willard disrupts the audience’s understanding of our race as grand by forcing us to acknowledge there is something greater than mankind.

After allowing the audience to accept mankind’s smallness in relation to the age of the earth, Wilder proceeds to make man appear even smaller by forcing the audience to look at ourselves in relationship to the entire universe. The address listed on Jane Crofut’s letter shows the relationship between Man and the Universe: “Jane Crofut; The Crofut Farm; Grover’s Corners; Sutton County; New Hampshire; United States of America...Continent of North America; Western Hemisphere; the Earth; the Solar System; the Universe; the Mind of God” (48). Crofut, being a symbol of a single person, shows the smallness of all men in relationship to the universe. The letter begins with the smallest of all the items and builds up to the largest. By creating a list of great length, each person feels smaller by the time he or she reaches the vast size of the universe. As the list drags on and on, the audience is meant to remember Professor Willard’s statements about the land: the planet Earth existed before mankind and will continue to exist after it, just as the universe will continue to go beyond Man’s physical presence on the face of the Earth. Even though Wilder has already made mankind seem small, he successfully makes each person in the audience recognize that Man in relation to mankind as a whole is even smaller.

The Eternalness of Mankind

The eternalness of man presented and exaggerated through the use of plot

Wilder believed a plot should be simple and common to the everyday man so it can encompass truths the audience will be able to comprehend. Twentieth-century theatre embraced melodrama, sentimental drama, and comedies; however, these three genres are a poor reflection of what theatre should be: “These audiences fashioned a theatre which could not disturb them” (XXVIII). All three types of drama are so embellished and over-exaggerated that they do not affect the audience. However, a simplistic plot, ironically, is able to move the audience in a more complex way—it can discomfort the audience by bringing reality to its attention. Unlike the over-exaggerated types of drama he critiques, Wilder’s writing is about the cycle of life in its day-to-day form. By projecting common-day events on stage, he shows that the grandness of life is in every minute. In Our Town, Emily Webb is able to revisit one day of her life after she dies. She chooses her twelfth birthday after the other dead characters suggest that she pick a day that holds no importance to her. After watching for a couple minutes, she asks to return to the graveyard because she can’t bear to watch everyone ignore the wonderfulness of life and living. Emily then speaks to the Stage Manager and asks, “Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it?—every, every minute” (110). In that moment, the audience is meant to realize that everything within our lives, down to the common motions of each day, is important and in its own way eternal. Wilder chooses to call his first act “Daily Life” because what we do every day is just as important as our loving and our dying. Most of our life is spent performing every-day tasks and going through our personal routines, yet the routines we create are what make each day eternal because we will continue to cycle through the same motions over and over again until our death; however, our loved ones will remember our routines, allowing us to continue living through their memories of us even after we die.

Rather than focusing on the everyday life of Our Town, The Skin of Our Teeth tells
the story about mankind in a never-ending cycle of survival; the audience sees the Antrobus family—Adam, Eve, Gladys, and Cane (who is parading around under the name Henry)—and their housekeeper Sabina travel through the Earth’s history—specifically the Ice Age, the Great Flood, and post-World War I—and we see how mankind has come to the brink of death, survives, and almost dies again. We see the characters huddle by the fire as they hope to survive the Ice Age, and we know they survive because we later see the Antrobus family almost miss the ark meant to save them during the flood and see them emerge from hiding after World War I is over. Wilder portrays mankind as eternal in a literal sense when we see the Antrobus family travel through millenniums. Since the name Antrobus is rooted in the prefix anthropo- (meaning human-like or pertaining to human qualities), the audience is meant to see the Antrobus family as an extension of ourselves as members of mankind and recognize ourselves as eternal as well. Sabina points to the cycle of almost dying and surviving again when the play repeats the opening scene of the play: “This is where you came in. We have to go on for ages and ages yet. You go home. The end of this play isn’t written yet” (Wilder, Skin 247). Life begins again for the Antrobus family, and it begins again for the audience as well. The audience will not revert back to the beginning of the play, but after each person dies, life itself will begin again—and it will continue to begin again until something can finally kill the relentless Man who continues to survive through the ages.

While the main focus of the play is man’s repeated ability to survive by the skin of his teeth, Wilder includes a variety of other smaller-scale cycles to emphasize man’s eternalness. Within the confines of the play, we are able to see repetitions of particular actions. For instance, Gladys Antrobus is attracted to the color red and attempts to incorporate it into her wardrobe via red lipstick (Wilder, Skin 142) or red stockings (199); however, her mother punishes her for it, recognizing the color as a symbol of passion and carnal desire—because it shows her the human inclination towards evil. Cain Antrobus repeatedly hits people with rocks. Beginning with the death of his brother (160), Cain continuously acts on his desire and throws rocks at people or attempts to hurt others. In the first act, his mother tells him to put down a rock so he doesn’t hit his sister (142), and at the end of the act, Sabina reveals that he’s hit the boy next door (161). Again in the second act, Cain threatens to hit a chair-pusher with a slingshot (182). While this repetition of action seems unimportant at first glance, both characters represent two different pathways mankind can take: to stifle your carnal passions or to give into them fully.

As the children of Adam and Eve, both Gladys and Cain are meant to symbolize the inherent sinful nature of man. Both are born with desire to sin caused by the Fall of Man; however, Gladys is better at controlling her passions, while Cain has become “a representation of strong unreconciled evil” (235). In the final act of the play, Gladys has controlled her passions, and she tenderly holds a young baby. On the other hand, Cain has become angry and attacks Mr. Antrobus; however, both of these ideas become true to the audience when Sabina interrupts the play because the actor playing Cain almost strangled the actor playing Mr. Antrobus during the production the night before. The actor playing Cain apologizes to the actor playing Mr. Antrobus and admits that this scene reveals something within him that reminds me of his personal life off stage:

But something comes over me. It’s like I become fifteen years old again. I…I…listen: my own
father used to whip me and lock me up every Saturday night. I never had enough to eat. He never let me have enough money to buy decent clothes…. They tried to prevent my living at all.—I’m sorry. I’m sorry. (238)

The personal life of the actor reveals the effects of living a life of sin in the real world. The actor’s father gave into his sinful passions by beating his son, therefore causing the actor to develop those same desires. Though the actor attempts to suppress the violence within him, the repeated exposure to beatings fed his sinful nature, making it more difficult for the actor to control when forced to act out events that remind him of his own personal toil and torment. By including a moment when the actor breaks character and talks about the personal effects of the scene, the audience is able to understand that Wilder’s plays affect and reflect real people, thus causing them to recognize the events happening on stage as true to the human condition.

*The eternalness of man presented and exaggerated through the use of Double Vision*

Wilder critiques the stage set because it anchors a play’s production to one particular time and place, distancing the audience from the events happening on the stage and preventing us from seeing ourselves within the characters; however, he combats this aspect of theatre by using double vision, which is a technique that blurs the lines of time and makes the play seem as if it could take place during any time period. By adding props and creating a more distinct setting, focus is taken away from the events of the play and the actions of the characters:

They loaded the stage with specific objects, because every concrete object on the stage fixes and narrows the action to one moment in time and place....When you emphasize place in the theatre, you drag down and limit and harness time to it. You thrust the action back into past time, whereas it is precisely the glory of the stage that it is always ‘now’ there. (“Preface” XXIX)

Wilder takes his critiques of twentieth-century theatre and applies it to his own pieces by placing his stories on almost-barren stages in order to allow his characters and the action of the play to become the focus of the presentation. Rather than picking distinctive props that can change styles or cease to exist depending on the time period, Wilder chooses props that will transcend time. For *Our Town*, he selects a table, three chairs, and a bench. None of these props will tie the play down to one time period because these items have existed for centuries and will probably still exist for thousands of years to come. Each member of the audience is then forced to fill in the empty gaps with images familiar to their own minds and memories. The audience is meant to picture their own lives and the world that surrounds them on stage—that is the beauty of a bare stage in Wilder’s eyes. Instead of distancing ourselves from the passions on stage, we are forced to place these passions in our worlds through our imagination’s eye. Wilder believes that the truths of our human condition—both the hope and the despair that we connect to within plays—are not seen in props.

Wilder uses double vision, a technique that blurs the lines of time and makes the play seem as if it could take place during any time period, so the audience can accept the time of the play as either during the ice age or current day without disrupting the play’s ability to relate to the audiences of any time period. In his literature review titled “Thornton Wilder Says ‘Yes,’” Barnard Hewitt describes double vision as time confusion between the present day and the past. For Hewitt, double vision is presented more clearly in *The Skin of Our Teeth* than it is in *Our Town*.
Again Wilder makes use of the double vision. The Antrobus family is living in both prehistoric times among dinosaurs and in Excelsior, New Jersey, today. As in Our Town, the events of ordinary daily life are presented against the vast dimensions of time and space; but the present is not seen against the panorama of the past; it is inextricably mixed with the whole history of human life on this planet. (117)

Even though the play takes place during three main time periods, the play is modernized and placed in the context of modern day through the use of mock news segments and projected slideshows. Since the Antrobus family’s world is naturally intermingled in both the past and the present within the play, the play itself is not grounded to a specific time period. By forcing the family to transcend the laws of time, the audience is able to accept the time of the play for what it is without distancing themselves from what is happening on stage.

By having thinkers such as Aristotle associated with the cosmos, there is an eternal quality given to Man. Ancient thinkers are still present, and the importance of books in the play emphasize the eternal qualities of mankind as we continues to travel through time. In this way, Man is then seen as ancient as the planet Earth. Though Man is still small, his presence has become grander.

Though Man is portrayed as small, Our Town clarifies man’s connection to the universe: man is as important as the universe. After pointing towards the stars at the very end of the play, the Stage Manager says, “Only this one is straining away, straining away all the time to make something of itself. The strain’s so bad that every sixteen hours everybody lies down and gets a rest” (113). Originally, the Stage Manager seems to be speaking of the stars; however, this could almost be interchangeable with the people of the town. By making the ending ambiguous, the audience is forced to recognize this confusion and the play creates a sense of double vision—man is doing the same thing the stars do; therefore, Man must be as important as the stars. Man does not contrast the universe because he is small and unimportant. Instead, Man is part of the universe on what can be seen as an equally important level.

Suspended Disbelief:

Though his plays are unrealistic in time and setting, Wilder still convinces the audience to believe the play by creating a sense of suspended disbelief; which causes the audience to willingly suspend our knowledge that the play is a work of fiction; we believe the characters to be true reflections of the human condition.
Rather than complicating his plays like those of twentieth-century theatre, Wilder chooses to write plays about the familiar: events common to mankind and characters that are meant to remind us of ourselves. However, his plays drift far from realism and touch on the supernatural or the mystic. Our Town, though it can be any town, ends with a conversation amongst the spirits in the graveyard, and The Skin of Our Teeth follows one family through five thousand years of existence. Both of these storylines go against the laws of nature, yet both of these plays manage to touch on man’s true nature in a way that other plays do not. Viewing the afterlife in Our Town brings a spiritual truth to life: no one is really dead after they’re dead. On the other hand, The Skin of Our Teeth acts as a play of historical fiction: the audience knows that the Ice Age and World War I happened, and some religions recognize the Great Flood to be a spiritual truth. The audience willingly accepts the play as truth, suppressing the fantasy of the play, in order to better relate to it and understand it to be true, even though it may not be factual.

Wilder continues to force the audience to suspend their disbelief when he writes in moments when the fourth wall—the wall between the actors on stage and the audience—is broken, and in doing so, the audience is unable to escape what happens on stage and must accept the play’s events as something we too must take part in. The Stage Manager in Our Town speaks directly to the audience for most of the play, and he even takes a moment to introduce the play (5), ask if the audience has any questions (26), and tell the audience good-night (114). While the audience members who interact with the Stage Manager are written into the script, the effect of the Stage Manager’s interaction with the audience is not compromised. The audience cannot take a step back and distance ourselves from what is happening in the play because the Stage Manager forces us to become directly involved in it.

In The Skin of Our Teeth, the actor that plays Sabina breaks character and addresses the audience in a similar way; however, her comments of denial and distance from the play itself reflect the audience’s own fears of addressing the events on stage and recognizing the action as reflections of themselves. She doesn’t ask the audience questions, but she gives the audience instructions:

Ladies and gentlemen! Don’t take this play serious. The world’s not coming to an end. You know it’s not. People exaggerate. Most people really have enough to eat and a roof over their heads. Nobody actually starves—you can always eat grass or something. That ice-business—why, it was a long, long time ago. Besides they were only savages. Savages don’t love their families—in not like we do. (152-153)

Sabina tells the audience to distance themselves from the events happening in the play both in time and likeliness. According to Sabina, the horrors of the world (such as poverty or broken families) do not exist. While the purpose of her denial is unclear at first, her repeated rejections of events that happen lead the audience to believe that she may be a reflection of Wilder’s critique of the theatre: Sabina is the audience of the over-exaggerated, dressed-up plays. Because of her role within Wilder’s play, the audience is once again dragged into the middle of the passions on stage: we are able to relate to a character on stage because we have experienced Sabina’s denial in the theatre, and now, we are forced into suspended disbelief because Sabina’s emotions are so real and familiar to their own lives.

The importance of understanding mankind as eternal and believing Wilder’s work to be true
By calling attention to the Eternalness of Man, Wilder forces the audience to pay attention to our own eternal souls and our fears of death. While the audience is discomforted by the death of Emily in *Our Town* and the near death encounters in *The Skin of Our Teeth*, the audience is reassured in return with Emily’s existence in the afterlife and Sabina’s return to Act I. However, the true key to comfort is found in the hymn Emily finds comfort in when it is played at her funeral: “Blest Be the Tie That Binds.” Though the lyrics are never mentioned within the play, “Blest Be the Tie That Binds” is mentioned in each act of *Our Town*; however, the lyrics may never be mentioned because Wilder wrote the play under the assumption that his audience will understand the reference and call the lyrics to memory. The final lines of the hymn give hope for leaving behind earthly death and achieving eternal life:

> From sorrow, toil and pain,  
> And sin, we shall be free,  
> And perfect love and friendship reign  
> Through all eternity” (Fawcett).

Within the two plays, Wilder places mankind under a microscope so the audience can clearly see the finite qualities of man. In *Our Town*, the audience sees Emily die and mourn the unappreciative and unobservant attitude of mankind while alive on Earth, and we also see Gladys’s and Cain’s tendencies to sin as well as the suffering the Antrobus family members undergo as they try to fight for their life while the world around them attempts to kill off the human race. While all this toil and sorrow surrounds Man on Earth, the audience is meant to remain hopeful because man’s true essence is eternal. In escaping death on Earth, Man will find freedom and happiness in his eternity formed within God’s perfect love. Though the plays disrupt our world view by making the audience aware of our own human suffering and temporal qualities on Earth, Wilder reminds us that there is still hope after all the pain has passed—the magic behind mankind is the heavenly world that awaits us after death.

**Wilder’s Importance As a Playwright in Twenty-First Century America**

Wilder offers an unexpected truth that other playwrights of his time are unable to bring forth within their own plays. Wilder’s ability may be deemed similar to that of Miller; however, Wilder offers us more than Miller’s plays ever can. For example, Miller’s *The Crucible* is a play of historical fiction, and it is a realistic retelling of an event associated with the Salem witch trials during the late 1600s. Though the play is inspired by real events and Miller uses trial manuscripts to guide the dialogue, *The Crucible* is limited to that time period alone and is distant to the audiences of today. I read *The Crucible* the first time in a high school classroom, and I disliked it. I couldn’t associate myself with any of the characters, and I struggled to believe them to be real people—everyone seemed too sinister or too heroic or too unjust to be a person I knew in real life. After reading the play for a second time in college, my views of the characters changed slightly, but I still felt distant from the events happening because witch trials aren’t common in current day America. Wilder, however, surprised me. Even though Wilder’s plays are not possible by the standards of science, I knew his plays to be true in message to me as a human being. Wilder forced me to suspend my own disbelief that this was a play I was reading for class, and he convinced me that I am small within this world, yet I am just as eternal as the characters he created for his plays because I could see myself within every single one.


I submitted my essay to Spectrum on a whim. I scavenged whatever writing I could in hopes of getting some sort of response in return. When I got the e-mail that my essay about Thornton Wilder was selected as a finalist, I was excited; my excitement soon turned into frustration. While I was writing the essay for my Religion and Literature course, my thoughts were scattered and tangled, like those angry scribbles you’d see in thought bubbles when comic strip characters were frustrated, and I knew my essay’s organization looked the same.

Every time I write an essay, I get carried away. I have a tendency to go at least three pages past the page requirement. In my original draft, I rambled about Wilder’s skill as a playwright for seven pages. By the time I reached page eight, I realized I only had two pages left to discuss the core of my essay: Wilder’s view of mankind. There was so much more I wanted to say after I turned in my essay, and I was scared that I might encounter that scribble-filled thought bubble again while attempting to edit. When I looked at my essay for the first time while revising, I was frustrated. After struggling with it at the end of the previous semester and thinking about it over Jan Term, I still didn’t really know what I was trying to talk about. Everything was muddled in my effort to talk about all the things bouncing around in my head without talking about every single thing.

During my first revision session in CWAC, Caitlin and I spent the entire hour finding a general cookie-cutter outline I could use to reorganize my essay. I felt wonderful after the first session. When I got home and tried to cut out my paragraphs and reorganize them, I became overwhelmed again. I had this outline, but I didn’t know where to begin.

I returned to CWAC and sought Caitlin’s help once more. She helped me reorganize my essay by paragraph and helped me figure out where to expand and cut. Finally, I was ready to tackle my essay, but my essay fought back. I found myself rewriting pages and shifting the focus of my essay, but I had finally figured out what I was trying to say for the past three months. My scribbled thoughts of frustration slowly became a coherent string of words, and my essay was untangled into a string of thoughts that finally made sense.

I remembered why I chose to write on the works of Thornton Wilder as opposed to Flannery O’Connor or George Bernard Shaw after looking up a quote during the revision process. Wilder humbles us by making us small; he reminds us that we are grand creatures. Even in what we may call “our common and boring lives,” we are fantastic, yet few people are able to recognize it. One of his characters asks, “Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it?—every, every minute?” (Our Town 110). Wilder crafts his pieces to include simplistic settings and everyday conversations so that we can at least appreciate “every, every minute” for the two hours we spend watching the play if we forget to do so every, every day.

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Call for Submissions
Spectrum, 2015

WRITING: We welcome submissions of any genre of writing produced as part of an undergraduate class, of any discipline.

Please submit via email to waccenter@stmarys-ca.edu with “Spectrum 2015” in the subject line, or in person to the Center for Writing Across the Curriculum (Dante 202). Please include the writer’s name, the professor’s name, and the course number. Writing may be submitted by the student writer or the professor by Dec. 31, 2014.

ART: The Department of Art and Art History welcomes submissions for artwork for the cover and interior of Spectrum 2015. The submission format is black & white digital, 7” x 9” at 300 dpi resolution. The winning selections will be determined by a jury.

Please email LRC3@stmarys-ca.edu for the entry form. All art entries will be due on December 5, 2014, in the Digital Art Lab.