

2010-2011 The Noisy Water Review Anthology of Student Writing & Art Whatcom Community College



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Introduction

 noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/intro.html

Welcome to the 2010-11 edition of *The Noisy Water Review*. We are particularly excited to introduce this year's edition because it represents an expanded version of the journal. This year, Whatcom Community College decided to combine the school's two former journals (*A Gathering of Voices* and *The Noisy Water Review*) into a single and more comprehensive literary and arts journal. As a result, this edition includes not only fiction and poetry, but also academic essays, artwork, and original music. We believe this broader scope better represents the true range of creative work that students accomplish both inside and outside our classrooms. We hope that you will enjoy what we believe to be some of the most brilliant, creative work done by students at Whatcom Community College this year.

In this edition, you will find deeply analytical and well researched writing like Semilla Sanchez's "More Than Child's Play" that explores the deep cultural, historical, neurobiological, sociological, and educational aspects of play and how important it is for human growth and development. You will find essays like Madeleine Easton's "The Damsel," which is part coming of age narrative, part story of her parent's broken relationship, and entirely fascinating, witty, honest, insightful, and lyrical. You will find stories such as Cheyenne Black's "Elegy" with a distinct narrator who carries the weight of her history in her voice mourning for a dead lover. And you will find poems like Anjolie York's "Blood Moon Tango" in which a dance with a stranger takes a sinister turn and evokes the darker side of the fairy tales we learned when we were young. This edition has art pieces like Rebecque Asher's "Three Point Fix," which brings together artistic and technical achievement with personal expression. Her still life represents objects of personal importance to her that hold deeper symbolic meaning, and is a reflection of the self.

But no matter the medium, we want to celebrate these acts of creativity. Producing art, music, poetry, and essays puts students in the position of owning their educations, of taking that great imaginative leap toward creating knowledge. Not all of these students will become professional writers or artists or musicians, but this work is deeply important nonetheless. As we know, creativity and imagination are central to not only to success in nearly every vocation, but also towards achieving individual potential and self- fulfillment. On the broadest level, creativity and imagination are critical components of problem solving and may yet prove vital towards dealing with the difficult social, global, and environmental problems this next generation faces.

We would like to thank all the students who submitted work for this edition, both those who are published here and those we could not find room for in this edition. We would also like to thank the faculty at the college for encouraging and supporting the creativity of our students.

Looking through this work energizes us and reminds us of the brilliance, talent, and potential of the students in our classrooms.

~ The editorial staff of *The Noisy Water Review*

Chicken Little: Juxtaposing My Feathered Friends in the Style of Susan Griffin

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/01-01essay.html

By Frances Sauter

I am one of 10 billion chicks hatched in the U.S. annually.

One in every five poultry workers is injured on the job.

In 2nd grade, I drew a picture of my dad butchering chickens. A dead chicken hangs on a fence in the background, a simple circle with two yellow legs sticking up towards the sun. A smiling man stands nearby, holding out a large ax like a child admiring a new toy. In the center, a table boasts a plate of drumsticks, a dish of eggs, and a bowl of peanuts. There is also a horse with a head twice the size of his body, and a man and woman stepping onto the scene to partake in the feast. Below the picture I have written, *Meat is a tasty treat. These are the meats I like to eat: nuts, eggs, and chicken.* By Frances.

I am still a baby. A rough hand shoves my beak into a machine. An eighth of an inch is seared off. Hot, blazing pain. I scream. Smoke rises. Blood falls.

Annual chicken consumption has risen from 27.4 pounds per person in 1970 to 59.2 pounds per person in 2004.

In the 1950s, it took 84 days for me to grow to five pounds. Now it takes 45.

Workers process 190 birds per hour, up from 143 ten years ago.

When I was 7 or 8 years old, we went to the Post Office to pick up a box. It was a cardboard box with lots of holes. And through the holes we could see little white chicks, baby Leghorns. We brought them home and gave them a nice pen all to themselves. They needed sugar water to prevent dehydration, and lots of grower ration. They pooped a lot, so we had to change their newspaper four times a day. Once they were old enough, we let them out into the big wide world. They loved to peck around for seeds and insects. Sometimes they took dust baths under our front porch. They were feisty bunch, and loved to flap around and squawk and squabble. Every night we locked them in their coop to protect them from hungry coyotes. After 8-10 weeks, they had grown big and strong. One afternoon, my sister and I were assigned to the task of catching all of the chickens. We had a blast racing after them. We chased them until they got tired, then trapped them in the corner of a stall, and snatched them up as they struggled to dodge us our fly away. We handed them off to my dad, who chopped the chicken's head off with one fell swoop. Then we watched as the chickens were hung upside down on the fence, and blood dripped out of their necks. After they bled out, the chickens were dropped in a pot of boiling water to loosen their feathers. My sister and I

watched as my mom plucked out the long white feathers. After the quills were removed, my dad took a sharp knife and cleaned out the guts. Then the birds were bagged and put in our freezer.

I am trapped. 20,000 other bodies press against my own, a flood of white robots. Space is nonexistent.

Workers make the same repetitive cutting motion up to 40,000 times per shift. Their cumulative trauma injuries are 33 times the national manufacturing average.

Arsenic found in the growth-promoting drug, Roxarsone. Eating 2 ounces of chicken a day exposes you to 3 to 5 micrograms of inorganic arsenic, which may lead to skin, respiratory, and bladder cancer.

One worker says: "I worry every day that I will break my hand or get hurt, but I never say anything for fear I'll lose my job. No American would do this job. This is a shit job for shit money."

Dust and feathers choke me. Ammonia burns my eyes.

Kapparos. My wings are wrenched back behind body. Sweaty fingers pinch my wings together, a rush of pain in my tendons. High, high, high I am lifted, above a man's head, looking down on a black hat, I am swung around in a circle. Three times I orbit around, each time the fiery pain shooting through my nerves. "This is my exchange, my substitute, my atonement, this rooster shall go to its death, but I shall go to a good, long life, and to peace." In a matter of seconds, my throat is slit. An instant of indescribable agony. My head falls to the ground. A stream of red spurts out of my open neck as my heart continues to beat. Soon, I will be given to the poor for food.

Steroids and antibiotics course through my veins. 11 million pounds of antibiotics are used in poultry feed each year.

During the 1990s, industry profits rose over 300 percent. Wages for workers have increased less than 1 percent over the past decade.

Six weeks of hell are past and gone. My body is a lead weight. I spend 76 to 86 percent of my time lying in my own excrement. My bulbous breast is blistered and burned. My legs are useless.

Illegal immigrants and people in their early teens are lured to meatpacking plants by radio advertisements in Mexico.

My Baci died when I was 11 years old. I remember having dinner at her house as a young child. We would have chicken, tasty drumsticks layered with breadcrumbs. I would peel off the skin and save it for last. I don't remember much about my Baci, but I hold what I do

remember close to my heart. Chicken has always had a special meaning to me because the flavor brings back memories of my childhood. Everything about chicken, chicken sandwiches, chicken soup, baked chicken, fried chicken, KFC chicken, it all rings a bell and conjures up a foggy image of my late grandmother. While it may sound pathetic, chicken is the only link I have to her, my only authentic memory of her. But at least it is something that I know and love, something I have experienced through life and death, something I have always known and always will know.

Many are dying. Respiratory disease, bronchitis, heat prostration, infection, cancer, heart failure, dehydration, etc.

Intimidation and harassment silence pro-union employees.

If you grew as fast as me, you would weigh 349 pounds at age 2.

A chicken hanger suffers from “claw-hand,” in which injured fingers lock in a curled position.

Confucian wedding. I sit solemnly in a soft lap. I am here as a substitute for the absent, bed-ridden bride. I hear heavy words floating through the air. Sincere. A red scarf has been wrapped around my head. It is silk and very smooth. I am enjoying all of this attention. I resist the urge to cluck in contentment. I ruffle my feathers with pride.

Help. One leg is snatched up. My body hangs down like a bulging weight. The brittle bones of my legs threaten to crack. For a fraction of a second, I am free. Flying through the air. Thud. I crash down. Stuck in a metal crate. The bodies of others pressing against mine.

In the black of night, a single catcher goes through 1,000 to 1,500 birds per hour. He will earn roughly \$92 a day, as opposed to \$108 a decade ago. At the end of his shift, dust will cover him head to toe. He most likely suffers from campylobacter, pulmonary inflammation, pneumoconiosis, chronic bronchitis, and the effects of toxic waste.

Thousands of miles flash by. Torrents of icy liquid pelt my flesh. A forklift dumps me onto a conveyor belt.

One morning, I was brushing my teeth when I heard my mother creeping slowly down the stairs. She had been in agony for the past two weeks, suffering a severe bout of the flu. As she stumbled into the bathroom, a powerful cough racked her frail body, and she crouched over the sink to spit out a wad of barf-yellow mucus. Her hair was a rat’s nest of black tangles, and as she looked up, I noticed dark circles under her eyes. “Good morning,” I said as she snatched her 115th Kleenex box from the cupboard and hobbled into the kitchen. “Geh mourning,” she rasped, the words scraping through her phlegm-coated throat like fingernails against a whiteboard. I heard the microwave beep as she heated up chamomile tea. I glanced out the window. Suddenly, a magnificent bird swooped down from the cloudy sky. “Look!” I shrieked, “It’s a bald eagle!” Hmmm . . . “Where’s the camera?”

“Ahhhhhhhhhehhwalakay!” howled my mother as she sprinted out into the yard towards the little black Japanese bantam cowering on the lawn. “Damn it, you stupid bird!” she bellowed as the bald eagle snatched up the chicken. Her old plaid bathrobe blew heroically in the wind, her shaggy mane a knotted mess. And suddenly she began to cry, the fury pouring out in icy tears running down her pale green cheeks. Meanwhile, the eagle had soared off into the distance, the chicken nothing but a tiny black dot in his massive talons. “Shit!” she spat it out nastily, and kicked the ground. I watched from the bathroom window, bewildered by this display of emotion, this image of rage swathed in a dirty bathrobe. My father went out to comfort her. “It’s gonna be all right,” he said, helping her totter back towards the house. It was as though the aftereffects of her illness had just set in, making her seem weak and feeble.

Three days later, my mother got a big surprise. As she walked into the coop around 8 o’clock to lock up the chickens for the night, low and behold, what should she find, but little Japanese Rosecomb, perched up near the nesting boxes. Ever since, the pint-sized hen has gradually turned white as snow. The hen was safe and sound, but I was scarred for life. I would never forget how my mom, exhausted, hacking her brains out, sprang to the rescue of our diminutive hen. Boy, that adrenaline must have cursed through her veins as she summoned the strength of a warrior, ready to defend the beloved chicken. I have a feeling this story will live through the next generations, for no one wants to miss out on “Miracle Hen: The Chicken Who Kicked the Bald Eagle’s ***.”

Dizzy. Ankles strung up on metal shackles.

There is no time for factory workers to take proper safety precautions.

Scream. Immersed in water. A wave of electricity zaps through me. 10 percent the level required to knock me out.

Abuse of pharmaceuticals in chicken feed has led to fluoroquinolone resistant campylobacter. Campylobacter are responsible for 2.4 million cases of food-borne illness per year.

In Chinese frescoes and Feng Shui, I symbolize reliability. I am the ideal of fidelity and punctuality. The Chinese name for my crest, guan, is that same as that of the official. If I am red, I protect the house from fire. If I am white, I chase away demons. When there are five of us, we remind parents to educate their sons.

I am still conscious as the sharp metal slashes at my throat. I thrash through my exhaustion. The mechanical blade cuts through my eyes instead.

It is Chinese New Year. My body will be presented as an offering. Cooked whole with my head, tail, and feet, it symbolizes prosperity, togetherness of the family, and joy.

I gently stroked the lustrous golden feathers of my enormous Cochin hen. I could smell the fresh scent of Casteel soap in her plumage. I had soaked her legs in mathalion wettable powder to eliminate external parasites hiding underneath her scales. After sponging her with sudsy water, I rinsed her with diluted vinegar solution. Now I let the warm air of the hair dryer ruffle her feathers and penetrate down to her damp skin. Later I gave her a once-over with a silky rag. A volunteer helped trim her nails with dog nail trimmers. Then I rubbed baby oil over her comb, wattles, feet, and shanks, and dusted her over with cornstarch to keep her clean. As I lift Buffy into her temporary cage, I check the wood shavings for any excrement. I make a mental note to refill her water in a couple of hours. Her yellow eyes stare back at me like miniature suns. "Hungry? Wait 'til after Fit and Show." What time is it? 3:43. At 4:00, Buffy and I will compete with the rest of the junior contestants at the Northwest Washington Youth Fair. My stomach is a swarm of butterflies. I have prepared Buffy to the best of my abilities; she is the epitome of a feathered fowl. Most importantly, she is an image of health and happiness. We have come a long way together, and we'll get through this too. There is really no reason to feel nervous.

I am one of 8,400 chickens processed per hour.

High levels of dioxins in chicken fat can cause chloracne, skin rashes, discoloration, excessive body hair, liver damage, and increased risk of cancer.

I am still conscious as I enter the scalding tank of water. My skin bubbles. I am boiled alive.

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noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/02-01art.html



Rebecque Asher

Three Point Fix

Digital painting, 7.5" x 10"

So, So Small

 noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/03-01creativewr.html

Ray Arani

You are sleeping on the bed and
I'm going through your laundry
I fold each item carefully;
Onesies, sleepers, overalls, tiny socks
Until I find something you've grown out of
And my breath trips on its way out
as I realize that our time is slipping through my fingers
like water
and I watched a movie last night when I could've watched you sleep
and suddenly
I want to hold that blue outfit you wore home
from the birthing center
You were so, so small you were just swimming in it
Your stirring on the bed
I drop the too small outfit in the "give away" pile
and move to rub your back
But you are hungry so I curl up next to you
clothes forgotten
and I remember that your still need me
and against my chest,
your knees pressing against my stomach,

you seem so, so small

Chaconne: Journey to Greener Meadows

 noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/04-01music.html

Carrie Schafer

Audio Player requires Flash player

This ensemble piece Chaconne: Journey to Greener Meadows starts as a theme in D minor centered around the two flutes. It continues incorporating the two violins before going into the second section and the two violins create a melody and harmony with the flutes leading with upper accompaniment. The return and variation to the theme as the third section brings back the D minor theme before moving to four voice counterpoint, returning to the theme before the close.

Analysis of Schick-Wilkinson Sword Commercial: Did They Just Say What I Think They Did?

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/05-02essay.html

Melisa Nelson and Brent Maier

Abstract

This study seeks to investigate the contrast in European and U.S. markets for the Schick-Wilkinson Sword Company, which influenced the production of the JWT New York Agency's "Mow the Lawn" commercial. It will also, through the use of mass communication theories, seek to uncover societal reinforcement of cultural norms that the commercial and ad campaign utilizes. It will analyze the historical aspects influencing the media angle, including the use of symbols, towards the targeted market. The theories used are Semiotics, Objectification, Dismemberment, and the Cultivation theory.

In order to fully understand the message being sent from this commercial the historical and feminist perspectives of hair removal were investigated, along with the deeper meaning of colors, shapes, and colloquial language used to discuss personal grooming habits and body parts.

Introduction

Television is rife with stereotypical images of women. Historically, the stereotypes were "the saint and the sinner" archetypes. In modern media these types are now the "housewife and the sex object." In her article "Beauty...and the Beast of Advertising", Kilbourne (2002) states that "The aspect of advertising most in need of analysis and change is the portrayal of women. Scientific studies and the most casual viewing yield the same conclusion: women are shown almost exclusively as housewives or sex objects." In analyzing the Quattro for Women Bikini commercial, the background of the company, the historical and modern ideology of hair removal, and the repercussions to women as a whole from the continued portrayal of these stereotypes were the main focus of investigation.

Product Description

The Wilkinson Sword Quattro for Women Bikini is one of the newest disposable shaving systems released by Wilkinson Sword. It features not only a four bladed razor (where the name Quattro came from) but also at the opposite end is a water proof trimmer powered by a single AAA energizer battery. The razor itself is thicker than an average disposable razor and it is featured in a two tone white and "funky teal" color. The "funky teal" is used for rubber grips on the razor.

The razor sells for €9.99 which equals out to \$13.32 in American currency.

History of Company

The combination of Schick and the Wilkinson Sword Company reaches back in history to draw together two companies from opposite global corners in the health and beauty product market. Forged together in 1992 by Warner Lambert, the company was sold to Energizer Holdings, a transaction worth \$930 million in 2003. This new partnership placed Schick-Wilkinson Sword in the number two spot in the world razor market, with over \$620 million sales by 2001 (Fundinguniverse.com).

The Schick-Wilkinson Sword title actually represents two separately directed brands. Schick is a U.S. manufacturer with origins that trace back to U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Jacob Schick. Schick invented a new type of safety razor in 1921. His career after this focused on additional razor development and innovation. Schick, with the merger of the two names, became the exclusive North American and Japan marketing branch of the company (Shaving.com).

Wilkinson Sword, the forger of ceremonial swords for the British royal family as well as the world's largest bayonet manufacturer through World War II, has been developing and refining blades since 1824. The 1950's and 60's brought the company into a highly successful global market, thereby attracting international attention. Wilkinson Sword blades began selling in over 50 countries, which instigated a process of packaging the company itself as a personal care accessories manufacturer (Fundinguniverse.com)

For a short span of about twenty years, 1920 - 1940, the company engaged in the production of pruning shears and gardening equipment, growing into a leading manufacturer for this market. Eventually the division was sold to Finland Fiskars, who continues to manufacture shears and scissors. Fiskars has now become one of four main competitors, another crucial one being Gillette, a personal care company from the U.S. (Fundinguniverse.com).

Schick-Wilkinson's most recent addition to the family, the Quattro for both men and women, made its debut in 2003. Quattro maintains the standard of production and design Wilkinson Sword has held proudly for over a hundred years (Fundinguniverse.com). Possessing a four-blade construction the women's Quattro razor is specifically designed for a smooth close cut in the bikini area (Shaving.com).

With the branding of their "Free Your Skin" slogan, Schick "focuses on providing a truly liberating shave... a more pleasurable, effortless skincare experience" (Schick.com) This statement, with its attempt to guarantee personal satisfaction, seems also to give the consumer hope of inner freedom as they undergo more bodily freedom without. Product quality is not left unaddressed. Schick proclaims they go beyond mainly removal of hair to a deeper care for the individual's skin, which literally encompasses the whole person (Schick.com).

Description of Commercial

The “Mow Your Lawn” commercial has a running time of 1:09. It was developed to run as a web campaign, in addition to the 30 second commercials shown on television. The commercial can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MvFSgXpyhoM>.

The commercial follows a woman from being inside her house in a robe to joining her neighbors outside mowing their lawns and trimming their bushes and hedges. In the opening shot, the colors are muted beige and brown tones. A woman is sitting on a chaise lounge in front of a window with an orange tabby cat on her lap. In this scene, and throughout the commercial, she is singing.

The commercial then moves outside and shows this same woman, along with various other women, engaged in gardening activities. The predominant colors are teal, white and pink, emphasized by the muted tones of brown, beige or green houses and drab green trees and grass. All of the women are in vibrant colors, mainly teal, white and pink, with some red and yellow included. Clothing styles are short: sleeves, shorts, and/or skirts. Necklines are low. Many are wearing high-heeled shoes.

While doing their various activities, lawnmowers and garden tools are being used. All of these implements are pink or have pink handles. During the action the women are all singing a song pertaining to the activities they are doing. At certain times the women’s actions act out the song’s lyrics. The lyrics are as follows:

Sometimes a girl can't help
Feeling a little blue.
When everything's a mess,
My favorite thing to do...

Is mow the lawn
Mow my lawn
Mow it
Do it
Cut it
Trim it

Some bushes are really big (wink!)
Some gardens are mightly small (giggle!)
What ever shape your topiary
It's easy to trim them all

Whenever I see a weed
I mow that rascal down
So all that's left for me to see
Are tulips on a mound

So mow the lawn
(uh-oh uh-oh)
Mow the lawn
(uh-oh uh-oh)

Toolshed's equipped
My forest clipped
Never feel untidy
Just spruce up your Aphrodite
And mow the lawn

Feeling a little rough around the edges?
(And mow the lawn)
Feels great to trim the hedges
(And mow the lawn)

At the end of the commercial the women are all waving at the camera as it pans away. The main actress is again holding a cat, which is now a hairless variety. The Quattro razor swoops across the screen mimicking the motion of a lawn being mowed. The brand name and a website appear at the very end.

Theory Review

Objectification and Dismemberment Theories

The theories of Objectification and Dismemberment are relatively new theories addressing concerns that have been around for many years. The theory of Objectification suggests that women are conditioned to view their bodies as objects and their faces as masks. (Kilbourne 2002) Women are also taught to internalize an outsider's perspective of their bodies. According to Frederickson and Roberts (1997) this phenomenon is called objectification. Dismemberment focuses on one part of the body, such as a woman's breasts or pelvic area, creating a sum of parts instead of the body and person as a whole. This leaves women feeling as if their entire body is less than ideal because one part does not measure up to some "ideal". Kilbourne (2002) believes that the use of dismemberment in advertising has become a monstrous problem that needs to be addressed.

Semiotics

One of the broadest definitions of semiotics is that of Umberto Eco, who states that "semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign" (Eco 1976). Semiotics involves the study of what is referred to as "signs" in general terms, along with anything that "stands for" something else. In semiotics signifiers take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects. They do not become signs until they are interpreted by the observer. According to Ferdinand de Saussure, widely acknowledged as the founder of linguistics and semiotics:

It is...possible to conceive of a science *which studies the role of signs as part of social life*. It would form part of social psychology, and hence of general psychology. We shall call it *semiology* (from the Greek *seméion*, 'sign'). It would investigate the nature of signs and the laws governing them. Since it does not yet exist, one cannot say for certain that it will exist. But it has a right to exist, a place ready for it in advance. Linguistics is only one branch of this general science. The laws which semiology will discover will be laws applicable in linguistics, and linguistics will thus be assigned to a clearly defined place in the field of human knowledge. (Saussure 1983)

The primary theoretical orientations in analyzing mass media have been semiotics and rhetoric (Images in Advertising). When analyzing a text the individual needs to make it imperative that all possible meaning is derived from said text. A signifier can have untold connotations of meaning. It all rests upon the interpretation of the viewer, the context in which the signifier is observed, and the depth of meaning the observer is willing to explore.

Cultivation Theory

The cultivation theory was first developed by Professor George Gerbner, who introduced this theory due to the decline in support of the hypodermic needle theory. The theory was first developed by studying groups of people and seeing how watching TV influenced or affected

people's beliefs. The study resulted in the findings that heavy TV viewers were more likely to believe the real world around them was like the fictional world they watch on TV.

Cultivation theory states that television is responsible for shaping viewer perceptions of social reality, which in turn eventually shapes our culture by blurring the lines between real and make believe. (Quick, B. 2009) This shaping of reality is amplified when a person has little firsthand experience with the topic being portrayed. This is due to the fact that a light viewer of TV would have more sources to pull information from rather than relying on the media as their only source. A widely used example of the cultivation theory is the use of violence in media, the portrayal of which leads heavy TV viewers to think the real world has more violent acts occur than what actually happen (Nabi, R 2008). This being said, cultivation theory argues that the increase of violence in the media effects people's attitudes about the idea of violence, not that the viewers act more violent themselves. As well as being used to study violence, cultivation theory has been used to study "other mass media from this perspective, and has dealt with topics such as gender roles, age groups, ethnic groups and political attitudes." (Chandler, 1995)

Theory Application

Cultivation Theory

In the Wilkinson Sword commercial, which advertises the Quattro for Women Bikini razor system, the main focus has little to do with the razor being sold. In fact the product itself is not shown until 43 seconds into the 1 min 9 second commercial. Also, the brand and product names are not seen until the last eight seconds of the commercial. It is clear that the commercial's main focus is selling the idea of shaving your pubic area, not the razor itself, and this fits into the cultivation theory perfectly. The idea is to make it seem as if everyone shaves, showing the whole neighborhood out "mowing their lawns," finally followed by a product that can help you do this. To a heavy viewer of television, the idea of shaving your pubic area because it is fun and everyone is doing it would seem more and more as fact. Even the neighborhood that is depicted in this commercial gives support to this idea.

The neighborhood used as the backdrop for the commercial is an excellent representation of the middle class. The muted colors used on the two-story homes are done intentionally in order to represent any middle-class neighborhood, anywhere. In this way, the advertisers are cultivating a sense of familiarity with the viewer.

In the early 1900s the increased use of shorter sleeves in women's apparel introduced the idea of underarm hair removal and a new market for those in the razor industry. Shortly after this the first ad campaign for shaving women's underarms was launched. It featured:

...a waist-up photograph of a young woman who appears to be dressed in a slip with a toga-like outfit covering one shoulder. Her arms are arched over her head revealing perfectly clear armpits. The first part of the ad read 'Summer Dress and Modern Dancing combine to make necessary the removal of objectionable hair. (Cecil, 1991)

The idea of shaving under the arms is no longer sold by the media, mainly because it has become part of our culture. As stated by Cecil, “The underarm battle was largely won. Advertisers no longer felt compelled to explain the need for their products but could concentrate simply on distinguishing themselves from their competitors.” (Cecil, 1991). This is because the idea that you need to shave under your arms, formed by the media, is now rooted in our culture and no longer needs as much focus from the media to maintain it. This is one of the main points stated by the cultivation theory. As Hargreaves and Tiggeman (2003) found in their study on the effect of viewing ultra-thin models in ads by adolescent females:

There is a feasible link between individual reactive “episodes” of dissatisfaction in response to specific media images and the development of body image in that enduring attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about bodies and appearance accumulate over time through repeated exposure to ideals of attractiveness in the media.

Continuing the cultural norm started by the ad targeting underarm hair in the early 1900's, Nair targeted leg hair in their “Dare to wear short shorts” ad campaigns that started in the 1970's. In the commercials, women wearing short-shorts hold bottles of Nair and sing lyrics such as, “We wear short-shorts, if you dare wear short-shorts, Nair for short-shorts.” This idea relates strongly with the fact that women's underarms were not targeted until their clothing exposed it, in this case short-shorts exposing more of a woman's hair, resulting in products to remove said hair.

A naysayer to this idea would state that the media has little to do with the actual progression of hair removal that we have seen in our culture in the last decade. It is actually just the recurrence of what has been going on for thousands of years. It has been stated that, “glabrousness has also held cultural significance for several millennia—affording a distinguishable physicality to notions of class, youth, femininity, and beauty.” (Prescott-Steed, 2008). This idea of glabrousness, or hairlessness, was widely adopted by the ancient Egyptians who related the removal of hair to personal hygiene, mainly due to lice.

Along with the hygiene aspect of hair removal, it was seen as, “...an expression of high social status, with ruling class women's esteem for glabrousness seeing them practicing the removal of all body hair except for the hair on top of their heads.” (Prescott-Steed, 2008) The cultural norms of the ancient Egyptians seeped their way into the higher echelon of ancient Greek and Roman society as well. Statues such as the Venus de Milo, which is used in the Schick commercial, depict a woman who has little to no body hair and even statues of men tend to show minimal body hair. So the idea of hair removal is not a new idea in terms of what is aesthetically pleasing to many cultures.

All that being said, it still does not take away from the idea that the modern media encourages cultivating the idea of hair removal in order to sell a product. The topic of grooming your pubic area is a sensitive one, at least in the United States, where a more conservative view is taken on what is appropriate to be shown on television. A commercial such as this would never make it past a censorship committee, even if the topic is one discussed by women all over the country when in the midst of intimate peers. In fact, there is a 30 second version shown in the U.S. that features women walking by shrubs that form the heart, triangle and rectangle shapes of the shrubs in the U.K. version as the women pass by. There are no visual or verbal puns used in the U.S. version.

Up until the last 30 years or so the idea of shaving you pubic area would be an anomaly despite the fact that pubic and body hair in general have been removed for thousands of years. The history of hair removal does not take away from the fact that hair has been a normal part of modern western culture until the media began portraying it as negative. As shown in the previous examples of print ads, the more skin that is shown by clothing styles, the more hair there is that needs to be removed. Although the commercial could be seen as a cheeky and innocent advertisement for a razor, if one looks at the images of women that have been perpetuated by mass media for the last fifty years as the “ideal” in attractiveness and desirability, the advertisement seems to be more insidious than fun. This perception of the dark side of this type of advertisement will be further analyzed in the application of the theories of Objectification and Dismemberment.

Objectification and Dismemberment Analysis

The commercial from Schick-Wilkinson Sword for the Quattro razor is a prime example of the use of women’s bodies as objects, along with the use of gardening implements and other objects to dismember those objectified bodies into parts. The women in the commercial are not portrayed as whole human beings, but as sums of their parts. This is not a new phenomenon, nor does the fault lay solely with the advertising world, but advertisements do contribute to the manifestation of body image issues in women. Studies have suggested that women are targeted more for sexually objectifying treatment than are men (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Frederickson and Roberts (1997) originated the term “objectification theory”, which suggests that our culture socializes girls and women to internalize an observer’s perspective on their own bodies (Greening, 2004). In doing this, women and girls become more concerned with their outer attributes instead of their unseen inner qualities. They in effect self-objectify themselves because of what they observe to be the feminine ideal in television, movies and ad campaigns. This self-objectification can lead to the development of severe mental health issues, such as eating disorders, depression, and sexual dysfunction (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997).

In a study conducted at the Flinders University of South Australia, Kuring and Tiggemann (2004) administered a questionnaire to 286 undergraduate students (115 men, 171 women). The questionnaire contained measures of self-objectification and self-surveillance, measures of proposed consequences of self-objectification, and outcome variables of disordered eating and depression. The study found that self-objectification leads to body shame, appearance anxiety, depressive mood, and disordered eating. These findings were almost exclusively reported by the women of the study. The men reported much lower levels of self-objectification and self-surveillance. However, those that did show evidence of these behaviors also experienced higher levels of body shame and appearance anxiety.

The “Mow the Lawn” ad campaign portrays women in an objectified manner. Their apparel consists of very short skirts and pants with low-cut shirts. The eye is drawn to their legs and to their breasts. In addition to the clothing, the props in the commercial further “chop” the women into body parts. This is an example of the dismemberment theory in practice. The lawnmowers are positioned to highlight the pelvic area of the women pushing them. The garden shears are held in a way that cuts the woman off at the neck, implying that the head is an un-necessary part of her. The razor, the one time it is featured in the commercial, is also held across the neck. The shrubs in the shape of a triangle, rectangle, and a heart are enlarged as if to say that all that matters about the women standing behind them are their “bushes”. The entire commercial reduces women to breasts, vaginas, and legs. This type of dismemberment encourages women to view their bodies as many different pieces and leave women feeling that their entire body is spoiled on the account of one “less-than-perfect” feature (Kilbourne 2002).

Semiotic Analysis

Every visual that is used in a television ad campaign is there to serve a purpose. Shapes, colors, buildings, *everything* is placed to promote the agenda and values of the company whose product is being advertised. This commercial is no exception. From the shapes, sizes and verdant greens of the lawn and topiary to the naked cat at the end, every audio and visual aspect of the commercial is a deliberate text. The variable element in this is the viewer, and his/her interpretation of the semiological connotation of the text.

There are three prominent colors used throughout the Wilkinson Sword Quattro for Women commercial. In addition to these bright and focus-grabbing colors, two of which happen to be the colors of the actual razor/trimmer itself, the entire color palette of the commercial lends an air of nostalgia and conveys the feel of a by-gone era. The browns, beiges and greens of the houses, fences and lawns bring to mind the colors that were popular in the 1960’s and 70’s. In addition, these colors provide a neutral background to accentuate the focus of the frame. The first highly visible color is a bubble-gum pink. Pink is associated with feminine qualities, passivity, love and friendship (color-wheel-pro.com). The lawnmowers that the women are using are a matte pink. The handles of the garden shears and scissors are pink, along with the

tool box that is hanging on the side of the house. In addition to the meanings attributed to the color pink, this bubble-gum pink is also part of the packaging colors of the product. Using pink helps bring the focus to that packaging when the consumer goes to the store to buy.

The other two pervasive colors are white and teal. The Quattro razor/trimmer for women is white and “funky teal,” the company name for the color. In the commercial the sky is shades of teal with white clouds. Many of the actresses’ outfits are teal and white. The use of these two colors breeds a familiarity with the colors of the product, so that again, when a consumer is purchasing a razor, they will remember the colors.

A subtler use of color is used in the beginning moments of the commercial. The woman in the scene is dressed in a brown robe-style garment. She is surrounded by very muted shades of beige, cream, green, and orange. Her hair is a toned-down blonde shade and matches the fur of the cat in her lap. Brown can connote masculinity (color-wheel-pro.com), which a woman could be considered if she is remiss in shaving and trimming “excess” body hair. Brown can also be used to convey quiet, mousy, and unpopular. The closed in, shut-off-from-the-world feel that is perceived in this beginning scene seems to give the viewer the idea that because this woman has not trimmed her body hair, she is sad, alone, and stuck in the house. This idea was verified by a post from the blog *The Hathor Legacy* that read, “Horribly racist stereotypes aside, the ad also suggests that women need to shave to feel “tidy” and not “rough around the edges” (implying that if you don’t shave, you’re dirty, untidy, messy).” (2009) The rest of the commercial exhibits what will happen once she uses the product.

For the rest of the commercial the actress from the first scene is portrayed as exuberant, happy, carefree, and popular. She has changed into a bright colored pink and white ensemble, her hair is styled and lighter looking, and she is out in the world with her neighbors and friends. Her entire life seems to have changed, because she used the product to free herself from her dreary, masculine world.

Throughout the commercial, the fences, rock walls, and shrubbery are positioned to be at the same height as the pelvic area of the actresses. Those that are in the background are colored in lackluster tones of beige and green. The idea is to draw the focus to the actress in the middle of the screen, so that along with the colorful outfits of the women popping against these flat colors, they are often used to create a frame for the cynosure, or focal point, of the scene. The bushes that are placed in front of the women are a brighter, albeit still muted, green. It would seem the purpose for this is to allow the dominant colors of pink, teal and white to stay foremost in the viewers’ minds. These background objects are not the only tools used for framing the focal points of the commercial.

When the actresses are pushing the lawnmowers, the handles of the mowers are placed so that the pelvic areas of the women are framed. The garden shears are placed in a way that the head and neck of the women are framed by the open V of the shears. The razor, the one time

it is shown in the commercial, is held at neck height and creates a frame of the actress's head. Yet this is not the only reason these implements are placed like this. As was discussed earlier, this is an example of dismemberment, as well as homage to the company's past.

The regal image of the crossing scabbards is one which brings one back to the historical contexts of the Schick company when it joined with Wilkinson Sword. This image is repeated using the garden tools unobtrusively advertised in the commercial, such as in the multiple scenes of females navigating their pink mowers in crossing patterns on the lawn. The scabbards themselves speak of a class association observable in the foundations of the company with the production of royal ceremonial swords. Every pruner, mower, lopper, and set of shears is a stamp commenting on historical quality and expertise. No actual swords are necessary to display until the commercials close, branding the neighborhood as the logo jumps into the corner of the scene, which has turned into lush emerald turf as background.

As described above, many of the objects that are used in the commercial have more than one meaning. Another example of this is the cat. In the opening sequence, the cat is sitting on the lap of the actress in the brown robe. The cat's fur is the same shade of blonde as the actress's hair. The cat is the only company she has while she is sitting in her house in an untrimmed state. Once she has tidied up her "topiary," she is able to join her friends and neighbors outside. The other meaning for the cat is a colloquial slang word for a woman's vagina. This is brought to the viewer's attention towards the end of the commercial, when the same woman is shown outside, pushing a lawnmower and holding a hairless pink cat in her arms. The naked cat is a metaphor for her naked pubic area. The fact that the hairless cat is pink also serves as a visual metaphor for another slang term for a woman's vagina. This is a blatant play on words using objects instead of the actual word. Another play on words is the visual use of two tulips potted on a green, bushy mound. The main actress is seen trimming this bush while seated with the pot containing the tulips situated in between her spread legs. She sings the words "tulips on the mound" while performing this action. This phrase is also slang for the vaginal area. One more use of these audio/visual puns is in the scene where the same actress blows away a leaf covering from the pelvic area of a statue of Aphrodite, also known as the Venus de Milo, while singing "just spruce up your Aphrodite." The Venus scene is additionally a subtle dig at Schick's main competition in the women's grooming market, Gillette. The Gillette razor line for women is the Venus, and this scene implies that Schick is "blowing away" the competition.

In addition to the use of colors and objects, the physical appearance of the actresses used in the commercial is also deliberate and multi-dimensional. One of the reasons they were chosen is to show that the razor/trimmer combo can be used by any woman with any type of hair. The dominant ethnicity in the commercial is Caucasian as shown by the main actress. The advertisers also use a woman who appears to be of African descent, one who appears to be of Asian descent and one that appears to be of Latina or possibly East Indian descent. As Shreffler said in a marketing industry newsletter, "Marketers aren't turning out multicultural ads for the good of society. They recognize there is money involved. If you skip out on a [a

racial and/or ethnic] group...who are you marketing to?" (msnbc.com, 2009) Ultimately, the reason advertisers use multiracial representations in advertisement is to increase profits, not to increase harmony.

The ad clearly illustrates what Williams (msnbc.com, 2009) was articulating when he said, "Every now and then you see something that bucks the trend. But when you do content analyses of ads, you are astounded by how much stereotypes are still part of the advertising we all digest." The woman who appears to be of African descent is seen "attacking" an unruly shrub with an electric hedge-trimmer. She is the only one to use a power tool to trim her hedge. Her hair is also the only hair to be blown around wildly by a "wind" as she is singing the line, "Some bushes are really big." This is reminiscent of Balkaran's (1999) assertion "As a result of the overwhelming media focus on crime, drug use, gang violence, and other forms of anti-social behavior among African-Americans, the media have fostered a distorted and pernicious public perception of African-Americans". The aggressive nature of her portrayal continues to reinforce the perception the public has of the women of this ethnicity.

In contrast, the woman who looks to be of Asian heritage is shown with a small pair of garden clippers while trimming a very tidy looking bonsai-style bush and singing, "Some gardens are mighty small." Her hair is neat and pulled back, and she is portrayed in a shy and retiring manner. She is also the only woman dressed mainly in white, which could suggest purity or virginity (color-wheel-pro.com). In a study, Wu (2010) "finds that both Asian/Asian American women and women from other racial-ethnic groups confirm belief in the model minority media stereotype in prime-time television". This statement perfectly expresses the myriad reasons why the stereotypes are used and perpetuated in mass media. The original post on The Hathor Legacy blog contained this sentiment, which was echoed by many of the respondents' comments:

I still can't decide what's the worst thing about this ad. The message that every woman must remove every single hair from her body to be a socially acceptable person, or that the Asian and white women go daintily about their business and the black woman goes at her bush with a frigging chainsaw. I get they are going for tongue-in-cheek, but I am left vaguely horrified by this, not amused. (S.B.G. 2009)

Conclusion

In analyzing the "Mow the Lawn" commercial from Wilkinson Sword, there are many different paths one could take. The message the company seems to be sending is one of cheeky fun, almost as if it is intending there to be an inside joke between women viewers and the company. The company is not introducing anything new, as the ideal in many cultures has leaned towards as little body hair as possible for thousands of years. If anything it is offering an innovative product for the consumer to use to remove their unwanted body hair and showcasing it in a fun and humorous way. Some viewing the commercial take the message in a completely different way. As Sherrett (2009) said on his blog AdHack:

At first blush, it seems charming. A smattering of spunky cuties singing and dancing. A distinct 1960's sunshine-and-lollipops, rainbows-and-puppy-dogs feel reminiscent of good times, fashionable TV shows (ahem: *Mad Men*) and an idealized era. So why was it bugging me? Why did it seem tasty but feel wrong, like candy floss: sweet on the tongue, rotting the teeth? And then it came to me on the bus this morning. They're not selling a razor/trimmer. They're selling shame to women.

It is possible to see the racial and feminine stereotypes used in the commercial and take offense to the portrayal of women as sex objects who are unworthy of attention unless they dress, act and shave or trim a certain way. The use of blades to frame the actresses' heads could be seen as a way of dismembering them and turning the women into just torso and legs because their heads and, therefore, their minds are insignificant and unwanted. As was stated previously, it is up to the viewer to interpret the commercial and its meaning for themselves and to come to their own informed conclusion.

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The Noisy Water Review | Student Anthology of Writing & Art, Whatcom Community College

 noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/06-02art.html

 Noisy Water Review, Whatcom Community College



Gareth Bolt

Dead Man's Hand

Mixed media, 13" x 9"

Elegy

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/07-02creativewr.html

Cheyenne Black

“Yeah, hi everyone. Thanks for coming. Ha! Like it's a party, or I have a right to thank you for coming. Jack would hate that. Did you all taste the cheese sandwiches? I brought them for Jack. Stop glaring at me, Stella. Hang on, hang on, let me get out a smoke. Okay, so yeah, Jack huh. Gone. How do we go on? Oh I know how I go on, just like before because it's not like he came 'round for more than a month at a time anyway, taking my time and smoking up my cigarettes and leaving me with no booze and a sore cunt. Not like we walked in the park and held hands and told tales to the old geezers playing chess how we'd be looking to settle down and make babies, did we? Not Jack, no way. But cheese sandwiches and sex and booze and words, that we had. Always the words. 'How do you expect to ever get better if you don't try harder fellaheen? You gotta try harder to give it up and out and use it all and have nothing left when it's done so you're empty but everyone else is full and then you've done it.' And I never did know what he was saying, why he had to talk like he was a saint and live like the devil.”

The cigarette drag was full and deep, the ash stretching, quivering as she spoke, her eyes red rimmed and caustic with heat, “But oh, it was good. Yeah, it was really good when it was good. Wasn't it, Stella? Yeah, you know. Hell, I think half us here know the truth that when he was on he was good and when he was down it was a ride into the deep hanging on to the back of a shark mad with need for salvation and no way to find more than the inside hurt. The way he'd go inside and take you with him just to make sure you knew he was in pain but never let you in enough to help him find the way back. The damned critics saw to that, didn't they? Made him puke his guts out on a page. Give away all the best of himself till there was no finding Jack anymore just the cartoon drawing they thought he was and that still wasn't good enough, not for them, no way. Give us more so we can tear you up inside, Jack, and send you screaming back into the oblivion you created in your damned mind when we weren't able to understand your kind of genius. Let us make you into something you never were and show us just how to live so we can help you die. Damned critics. You loved them though, always defending their right to sing your praises and lash at your soul with the same pen, always saying they might be onto something, then crawling inside where I couldn't get to you anymore. Have another bottle, Jack! Who needs two fingers when you can pour four and have to leave the desk half as often?”

Her hand raked through her wiry hair, unraveling curls into a frizz while her free hand tipped a flask to her lips before she replaced the cap and dropped it into the pocket of her blonde fur coat.

“Spending the night in that putrid alleyway was the worst night of my life, Jack. Listening to you talk for hours with the bum covered in his own mess and waiting. Just waiting. Always waiting for you! Why did you need to hear his entire story? Couldn't you make some of this shit up? What is the use of hanging around in grotesque places and gathering wool to spin into tales you could have woven from the threads of your own imagination, Jack? Why? And why won't you fucking answer me, you damnable bastard! Can't we just start over? Go back to the day we met and you were so damned charming. Always smiling, leaning on that bar and offering to take me on the road with you. What is the use of you if it was just to torment me all my life? Hey yeah, anyone have a refill?”

Fishing out the flask, she held it aloft toward the crowd and shook it lightly, her eyebrows raising in question. Shrugging, she gave the cap a twist and brazenly emptied the last of the contents down her throat before dropping the leather covered flask on the podium with a jarring thump.

“So yeah uh, that night was incredible. All silk stockings and cigarettes, and you never stopped talking, filling my ear with tales and words I can't remember now but I wonder if it was to keep me from thinking, so I wouldn't say no to you and you could have your way, not that I'd have said no given any thought to my own way anyway but you know, I was a lady once, Jack, damn you, I was a lady once. Till you poured through my life like the whiskey you used to warm and sip off of my belly. You poured along filling every damned nook and cranny, every sense of me was consumed in you, your cologne never stopped at my pillow but clung to my hair and no washing would get it out until I thought I'd burn it off to be rid of you when you wouldn't come for months at a time and I couldn't stand it anymore. The way the clippings you were always cutting littered my desk but I was afraid to move them for fear you'd need just that one and I wouldn't be able to find it again. Never wanted to displease you did I, Jack? Oh no, who wants to become a caustic story fed to your buddies over booze on a Friday and told to a mic by Allan? Not me for sure. How do walk with that damned swagger anyway? The way you move made me want to climb onto you even in that forsaken alleyway and let the damned bum watch for all I cared, just to be on you, with you, in me, over me, consuming me, making me alive again because I died when we met and you remade me into this thing I am now that I don't even like and can't ever go back to being what I was so I stay here in this body thinking only that you're gone and I'm a wasted version of me, alone and lost and without the spark that brought me life because I gave myself away, didn't I Jack, but you took it in, you accepted it and asked for more then gave me nothing back so I was empty and told me to give them more, them, always them that you never really told me who they were, the people you'd say, but who the hells is that, Jack? Is it me, you? Stella? Oh don't glare, Stella, you got it all didn't you? And I got nothing really, just his hat on the back of my door and his sleepy mumblings that I saved him. For something? From something? Why, when and what? How? Did he ever tell me so I could do it again or more? No of course not, and he always went back on the road and back to you, didn't he Stella? Damn you, Jack.”

She took another drag, surveying the audience in front of her, the way several were shifting uncomfortably in their seats, others looked bemused, and Stella glared through slits so narrowed, it seemed they might close the last distance and she would implode from the rage lining her face, or her teeth may shatter under the pressure with which her jaw was clenched.

“When we had it, we really had it though, didn't we Jack? We could talk for hours about the way the sun came up, the reflection on the glass being a clue to our own existence. How we loved to dream. We'd plot and plan the ways we could escape it all and then come back later with all of the truths and treasures of the world. How we'd sleep on the roof and rename the stars and give them each a story, rife with our own ideas for life. You'd bring me a bottle cap and tell me the way it had rolled through life was the plan for you and now I can't see one and not see you, bumping your way along, finding all of the low spots suffering some for the kicks of the passers by and cutting the feet of the unsuspecting. Why did you bring me to this, Jack? Why couldn't you have left me alone? I'd be married to some banker by now and happy, with a couple of brats and more booze than I could drink. But instead I can't unsee you. I can't undream nights spent under the stars and I can't feel hands other than yours without thinking that you did it better, truer, and with more fire than any man before or since. That you would lay claim to me and absorb me before putting me back changed with every encounter.”

“I'm like that damned coffee you taught me to add whiskey to and now I can't drink it any other way because it just feels like it's missing something and I'm the coffee or maybe the whiskey because the heat of the coffee brings out my best qualities. But you didn't did you? Oh, we'd fight! Love to fight with you but the neighbors hated it the way we'd scream and let it all hang out, but then we'd be free wouldn't we, no more holding back only the heat and the way cleared out. All words and breath and hate and heat and who needs sheets? You tore mine up to make a rope so you could hang upside down from the window and explore the street from a new vantage point but I had the last laugh when I wore your tie to your engagement party; the one she gave you and you left in my apartment. We were always sparring weren't we, Jack? Eloquently turning to one another and building to some crescendo that only we could hear, some peak in the tension that would kill us or make us into something new and now here you are, and I'm alone but useless to anyone but you. Any one of you writer boys in the market for a used up muse? Not you William, put your hand down, I don't play those kinds of games.”

She snatched up another cigarette and lit it, taking a long drag and exhaling toward the ceiling, considering the crowd through the smoke.

“But I wasn't Joan, was I Jack? No, none of us were. However much we tried, whenever we opened our mouths to speak we just didn't have the same delicate but biting way did we? Delicate but biting is what you always called her, how is that even possible for a real woman, Jack? We, all of us, even Stella, tried to live up to the image of her you all built in your minds and we just never could. But you had no end of letting us try, did you Jack? No, you would

prod and pull and ask and beg me to give you my ideas on the bourgeoisie, to beat with you the ways and means of our very survival in this place and then catapult us both into the arms of dreaming. Who the hell's got benny? Anyone? Shit.”

The drag was long, steady, the scaly ash growing before falling onto the lectern without a glance, she lit another from the butt and stubbed the end on the wood leaving a scar in the finish. “Damn you to hell, Jack Kerouac, I'll love you to the day I die.”

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Mitch Britt

Waves

Acrylic, 24" x 26"

More than Child's Play

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/09-03essay.html

Semilla Sanchez

As a culture we tend to discount play as a resource beyond the ages of childhood, and yet play is often how we navigate any new experience. Play is an integral element in our lives, enriching how we interact with the world. In the educational curriculum play is often delegated to early learning centers where it then becomes derailed in middle school to be replaced by catchy gadgets designed to stimulate and entertain. The value of play is in its creativity which engages the mind to create and make connections out of the unknown. The process of play has the potential to develop multiple learning dimensions that are relatable throughout one's life. While play is often considered a trivial childhood pastime, its resource for developing innovative and flexible problem solving is needed for navigating many of the complex issues we face in society.

The role of play in Early Childhood Development (ECD) facilitates multiple learning concepts. The four basics are physical, cognitive, social and emotional. In the early childhood setting play is the first tool to facilitate learning of these concepts that will continue into adulthood. In *Teaching Young Children: An Introduction*, Michael Henniger a professor at Western Washington University, shares that "play is a crucial way in which children learn about language, develop intellectual concepts, build social relationships and understandings, strengthen physical skills, and deal with stress" (Henniger 5). Play provides multisensory experiences that engage children to make sense of the world around them and their place within it. Advocate for children through research and educational speaking platforms, Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg reports that when children play "they become masters of their world through the development of new competencies that lead to enhanced confidence and the resiliency they will need to face future challenges" (Ginsburg 183). As each challenge is accomplished, children begin to build a base of resource able elements that can be called on for each new challenge.

Play teaches children how to adapt to change with the flexibility of innovative thinking, decision making and the self-confidence to experiment. Jean Piaget, an early philosopher for (ECE) who established several theories on cognitive development, has termed 'constructive learning' as a descriptor on the process of learning. In constructive learning "we are all constantly receiving new information and engaging in experiences that lead us to revise our understanding of the world" (Henniger 45). Play is the vehicle of discovery for developing infinite possibilities which cultivates early problem solving and adaptability in children. An example is two children who are playing with blocks to create an elaborate structure. Working together, they are negotiating the early signs of problem solving by sharing in the development of their construction. One wants to build tall sky scrapers while the other wants to build a small city by the bay. All four of the basic learning skills are engaged in this

activity: The physical with fine motor skills; Cognitive development with spatial awareness towards balance, shape and color, plus early mathematics; Social and Emotional development is engaged as the two generate ideas through interaction and the testing of solutions. These children begin to gain self-confidence and control by their shared ability to co-create their inspired vision. This illustrates how play stimulates active learning for children by engaging their naturally innovative minds. The importance of play has been “recognized by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a right of every child” (Ginsburg 182) This law recognizes the multi-dimensional value of play as a facilitator for education, abstract learning and the pleasure of free (non-adult-directed) play. Play allows children to be themselves, to reflect on what they know by implementing it in their play, to interact with peers, and to experience the fun of learning new things.

Creative play has taken a recent backseat with the passing of “No Child Left Behind Act” in 2002. The act was formulated to provide support to children who were falling through the cracks in academia, yet its repercussions have changed the curriculum offered in many schools. It is a reflection of how the best intentions can have adverse effects for children. Nationwide, many school districts are “responding to the pressure by reducing time committed to recess, the creative arts and even physical education in an effort to focus on” academic standards for all children (Ginsberg 4). Though some of these standards may be important for advancing children’s ability to meet the competitive job market in today’s society; “this change may have implications on children’s ability to store new information, because children’s cognitive capacity is enhanced by clear-cut and significant changes in activity. Children need free unscheduled time for creative growth, self-reflection and decompression” (Ginsberg 4, 185). By lessening play opportunities, many educators are discounting the value of free associative play that fosters cognitive development through social-emotional learning in favor of intellectual standards. In “Play and Social Interaction in Middle School,” Doris Bergen, a professor of educational psychology, and Doris Pronin Fromberg, a professor of education, show that “when children have had opportunities to practice pretense and use their imaginations, researchers have found that they’re more able to be patient and perseverant, as well as imagine the future” (Bergen & Fromberg 4). Children need this down time in order to absorb and learn advanced reading, mathematics, the critical thinking of the sciences and the cognitive development involved in social interactions. Fostering imaginative play provides children with non-adult-directed activities and supports children’s abilities to make their own conscious decisions, allowing them to have some control within their lives.

Through play, many children experiment by role playing adult behaviors, exploring their evolving self-identity by acting out different “selves.” Similarities are seen across the species as many young animals use what appears to be play to explore themselves and their environment. William Crain a psychology professor at the City College of New York has been researching the connection to play in our earliest ancestors. In his article “Is Children’s Play Innate?” Crain explores through research, the role of play across all young mammalian species. Studies are showing play as a universal presence for every mammal observed. There

are several hypotheses on the adaptive value of play seeing it as “developing the capacity to improvise and therefore handle unexpected events” (Crain). Play is also seen as a self-assessment tool of animals’ potential capabilities. Watching young kittens is an example of learning through play. Their rough and tumble aggressive rushes relate to hunting behavior which aids in their survival. Cats constantly modify their behavior as they observe and learn; in this way, play provides a blueprint of social skills that are learned through creative exploration.

This early wiring of connective links is the brain developing synapses through the vehicle of experience. Human babies are born with 100 billion neurons awaiting the forming reinforcements that the experience of their environment provides. In “*Learning with the Brain in Mind*,” Frank McNeil, an educational researcher, shows “it is our sensory experience which provides the brain with the basic resources to make sense of our world. Children need time to attend, observe and engage in the world with their senses in order to differentiate and form concepts” (McNeil 61). Play facilitates this by its open-ended and often multi-sensory engagement. Chris Mercogliano, author, editor and writer for the journal *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*, addresses the role of the brain through play showing that when the brain “encounters something new it releases increased quantities of the neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin. At the neural level,” these hormones “activate the brain’s attentional networks and energize all of the cognitive areas that cooperate to make learning happen” (Mercogliano 13). Play stimulates our active brains to make new connections which build on the matrix of evolving concepts. The experience of play is often the most enjoyable because it is the exploration of new and exciting territory. There has been “recent brain and heart research showing that positive emotions have profoundly beneficial neurological effects on the learning process” (Mercogliano 13). Play makes learning fun and by fostering play as a useful tool throughout life society may reap the benefits of its innovative problem solving potential.

The development of learning is often stimulated by product play. In the early stages of child development young children begin to conceptualize the world around them through products that enhance their creative learning. A few examples are playing with blocks, puzzle shapes, books, art and dramatic play. As children progress in age, however, product play can become the standard activity that drives their creative play. As a culture many humans are driven by the commodification of acquiring and playing with their adult toys. Through the media we are driven by the newest and greatest “something,” which culturally models to children our materialistic values. By “modeling this materialistic approach to play and childhood, many children have gotten the message that valid experiences are bought experiences” (Wilson 9). This changes the perception of play as a creative endeavor for children’s expression of self. For play to develop innovative thinking and problem solving skills, children need opportunities to engage their minds beyond some of the passive play that can develop with an attachment to products for their entertainment. In older children it is important to counter balance product play with equal amounts of process play which engages their natural curiosity and aids in the progressive development of problem solving (adapting to change), a

needed skill in today's society. In life there are various events which call on us to adapt and respond to changes, like housing decisions, job/career/education, personal relationships, community service, birth of children, environmental concerns, voting/politics, personal expenses, travel, etc. These experiences require creative adaptability to the changing landscape within one's life. Children need to develop the resiliency to cope with change by strengthening their innovative and imaginative critical thinking skills; and children need adult mentors who will support their creative process (often through play) for discovering their own path through the diverse problems/changes we face as an evolving culture.

Process play is a creative outlet that is often facilitated by open-ended play experiences which engage children's minds to think outside the box. In process play ordinary objects become extraordinary. Dorothy G. Singer, a research scientist and Jerome L. Singer, a professor of psychology, share insights from their research in *Imagination and Play in the Electronic Age*. Child development shows that "when children use objects to replace other objects in play (a block becomes a boat) this sets the stage for abstract thought" through symbolism (Singer & Singer 28). An example is the power of an ordinary cardboard box. It has the power to become anything a child imagines: a race car, a house/fort, a submarine, a robot, a flying saucer, a doorway to another realm, etc. The box represents a vessel for whatever the playful heart desires. (My cat loves cardboard boxes, no matter what the size. Is he engaging in the mystery of infinite possibility by playing with unknown and abstract images?) Penny Wilson, a "playworker" around the world who facilitates play studies and creates environments driven to cultivate self-reliant and exploratory risk takers shares "it is a universally acknowledged truth that a child will play more happily with a cardboard box than with the present that came in it" (Wilson 10). Granted this usually peaks between the ages of two to six years, however, give any child an appliance box and watch the creative innovation of process play emerge. Play is rooted in our "biological, psychological and social genetics. Children need to discover the world for themselves if their play drives are to allow them to come at the world creatively" (Wilson 30). Process play stimulates problem solving solutions through its adaptive reactions to changing experiences and environments. Using the creative imagination in this way enhances the joy in play; and considering the last 20 years of research in positive psychology, "positive emotions increase attention and memory, facilitate open thinking and innovative problem solving, and promote cooperation and sociability" (Mercogliano). Play changes the dynamics of problems or obstacles making them games or puzzles to be solved.

Process play is considered unstructured play because it creates open-ended opportunities to learn and adapt too many of life's complexities. The process of unstructured and "undirected play allows children to learn how to work in groups, to share, to negotiate, to resolve conflicts, and to learn self-advocacy skills" (Ginsburg 2). This illustrates the need for balance between the structured play of academia and the free associative play of diverse learning styles that are unique to the individual. Penny Wilson adds that when we organize every second of children's awake time, filling their days with action plans devised to mold them for adulthood, we teach them to bypass play in favor of our own structured and hurried lifestyles

(Wilson 15). When adults support the expression of play for children, we model the value of creative diversity for exploring the world. By engaging and supporting children in play “adults provide real choices where children can build the trust they need to cope with solving physical,” emotional and social dilemmas/obstacles (Bergen & Fromberg 4). Instead of creating carbon copies, we can teach and support children to honor their uniquely creative adaptations in the world as they eventually evolve toward leaving the nest to become competent, independent and community conscious individuals.

Early problem solving is strengthened when children are left to their own devices such as that in nature. A fairly new concept called “nature-deficit disorder” considers that children lack direct exposure to the natural world which they need to develop a healthy physical and emotional self-concept. However outdoor play is dwindling for many children in our culture and “nature-deficit disorder” is a response to this disconnection from nature. Outdoor play creates opportunities for children to investigate their environment and their own minds. Nature engages the senses and “allows children the full blossoming of creativity, curiosity,” imagination and developmental strategies which strengthen critical thinking (Ginsberg 4). The natural world is a place of wonder and awe that has the potential to inspire children to explore their vivid imaginations. In *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv, author, writer and spokesperson for “nature-deficit disorder” explores the growing body of research connected to ‘nature’ driven play which unfortunately is showing a “new trend for the landscape of childhood”-indoor entertainment. An example is a fourth grader’s comments to Mr. Louv during an interview about playing outdoors: “I like to play indoors, ‘cause that’s where all the electrical outlets are” (Louv 10). This simple statement speaks volumes to the direction that play has become for many children. Many are now passively engaged in play like experiences which basically appears to have made play a catch all for media and technological entertainment. Children’s minds are now stimulated by many programs and activities which suppress their naturally inquisitive minds. They are learning about the world and themselves through the media. The natural world has become a distant and abstract concept for many children. An example is in the evolution of play. Up until the 70’s and early 80’s, the landscape of unsupervised play was very different. Children were more apt to be encouraged to go play outside producing, as Chris Mercogliano calls it *In Defense of Play: Protecting Kids Inner Wildness*, “hardy and self-sufficient youngsters.” Shift to today’s landscape and we have many children who are “delicate, and dependent creatures who at any moment might be struck down by germs, or unforeseen circumstances,” like the many dangers present in society (Mercogliano). Today’s children lead protected lives, and rightly so in many circumstances, and yet what is the cost of sheltering children to the extent that we limit their natural curiosity and opportunities to play in creative ways? A study from “2005-06 reported that children between the ages of 8-18 spent an average of 6.5 hours per day plugged in electronically” (Louv 119). This illustrates children’s connection to the often passive form of entertainment and a further disconnection from the engagement of the natural world. There is a “new study suggesting that exposure to nature may reduce the symptoms of ADHD, and that it can improve all children’s cognitive abilities and resistance to negative stresses and depression” (Louv 35). Nature’s sensory world is full of multiple

levels of stimulation which engage our process orientated brains. The natural world is a huge resource for children (and us) because it engages all our senses, stimulating our brain to make multiple neurological connections about the wonder and mystery of our environment. Being in nature helps us reflect and reconnect to something bigger than ourselves and our hurried lifestyles; helping us slow down and honor the quality in our experiences. This feeling is reminiscent to awe and wonder which the essence of play and creativity is.

The role of play in childhood is an essential skill that shapes what is needed as children transition into adults. As an evolving culture there is a necessity to go further than training children to emerge as “cogs in the machinery of commerce. The international community needs resourceful, imaginative, and inventive problem solvers who will make a significant contribution, not only to the Information Age in which we currently live, but beyond to ages that we can barely envision” (Henniger 442). In the work force, society needs people who can think on their feet and are not afraid of fast changing environments that require flexible, innovative and often hands on proactive approaches to problem solving. To illustrate this, imagine you work in a community center as a lead cook and it is your job to feed the hungry masses. On a hypothetical Tuesday afternoon an unfortunate occurrence happens when the planned meal for 300 burns. You have 20 minutes to come up with a solution. Putting on your thinking cap you quickly take stock of available foods and begin to delegate the production of a large pot of tomato soup. You accomplish this goal by quickly assessing the situation and taking a leap of faith. This example is creative problem solving and taking a risk in the unknown. Instead of choosing to flee or remain frozen, problem solving uses existing resources to adapt to change. Play facilitates this by creating opportunities to experiment and find solutions. In *Creative Expression and Play in the Early Childhood Curriculum* Joan P. Isenberg and Mary Renck Jalongo introduce the big picture with:

“In the future, children will need to know how to learn, how to cope with change, how to build and evaluate a body of knowledge that will evolve throughout their life, and how to adapt to a changing work environment. They will need to acquire critical thinking, decision making, and communication skills with an emphasis on the cognitive processes of inquisitiveness, sequential thinking and problem solving. Children need to learn flexibility, experimentation, autonomy, risk-taking and innovation” (Isenberg & Jalongo 329).

This example illustrates the broader picture of the role that play has in fostering innovative and capable adults who are empowered by their vision and willing to take risks in unknown situations which require flexible hands on problem solving. Play is the resource for these skills.

Often play is not recognized as a learning source that facilitates a broad and wide spread resource in society; specifically in today’s work force. There are researched studies across the globe that has discovered that many of today’s young adults do not have adequate, hands on problem solving skills. An example of the need for hands on learning is in Stuart Brown’s researched book *Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*. At Cal Tech’s aerospace research facility (JPL) in the late 90’s, management began

to hire young engineers and scientists to replace the large group who were retiring. Though many of the new potentials were at the top of their field, they lacked the hands on problem solving skills common within the older generation. A consultant was brought in to discover why this was so. In the process of talking to a wide range of employees, it was determined that the older generations had more skills in problem solving because their childhood play experiences were often outdoors, in woods and fields with hands on activities which supported innovative thinking and creative solutions around obstacles. The younger generations did not have these skills because their play experiences were more structured and often confined to the school yard or indoors with limited free associative imaginary play. In addition, it was determined that “academic excellence was not the most important measure of the new graduates’ problem solving skills;” instead what was needed was a balance of both because as a “premier aerospace research facility,” complex problem solving was/is a key ingredient for safe space travel (Brown 10). This example addresses the complexities of incorporating both play and academic achievement to gain employment. It also illustrates the importance of process play for engaging children’s minds.

Innovative process play is a growing need for the children of today to succeed in our world. There are many reasons for this shift away from avenues which support imaginative or process play: Many children are more apt to play indoors due to the results of fear among parents about the dangers of the outdoors and unsupervised play which tends to be geared toward active engagement within parks, fields, and woods; children are more engaged in media and electronic entertainment which can lead to passive play, limiting the innovative problem solving skills developed through process play; children’s lives are more structured and adult-directed (sports, music, dance and various educational afterschool programs). The reasons for these are multiple as well; a few examples are that parents are working longer hours and or are structuring their children’s lives in order to prepare them to succeed in school and the often demanding and competitive work force. More and more, children do not have the opportunities and support to seek pleasure in the leisure of play. By structuring their lives with a full course meal of adult-directed activities we (may) lose sight of the development that takes place in child-directed play (not to be confused with the passive programming of television, computer/internet, texting or structured toys that limit creative play). Play has become secondary to many of children’s organized lifestyles and by removing it from children’s lives we may be educating out the very skills we desire from these generations who will help shape the direction of our global communities in the future.

As a culture we need to take play more seriously, to ignore the critics who deem play as unproductive and instead realize the multi-dimensional learning that takes place through the avenue of play. We need to let children to have ‘their time’ in the wonders of childhood by supporting their meandering and creative journeys’. The future needs well rounded thoughtful people who can easily engage and adapt in the complexities that life has to offer and play is the creative pathway toward realizing this reality.

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The Tempest

 noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/10-02music.html

Elizabeth Thomas

Audio Player requires Flash player

The Tempest begins gently in the key of C. First following a steady 3/4 time signature, the piece then shifts to a 6/8 hemiola rhythm pattern midway in C's relative minor, A. The melody builds, growing in intensity and increasing in tempo, akin to stormy weather. Composed for piano and flute, the piece ends like the beginning, tenderly and sweetly, full of hope. This piece was inspired by the unpredictable weather patterns of the Pacific Northwest.

The Playwright

 noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/11-03creativewr.html

Brandon Boatman

WRITER

Just kiss him!

FEMALE

Ugh! Why? He hasn't done anything to earn it!

WRITER

Kiss him because you love him!

FEMALE

I don't love him!

WRITER

Everything has lead up to this kiss, if you two kiss, you will realize you love him!

MALE

I don't quite see the logic there...

WRITER

There doesn't need to be logic. It's love! Trust me, just kiss and find out.

Male and Female kiss quickly.

FEMALE

I don't feel any differently.

MALE

I still feel the same. Awkward.

WRITER

Well that wasn't a real kiss. Really kiss her! She likes you but wants to know you have the passion to move into love.

FEMALE

Where did you come up with that theory?

WRITER

Listen, you should be following orders. Just let him kiss you right, after everything you two have been through, you will fall in love.

MALE

That just feels a little forced.

WRITER

Well, we'll see. Try it.

Male and female shrug and male kisses female passionately.

WRITER (CONT'D)

Well....

FEMALE

I guess I'm just confused at what you think this will do for me.

MALE

I feel totally out of my element with that.

WRITER

Nothing is different? You both still haven't fallen for each other?

M AND F

No!

WRITER

What the hell!? I thought girls wanted to be kissed passionately!

FEMALE

Well, how would you know that? You've never experienced that.

WRITER

Duh! I'm trying new things out because this has to work. She has to fall for me!

MALE

I think you might be trying too hard, man.

WRITER

I've tried not trying. I've tried trying. I need to try something else.

MALE

Maybe you should try not trying harder!

WRITER

Maybe you should shut up and help me out.

FEMALE

The kiss is not it. Too much too soon. Think of something else.

WRITER

Well what comes before a kiss?

MALE

You mean besides all the sappy, heartfelt sentiments?

WRITER

What about a dance? A slow dance. You hold her close and you look deep into his eyes and you know!

MALE

Ugh!

FEMALE

Did this ever work for you before?

WRITER

You know the answer to that.

FEMALE

I do, but I think you forgot.

WRITER

We're not here to debate. We're here to figure out how to fall in love! There should be music.

MALE

You don't know how to dance.

WRITER

I don't need to. It's the sentiment that counts, right?

FEMALE

Just entertain him.

MALE

I will, but I just think he needs to accept reality.

WRITER

Hey. Man and woman. Work with me here, we're brainstorming. This can work!

MALE

I think you are losing your grip. You struck out! Just go sit back on the bench for a little bit.

WRITER

I'm going to do this, I just need the final touch, and you are both going to help me figure out what that is. Now dance romantically!

M and F begin a ballroom dance.

WRITER (CONT'D)

There should really be some music here, do you think something symphonic or something easy going?

FEMALE

I think no matter what we're running into the same problem. This is mundane. When have we ever danced before?

MALE

Not only that, but not knowing how to dance is really making this awkward.

WRITER

Well forget it then. That's not working... That works in other situations.

MALE

Different situations it will probably work out fine. You are not in one of those situations.

FEMALE

At least you're trying, that says something.

MALE

Does it though. He has always tried. It always works out the same. How can you look at the situation and think this will help?

FEMALE

I'm not saying it will help. I just think there is something a little romantic about this.

MALE

Don't go that route. You will just be giving him more false hope than he already has.

WRITER

I'm not giving up! Let's try something else... assuming the dancing slow, holding each other close, gazing into each other's eyes... didn't work.

M AND F

sigh It didn't.

WRITER

You need to know he loves you. And you need to believe he does. Why not just tell her. Make her believe!!

MALE

You feel like writing poetry or something.

WRITER

No really! Why not just tell her the words in your heart. Why wouldn't that work? There is a spark there, why can't that catch fire?

FEMALE

That might be closer, but I still don't think you're looking at the whole picture.

MALE

You need more than just words. Your words will not save you in this situation.

WRITER

But that's my greatest strength. She can fall in love if I bare my soul and show her my true feelings.

MALE

This is new ground and I'm sure it will end up badly.

WRITER

What do you think?

FEMALE

I think that you won't really listen to what we have to say until you see it through, so we might as well just do it.

WRITER

You should take her hands and look into her eyes.

MALE

And what should I say, genius?

WRITER

Say:

MALE

More than anything I know about life or the way things are in this world, I know I want you. I know that we are perfect for each other and that I will never be as happy as I am when I am with you. I do know that I don't know what I'm doing. You deserve to be pursued liked the

royalty you are and I screw that up quite often, but I will take all the time necessary to perfect the craft if you would let me. I love you and I will pursue you to the ends of the earth to show that to you.

WRITER

How was that?

FEMALE

Well, not bad. But I still think you are not thinking this all the way through.

WRITER

How can I? I love her. I need her to know that. She needs to know that...

MALE

We think that you need to know that someone loves you. That's what we've alluded to earlier. You aren't thinking this all the way through.

WRITER

If she sees this play I have written her, she will know that I care, she will know how I truly feel. Right?

FEMALE

She will know you are still thinking about her, for sure, but probably not in the context that you are hoping for.

WRITER

I have never been this close to somebody else before.

FEMALE

You've never really been close to anybody.

MALE

Try to get outside of your feelings and think with a clear head here. You can predict what will happen.

Jennifer comes on stage.

WRITER

Jennifer! What are you doing here?

JENNIFER

You have something to show me?

WRITER

I wrote you a play! I know I couldn't express myself correctly beforehand, but I think everything I truly want to say is in here.

JENNIFER

Why would you write me a play?

WRITER

Because I love you, and I need you to know that.

JENNIFER

But you've said that before. You didn't already forget our conversation, did you?

WRITER

I didn't. But I know if you would just sit down and watch it, you will see what I mean.

MALE

Dude, you should let it go.

FEMALE

Listen to him. Just trust us!

WRITER

Please, just watch it. We've been working on it restlessly.

JENNIFER

I don't know how to say this to you in a way that will make you understand, but we are through! You don't ever pay attention to me or listen to me! I am not a damn character in a play or book or movie or song or whatever the hell you are into at the moment.

WRITER

I know that! I just wanted to show you...

JENNIFER

When you're in a relationship, you work with the other person to make the relationship stronger. You speak with them. You improve yourself for them based on their needs. You do not look to media for answers to the problems you have devised in your head!

WRITER

Jennifer! I know that. This play is to show you that I really understand that I love you. I will work at it! I will!!

JENNIFER

This is a damn play! It is not a contract verifying your actions will change. It does not mean anything. Just another fabrication of your imagination leading you to believe that everything you say and do is great and you have the power to change whatever is wrong.

WRITER

I know that I can't do that. I'm willing to do the work.

JENNIFER

How can I know that? What has really changed about you to prove it?

WRITER

I... I mean it. I don't want to lose you.

JENNIFER

You won't because you never had me to begin with. You need to decide to come out of your imaginary world and live among the real people or just stay up there and leave us alone. You are not a person. You are just a genius who is too smart for his own good. Accept that or give it up, but stop trying to live in both worlds.

MALE

You need to just accept what she's telling you otherwise you're going to be here a lot longer and I'm not sure how much more of this you can take.

FEMALE

Just tell her ok and come back to us.

WRITER

I need to make her understand... she needs to know I mean well.

FEMALE

Just let him be! He'll get it. He was almost there.

JENNIFER

How many times has this happened before? He needs to realize it's him and stop thinking it is everyone else. I'll enforce that anyway I can.

MALE

He gets it. He gets it. Tell her you got it.

WRITER

... I got it.

JENNIFER

What?

WRITER

I didn't respond to you the way you deserved to be responded to. I should move on and allow you to do the same.

JENNIFER

That's all I wanted to hear.

Jennifer exits stage.

FEMALE

What a bitch!

MALE

Just listen to us from now on. Don't let her come back.

WRITER

Jennifer?

MALE

Jennifer, Allie, Danielle... whoever it is you can't let go of.

WRITER

I really thought this would work, you know, win her back.

FEMALE

Well, you don't need her. You have us! We always play nice.

WRITER

That's kind of the rule though.

MALE

Just enjoy it, douche bag!

WRITER

So I shouldn't call her?

MALE

Fuck you! That hurts us just as much as it does you.

FEMALE

Just finish this. It will take your mind off things.

WRITER

But it's a love story, I feel like I should write anything but.

FEMALE

You kidding me, you almost have it done.

MALE

Yeah, just focus and close it up.

WRITER

I mean, really? I think I have proven I shouldn't be writing about this stuff.

FEMALE

That was your life though. This is fiction.

MALE

Yeah! People buy this crap all the time. Cash in.

WRITER

I guess you're right.

MALE

You would know if I am right.

WRITER

How should we close it out? Which of the three fit best?

FEMALE

Keep them all! Just go in the opposite direction. Even the fact you can't dance, I think it's cute.

MALE

I think we should go through them one more time, practice that kiss again at the very least.

WRITER

At least somebody around here will be getting action.

The Noisy Water Review | Student Anthology of Writing & Art, Whatcom Community College

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/12-04art.html



Gail Cowan

The Little House

Collage/monoprint, 11" x 17"

The Damsel

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/13-04essay.html

Madeleine Easton

I am eight or so. We live in a pretty, historic neighborhood, nine blocks from my elementary school, at the corner of two dead-end streets. It is summer, and it must have been rainy some time recently, because the grass is vibrant when I answer the knock at the Keesling Street door. I had not yet encountered our new neighbor, but she had come, frantic from her rapidly flooding kitchen, soaking wet, arms raised palms up like the Virgin Mary, quarter-inch hair sparkling with beads of water in the sun, white t-shirt stuck to her skin, panic – and, was it shame? – on her face.

“I can’t turn off my water!”

Both parents come to the door and I am pushed aside as my father runs with her out the gate of our chain link fence to stop the flood.

She was a lesbian. I found that out by eavesdropping. Sometimes she’d throw parties in her back yard, and I would dress up and stroll through the shifting bodies, skirts and shoes, cigarettes and wine glasses, then skip back to my room and change my clothes, and try it again, seeing how best I fit. Even after she moved away, my mother would sometimes visit her, or go to one of her parties. When she brought me along I was an anthropologist on mars, marveling silently over specimens male, female, old and young, but always colorful, and smelling of things I could not identify. I can’t remember the things they talked about, probably because I had no way of understanding. To have remembered would have been like memorizing a poem in Icelandic.

My father did not like my mother spending time with this woman. All I knew was I wanted to snoop in every room of her house, because there was treasure. Once, I found a photograph (among many on a cork board) of several friends, naked at a rocky river. I think that was the first time I’d seen a penis.

When my parents got divorced, a lot came out. My father’s narcissism, for one. And my mother’s many supposed indiscretions – marijuana and tarot cards and lesbians, oh my! My father is not a bad man. Even the terms bigot and misogynist are too harsh, though they are used.

I never considered why the image of Dana, sopping, desperate and apologetic at our door, stuck so firmly in my mind. Now I think it might have to do with how my father saw it.

Damsel in distress. Man to the rescue.

She wasn't threatening to him, wet and helpless. It was only when my mother tried to assert her independence that Dana became a scapegoat. Dana, and Christine, also with short hair, also unwed. And Joyce, who smoked pot and read her horoscope. Friends who offered my mother nothing more than their homes, their support and understanding, their strength. Teaching my mother that she hadn't forfeited hers when she married him.

My father clung to the Bible, to church, to the ideal of a pretty little wife with long graceful hair and no goals. (Which he eventually found, and divorced.) It is unfortunate that church and Bible became his justification for what he already hated.

Is this why he looks at my short hair and registers danger?

What my father saw was weakness, requiring a rescue. And later, a threat, capable of taking what was his and letting it think for itself. What I saw was strength, right from the start. Humility banging on our door, Busting into our lives and expanding my world.

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noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/14-05art.html



Autumn Griffith

From the Ground Up

Charcoal/Colored chalk,
17" x 14"

Laughter

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/15-04creativewr.html

Claire Cancilla

The laugh began at the front of the theatre. It started with the guffaw of one man. The laugh knew this was all it would take. It had targeted this man, knowing that he would be easy to overtake. As the echo became fainter, the laugh, slippery thing, slid into the orchestra pit. It encircled the conductor, wrapping itself around him. The conductor chuckled, a deep noise that surprised the laugh coming from such a small man. The laugh sidled down to the floor of the orchestra pit and climbed onto the legs of the first violinist. Trying to hold in his giggle, the violinist snorted once, which echoed throughout the orchestra pit, causing the string section to wave as they tried to maintain focus. Soon, the laugh had covered the entire pit with its invisible presence.

It oozed through the first row, through the plush chairs, and into the laps of the people sitting there. The man on the end, with the red bowtie and a salt and pepper goatee, snorted. The woman he was sitting with, who was clearly not his wife, laughed, to hide her discomfort. The woman sitting next to her, wearing a diamond the size of a small egg, knew that she was not his spouse, because she was on the theatre's board with his wife. She giggled because she knew she could use this information to blackmail his wife into giving her the Bainbridge Luncheon. Her husband, a balding man with a double chin, was dozing. At the sound of his wife's laughter, he woke up, aware that something was happening. He too joined the ever growing chorus of laughs, assuming that a joke had been told. The laugh continued content in its work. The three college students next to the balding man looked at each other. The first let out a guffaw, and the others followed, although they only pretended to understand the joke. Their laughter was not real. The laugh disapproved of false joviality. Disgusted, it turned its attention elsewhere.

The laugh sidled to the second row. This group was harder to please, the laugh observed. It had to work harder. It slithered over the row, coating each person with an understanding of the joke. Then, it focused on each individual in the row, gliding with more intensity. The chuckles gained momentum, creating an overwhelming sea of noises, like a freeway during rush hour. The used car salesman, in the middle of the row, wearing a white suit, chortled loudly. The man next to him glanced up in surprise, and giggled, quite daintily, at the seemingly uncharacteristic display of joy. The laugh smiled.

Like dominos, the third row started to laugh. This row was easy. The laugh only had to surround each person once. The laugh glided to the fourth row. It quickly made its way through the fifth, the sixth, the seventh, rows, leaving behind it swells of laughter. Soon, all 53 rows were chuckling. The room was full of different laughs, guffaws, giggles, sniggers, chortles and chuckles, that somehow unified into one sound that made the thin walls of the

theatre vibrate. The laugh had worked quickly. For one moment, the entire room was laughing in a single instant of unity, overwhelming the noises of the cars outside, the actor's next line, and the rustling of programs.

Just as quickly as it began, the laughter began to subside. As the room became quiet, the laugh began to fade, no longer slithering, but merely disappearing. The man with the red bow tie began to think about whether going in public with his companion had been a good idea, as the woman next to her was staring intently at him. His companion wondered how much longer the play would be, oblivious to the woman next to her, who was now staring at her. That woman thought about how she would expose this outing; whether it should be at the luncheon, or even more public, perhaps with the woman's children in the room. Her husband noticed the receding laughter, and his eyelids began to droop. The three college students had already stopped laughing entirely, and were texting on their phones.

The laugh could feel itself becoming weaker. The second row stopped, then the third, the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh. The laugh knew that it was only as strong as the last person laughing. When she became quiet, the laugh disappeared from the room entirely. The entire audience was quiet, with only the noises of the actor's lines, the cars outside, and the rustling of programs.

Infinity in “Meshes of the Afternoon”

 noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/16-05essay.html

Diane Chapman

Trying to fully understand the world and an individual's place in it is the most confusing and convoluted journey to embark upon. In Maya Deren's 1943 experimental film “Meshes of the Afternoon,” the filmmaker aims to take the audience on this journey, attempting to unveil its destination. Deren uses a unique style of non-narrative, which doesn't have to rely on the constraints of linear order, but rather uses its incongruity to suggest character transformation. By immersing the audience within an individual's dream world, she suggests that a dreamer's ability to perceive is far beyond what a waking person could perceive. Within the dream, time loops around several times in order to allow the Dreamer to view herself in three different perspectives (past, present, and future self) within one world. The drama of her struggle, and the destructive end to which it brings her, attests to humanity's inability to cope with infinite reality. The message Deren is conveying is the Dreamer's psychological struggle with a sense of helplessness when trying to perceive the reality of infinity, thwarted by the human need to classify the world in terms of subjective and objective reality.

Before the character begins dreaming, Deren presents her in shadow in order to signify the character's entrance into a new reality from one obscured by objective perception. The camera is so intimately close to the character that we view the world much as the character would: without seeing her face or her full body, but the world around her and the shadows she casts. The way that shadow bends itself in accordance with the world upon which it is cast reflects the character's perspective that reality is concrete as the stairs in front of the house—an unchanging reality which *she* is changed by. Deren thereby crafts her film to immediately bring up the question of whether reality is built around us or *by* us.

Deren then introduces the extraordinary concept of infinity into the world of her film by rooting it in the ordinary. The film's first image of a disembodied hand is otherworldly, arriving seemingly out of nowhere to drop a flower onto the street and disappear back to wherever it descended from. However, when our character first encounters it—though she may not realize what her finding it will lead to—it appears insignificant as any other flower. As a symbol of the natural cycle of birth and death of all life—a cycle which continues throughout time, further than an individual can witness—the flower is an essential symbol in her dreaming world. By coming to see those beginnings and endings as one and the same, the flower will later be the catalyst with which she breaks through the bounds of her own perception of reality. Reflecting on the film after its finish reveals this finding of the flower fated, as if something did indeed drop it from the sky simply to direct her on her journey. In the same way that the flower is initially a mundane part of her reality, so will the figure

disappearing around the street corner, the phone, the knife, and the key each play an essential role in her dream. In reality as well as in the dream, they are each examples of her limited perception of something much greater.

After finding the flower, the next image that will resonate in her dream world is of a darkly dressed figure ahead of her on the street, who disappears around the street corner just as she looks up. This character, outside of the dream and within, represents a larger perspective, just out of reach. Not only does its image slip from her sight just when she first glimpses it, but it is also able to see around the corner of the street, somewhere the character and audience never can. Continuing on her initial course, the character attempts to enter the house and in doing so, she drops the key. As it falls down the stairs it is continually just out of her reach, echoing the disappearing figure. What is vaguely unattainable continues to present within the home. Except for the one facing the street, the windows are all closed, allowing only one view to be had, just as she can only have one perspective. The phone's receiver is off the hook, barring communication from the outside, just as only so much of one's reality can ever be communicated to another. The knife, which is embedded in the bread (as its routine function would place it), falls out exactly when she looks at it, as if suggesting it has another purpose. These realities show up in the surreal dream world to signify that what is infinite is not necessarily "unreal." In fact, the infinite could not exist without the finite. It is only our understanding of what is finite as it exists throughout time that defines it as such. If perceived differently, as the film's character comes to do so in the dream, each item becomes a tool rather than a boundary to aid her in comprehending the vastness of time, and the limited scope of her individual perception.

To bring the audience into the dream, Deren uses an extreme close-up on the character's eye, signaling an intended focus on perception. The world becomes veiled as she closes her eyes, as does the view outside the window. While at first the dream begins with a tunneled vision of the street, as soon as the hooded figure makes its first entrance into this line of vision the character becomes immersed in the dream and finds herself on the street, as she was in waking life only a few moments ago.

The hooded figure is an unsettling combination of many aspects of the waking world the character just experienced. It is draped in billowing black, just as the bedroom window had black curtains that were blowing in the wind. The figure also holds a flower in one hand, signifying a relationship of some kind with our character, as she also held the flower. Also, the hooded figure has a body frame similar to the figure she saw turn the corner ahead, and indeed follows through with that action after briefly pausing to face the character. In this pause, the one aspect of the figure which is most unsettling is made apparent: where a face would be, there is only a mirror. The fact that the hooded figure lacks a face and is instead identified by a flat, false reflection of the character who follows it, delineates that the hooded figure represents our character's perception of the future. It is always ahead of her, though she may try to catch up, and while she would like to identify it, she can only perceive it as a reflection of where she stands behind it. Throughout her dream she gets closer to the figure

by degrees, though she never truly catches up to it. In fact, the point of the dream is not to finally perceive this “future” figure for what it is, but to realize that the distance between the character and the figure is objective, is based on time. In an infinite reality, this distance is inconsequential.

The character comes to reject the limits of this objective distance with each repeated sequence of the dream. At first she must see herself as three separate entities in the dream, because that is how any individual processes the world around them—through terms of subjective and objective. But eventually all three come to exist at once, and even share discourse as the dreamer comes closer to understanding infinite time. At first she defines herself by time in terms of past, present, and future, but the reality is that each of those selves is in fact the same.

The first self the character dreams of is the Past Self. This self is the first to glimpse the hooded figure, and the one furthest from an understanding of what the hooded figure means. Much of the house is the same as it was in the waking world to this self. Though the knife rests blatantly in her path to the stairs, she is unaware of what it is for, and passes it to ascend. This climb is filmed in slow motion, not as though it is in fact hard for her to do it, but because it is as though she is *remembering* doing it, sensing that this action belongs a past time. However, though she has already climbed the stairs, the Past Self does not know where they will lead. When she turns the corner of the stairs and peers into the bedroom, she is suddenly obscured by the drapes and enters the room through the window. This displacement is meant to suggest that her Past Self has now been displaced in Time. She sees the phone’s receiver lying on the pillow and finds the knife on the bed (where it will later be found), as though the future use of the knife is calling to her. Though she sees her warped reflection in the knife and feels that her sense of Self is shifting, she cannot yet comprehend it because she is still rooted in that sense of Self which is rooted in a past time. She retreats, only to be buffeted about the house by a wind stronger than herself. This wind symbolizes her being overwhelmed by the change she is going through. By seeing the Dreamer, the Past Self becomes grounded again, and when viewing the street and another self on it, it is the Past who comes to understand the key to infinity is within. She takes this key from her mouth and holds it in her palm, only now able to grasp it.

The second self is the Present Self. When this self enters the house, it is windy inside, just as it was for Past Self, because she is still struggling in the wake of change. Present Self is the one who comes close enough to see the hooded figure go upstairs. For her, the climb upstairs that was remembered by Past Self as easy has now become almost insurmountable. As her perception is shifting, so does the world around her continually shift. She comes closest to an understanding of the future, by witnessing the hooded figure place the flower on the bed where the man later will. However, though she comes close enough to see it, when the figure disappears she once again does not understand, and remains dumbfounded on the stairs. Time becomes abrupt, and she finds herself downstairs, next to the Dreamer. With enough

objective distance to have seen the Past Self and glimpsed the future (though with minimal understanding), it is she who realizes that the key is also a tool, and it therefore becomes the knife.

The third self is the Future Self. She doesn't see the hooded figure at all, because the Future follows after no one, but leads. When she comes into the house, where she once held a flower, she now already holds the knife because she already understands its use. She attempts to explain it to Past and Present, and although they can pick up the key, they can't maintain their hold on it. It isn't until Future takes it and shows them that in her already stained hand it becomes the knife that they can understand. Yet even in their understanding they are afraid, and the Dreamer stirs in her sleep behind them. It is after these three Selves have faced each other and all three have attempted to "grasp" the key that the Future self makes her move to destroy the Dreamer. With eyes rounded, reflective, and so large that they extend outwards from her head, she can see much differently than her counterparts, and knows that the knife's destructive power can free the Dreamer from her own limited perception. As Future Self comes closer, her feet are shown to approach from a beach, cross fields, pass over cement, and finally cover the space of carpet between her and the Dreamer. This symbolizes that she now has the knowledge necessary to travel from the vast reality of infinite time which she has come to be a part of, to the Dreamer's finite reality.

The instinct to survive leads to the Dreamer's false awakening. Her mind organizes all three selves into one again, but as the "waking" world continues to mirror her dream, she becomes more and more distrusting of the man who "wakes" her. She scrutinizes his actions, and seems unwilling to easily lie back down to become only an object within his perception of reality once more. The view of the man looking into the mirror reminds us that he is bound by his sense of perception as well, and reminds us that he too must still be following his own hooded figure—a false reflection of himself. When he touches her it is in the same way she touched herself before the dream began, and this synchronicity triggers her full awareness of her perception and the power she has to change it. Once this is realized, the flower (passive, beautiful and inactive object) transforms as the character does, into the knife (active, reflective and destructive object). With the knife she breaks through her last attachment to subjective reality—another's perception of her—and can finally see the ocean of infinite perspective behind it.

In the last scene, the man comes home and we see his actions mirroring the woman's in the first scene. He unlocks the door the same, he enters the house and surveys it in matching perspective to hers. This signifies that what happened to her character is intrinsically part of his perception, and his reality. She was, at the beginning, interconnected in a finite way to the world as he perceives it. Since he is still bound by his perceptions, and therefore still connected with the finite world, all he finds is the body she has left behind there. Having slit her throat with a shard of glass in retaliation of that false way of viewing self, she lies covered in the kelp she pulled into subjective reality from infinity.

Our character has left the finite world behind because of her own inability to fully realize the infinite reality of the world through her limited perspective. It is clear that she had to destroy herself to destroy the limits of perception to fully know infinity. However, it is significant to note that her eyes remain open, even in death, signifying that perhaps there are still more realms of perception beyond life as we view it. If Deren's film suggests that an individual is unable to know infinite reality because of perceptual limitations, then why is this individual driven to seek it? Why does the character chase the hooded figure? This question is the ultimate message Deren means to leave us with: that as humans, we are paradoxically driven to attempt to understand even what we aren't humanly capable of understanding. That even when we are unable to see what is out of reach, we can't help but want to look.

Works Cited

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 noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/17-06art.html

 Noisy Water Review, Whatcom Community College



Jessica Hemple

Mollusk

Etching, 4" x 6"

Selection from Army Memories

 noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/18-05creativewr.html

Heather Johnson

In many ways we were like college students: we lived in dorms (barracks), we went to classes (training), and we were young, ranging from 18 to mid 20's. In contrast however, we entered the dimly lit room in an orderly fashion, removed our hats, one by one, filling the pews from front to back. While we waited for the rest of the soldiers to file in, I took the time to glance around and absorb the scene. The obedient silence in the large room had a very church-like and solemn feel, as it should have. I imagine this is what it would be like if attending a service at a cathedral in Europe. Surprisingly, though the general atmosphere was sobering and intense, the decor was mundane.

Everything about the building starting outside with the orangey-red bricks perfectly mortared covering the simple unadorned architecture, (the kind of building that if you didn't already know, you would assumed to be some sort of jail or prison) to the inside with its cheap faded blue carpet and outdated fake wood paneling that went up the walls leading to a tiled ceiling (the kind where in movies people hid money or drugs). The church was properly institutional like all other military establishments.

I was amazed at the large attendance. I tried to sneak a look around without getting caught by any of the drill sergeants pacing the isles like Dobermans. Some of the soldiers were pulling out the little new testament that was provided to us (the only book other than our military study guide that we were allowed to have) and flipping through it. Others were picking up the hymn books placed in front of us and mouthing silently the words to long forgotten songs of my childhood. A few others, like me, were just sitting there waiting and watching.

I began to wonder about the reasons that we were all here. I wondered how many of these people attended church regularly before they joined the army and how many were here to get out of the barracks. We all shared the same misery of being away from our family and the fear of the drill sergeants attention that was breaking us down so that we could be built back up into the type of soldier the military wanted us to be.

When the service started, the soldiers began to participate in the singing, some even going up to the stage to pick up instruments placed there to join in. Others read scriptures along with the Chaplin, and at the end many went up to "get saved."

I remained frozen to my seat, watching everything take place around me. Frozen because I suddenly felt like an invader. I wasn't religious, I hated church, ever since being forced to go every Sunday as a child with my extreme grandmother.

After it was all over, I went back to my barracks room flopped on my cold metal and wool bed and tried to sleep but it didn't embrace me; instead I was haunted most of the night with guilt. Why was I so ashamed? I supposed I felt cheap or maybe even tricked.

The following Sunday and all the ones after while I was at boot camp, I attended that church. The guilt was better than being harassed by drill sergeants or assigned extra duties like waxing floors or fireguard (why did we bother to have fire alarms and extinguishers). I never did participate in the service and I had mixed feelings for the ones who did. Were they sell outs? Did they genuinely feel the need to find religion? Did it give purpose and comfort to their existence in the military or were many like me just trying to hide?

Once I got to my duty station and I along with all the other new soldiers got settled, I feel like I may have gotten some insight to my questions. The first Sunday morning while the church on the post was having service, the barracks were filled with soldiers doctoring hangovers, playing cards, doing push-ups, shining boots and washing laundry in preparation for Monday morning inspection. Minus the inspection and boots, it was all much like I imagine a college dorm would be like on a Sunday morning.

A Language Not My Own

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/19-06essay.html

Jaymie Wakefield

I was excited to sign up for this honors class on applying a Buddhist view to literature. I never remembered the full title of the class and when asked by friends what the class might be about I honestly had not a clue. I like literature and was very interested to learn something new. For me, “Buddhist” meant new. Very new. So new in fact that my first journal entries during the class focused on grappling with definitions, coming up with my own arguments and picking at small points. I found myself surprisingly argumentative and at risk of being narrow-minded. This was particularly true with the first book assigned us, the back bone of our learning, *What Makes You Not a Buddhist* by Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse. While I risk offering an unsolicited review of *What Makes You Not a Buddhist*, I must say I honestly struggled with this book. The tone in particular was hard to adjust to and I felt resistant to learning from someone I perceived to be a smug author. Putting that aside, I continued on in hopes of in fact learning something new. That is why I was thankful for the second book.

The second book assigned to read alongside *What Makes You Not a Buddhist* was *Siddhartha* by Herman Hesse. Now this was a book I could dive into, head first, open minded and willing to understand; I was thankful for the narrative style and the story-like manner used to explain the Buddhist beliefs. This narrative was a perfect complement to Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse’s more technical and direct definitions of the four seals, the pillars of Buddhist beliefs. These truths recognized by Buddhists are as follows;

All compounded things are impermanent
All emotions are pain.
All things have no inherent existence.
Nirvana is beyond all concepts (Khyentse 3).

I was tripping over the second truth, “All emotions are pain,” and concentrated on understanding this idea. My argumentativeness was apparent and in full swing trying to understand some of Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse’s claims and explanations. For example he states, “Moreover, [the Buddha] discovered that, as real as they may seem, emotions are not an inherent part of one’s being” (40). As a Psychology major I am being taught otherwise. Beginning at birth, babies express their feelings to increase the chances of their needs being met, at basic survival levels, like crying when hungry. In Psychology these are identified as in-born emotions.

While I am reading this book my little dog, who has been plopped from my lap to the floor, begins to whimper at me. Sad face, ears flat back, I recognize that even my dog has emotions. Yet, what I might consider is that if my little dog realized that my lap was temporary, non-

existent as soon as I stood, that maybe the amount of emotion spent on this want, this temporary, impermanent place to be, would be nullified. This impermanence is the first seal, based on all things being impermanent, what are we investing our emotions in? Yet, when I continue reading Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse's *What Makes You Not a Buddhist*, I begin to understand how he might define emotions. I begin to realize quite a few differences in our definitions and how we might use language. I realize that even the word "born", when I argue that we are *born* with emotions, would mean something different to a Buddhist if I start to understand that they believe in a continuing cycle of life, and do not have a beginning (birth) and end (death) the way I would define. Yes, now I begin to realize part of my dilemma is the need to read this book outside of my own language, holding on to my own definitions only loosely.

I began by rejecting my desire to help Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse out by replacing his words with words I feel he actually may have meant. Instead of deciding to correct what I initially felt was a translation issue, I decided to let his words stand. I decided to accept that in my newness of understanding Buddhism, I needed to reconsider the meaning behind concepts I had zero practice in, requiring me to suspend my interpretation until the book was read in completion. I came to understand two things during this process; first, changing words, altering the language of a truth, changes the meaning, and by that right it is simply disrespectful. Secondly, in understanding anything as substantial and complex as a religion, I must remember that concepts are foreign and unnatural unless they are practiced and accepted.

I can see this same to be true with Christianity as well. When I was first coming to understand my husband's Christian faith I had a lot of arguments, wanting to change wording to make sense of foreign concepts and new ideas. It was later, while reading a different translation Bible, that this really struck me. I was reading a favorite Psalm when the original word "blessed" was translated to "happy" and that startled me. It felt wrong and incorrect, and while I would be hard pressed to clearly define the differences between "blessed" and "happy" I know they are different words, and the meaning of the Psalm had been altered. While remembering this, I now understood the conflict in changing key words to try to understand new concepts. With this new understanding of language and the need to suspend interpreting until the reading is complete, I continued on with both Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse's *What Makes You Not a Buddhist* and Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*.

A motivating unhappiness that Siddhartha feels in Hesse's story grabs my attention, "Within himself Siddhartha had begun to nourish discontent"(6). This initial feeling, this emotion of discontent, was a great motivator for what would become an incredible journey for Hesse's version of Siddhartha. I now found myself needing to make sense of this, this idea of emotions that led his journey, emotions of discontent and yearning and want. First I had to consider what this desire of Siddhartha's was about. "Siddhartha had a single goal before him, one and one only; to become empty, empty of thirst, empty of desire, empty of dreams, empty of joy and pain" (Hesse 13). I considered that his goal did align with the four truths

even if the motivating emotions initially did not. Siddhartha's goal was to reach Nirvana, not happiness. For if happiness was his goal, he would need to define happiness, and define the conditions to maintain happiness and then his happiness would be contingent on those conditions. "Conditions", that's a key word in beginning to understand the ramifications of emotions. Conditions define and bind. So while the emotion itself is not inherently bad, reacting to it, responding to it can be the stumbling block, as the path to answer those emotions, to quench them, can lead away from enlightenment and Nirvana. We see this later in Hesse's *Siddhartha* when late into his journey and well on his way to an enlightened state of being, Siddhartha once again becomes bound by his emotions: "But the wound still burned, passionately and bitterly Siddhartha thought of his son, nursing the love and affection in his heart, allowing the pain to feed on itself, committing all the follies of love" (Hesse 102). Siddhartha was bound by these emotions for his son.

Love! Why even the emotion of love has conditions; confines and binds. When we consider the four kinds of suffering;

You have something you want and you want to keep it,
You have something you don't want and you want to get rid of it,
There is something you want and don't have yet,
There is something you don't want and you have to keep it away

then we can apply every emotionally driven action, even ones based in love, to one of these four definitions of suffering. In Siddhartha's story, his desire to have his love returned by his son is an example of wanting something and not receiving it, an unanswered desire that consumed him and blocked his journey to enlightenment. The language I have been tripping over begins to clarify; love and compassion as an *emotion* are not the same love and compassion defined as an *action*.

Although emotions can be naturally occurring Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse explains that "we can still fall in love without the fear of being rejected" (105). A person need not be defined and confined by that love. While we may *feel* an emotion, Buddhism says you needn't react to or "get worked up" by that emotion and you needn't be *defined* by that emotion. Khyentse explains this best when he uses the dirty wineglass as an example:

Our true nature is like a wineglass, and our defilements and obscurations are like dirt and fingerprints. When we buy the glass, it has no inherently existing fingerprints. When it becomes soiled, the habitual mind thinks the glass is dirty, not that the glass *has* dirt. Its nature is not dirty, it's a glass with dirt and some fingerprints on it. (91)

The difference between "being" and "having some" is that "having some" is temporary, whereas "being" is defining. When we consider this idea and apply it to our emotions we can start to see the difference between having some emotion and being bound by that emotion. As Khyentse says, "When we think of ourselves as inherently angry and ignorant, and we doubt our ability to achieve enlightenment, we are thinking that our true nature is

permanently impure and defiled. But like the fingerprints on the wineglass these emotions are not part of our true nature; we have only gathered pollutants for all sorts of unfavorable situations” (92). This was when I finally liked the book! There is an idea here that what we feel can simply be temporary! Just saying “I have sadness” versus “I am sad” is very different and very liberating; it gives the emotion “sadness” only a temporary station, instead of a more permanent home of self definition. The knowledge that these emotions, and our humanly way of responding to them, are in fact temporary, leads me to believe that Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse is speaking of a process, and Hesse’s book lends to this notion of a process, a journey.

The journey that Siddhartha traveled in Hesse’s account is full of recklessness, greed, love, scorn, temptation, impatience, questioning, anger, frustration, disillusionment, study, acceptance, patience, a myriad of emotions and experiences. For Hesse’s Siddhartha to fully understand all that he was renouncing he needed to experience and identify all that he needed to give up, be rid of. Khyentse illustrates this with the story of King Ashoka:

One of the greatest emperors of the third century B.C.E. was King Ashoka, a ruthless warrior and tyrant who had no qualms about murdering his close relatives to consolidate his power. But even King Ashoka eventually found the truth of the dharma and became a pacifist (55).

This and other stories were initially examples of responding to emotions, being held captive and bound by emotions of desire, greed. If one is able to understand and accept the second seal, “all emotions are pain” then one can begin to live in balance, where emotions are not invested in. Says Khyentse, “When you begin to notice the damage that emotions can do, awareness develops...Awareness doesn’t prevent you from living, it makes living that much fuller. If you are enjoying a cup of tea and you understand the bitter and the sweet of temporary things, you will really enjoy the cup of tea” (54).

While I am sure I have barely scratched the surface in understanding the fullness of the four Buddhist seals, I have learned how to *learn* them. I went through a period of arguing and word bantering to try to understand concepts foreign to me. It was only when I recognized my own language barrier, trying to define concepts within my own understanding, that I was able to suspend the need to edit and to read with clarity and consider what the Buddha was teaching. And it was exhausting. And if learning to simply understand these concepts was this much of an endeavor I can certainly understand how the adventure to reaching enlightenment might take more than a single lifetime.

Cough

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/20-06creativewr.html

Andrew Oppliger

Life falls from a high porch perch,
brown balled sparrows plummet
to the cold concrete near my feet
purged
by upper respiratory carcinoma
in sunlight
running blissfully
treading the silver chain-linked border between industry
and a creek which softly speaks words from upstream,
occasional fish float by effortlessly,
frogs croak in chaotic harmony
with migrating mallards splash-landing for a break from flying,
water hymned in by humming monuments
-warehouse A/C, perhaps?-
of economics and the American Dream
a hundred yard sliver on the rough concrete skin of a city
where birds chirp cheerfully
in darkness
stumbling aimlessly through the sanctuary
consumed by the cacophony
of progress and productive citizenship,

night amplifies the hums cooling absent bodies
while trucks' engines roar on the road fueled by money
trading circadian cycles for cash as tires rip over pavement,
stomping carelessly as thoughts of jobs, citizenship, rent,
friendship, that weird rash, transgendered fish, tomorrow's dinner,
fixing the car, final exams, unemployment rates...
all infect an overwhelmed mind
Click for benzene fire as fish float belly up
Sizzling pollutants mute a meandering stream
Exhale next to a chirping corpse of carcinoma
Cough harmoniously with wheezing frogs and
Repeat.

The Noisy Water Review | Student Anthology of Writing & Art, Whatcom Community College

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/21-07art.html



Erik Livingstone

Untitled

Mixed media, 7" x 10.75"

Advertising Perfection to the Masses: Analysis of Old Spice's Questions?

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/22-07essay.html

Brandon Boatman

Abstract

Taking a look at Old Spice's "The Man Your Man Can Smell Like" ad campaign and focusing on the commercial entitled *Questions?*, information and explanations are sought to discern the appeal and widespread success of the ads. Using Fantasy Theme Analysis, Semiotics and Uses and Gratification theories, I explain why this commercial, in particular, highlights the popularity of the campaign. Explanations seek to explain why "The Man Your Man Can Smell Like" is able to appeal to varied demographics and why it was able to increase sales of the Old Spice brand.

Introduction

The internet has provided companies with ample opportunity to advertise to distinct audiences that they can identify through market research or with key phrases found within websites. An individual will be confronted with cell phone advertisements on electronics blogs, healthy eating or weight loss advertisements on health websites and so on. What usually does not occur are individuals seeking out the advertisements themselves, until Old Spice, Wieden + Kennedy, and Isaiah Mustafa changed that with a recent ad campaign identified as "The Man Your Man Can Smell Like."

The campaign featured two 30 second commercials, two 15 second commercials and 186 YouTube video responses to social media posts. YouTube.com currently reports that Old Spice posts have been viewed over 181 million times, and advertisers and social media experts are buzzing after the campaign's success. The response videos are being hailed as the fastest-growing viral video campaign of any product in history (NPR Staff, 2010). The Emmy award for Best TV Commercial was awarded to Mustafa and ad agency Wieden + Kennedy for "The Man Your Man Could Smell Like" for Old Spice Body Wash. It's the latest in a growing line of formal praise for a campaign that hit TV like a ton of beefcake and became an ongoing viral sensation (It moved a ton of product, too) (Stanley, 2010, p. 32). The praise for these commercials begs the question: What have they done differently?

Foremost, Isaiah Mustafa's character stands out as an over-the-top, shirtless machismo. The commercial entitled: *Questions?* allows us the most insight into what is different about this character and campaign, and therefore will be used in analyzing the roots of success for Wieden + Kennedy and Old Spice. Using Fantasy Theme Analysis, Semiotics, and Uses and Gratification Theory I will expand upon roots of the commercial as seen by myself and

communicated throughout my research with an effort to focus on the qualities that pushed “The Man Your Man Can Smell Like” to the top of viewership on YouTube, and to the top of advertising agencies’ success targets.

Company History & CEO

When it comes to success and market revenue, very few companies can compare with likes of Procter and Gamble, the owners of the brand Old Spice. In 2010 Procter and Gamble was the sixth most admired company in the world by other companies (money.cnn.com). The company changed CEOs in July of 2010 from A.G. Lafley to Robert McDonald. Under Lafley, the company was admired for its innovation and focus on the consumer, while new CEO McDonald has announced plans to introduce dozens of new lower-cost products in the U.S. and abroad, hoping to capitalize on recession-weary shoppers looking for discounts (money.cnn.com).

Robert McDonald has nearly 30 years of brand-building, market development, global business unit and global operations leadership experience across P&G and throughout the world (pg.com). Companies like P&G are a force in the world with a market capitalization that is greater than the GDP of many countries, and serving more the 180 countries with 120,000 employees.

The company was founded in 1837 and headquarters reside in Cincinnati, Ohio. P&G states it grows but touching and improving more consumers’ lives in more parts of the world...more completely (pg.com). In 2010 it was reported that P&G had total revenue of \$78.9 billion and a net income of \$12.74 billion. In 2009 it was reported P&G had total assets worth \$134.83 billion and \$63.099 billion in total equity (pg.com).

Old Spice was introduced first in 1937 as a woman’s fragrance and was followed by a men’s fragrance in 1938 by the Shulton Company founded in 1934. P&G purchased Old Spice from the Shulton Company in June 1990. Introduced with a picture of a clipper ship originally, P&G replaced that emblem with a sailboat/yacht logo in February 1992 (Kahn).

Description of Commercial

The commercial entitled “Questions” begins with a close up of a shirtless, African-American man holding Old Spice *After Hours* body wash with foam soap on the bottom of the bottle. He quickly addresses viewers by saying “Hello ladies! How are you doing? Fantastic! Does your man look like me? No. Can he smell like me? Yes! Should he use Old Spice body wash? I don’t know...” leaving no time between his questions and answers. The camera zooms out to show the man in a towel, within a beach scene featuring a running outdoor shower and the sound of seagulls in the background.

After he says the words, “I don’t know...”, the beach scene breaks in half moving opposite directions taking the man’s legs (fake along with the beach) with each separation. The scene revealed behind the beach is a lake surrounded by evergreen trees and snow capped

mountains. The man is then walking on a log in the middle of the lake wearing khaki high water shorts while continuing his questioning: “Do you like the smell of adventure?”

At the end of the question he drops the bottle of Old Spice body wash and leaves the log to walk across the lake (on the water). He continues, “Do you want a man who smells like he can bake you a gourmet cake...” he catches a white frosted cake with red trim and lettering, reading *You’re Beautiful*, surrounded by red frosting roses. He does this while walking into an unfinished kitchen moving his right hand to a table saw placed on the counter, continuing, “...in the dream kitchen he built you with his own hands?” The background of the kitchen shows a stainless steel refrigerator, a window looking at a tree, unfinished walls and a counter featuring a sink that has tools and blueprints on it. As he moves across the unfinished kitchen he saws a portion of the kitchen’s center island off and throws the cake on the parallel counter, which lands perfectly flat.

As the cake lands, our character exits the unfinished kitchen into an open forested stream on a mountain and comes to a waterfall. He spreads his arm and, still staring into the camera, exclaims, “SWAN DIVE...” and leaps from the ledge and, with arms outstretched, he begins to float down never having left his standing appearance. He continues, “...into the best night of your life!” as the camera follows our character down the waterfall where he lands in a natural wooded (custom made) hot tub.

After he splashes into the hot tub, his gaze never averted from the camera, he continues, “So ladies...” The camera pans out to show the natural wood hot tub sitting on a natural wood deck with a forested mountain background. The character places his right arm back, open to the camera as our character begins to conclude, “...should your man smell like an Old Spice man?” The camera continues to zoom out to also reveal a natural wood bench with two white towels folded neatly near the edge. Suddenly, the four walls of the hot tub fall outwards and disappear as the water rushes towards the edge of the natural wood deck revealing our character now sitting on a red and white motorcycle with the engine running. He is also holding the Old Spice body wash that he was holding in the beginning of the commercial, and is now wearing dark blue denim jeans and his right hand is on his hip. As he holds up the bottle of Old Spice body wash he concludes by saying, “You tell me.”

The final image we are left with is our character holding the Old Spice body wash, sitting shirtless with denim jeans and khaki colored boots and belt. He still has his right hand on his hip, smirking seductively on a dripping wet, red and white motorcycle with the engine running on a natural wooded deck. A forested mountain background with a running waterfall is overlaid by white words that appear above the head of the character stating *Smell Like A Man, Man. Old Spice.*

The entire length of the commercial shows the emblem for Old Spice in the bottom left hand corner; a white ship with numerous sails showing wind and signifying movement. The commercial ends with the signature Old Spice “whistle” tune. The commercial is unique for

its continuous movement and unaltered gaze from the main character featured in the commercial.

Theory Review

Fantasy Theme Analysis

Fantasy Theme Analysis is a form of rhetorical criticism. It takes the shared fantasies of a group of people, perhaps the audience for a business presentation or a public speech, and examines them for inside jokes and other cues to a shared consciousness (Bormann E. G., 1972, p. 397). The criticism can then describe and evaluate the consciousness of the group to determine its heroes and villains, its hopes and fears, how the group members deal with things such as violence or acts of kindness, and such other events within and outside the community (Bormann E. G.). The “reality” is made up of descriptions explaining how things are believed to be. The themes or stories are created in small groups which are chained out to the larger society. Fantasy Theme Analysis can be summed up as the creative and imaginative interpretation of events that fulfills a psychological or rhetorical need (Bormann E. G., 1972, p. 397). The underlying motivation of Fantasy Theme Analysis states that we are not necessarily persuaded by reason. We are often persuaded by suggestion that ties in with our dreams (Bormann E. B., 1972, p. 171). By using a fantasy theme, one will have a better chance to influence the other involved by influencing the best of what we hope in ourselves. A different explanation focuses on “parables” or dramatic interpretations within the advertisements. A McDonald’s commercial, for example, is not a series of testable, logically ordered assertions. It is a drama, a mythology, if you will, of handsome people selling, buying, and eating hamburgers, and being driven to near ecstasy by their good fortune. Is there a claim? (Postman, 1985, p. 5) The intent, therefore, is to identify the message within the message, what the advertisement alludes to in its communication of what is offered by buying their product or using their service and what is derived by those that see it.

One’s use of Fantasy Theme Analysis is based on several assumptions: 1) People build symbolic shared views of reality non-objectively. 2) A rhetorical community’s shared view of reality is best analyzed through a rhetorical concept called a fantasy theme. 3) Meaning, emotion, and motive are in the message, providing a direct link between one’s symbolic manifestation of reality (the rhetorical vision) and one’s behavior. 4) As people begin to share and extend fantasy explanations they build up a composite dramatistic explanation of reality for maintaining and promulgating the rhetorical vision. 5) Rhetorical visions are often in competition about the same issues (Shields, 1985, pp. 102-104).

Semiotics

Simplified, semiotics is the study of signs. It is a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life. It investigates the nature of signs and the laws governing them (Saussure, 1916). Expanding on the simplified definition, semiotics is the theory of the production and interpretation of meaning. Its basic principle is that meaning is made by the deployment of

acts and objects which function as "signs" in relation to other signs (University of Twente, 2010). The measure of semiotics is nearly infinite, as semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign (Eco, 1976). Additionally, every thought is a sign (Pierce, 1931-58, p. 538). We learn from semiotics that we live in a world of signs and we have no way of understanding anything except through signs and the codes into which they are organized. Through the study of semiotics we become aware that these signs and codes are normally transparent and disguise our task in 'reading' them. Living in a world of increasingly visual signs, we need to learn that even the most 'realistic' signs are not what they appear to be (Chandler, 2005).

In using semiotics to analyze a commercial, one must identify the signifier (the form which the sign takes) and the signified (what the concept represents) (Saussure, 1916). If we were to look at a stop sign, we would recognize the physical sign as the signifier. We would then recognize that the signified concept is to "stop". Depending on the context of those identifying the sign, it may take on different signified concepts such as "slow down", or "make sure to not wreck your vehicle while passing through."

Uses and Gratification

The uses and gratification approach suggests that people use the media to fulfill specific gratifications. This theory would then imply that the media compete against other information sources for viewers' gratification (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974, p. 20). The core question of such research is: Why do people use media and what do they use them for? Four uses have been identified and ordered when concerning media use: 1) information; 2) personal identity; 3) integration and social interaction; and 4) entertainment (McQuail, 1983). Uses and gratification is mainly used to observe and theorize why individuals use different media.

In analyzing a commercial itself, we can apply the theory to the product being advertised. Applying the theory to the product should aim to answer the question: What benefits (gratifications) will the consumer experience by using this product? Both the media analysis and product analysis will be used.

Theory Application

Fantasy Theme Analysis

The largest fantasy theme being communicated by the commercial is the portrayal of the ideal man. "The man your man can smell like" (who the character is recognized as) is an over-the-top representation of everything an American man may aspire to be; he is tall, handsome, muscular, confident, smooth, witty, capable, cool, charismatic, intelligent, and one could assume he smells fantastic. A man may aspire to be many of these things, but to aspire to be all would seem daunting and impossible. The Old Spice commercial assumes this in its portrayal of the ideal man; American standards for ideal are set too high. For the ladies

that the character addresses, he states from the beginning that sadly, their men are not him, but at least they can smell like him. Further expanding on the Fantasy Theme of the Old Spice character being the ideal man is shown when he walks across water from a log to catch a cake seamlessly delivered from the heavens. This can be seen as a reference to similarity with Jesus, who theologically in the Christian faith is the only perfect human to have ever lived. In referencing his role as Jesus, actor Bruce Marchiano refers to Jesus as literally living, breathing manhood- true manhood. In the sum of His ways, He was true masculinity defined and personified. He was the perfection of masculinity, the model, the ideal, the bar, the standard (Marchiano, 2006, p. 6). More so, men and women consider Jesus Christ and Martin Luther King Jr. ideal men based on characteristics such as love, caring, and leadership abilities (Weinstein, 2009, p. 166).

After the Old Spice character seemingly builds a dream kitchen with one hand while holding a cake he supposedly baked, he comes to a waterfall and uses an action metaphor of “Swan dive... into the best night of your life!” and jumps off. Instead of meeting bodily harm, he floats down with arms outstretched and back upright, as if he is a gift from God being sent to the women of earth. The Fantasy Theme is powerful in this regard as it communicates to women who would seek an ideal man that their standards may be a bit too high, but God certainly approves of Old Spice. To the men watching it is communicated that they have no chance of being the ideal man and to take some of the pressure off themselves, at least they can smell like him, which is the most important step since scent is the easiest to judge (if you smell like Old Spice, you will be associated with the ideal man). By taking steps to smelling like the ideal man and naturally, towards being the ideal man, men in relationships become more satisfying to their mates, and single men become more desirable to women. In purchasing and using Old Spice, a man can be identified as moving towards the perceived manhood idealism that has been established by the society at large. Old Spice Guy deftly managed a difficult stunt: being the man women want, and the man other men want to be (Potter, 2010, p. 23).

Even how the commercial was recorded has added to allure of the character. The ads were shot in a single cut, without computerized special effects. That’s really Mustafa delivering his lines, rolling a log in a lake, cutting a countertop with a circular saw, throwing a cake over his shoulder and then jumping (with the aid of an invisible harness: communicating still that real men are prepared) onto a motorcycle parked in a Jacuzzi (Edwards, 2010, p. 18).

The commercial begins with a beach scene showing the open ocean, sunshine, a running shower, and the sounds of seagulls which is then torn apart to reveal a forested mountain setting. Both of these environments feed the previous fantasy theme as well as help establish a new one: experience. From its beginnings in 1938, Old Spice rested heavily on nautical imagery and everything it represented- cool breezes, brave seafarers, freedom and adventure. Back when consumers weren’t as cynical as they are now, the brand could use this iconography literally (Klara, 2010, p. 33). Rather than rebrand itself, Old Spice has brought back the nautical themed references that it began with while communicating a new message

with its voice. Rather than trying to run away from its grandfatherliness, Old Spice instead embraced a big-brother persona and a purpose as Mr. [Jim] Stengel described it as “helping guys navigate the seas of manhood” by offering experience (Neff, 2008, p. 12).

One may be curious as to why Old Spice would attempt to adopt an older brother image rather than a father image when trying to communicate experience in navigating the seas of manhood. One reason could be the number of single mother households in America at the time of this decision. There are almost 14 million single mothers and fathers currently raising their children in the United States. Out of all the single parents, females constitute about 83% of the total number, and single fathers around 17% (Grall, 2009). Another example is implied from the character Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt) in the movie, *Fight Club*, as he exclaims, “We’re a generation of men raised by women.” (Uhls, 1999) Being raised in a single mother home would leave one with the feeling of distaste if Old Spice were to adopt a father figure, but by taking the route of an older brother, the same viewer can relate because an older brother would have gone through the same experience, and those from a two parent home will not sour because of it. Tying into the fantasy theme of the ideal man, the older, experienced brother adds to the imagery Old Spice set up with their character. A manifesto from Old Spice’s brand team goes: “I didn’t have an older brother to steer me down the aisle of the Old Spice shelf. Needless to say, I spent my formative years watching a lot of ‘Star Trek: The Next Generation’ on Friday nights. Now I have the chance to be that older brother I never had. I want to help the kids of today become the men of tomorrow. I want to sell them some Old Spice.” (Neff, 2008, p. 12). Further adding to why Old Spice decided to have an older brother attitude over a fatherly attitude can be derived from a statistic that states 94 percent of people in prison are men. And 85 percent of those men grew up in fatherless homes (Miller, 2010, p. 4).

The ocean scenery references freedom, breezes, opportunity, while the new mountain scenery presented in this commercial adds to the theme of the ideal man. The well known term “mountain man” comes to mind when watching the commercial. It further propagates that this man can live self-sufficiently. He can build not only his lady’s dream kitchen, but probably a house as well; he can hunt, live off the land, and be one with nature. The seamless movement through the mountain scenery and the unbroken gaze from the camera even as the character jumps off the ledge would indicate fearlessness, another desirable trait among men.

By using this character of African-American decent to represent the physical portion of the ideal man, we witness reframing in action. Media have divided the working class and stereotyped young African-American males as gangsters or drug dealers. As a result of such treatment, the media have crushed youths' prospects for future employment and advancement. The media have focused on the negative aspects of the black community (e.g. engaging in drug use, criminal activity, welfare abuse) while maintaining the cycle of poverty that the elite wants (Balkaran, 1999, p. 1). Yet by using an African-American man to represent the quintessential perfect man, it seems like Old Spice chose to disregard

stereotypes and preconceived notions altogether and focus on the right man for the job. They could have paid attention to the study that stated Jesus and Martin Luther King Jr. were two of the most ideal men according to college students. They would not be wrong in their decision to cast Isaiah Mustafa as the “Old Spice Guy”.

The commercial that premiered before this particular one, the first of a three part ad campaign featuring Mr. Mustafa, won the Film Grand Prix at the International Advertising Festival at Cannes in June 2010. Old Spice began to reverse share losses as soon as it began in February. As of July 18, 2010, Old Spice, with 94 million views, had become the No. 1 all-time most-viewed sponsored channel on YouTube. Old Spice had eight of the top 11 most-popular videos on YouTube on July 16 (Nack, 2010, p. 30). It would seem apparent that the campaign made an impact and Old Spice’s decision to cast Isaiah Mustafa and reframe African-American males under the light of the ideal man was a decision that is reaping rewards in one way or another.

Semiotics

The character’s gaze is set directly in the camera and never alters. The gaze of the character demands a personal, deep connection. It also demands respect of the character and the product. The gaze is generally used to draw your attention to a product; however, it can be used to imply knowledge, sexuality, and power (Olin, 1996, p. 209). In this commercial, the character’s gaze implies all three. The gaze also suggests that a perfect man makes eye contact with those he is speaking to, especially when a man is speaking to “ladies.” His gaze is directed into the camera as he moves throughout the scenery suggesting the bravery or fearlessness an ideal man possesses. It also alludes to familiarity with a man’s surrounding environment. He can look directly into the camera fearlessly, giving the ladies the proper respect they deserve because this is his territory. He owns this land and works with these materials daily, and no longer needs to pay attention while walking because a perfect man learns and adapts to his environment. Furthermore, the gaze implies the confidence the character has in himself. He has nothing to hide when speaking to ladies, he is honest and noble, and he establishes trust with the audience by gazing into our eyes.

Our character is holding a red bottle of body wash. The bottle has an orange sticker on it with a black hexagon in the middle. The black hexagon shows “Old Spice” and “Body Wash” written in white, while a red bar outlines the white words, “After Hours.” The top and bottom of the body wash also has white foam covering those parts of the bottle. The red bottle is meant to symbolize strength, power, passion, and desire. The orange represents joy, sunshine, determination, and attraction. The black represents strength, authority, and elegance. The white foam symbolizes perfection, goodness, innocence, safety, purity, and cleanliness (QSX Software Group, 2010). Furthermore, the bottle of body wash signifies all these attributes the character possesses are due to him using the body wash. The foam implies use as the character is standing next to a running beach shower before we are given a lecture on what sets apart a man who uses Old Spice.

The beach scene has brown sand, a light blue sky, and blue ocean. The brown suggests stability and denotes masculine qualities. Light blue is associated with health, healing, tranquility, understanding, and softness. Dark blue represents knowledge, power, integrity, and seriousness (Qsx Software Group, 2010). As the beach breaks away our character is surrounded by similar blue skies, but is now on a lake surrounded by gray, snow capped mountains and dark green trees. The mountains signify the vast open space a free man has the luxury of working within. The gray colors of the mountain suggest that the surrounding environment can be bleak and confusing. The dark green in the trees is associated with ambition, greed, and jealousy (Qsx Software Group, 2010). These signs offer a message that alludes to the outside world being envious and perhaps being cruel, but a real man finds success anyways. The ideal man will even share his wisdom with those who will listen although it seems as though the force of opposition is great. As the character walks through the mountains, he wears brown shorts, communicating his stability and masculine qualities. Also, the two different scenes offer us a picture of the natural, and communicate that the character himself is all natural.

The character says implies that if your man uses Old Spice, we will smell like adventure. Adventure is communicated in the forms of walking on a log in the middle of a lake, walking on water, baking a gourmet cake, building a kitchen with your bare hands, cliff jumping, and motorcycle riding. Perhaps if your man at least smelled like these things, then you could be proud of him and even brag about him.

The character drops the bottle of body wash into the lake when he finishes effortlessly walking on a log. When he is seemingly done with the body wash, he moves briskly throughout the scene, never pausing or stalling, which signifies that after you are done using Old Spice body wash you will be more productive and more decisive all day.

The character asks the ladies if they would like their man to smell like a man who can bake them a gourmet cake in the dream kitchen he built with his bare hands. As he asks the question a gourmet cake falls from the sky and is caught by the character showing the audience that an ideal man is prepared, and that he is in control. He moves through an unfinished kitchen moving a running saw across the counter while carrying the cake he caught also communicating that an ideal man can multitask well.

When he comes to a waterfall and jumps off, only to float down gently, a semiotic code is presented communicating that an ideal man can do amazing things (walking on water, commanding a cake to fall from the sky). The ideal man has an ability to amaze you in some way and even more so if he uses Old Spice, like not only building you your dream kitchen with his bare hands, but also using that kitchen to transcend stereotypes and bake you a gourmet cake. If you are with the ideal man, you will not be typecast into the role of a typical woman. You will be doted on and catered to.

He floats down into a custom made hot tub. We can assume he built this with his bare hands as well. The natural wood matching that of the deck it sits on, it seems obvious that our character crafted these himself from the surrounding trees. Also, by coming to this assumption, it can be signified that the greed and jealousy that previously surrounded our character has succumbed to the power of the ideal man, and been made into another item that is intended to provide a luxury for his lady. The character tells the ladies to swan dive into the best night of their lives. He doesn't inform us what is involved in the best night of a lady's life, but we can easily assume it involves a man who smells like Old Spice.

In the hot tub, the character asks: "So ladies, should your man smell like an Old Spice man? You tell me." He has informed us the entire commercial what an Old Spice man smells like and made it obvious that men should smell like Old Spice, but he leaves the power of the decision up to the ladies. Women are in control throughout the commercial. The character addresses them, asks them if they think their men should smell like Old Spice, informs them what an Old Spice man smells like, and then lets the women decide if that is what they want.

He ends the commercial on top of a red and white motorcycle, further symbolizing adventure and freedom. He is wearing dark blue jeans signifying knowledge, power, integrity, and seriousness. The red on the motorcycle represents energy, danger, strength, power, determination as well as passion, desire, and love. The white represents goodness, innocence, purity, and perfection (Qsx Software Group, 2010). He ends up with the bottle of body wash that was presented in the beginning of the commercial as well.

Uses and Gratification

Something peculiar with the delivery of the character is the fact that he is addressing women to sell a man's body wash product. Research done by Procter and Gamble showed that men used their significant other's shower products, but secretly longed for their own. Men liked using the products, but felt it sacrificed their masculinity (Wong, 2009, p. 8). Company research also showed that 60% of the time females have a significant input in purchase decisions of male shower products (Liu, 2010). By addressing women, the character is addressing the influence for certain body wash enters the showers of men. Those women with men will influence their men to use Old Spice, and those without men will be attracted to men who do use Old Spice thereby influencing single men to purchase Old Spice as well.

Being a man who uses Old Spice, you will be more desirable, but even more important is the fact that you will identify yourself as a man striving for perfection. One would identify himself as a man with ambition, drive, and a passion for achieving the best in him. A man, whether single or not, could even start using Old Spice as a daily reminder to aspire to the ideal. Halvorson (psychology, Lehigh Univ.) holds that an individual's mode of thinking (the abstract whys and concrete whats) can help or hinder achievement of goals (Bigelow, 2010, p. 88). With the character making it clear that he is the embodiment of the ideal, using Old Spice can affect the individual's mode of thinking. The scent alone can be a reminder throughout the day.

At the very least, if a man uses Old Spice he can be associated with the ideal throughout the day. The relative ease that the character flows throughout the scenery in the commercial will be communicated through the scent carried by the individual throughout the day. This fact appeals to men who do not care to aspire to the ideal as well. They will be associated with the ideal just by showering with Old Spice products.

Use of Old Spice, overall, is associated with satisfaction in a relationship. If you are attracting a new mate, improving the relationship with your current mate, or just bored with your current male mate, Old Spice offers itself as the product that will remedy these situations. It assumes women will be happier with a man that at least smells like adventure. It assumes that men are happy with a woman and seek to improve their odds with women through scent associations.

The popularity of the commercial, especially after it was added to YouTube.com, provides evidence as to what people are looking for. The video has over 18 million views, over 57 thousand likes, and less than 1,000 dislikes. The majority of the comments address the entertainment value of the commercial. YouTube.com user Ayume116 commented: "oh my god this is the greatest thing in the history of everything." User koolpopcorn27 quotes the number of dislikes when they comment: "875 men can't smell like him." The product movement reported after these commercials seems to support the idea that entertaining today's viewer sells product. Old Spice understood the popularity they garnered through YouTube.com and used their YouTube channel to make 186 custom video responses to users of social networking websites. Keeping these commercials accessible to the public has added to the entertainment appeal and allowed Old Spice to grow exponentially in the consumer's mind.

Conclusion

Old Spice has established themselves as the body wash for the ideal man, or those striving to become ideal. By using an over-the-top character to exaggerate qualities many of today's young men strive for and many women seek out, Old Spice was able to differentiate themselves from other brands and have allowed them more freedom in how they approached their target audience. By using the previously mentioned fantasy themes, adding additional semiotic messages, and anecdotally referring to different gratifications from using their products, Old Spice has set a new standard for advertising entertainment. "There's something about the potential that you could be spoken to directly that I think is very, very captivating," (Marshall) Kirkpatrick says (NPR Staff, 2010).

The unattainable, perfect man (God's gift to women) is not you or your man (if you are a woman). But if you use Old Spice, the cool older brother that has been around the block and has the wisdom to point you in the right direction, you (or your man) can take the next step towards achieving mountain man (previously nautical voyager) status and be fearless, self-sufficient, able to provide for, strong, powerful, determined, graceful, well-spoken, attractive man. At the very least, you can smell like a man, man.

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Stalk-Raving Mad

 noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/23-07creativewr.html

Jeff Thompson

Once upon an August seventeenth, twenty ten..

Gnarled and twisted, otherworldly junipers litter my peripheral and the otherwise barren landscape rushing passed. The trunks of these trees spider and curl around themselves, creating what seem like deliberately silly shapes. *Is that one a guy flipping me off?* I wonder. *That other one is a throne, no question.* It's as if these trees were sloppily scribbled across the landscape as part of a creative six-year-old's drawings. *Surreal*, I note. Somehow, central Oregon ended up with only his trees. While, thankfully, the rest of this kid's portfolio was lost in transit. What lies around, in utter contrast to these unrealistic trees, is a very real desert.

Wait, I'm confused. Desert? How did a desert make it's way all the way up here from California? It must be lost. I should report this. Shouldn't I be in the Pacific Northwest by now? My mind wanders.

This whole scene barely catches my attention, because my mind is who-knows-where right now. Playing frisbee golf in San Diego, probably. One thing is for certain; an incoherent daydream has taken priority. I'm so out of sync with the reality of the situation I'm in, you could call me Justin Timberlake. Luckily, I have a smidgin more time to gather my thoughts. For a little while longer, an artificial barrier lies between this stark-raving mad land and myself. In less than an hour that will change though. By then, the twenty-five-miles-to-the-gallon barrier will have gone, and it will have taken my friends, Splinter and Aloe, with it. Off they will venture to the safety of Portland's sprawl. And here I will stay; me, the stark-raving mad juniper wilderness of central Oregon and no one or nothing else for miles, save for a shrub or two. And some creepy crawlies.

Six months ago, I would have been more on-edge than I am right now. My mind would have been a clogged toilet of questions and concerns. *Do I have everything I need to make it to the next town? Do I have enough food? Water? My stove? Tent? Tent poles? Maps? Knife? Bear mace? Lighter? Sleeping bag? Toilet paper? Book? Cell phone? More maps?* Because, you see, six months ago I had never, ever been on an overnight backpacking trip. No, not once.

That all changed in late April when I, maybe ignorantly, set out to hoof it across the entire length of the Pacific Crest Trail. This trail system runs, unbroken, from the border of Mexico to the border of Canada. For nearly three thousand miles, it snakes its way across deserts, mountains, glaciers, rivers, valleys and tiny towns in all three of the west coast states.

Starting at the Mexican border I've been hiking, more than less, non-stop since late April, and believe it or not, I've had company. Apparently, other crazies exist. Who would of thunk? Along the way I've met plenty of like-minded dudes and dudettes: doctors, lawyers, students, climbers, sailors, foreigners, artists, drifters, writers, hippies. Young, old and neither.

Splinter and Aloe, a young couple from Portland, are two of the many friends I've made over the last five months. Off and on throughout the never-ending California section of the trail we shared enough experiences to form a bond tighter than Gorilla Glue on plastic. Through adventure, hardship and a ridiculous common goal of Canada the bonds made out here, on the trail, are as strong as can be.

So here I sit, riding in Splinter and Aloe's car across the stark-raving-mad juniper wilderness of central Oregon, more than five and a half months later. They both finished the trail weeks ago, while I'm still puttering through Oregon. As I daydream about frisbee golf or who-knows-what, they're driving me back to the trail from their place in Portland proper. Having been disconnected from society for long enough, I took them up on their offer to *chill out* out in Portland for awhile. *As long as you need*, they had said.

Apparently two weeks was as long as I needed, because that's as long as I stayed. And this marks the longest break from my trail adventure yet. Over the course of my stay, I became so used to the comforts of modern life that I didn't want to leave. If I hadn't packed up when I did, someone would have had to drag me back to that central Oregon wasteland kicking and screaming. That's not to say I didn't want to get back out there and continue my trek, because I did. It was just tough to leave behind the comforts that I almost always took for granted prior to my hike. Tap water, ice cream, cold beer, oh my!

The day I left Portland we all agreed that visiting the beer brewing town of Bend would be a swell idea before hitting the trail. So, in a fit of excitement I packed in a hurry. Cramming what I thought was a week's worth of gear and food into every orifice of my pack until it was bursting at the seams. Naïve six months ago me would have been more cautious. *Check and quadruple check that everything is there*, he would have nagged. *No excuses*. But since he no longer exists, I didn't listen.

We race across central Oregon, passing the tourist trap known as Sisters, and I can smell the complimentary brewery tour on Splinter's breath as he asks, "Dude, you sure you have everything you need? This crap shoot of a town is your last chance."

"Yea, I'm totally good," I hope.

Less than an hour later I thank them for everything. We say our goodbyes, give our hugs, and before I know it Splinter, Aloe and the twenty-five-miles-to-the-gallon barrier are gone. *Poof*, I'm alone. My guess is there are no cars in the parking lot, because no one wants to day hike in this stark-raving mad place. You would be lucky to find anyone other than someone hiking the whole trail out here. Just before seven I shoulder my pack and north I go. *To Canada!*

Two hours later, I'm singing Lamb Chops at the top of my lungs because a) I'm bored b) I don't want to surprise any wildlife and c) there's no one around for miles.

“This is the song that doesn't end! Yes, it does on and on, my friends! Some people started singing it not knowing wha-,” I freeze. “The hell is that?”

I'm suddenly shaking like a junky without a fix as I stare into the eyes of a giant, golden cat. It doesn't move, only blinks. This monster is crouched no more than fifteen feet from me, staring. Creeping.

My unwanted new friend, Franklin, and I have been locked in a pseudo Mexican standoff for at least ten minutes now. *I think*. I don't know anymore. Time seems to have ceased to exist for me, and I wonder if Franklin is in the same boat. *Is he* scared?

At some point, one of us will have to give in. Something has to happen here, good or bad. I was not prepared for this. Having already hiked over two thousand miles this summer, this is not what I had come to expect.

Day one back on the trail, within hours even, and I'm having a pissing contest when an adult cougar. *This isn't fair*. My mind is elsewhere, and my pack unorganized. When I packed in a hurry before leaving Portland, I crammed every item I own into the main compartment of my backpack with random efficiency. I have no idea where anything is, and I'm not about to call a time out so that I can take my pack off and rummage through it to find my puny pocket knife, which has likely fallen to the bottom. So, my only possible defense, if Franklin gets testy, are two trekking poles that have been beaten to nubs over the last two thousand miles. Sadly, I didn't have enough forethought to pack a giant ball of yarn. Yea, that's unfortunate, because right now I can't realistically think of anything else that could get me out of this situation alive. A raw steak maybe, but that was also absent from the pre-hike gear checklist I didn't do.

As night fades into our peculiar little situation I start to panic. I need to get out of here soon! Except for the silvery reflection of my flashlight in Franklin's eyes, he has disappeared. He might as well be wearing Harry Potter's cloak. To make matters worse, I've completely lost all sense of time.

How did it get dark? How long have we been here, getting to know each other in this all too intimate fashion?

I never planned for this, because I never imagined myself in such a situation. I literally have no idea what to do. This could possibly come down to survival of the fittest, and I'm in no way as fit as two hundred pounds of salivating muscle.

Over the course of our standoff, I haven't been action-less. I've tried throwing rocks, making myself look big and awesome, screaming and backing way. I even insulted Franklin's mother a time or three. He was phased by none of these things. In fact, when I backed away, he

crawled towards me in the best stalker posture he could muster, like a Siamese chasing a laser pointer. At this, my involuntary reaction was to scream, but I quickly regained composure in an attempt to zipper my mouth shut. The last thing I want to show is weakness. That could be the kill code he has been waiting for.

Eventually, and against my better judgment, I decide that my only option is to turn my back to him and walk away. My goal: civilization. My best bet is the highway I started from earlier this afternoon, ten miles south. Constantly checking behind me, I slowly make my way in the pitch dark. From a distance, Franklin stalks me the entire way. Thinking that he has finally made his move, I want to scream at every sound that pierces the horrible silence.

Several hours later, I see his giant, curious eyes for the last time. He is maybe forty or fifty feet from the trailhead parking lot, creeping behind a bush. As I make my way into the parking lot I am relieved to see cars where none had been before. I pass a small group of campers bedded down right at the trailhead. At this point my survival instincts tell me, "If Franklin is brave enough to come this far he'll likely run into these guys first."

So, without warning the sleeping bait, I venture deeper into the parking lot to set up camp. Finally feeling somewhat safe, exhaustion takes over and I fall asleep in minutes, totally uninterested in one of the coolest meteor showers I've ever seen, doing its thing above me.

The Noisy Water Review | Student Anthology of Writing & Art, Whatcom Community College

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/24-08art.html



William Martin, Jr.

Self Reflection

Graphite/charcoal, 18" x 24"

On Fascism and Fairy Tales: An Analysis of Pan's Labyrinth

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/25-08essay.html

Ethan Smith

“To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives.”

— Howard Zinn (270)

This quotation in many ways reflects Ofelia's place in the real world. She's surrounded by revolution, war, her mother's death and a cruel fascist for a stepfather. Despite this, she still has faith in the escapism of her fantasy world where she's a princess belonging to a royal line. This hopefulness, which Captain Vidal does dismiss as childish, (or in Zinn's words, foolishly romantic) is based on the fact that Ofelia understands that there is love and beauty if you search for it. The end of the film shows Ofelia's faith in these ideals, and this belief that the world isn't all ugly. Captain Vidal however, represents the ugliness in the world. He's the Orwellian Big Brother, the boogie man and the Spanish Grendel; he is fascism.

Fascism is defined, in *Political Science: An Introduction*, as “an extreme form of nationalism with elements of socialism and militarism” (Roskin 108). It then describes Benito Mussolini's rise to power, initially a socialist, military service turned him into a hardcore nationalist. Italy was full of chaos and dissonance at the time and Mussolini collected people in black uniforms, stuck them in high power positions and created a state with no political parties or democratic practices whatsoever. Adolf Hitler would follow with the rise of Nazi Germany and it began a global question raised by intellectuals: What was the future of governance? (Roskin 109). Guillermo del Toro, through the vehicle of Captain Vidal, illustrates the dangers of fascism, from the brutality to the very nature of it, and power.

Guillermo del Toro, while not answering this question explicitly, chooses instead to personify fascism and paint a psychological portrait of it through the character Captain Vidal, and I think the ethics and implications of the way he portrays this character answer this question. Guillermo del Toro stated about *Pan's Labyrinth* that he wanted to juxtapose fascism, which he defines as “the absolute lack of choice and the most masculine expression of power” and the imagination which is the “most feminine, most beautiful expression of power” ().

In Captain Vidal, this total lack of imagination is obviously present. He's single-minded, and there isn't much creativity to him. He exists for one purpose. He's a tool of war. War is something brutal, violent and cruel; he is brutal, violent and cruel. This illustrated by the way

he tortures people and his rejection of Ofelia's childlike books. There's also the end of the film, in which he shoots Ofelia. This act gains him nothing. He does it because it's who he is, a murderous and cruel man.

Abstract notions of love also don't seem to exist in Captain Vidal's man. He tells the doctor, when his wife is pregnant with his son, that if he has to choose who survives, to choose his son. An interesting thing to note about the birth of his son is he doesn't even know it's going to be a male. The doctor at one point mentions to him there's no way of knowing this, and he simply states he knows. Biological facts and probability be damned in his head.

Ultimately, Captain Vidal doesn't seem to possess any values in regards to family. It's all about the continuation of the male line – a male line, which seems inherently obsessed with order and cruelty, which explains Vidal's fascism. In the film, at the dinner party, someone asks if it's true that Vidal's father broke his watch so his son would know the exact time he died. This is extremely noteworthy because it suggests an obsession with quantification, or things that can be measured and order. It's another indicator that order is important to Vidal, as it was important to his father.

At the end of the film this reoccurs. Vidal asks, when the revolutionaries have him surrounded with guns, to please, let his son know what time he died. Again, there's that motif of time (specifically time of death.) This is very indicative of this order fetish which is a character of fascism. The revolutionaries tell him no, that his son won't even know his name. Vidal looks crushed at this, because I think it philosophically represents the end of the line. His son won't be in search of power and order, like him, and possibly his father before him. This male line is also important because it reinforces the idea of fascism being a masculine expression of power, as del Toro stated in his interview.

Guillermo del Toro didn't just state that fascism was masculine though, he also stated that it was an absolute lack of choice. In George Orwell's dystopian novel, *1984*, he depicts this lack of choice in fascism. Orwell states:

We shall abolish the orgasm. Our neurologists are at work upon this now. There will be no loyalty, except loyalty to the party. There will be no love, except the love of Big Brother... There will be no art, no literature, no science... There will be no curiosity... But... always will there be power. (277)

What Orwell is stating here, is that the Party and Big Brother, which are both fascist, are going to strip away everything that makes humanity, well, humanity. Sex, love, art, science, and that natural curiosity that even *Homo sapiens'* relatives, the apes, feel. Or, in del Toro's words, the lack of choice.

Individuality is disruptive to order. With order, there's carefully set plans, everyone needs to act the same and follow the rules and standards. This is why fascists come in uniforms. Individuals can't exist. This order fetish is one of the dangerous of fascism, but there's

something far more insidious while being more explicit about fascism. It's the violent nature of it. In some ways it stems from fascism's need for conformity. It requires a system that has to conquer the individual, in 1984, they brainwash, in *Pan's Labyrinth*, Vidal kills and tortures people.

Fascism requires justification for this. No one thinks they're immoral and doing the wrong thing, even if they are. Noam Chomsky stated in an interview that:

Clinton, Kennedy, they all carried out mass murder, but they didn't think that that was what they were doing - nor does Bush. You know, they were defending justice and democracy from greater evils. And in fact I think you'd find it hard to discover a mass murderer in history who didn't think that. (10)

This is what characterizes Vidal's cruelty. He thinks the ends justify the means. In torturing people brutally, killing them, he thinks he's serving the greater good. It's this delusion that allows for him not only to continue his violent cycle, but also to justify it and consider himself a national hero, and a fighter for a good and a better country. One sees this very delusion in history over and over, and there's blood on the ground as a result of it.

This delusion is universal too, which represents a danger going far beyond Spain and the world of *Pan's Labyrinth*. It goes on in the United States and is largely ignored. Slavoj Zizek, in his essay "Between Two Deaths: the Culture of Torture" referred to this as the "unknown knowns" (Zizek 9). Which was a play on Donald Rumsfeld quote about known knowns (the things we know we know), known unknowns (the things we know we don't know) and unknown unknowns (which are things we don't know we don't know.) Now the fourth term – unknown knowns – is the things we don't know we know. That Freudian unconscious can be used to describe the state of many in Washington D.C. over the issue of torture. Our elected officials who approved it but when it came to owning up to it simply said "The CIA never told me what they were doing."

The political messages of *Pan's Labyrinth* are as important as the works of anyone from Adam Smith to Karl Marx. They show the hubris of not just fascism, but cultures that condone cruelty in their ignorance. It shows the brutal nature of power, which is something that is always worth understanding because it's a reality that exists for everyone. In a country like the United States there are many privileges, but also many responsibilities. Understanding the brutal nature of power and those that wield it is one of those responsibilities. Captain Vidal could be a congressman or a president, and if society doesn't understand how to recognize the nature of fascism and power, than he may be closer, and far more real than one realizes.

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Mike Rodriguez

Untitled

Digital art, 10" x 7.5"

Maniac

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/27-08creativewr.html

Elizabeth Wykes

'Baldy, baldy, bald eagle!'

I am in my grammar class, and I am thirteen years old. Because of alphabetical seating, I am forced to sit in the front of the class. The kid who sits three seats behind me is bouncing up and down, pointing at my head, and mocking me. I try to block him out, but his voice continues to ring in my ears, quietly ridiculing me for the rest of the day. *I can't help it*, I want to tell him. Most of the time, I ask to go to the bathroom and instead go hide by the playground so they don't see me cry.

Baldy, baldy...

Once, I tried to keep my hood up in class so he would not be able to see my head. The teacher roughly yanked the hood down and berated me in front of the class. I said I was cold, but she wouldn't listen. My eyes filled with tears and I felt that familiar burning sensation in my throat. *Please, just let me keep my hood on*. I sunk lower in my seat while I tried to arrange my hair so the two bald spots won't show.

I find the name for pulling in a book I am reading. 'Hair pulling is also known as trichotillomania.' *There's a name for this?* I ask myself. *But how do I tell my mom?*

A friend from church noticed first, the summer when I started pulling. Listen, she says to my mother. Elizabeth's pulling out her hair and hiding it, you've got to do something. That same month, my mother buys me a magnifying mirror, and I sit in my room for four hours a night picking at my skin. *I am ugly*, I tell myself. And then I think - *sometimes, I don't even want to be around anymore*.

The psychiatrist they take me to at the Children's Hospital reminds me of a duck. It took four months in order to get an appointment. She talks a lot, and once my parents leave, she asks me a bunch of questions. 'What do you do with your hair once you pull it out? Can I see your spots? Do you chew on it? Do you pull from any other places? Do you pick at your face? Have you ever thought about ending your life? Is there anything else I should know?' *I throw it out, sure, no, no, no, no, no*. Every no is a lie. I know not to trust her, and I know how I should answer so I don't get in trouble with my mother. If I answer wrong, I will get grounded. At the end of the appointment, she tells my parents that my pulling is not bad enough for medication, or to qualify me for a clinical trial.

In the spring, I tell my three friends. My best friend says simply, 'If you need help, let me know.' One tells me that she doesn't think it is a real condition, but offers support. The other just hugs me.

In my sophomore year, somehow my pulling comes up in conversation. I haven't pulled in a few years, but my skin picking is back. Within a week, I come to find out that five of my friends pull, along with my maternal grandmother. They didn't know the name of the condition; they just knew the symptoms - pulling out their eyelashes, eyebrows, beards, pubic hair, whatever.

It's been years since I have pulled, and I don't believe that I will ever start again. Moreover, I don't know how or why I could have grown out of it, but I have. I hate having to admit that other conditions have replaced it. I wonder if things will always work like this - still trying to get at the root of something.

Enlightenment

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/28-09creativewr.html

Elizabeth Wykes

“Mind if I have a smoke?” you ask, already exhaling a thick fog out of your magenta lips. Of course not, I think to myself. I am envious of your freedoms, of all the things you can openly obtain while I am forced to sneak around at a much greater risk. You are gorgeous, you always have been: blue eyes that have seen too much, long brown hair with hints of blond that link you back to your California hometown, porcelain skin with a hint of vermilion on your cheeks. If I look closely I can see the scars from your razor blade addiction back in eighth grade, and the marks from cigarettes are still visible on your wrists. I remember watching you hurt yourself and condemning your actions, then doing much worse things to myself at night.

You are the only link to the old version of me. I remember when we used to feast off each other's misery and fight over the meaning of song lyrics. I could always tell you everything. Yet it was not until this summer that you found out about the rape- when it slipped out of my mouth you stared at me wide-eyed, not speaking a word for a good minute before saying, “I need a latte.” That is what I love about you, your impulsivity. It is not overbearing or overzealous; it only reveals itself at the appropriate moment.

I remember first talking to you about the sexual abuse I had experienced at a younger age when I was eleven years old. Before then, I had not known you that well or long, but you were a part of the group, so I trusted you. I told you in the school yard while we were sitting by the gnarled roots of a maple tree. You did not say much at first, and I could tell you were attempting to come up with an appropriate response. After a few minutes had passed, you looked at me with those turquoise eyes and said, “I’m sorry.” After that, we did not discuss it for over a year.

The discussion began while I was sitting on the white, stained carpet in your bedroom and you were sprawled out on your astronomy-themed comforter, with The Doors blasting from your stereo.

“You don’t have to answer this,” you muttered. “But what was it like, having him force himself on you?”

I was quiet for a minute and then let out a nervous laugh. “I’m over it now,” I lied, gripping the carpet in my left hand. “Every time it ever happened, though, it was horrible. Words cannot describe it.”

You awkwardly climbed off of your bed and sat next to me, placing your hand on my knee. You always cared but were not sure how to show it.

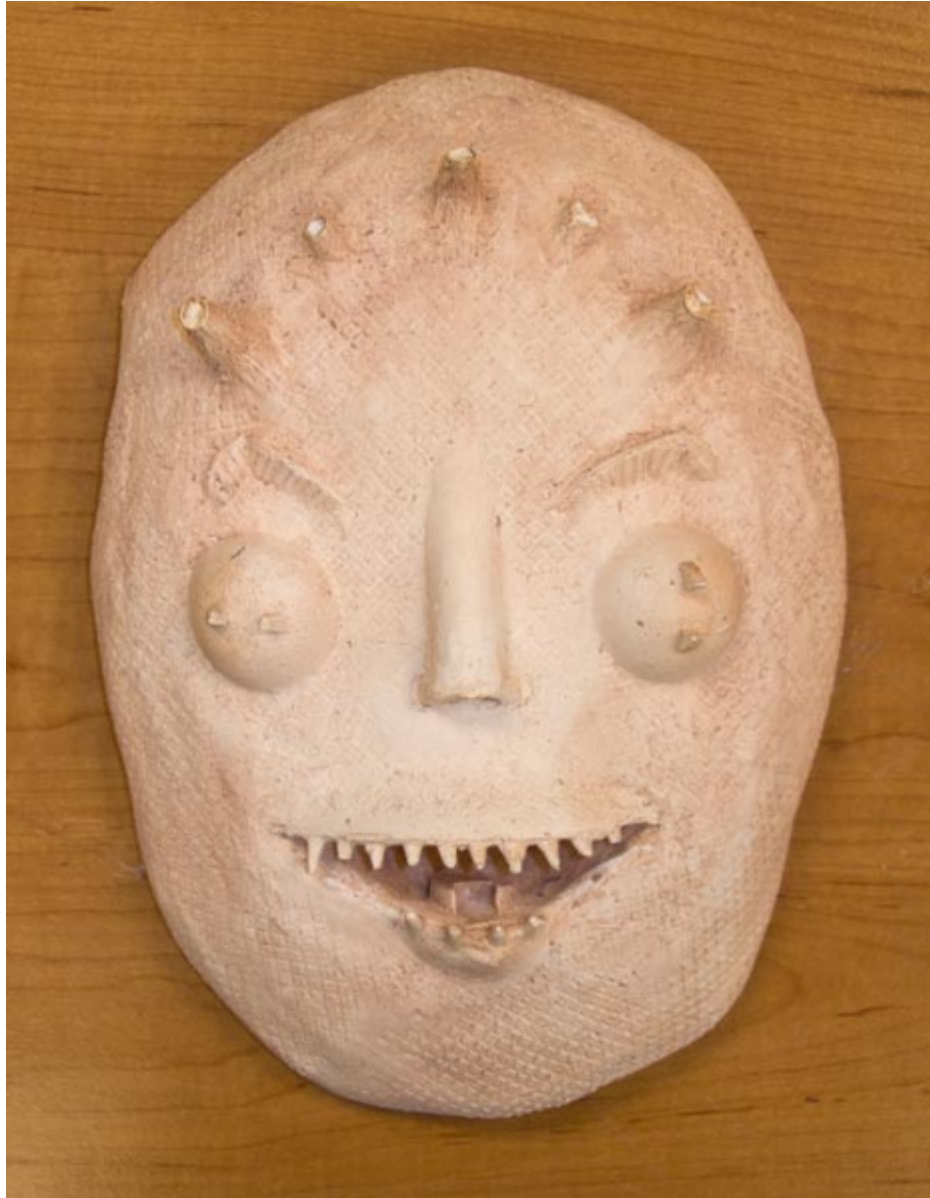
Years went by and we told each other everything. Whenever you stayed over at my house we would sneak out into the nearby woods to sit, talk and smoke. If I was at your place we would stay out in Broadripple extra late, perhaps three or four in the morning, before walking back to your house to eat tortilla chips and listen to Billie Holiday in silence. At the end of eighth grade, however, a mood disorder took over my life, transforming my usual mood into a variety of ups and downs. One minute I would be babbling incessantly, flailing my arms around wildly and the next I would be unable to move or speak, entirely consumed by melancholy. A depression took over your brain, and I later found out that you had been battling dangerously low self-esteem and a feeling of hopelessness for years. You had never told me about these things, despite our closeness, because you felt weak for feeling that way. That summer, we started hanging out less and less, even though we were going to separate schools the next year. We had too much to deal with on our own and could not help each other out.

Freshman year we barely spoke. You later told me that you could not bear to watch my self-destruction, and chose to wait until I was stable to talk to me again. There was limited contact between us until the summer before our junior year, when we carried on countless philosophical conversations and walked in the city. One night we wandered around downtown, first stopping at a vegan coffee house and later sitting on the edge of your favorite fountain. We talked for hours about our lives, drinking lukewarm soy hot chocolate while watching the city sleep.

I am now sitting on your back porch, not wearing a jacket and watching the snow cascade down while cherry-red cardinals flutter in the skeletal trees. You are smoking again, and I don't mind. You don't ask if I want a drag because you know what my response will be. I am eating chips with the salsa you made earlier and stealing sips of your organic strawberry drink. At this moment, I sit here shivering outside of your house, observing your backyard. For the first time in days, weeks, months, I feel at peace. I feel happy. I realize that I would sit here with you forever if I could, even if it meant freezing to death.

The Noisy Water Review | Student Anthology of Writing & Art, Whatcom Community College

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/29-10art.html



Matt Schvaneveldt

Untitled

Plaster, 10" x 7" x 2.5"

Co-op 190 Job Journal

 noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/30-09essay.html

Will Middlebrooks

Introduction

I'm back to school now here at Whatcom Community College in part because I never really was good at school, or even a real student for that matter. Before earning the title and stigma of high-school dropout, I had a bright academic career, brimming with potential, but mostly disappointment. After being expelled from middle school, four high-schools, and two school districts, I earned my Good Enough Diploma, or GED, at the ripe and ready age of fifteen. Then what? Well, as my Dad put it at the time, "You either work or go to school, but you're filling your day with something." And so I found work. If I was going to fill my days with something, I might as well get a paycheck. Experience had already proven to me that I was one of those people who wouldn't or couldn't make school work. So from florist, to line cook, to landscaper, I worked and found myself moving through my life in a new way, building upon successes and skill-sets rather than reoccurring failures. What I found through this work, and never in school, was an environment that engaged not only my head, but my hands and heart as well. Through these jobs I learned what I loved—the outdoors, botany, food, nature—and used these as a dowsing rod for more work: first habitat restoration in urban Seattle, then moving a little further from home spending four years as a full-time farm worker. It was here that I first had a taste of what it felt like to be an educator. During summer, we would have a farm-camp, where high-school age kids would come four days a week to work and to learn. I was now able to share some of what I loved about my own life, a passion for the natural world, the balanced cycles around our food, ecosystems, healthy diets, ethical animal husbandry, and more generally, how we really interface with our world.

The kids I worked with over these summers really responded to not only the physicality of the work, but also began to really dig in to the fundamentals that lay behind it. They seemed to gobble up things like watershed management, forestry practices, principles of sustainable agriculture and the other lessons that made up half of their days, and did I mention most of these kids were "at risk youth" with most being "drop-outs"? Who knew they'd love to learn as much as most kids? Most of us shared not only similar backgrounds, but also learning styles: we needed knowledge that was supplemented with work, an environment that kept not just our minds active, but our hands as well. It was here that I learned I loved to teach, to share, but also that there are many kids, myself included, for whom the current educational path seems remote and alienating. And it was here I decided I wanted to help change that. I wanted to take my accumulated failures as a student and use them as fuel to help out those who were like me at their age. So there's the long story of how I came about writing this journal. I'm back to school now at Whatcom, wanting to become a teacher of all things, and

over this year have been working as a teacher's assistant three hours each morning at Sehome High School. The following entries are from these mornings, my first time back in high-school a decade later.

January 3, 2011

Back to school today from the holiday break and was feeling a little unsure of myself in hitting the ground running. While I wasn't feeling as prepared as I normally do, I think I was on par for how Craig and the students were also feeling. Everyone seemed a little out of shape in a sense, but after the first couple periods I think we all got back into the rhythm of where we were and what we were supposed to do. Spent most of the morning preparing a lab for the next two days, which wasn't at all that easy to do as Craig didn't have any time before class to hash directions out first. I had to imagine how I thought the lab would go, the flow of the activity, based on how I'd seen the students interact with each other before. I think it will work out well, but I find myself getting a little wound up when I feel I'm not on the same page as Craig from the get go. I think it's good for me in the sense that it's giving me the opportunity to become a little more fluid, a little more adaptable and able to fire from the hip, something I see in Craig. I think this will be a core quality I have to work on for the future because I tend to feel very secure when I'm prepared, organized, and find myself getting overwhelmed and scattered if things stray from my original plan. I'd like to find a fine balance between spontaneity and careful orchestration.

January 4, 2011

Today I got another chance to present a short lecture, something still very unfamiliar to me. It's a little nerve-racking too, to be honest. I still have a little apprehension around speaking to a group of people, one-on-one is fine, but to the whole is not so easy. It's surprising that I have the same sort of hesitation when speaking to the kids, as I do when speaking to adults, I tend to think it should be easier. The problem I think I have again comes back to preparation, but I don't know if I can get fully prepared for a lecture. It was different than most public speaking I've done before in the sense that it's more of a conversation between you and the class than just speaking AT them. I begin with a pretty clear idea of what I want to say, but then as they ask questions, or I ask questions to gauge if they're confused or not, the track I intended to take originally starts to change course. This is where the nervousness steps in. I'm sure the more opportunities I get to practice the more comfortable I'll get, and the better I'll be able to help the students.

January 5, 2011

Today was a block day, and as Craig likes to do it, we usually do a lab or some other sort of group activity. Today was a lab day and a pretty fun one at that. In my free time during lecture at the beginning of the week I was able to set up the materials and equipment for our class as well as Mr. Ruthford's class. In this lab each pair of students had to construct a cell using dialysis tubing, and sugar, starch, and salt solutions. The process was similar to

stuffing and tying sausages and the kids had a pretty easy time of it. The rest of the protocols for the lab were similarly simple and the students had no big hiccups. The lab also built off of some new skills the students had learned in a previous lab: how to test for sugar, starch and salt molecules present in a solution. I liked being able to build from one activity to the next, it does a great job at tying together concepts, keeps the curriculum cohesive, and I think it also gives the students a sense of progression with the class.

January 6, 2011

Lab again today and everything went smoothly the first day, which means I don't have to worry about tweaking the prep today or later for Ruthford's class. The one logistic that gets tricky is swapping the lab materials and tools at the end of the block period. Not only do Craig and I have to get the lab broken down from our classroom and setup in Ruthford's, but Ruthford also has to break down his lab and set it up in our class, a switcheroo of sorts. This happens because of an arrangement set up between Craig and Ruthford at the beginning of the year. While both of them have Honors as well as General classes, Craig sets up the lesson plans for Honors and Ruthford takes care of the lesson plans for General. Beyond the logistics of swapping labs, this arrangement seems to work well and is a good division of labor. There are times however where it becomes obvious that it can be hard to work from a lesson plan you didn't come up with yourself. Both of them are careful to tweak the plans too much though, as they want there to be some sort of consistency when students are taking the same class, but from different teachers.

January 10, 2011

Whoops! Turns out it was a late start today, but I headed to Sehome as usual. Turns out that when all the kids are sleeping in, most of the teachers are taking the opportunity to catch up and use the free time available. I was able to get handouts and most of the lab prepped for the week, and Craig and I were able to get synced up for the week, something that rarely happens. The downside is then all your class time gets chopped. I had two activities to review with the students, one of the times were I get to present to the whole class rather than small group work. I had prepared thinking I was going to have more time (regular periods) and ended up chewing up too much time for one of the periods and had to cut down my time to make it work. Challenging for me to be sure, I have a hard time thinking on my feet when up front and having to interact with all the kids at once. It's funny how it works, but every time I get up front, and don't do as well as I'd like too, I seem to have an easier go of it the next time I step up front. I'm grateful for the opportunity that Craig is affording me.

January 11, 2010

Today was a short lecture and then a 'Cell Game' activity. I thought the kids would have way more of a fun time with the game, but not that many people were really into it. It might be because there was a bit of a learning curve for the rules before the game-play built up momentum, maybe when we take it up again there will be a little more enthusiasm. There

was however a bit of excitement towards the end. Students from Ruthfords's class rushed in to grab Craig; a student had passed out in class and paramedics were eventually called. This left me with the class alone, only for a five minutes, but with everyone a little hyped up because we didn't know at the time what was going on next door. I stepped up front and began the cell respiration lecture just to keep the momentum going. I thought with Craig gone and the kids a little worried it was best to just carry on rather than to allow the class to stop with a screeching halt. Again, it brought to my attention how I really need to prepare for presenting material. Having to jump up and start immediately is not my style, but I feel I did well enough for the circumstances. Though it did bring to my attention again how I'm really going to have to work hard at being able to be more adaptable to spontaneous situations with every day.

January 12, 2011

Another Block day today along with a longer than normal lecture, you can almost see the exact moment when the class collectively tunes out and a blank look crosses their eyes (even the most stellar students). It really hits home the fact that these kids don't seem to respond the best to 'teacher up front' scenario. Of course lectures are necessary and needed to be able to introduce and drill new things, but it just seems it isn't always the most effective at engaging them into being excited about biology and some of the places they could explore with the subject. In addition, they seem to have a better retention of the things we do *together* in class, like labs, 'card sorts', and group/partner activities. Lectures seem to put the kids into the role of spectator, where it's real easy for them to forget that they should be actively engaged in their own learning, rather than just being spoken to. When there is an *interaction* taking place I think it becomes apparent that they're at the center of the learning process and they can take control.

January 13, 2011

I've been noticing throughout the three periods that I'm at Sehome, that each class seems to have a distinct personality all in itself. Each class seems to behave as a whole in different ways, and accordingly seems to require different approaches. I haven't been able to figure out if it's the combination of the individual students that lends itself to this "personality", or whether what time of day it is the determinant. First period always seems withdrawn and reclusive, it usually takes a little bit of probing to get them to pop out of their shells, but maybe it's just because it's the first period of the day and everyone is still waking up. Second period is a bit more attentive and usually chimes in to discussions easily, and it seems that everyone works really well together when it comes to labs and group activities. Third period is similarly attentive, but when it comes to cohesion, they tend to not work as well with their partners and/or groups as second period. Now I'm wondering if this is always the case, is each class separate than the others and need to be treating accordingly?

January 18, 2011

Block Day today where we put on what was thought to be a quick and easy lab, involving soaking cubed agar “cells” to look at diffusion rates and the relationship to surface area and volume of cells. It took what could be a confusing and microscopic idea and turned in into a large, bright almost cartoonish demonstration that was easy for the kids to pickup key concepts. Everything went well except for the math. Most of the lab time was spent one-on-one with just working them through the calculations. It really got me thinking into why having solid, identifiable standards for each grade level is very important from a teacher’s perspective. The calculations were basic enough, calculating volume, percentages and ratios, yet some of the students were really challenged. When planning for a lab, as Craig did today, he needs to be able to trust on the fact that the equations he gives aren’t above the heads of most of the kids at that grade level. Not being able to work these problems puts the some kids at a disadvantage because they are then unable to use the data to come up with their own conclusions. Not only are having basic math skills important for biology students, but basic composition and grammar as well. There are many students who have a difficult time writing their thoughts to paper, they may understand all areas of a lab or reading assignment, but if they can’t convey those thought to Craig and I, they’re not getting recognition or credit for that matter.

January 19, 2011

Today was all about the lab again, although this time Craig took the time to work through the calculations with the class in the beginning, rather than us having to triage one-on-one for the majority of lab. It took a ate up a bit more of the pre-lab gear-up, but in the long run netted far more time (and energy) than it took. Another shining example of adaptation, of being able to observe the hiccups and change gears. Craig seems to be able to do this effortlessly; I think at certain times he’s not even aware that he’s doing it. I can watch little fine-tune adjustments and tweaks throughout the morning from first period to third. I hope that I’m able to taking on this attribute in the future, I’m still having a hard time “thinking on my feet”, but I think this comes from a place of needing a little more confidence and a lot more experience. I think the first step in being able to adapt lesson plans and delivery to the class comes from keen observation, something I feel I have a strength in. The next couple steps in *responding* to these observations is what I think I’ll have to work on.

January 20, 2011

Today was another “card-sort” test, akin to what we did with the immune system a couple months back, but this time focusing on cell respiration. I really tend to like this method of testing. Firstly, it’s non-traditional in the sense that students get to work as a team, which alleviates a bit of pressure (unless they didn’t prepare at all), and it also provides the ability to set it up in their own way. There are around thirty words or terms that they need to arrange in a logical sequence, system or pattern, then from there they present the whole process of cell respiration to either Craig and I. The element of collaboration with their partners I think helps the students a bit, where they may not prepare as well for a written test where they can fail anonymously, they are now put into a situation where their

comprehension is tied to their partners success. Although Craig and I have to do a good job of prompting both partners so there isn't one student who is pulling most of the weight. I did have to fail a couple groups, and give another couple reduced grades due to the fact that they did so poorly. It brought to my attention that there is a fine line between Socratic questioning and leading them directly to an answer with no critical thought. It was hard to have to fail the students I did, I felt partly responsible for their success, but in the end it's up to them to be on par, and they simply did not give it the effort needed.

January 24, 2011

Today was the first day, of the last week of the semester. Craig went over a quick review and then let the rest of the class period focus on any questions the students had or anything they needed clarified. You can really start to tell that the anxieties are raised about their finals, not just for this class, but all their others. I wish there was a way to have finals staggered over the week, it seems like an awful lot to have five or six finals all falling within the same few days. I spent the class grading the last bit of their packets so they could have them back at the end of class to use as material to study for the final. Craig does a really good job of letting the students know what to expect on the final exams, both the practical and the written. All the students get a study-guide that let's them know what is to be expected of them to have to answer to on the tests and this allows them time to focus on the areas where they feel less confident. We've had many students come in before school, on breaks and lunches in order to help fill in any gaps they might have. Without the study-guide I think a lot of students would be caught broad-sided with some of the units we've covered, especially some of the older material.

January 25, 2011

Another review day today, I spend most of the morning setting up the Lab Practical exam, which will make up half the point for the final. Most of the students seem like they've got a grasp on most of the material by now, but there are a few questions that seems to come up each period, especially with cell respiration. One trick Craig uses to help the students be prepared for the final, is to have them save all their work from throughout the quarter. At the end of each unit he "pays them with points" by having them put together a unit packet of all the worksheets, notes and labs they've finished. This helps us keep all the grading in one spot, and gives them a few extra points. Anything that wasn't previously graded (most assignments have been by now) can be looked over and graded, and in addition the students have one packet to turn to for studying when the final is approaching. Most students seem to prefer looking over their own work for answers, rather than looking in a textbook or online. I think that's the value of having them do all their work in their own words, they tend to better understand a concept than by simply reading someone else's words.

OUT SICK FOR 1.31-2.3 2011

February 7, 2011

Today seemed like about as straight-forward day as they come: we were going to have the students watch a video and a couple animations, then answer some questions on what they had addressed. The students have been learning about the cell cycle and cell divisions, and now we were introducing the concept of cancer. The materials we had to use were provided to Craig by the National Institutes of Health, a CD with various media. Then we had a complete technology failure, none of the videos we had to show could play all the way through, and because that's what the "lecture" consisted of for the day it put us at a standstill. The concepts covered really are best when presented visually, so the videos were a great tool, but when they were gone, it threw away a solid five minutes where we were scrambling. Another situation where adaptability comes into play, and also you can see where technology has some shortcomings. We eventually found the same videos online at the NIH website and were able to use those. First period went off the tracks for a bit, but we were set for second and third.

February 8, 2011

Today was a block-day, which normally means lab day, but Craig needed to cover meiosis, which is a pretty hefty process to introduce, so there was a good-sized lecture to start. When Craig is lecturing that usually translates to me grading papers, making keys or proofing quizzes and exams. Work that's definitely important for the class, but not at all that stimulating. The second half of the classes made it worth it though, the students got to use modeling clays to build and demonstrate meiosis. Turned out to be a lot of fun for most everyone, and was especially exciting to see some of the kids who weren't normally that excited about biology come alive for the period. I'm starting to see that when the kids are engaged and stoked about class it's contagious, it makes class fun for me as well. This is why I think labs and partner/group activities seem to work the best, there are many inputs for the kids to glean info, sometimes without realizing it's happening. They not only learn from the activity itself, but also from their partner and through the one-to-one interactions with Craig and I.

February 9, 2011

Another block day today with the same lecture/lab schedule as yesterday. You really start to get familiar with the material covered as well the flow of the labs, the little details you may not have noticed when preparing the activities. By this second day I really feel confident in where to put my energies, what problems the kids have been having with certain sections and how to help them make it through. I can really see how you can improve over time if you were allowed these little tweaks not just over a few periods, but of having year-to-year changes and additions as well. As the first years go by and I were able to work out different labs, as well as presentations, hand-outs, worksheets, I think I could become significantly more efficient as planning different sections. Although I can also see how *relying* on having these materials could also head in the other direction and lead to stagnation if I were to *never*

make changes to my lesson plans. I think it's especially important to stay current not just to have an element of freshness for my classes, but also to keep up on what is constantly being uncovered in the sciences.

February 10, 2011

Had the opportunity to present a lecture today, which again was a little nerve racking, but a definite confidence builder. I went over some common genetic trait, dominant/recessive genes, how these are passed on and expressed. I also went through how to construct a trait chart with them so they could figure out how different traits were expressed within their family. It was a lot of fun for the students because they were concepts they could relate to themselves, their families, their world. Since they were having a good time, I was having a good time: it took a lot of pressure off of having to "teach" them new concepts, it was the first time I felt there was a real easy back-and-forth type of interaction. I think it was partly due to me being more confident in my role at the front of the class, and also due to the fact that the kids were engaged and genuinely interested. I think it's been real important to relate as many of the lessons to the kids on a personal level: how do these concepts affect *you*? Teenagers by their very nature are, and have to be self-centered, it's a prime-time to discover themselves. If I can relate these topics in biology to revolve around them as individuals, I think they get excited about this exploration, of having new ways of looking at themselves.

February 14, 2011

Besides being Valentine's today it's been a pretty standard day. Not to say that nothing happened or it was easy, but today had all the elements that make it a typical Monday in Craig's class. Craig goes over what lessons we're going to take on during the week, we go over any problems with homework and the kids assemble and turn in their packets or journals of work from the preceding unit. Now when I say this Monday is pretty "typical" I think that comes as a good thing. It helps Craig give a solid scaffold and structure to which he can form his different lessons around, while also giving the students a sense of predictability and knowing what to expect from the class. It helps me with my work as well since I'm jumping into somebody else's class, topics, delivery, and style while trying to find a way to best fit into the situation and be as helpful as possible. I think another advantage to a "typical" Monday is helping us ALL get back into the groove of a fresh week and readjusting from the weekend and getting our stride.

February 15, 2011

Today was the first of the two lab days where we were exploring the ideas of probability using dice and coin-flipping. Later we will relate it to genetics and the probability of certain genomes being passed down through generations, but for today all we need to do is flip coins and roll dice. It was another chance for me step forward and present the lead-up lecture to the lab. The current standard we've set-up for this is that Craig will do the first period so I can see what he's covering and then I'll take over the next two periods. The first couple I did

were more impromptu, “Hey you want to do the next one?”, but for today he let me know of the opportunity the day before and I was able to spend a little time preparing. That being said I feel I totally bombed the first time. While the kids were able to move through the lab and understand what we were uncovering in terms of probability, I think my overall delivery was stilted and didn’t come easy. Though I have to keep in mind what you’ve said about experience, I can’t measure myself with Craig being the yardstick. Then next ext period I hit it out of the park, something clicked and I was able to get that “dialogue” going rather than just speaking at the class. Instead of a having a nervous-tunnel vision like first period, I felt not only more comfortable, but more lucid in what I was doing. I haven’t been able to put my finger on why I was able to pull such a 180 turn between the two classes, but I do know it felt great!

February 16, 2011

On one hand the activity is a success (as most of the labs are) for the simple reason that the kids get something to do, they’re active and get to work with their partners, instead of the “eyes-up-front”. On the other hand it proved to be a challenge when some of the students were faced with the math portion. At this point I’ve gotten to know the class well enough to have a good idea of who usually needs a little extra help and who works relatively trouble-free with their partners. This was totally thrown off by the fact that now we were working more results based on math equations, rather than concepts and processes. Some students who were normally on point with the topics in biology were now more challenged then ever when having to incorporate math. Likewise, some others who have struggled with biology were now whizzing through the lab due to their solid math skills. Days like this really bring to light the need for labs and activities that touch on a little bit of everyone’s strengths, as well as their weaknesses. It seems like a good ideal to strive for classes that will allow some to be challenged, and others to excel (and vice versa) so that students can have an overall experience that balances struggling with success.

February 17, 2011

Today we further explored genetics by introducing Punnett Squares, a way of determining the probability of certain traits being passed down. Craig went through a quick lecture on how to work a two-factor cross, a little more complex than the one-factors we had looked at before. We had two things to accomplish with the time: make sure they could actually use the Squares correctly and also to try and bridge what they had learned in the days before about probability to the study of genetics. I’m realizing that it is these connections that are the most important. There are students who are very good at listening, following directions and completing the tasks we put before them. They can be very goal-oriented around simply finishing the lab or worksheet, but then have a more difficult time connecting the dots between all the lessons to get a bigger picture on the subject and see all the different interactions taking place. This seems to be where Craig and I need to step in, especially with some of the brighter kids who are great at finishing ahead of the pack. When some finish early I think they can get a false sense of “owning” the subject, and it becomes a focus of mine

to challenge them a little further when I see this happening. Instead of just looking over their work to see whether or not it's correct, I probe them a little on how they arrived at their answers: "Tell me how you got up to this point" or "What made you think this?"

February 22, 2011

So we jump right into this week with a block day and it proved to be a little challenging to get everyone focused and working right away. There hasn't been school for the past four days and it's just enough time to where they have forgotten how it works! It's also a little challenging for them too because it a full two-hour class, and they're still on the attention spans of the mini-vacation. Once everyone was settled the lab went smoothly for all, except it was a little boring. It involved literally counting out all the different types of kernels on a cob (think Indian Corn), then using that data to plug into the various equations we had been learning. On one hand the activity was great in the sense that it put something real and tangible into their hands to demonstrate some genetic factors we had been exploring, but on the other hand the activity was a real chore. To be perfectly honest, when they're not having fun, it makes it harder for me to enjoy the work.

February 23, 2011

Another lab day where corn-kernel-counting is king. It is real easy for me to play Monday-morning quarterback, but if it were up to me I might start the lab day off with something brief, but *stimulating*, before taking on the corn-counting. I think there is a lot in genetics to pique their interest, such as showing images of the crazy colorations of different, but related, tropical bird species, or why some animals can end with two heads or an extra appendage. I could show pictures of an albino Redwood I came across and relate it to probability, how unlikely it is to occur, but that these mutations can, and do, occur. I think because the corn-counting activity was so dull, that some students saw the lab as a "task" and not a place to ponder or wonder. For what the activity was trying to accomplish I think it did well, but like I said, there should have been something more that queued up their interest in genetics and how fascinating it can be. It's a relatively new area (in terms of science) to examine and there's so much more to be learned that I'd love to be able to engage some of the kids in the topic.

February 24, 2011

Today was another opportunity for me to present a lecture. It was covering a Chi-Square, a tool used to determine how much variations in data from an experiment was due to chance, or how much you could attribute these variations to something else, possibly for reasons that may cause you to research further. I felt prepared, but I was a little nervous to see how it was going to be received as it was all equations and chart-reading and the class had a challenging time with the math portions of last week. Like last week my first lecture felt as if I fumbled through it, and the second was right on point. Both classes got the equations down, so I didn't feel the students who got the first lecture was at a disadvantage for it, but I can tell by

their expressions they had to work a little harder to follow, and most importantly, they didn't seem that thrilled about it. The second time around I was warmed up and felt I could have a little more fun with it. I think when I'm comfortable they are too, and we could have a little more fun with the interaction.

February 28, 2011

Not much to report today, we've been handing out periodic quizzes as we move through the genetics unit and today I spent most of the morning sorting and grading. Craig has added a little more quizzes than usual, six for this unit, and I think the idea is that with an extra person he can have them graded, recorded and handed back within the same period. I really like that approach, because I think it gives the students a clearer picture on how they are doing with the lessons. Some students will follow along in labs and lecture thinking they have a solid understanding, but it's not until they have to put the information to practice that they then realize they might not have the whole picture intact. It also gives Craig and I some immediate feedback on how we're doing, what areas are sticking and which we might need to spend some time revisiting. As much as I like it though, I'm not sure I would want to implement this solo as a teacher, seeing as how much time it would eat up to grade all of them at the end of the day.

March 1, 2011

Block day today, and instead of a lab as we usually have we had a crazy busy day of tying up loose ends. Turned out to a little hectic, but we accomplished everything we'd set out to. As a class the students had to go over a worksheet on blood types and heredity, which we'd anticipated to go pretty quickly, but there were a lot of questions and it ate up a considerable amount of time. We also had tried something new this unit, which was to sign off all their work and lab sheets as they finished them each day; it gave us the chance to have them rework problems they had missed, then bring it back for a signature once it was fixed. The thinking was that once it came time for the students to grade the "unit-end packets", all the work would have been checked off and there wouldn't be a pile of papers the students then had to score. Turns out there were so many kids who forgot or put off getting their signatures that we spent half the block going over work and signing off corrected work. Not sure this worked out as well as we had hoped. Part of the problem was due to how many sick students we had lately, but at some point we just had to have the students turn in what they had, with a stern reminder that they shouldn't wait until the last minute.

March 2, 2011

Another day of scrambling to check and sign off on work the students had fixed and needed credit for. It's a little trying to figure out who didn't complete their work on time and were looking for a way to catch up as opposed to those who had done their work on time, but only had a couple mistakes to correct. On one hand I think it was a good idea to allow the students to rework some of the problems, especially the ones that were math heavy, instead of just

grading them down and moving on. It afforded them the opportunity to learn from their mistakes, increasing their comprehension, while also boosting their grade to reflect the amount of work they had put in. On the other hand it also makes a grand opportunity for some of the slackers and procrastinators to get a little leg up. A few of the students, (I'm seeing now who to look out for) will take advantage of this opportunity to try and rework some of their errors, at the very last minute, at which point I don't think they're *learning*, as much as just trying to simply *earn* points.

March 3, 2011

Today was a review day for the upcoming test and it seems students are a little more interested on exactly what will be on the test, what type of questions to look for and "what they should know." They did have a review test they're working through today to give them one last shot at whether or not they know their stuff. Craig and I spend the quarter working with students one-on-one or in small groups if they all have the same questions, and many of the students seem to be working with their partners to get refreshed. I made a note in the grading rubric of which students had worked on the pre-test before coming to class and we're going to compare the grades of those who did and didn't work the pre-test to see if this review technique helped or not. This is one thing that I admire about Craig: after decades of teaching biology you might think he could have fallen into a sort of groove, doing the same thing as years past, but it doesn't seem like he has. While some of the labs and activities he's done for years, he seems to scrutinize his techniques and is willing to switch up the way he does things if they're not working. I think this is one of the keys to his success, the ability after all this time to continually examine and fine-tune his classes.

March 7, 2011

"Teacher Development Day" - DAY OFF

March 8, 2011

Today was everyone's least favorite day, exam day. You can just feel the stress and anxiety filling the room as students are piling in. The least prepared students are scrambling to ask last minute questions of Craig, myself or other students. The most prepared students are the ones who don't even pull out any review materials before hand: they've studied, they're ready and carry a certain amount of confidence. For the "red-hots", the students who just fly through the test, we have a DNA building activity to start working on. It didn't require a lot of movement or talking so as not to interfere with the others still taking the test, but it did allow for the students who finished to keep working on something. This task of building their own DNA strands also gives them something to lighten the mood a little, it's not a dense reading or complicated worksheet and I think it helps to clear the mental (and emotional) palette of test-taking.

March 9, 2011

Exam day part two. Still a lot of worry in the air, but I'm not sure what we can do about it. At some point you have to stop and assess your students to see how they're assimilating and comprehending the subject and I haven't seen a way for teachers to do this without bringing out anxiety in the students. It warrants some new ideas though, because if students weren't as anxious they could calm their little amygdalas a bit and actually THINK more clearly. Stress plays an important part in our brain functioning properly, and if the students are overly stressed their test performance will definitely be affected. So how do you test a classroom full of students without a little pressure? I think it will always be there, but maybe there's a way to harness it to help them do better. I'm not sure where I'm trying to go with this, but I think it's good to give this some thought to try to come up with ideas on how to frame the test so it's not so intimidating. I think the trick lies somewhere between taking a little pressure off the students while also keeping the test serious for them in terms of it's assessment on their learning.

March 10, 2011

Well the test is over with and for the most part the kids seem back to normal. It seems like there's a sense in relief of starting over, whether they did great at the test or not so good, today marks the day where there's somewhat of a blank slate and a fresh start. Craig went into a lecture on the structural makeup of DNA while I stuck to my desk and graded tests for the morning. Spent all of three periods grading and still wasn't finished by the end of it. For this test in particular there was no real way to give a multiple choice ScanTron, so it took quite a bit longer. While multiple choice ScanTrons would have been the best choice for saving time on grading, they certainly aren't the best choice for getting a real gauge on the students understanding. Most of what we've gone over in this unit involve processes that take making calculations, graphing and building tables that require a little more "working out" than just selecting the right answer and filling in the bubble. Not only can you better identify the sections each student was missing you could follow their train of thought through their work and see where they went astray. So while it took longer to grade, (something to consider if you're going to be grading in your "off-hours"), it did give us a better picture of where each student was at with specific points with the topic. It also gave me the opportunity to show with my red pen how they could have fixed one or two things to get to the correct answers, making the test not only a tool of assessment for us, but also a tool for continuing to teach them.

Conclusion

So what all have I learned from this time? I wish I had a profound way to encapsulate the whole student/teacher relationship to end this off with, but I'm finding it's not that easy. I find myself in a strange grey-area now, having helped teach, having been at the front of the class speaking to thirty faces staring back, but also as a student, as someone who is one of those faces staring up to the front. The line between teacher and student has been blurred a bit, but I think this is a good thing, to sit in the grey for a bit and see what comes out of it. Not only have I learned to be a better teacher, to be able to look at the same subject matter and

explain it in many different ways according to how the student might absorb it best, but it's taught me to be a better student myself for these same reasons. As I come across new material at Whatcom I now ask myself, "So you think you understand? Now could you explain this to another in a way that would make sense to them?" It's upped the ante in how I learn, not just to shoot for that A grade, but to make sure that I can carry that knowledge forward, that I can pass it on and share, to make it my own, make it interesting and make it connect. It's put a new flame under my motivation for academics, and daily I'm reminded by all those faces at the high-school why I'm back here at Whatcom.

It was through my work and through mentorship that I found something to belong to when I was younger, though direct experience, hands on connections and knowledge supplemented by activity. I'm now hoping I can take that into my future classrooms, that I can be the teacher I never had, to give attention and guidance where it's needed. To connect knowledge to field work and lab experiments so the hands can be engaged just as much as the mind. While this experience working with the high school kids in the mornings has left me feeling in the grey, I hope to hold on to that feeling. Being a good teacher means constantly learning and adapting, but firstly being a student eternal. I hope that in my future self as a teacher and educator I can hold this flip-flop: teacher-student-teacher-student. Just liked I learned with the kids at Sehome, my years on the farm, and my time as a worker and a student: there's never an end-point to growth, just a continuation of new growth from what once was. My hope is for the seed of a drop-out to blossom into a bridge for those who struggle in school, I simply hope to help.

The Noisy Water Review | Student Anthology of Writing & Art, Whatcom Community College

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/31-11art.html



Steven Sefati

Hands On

Charcoal, 24" x 18"

Colorblind or Blinded by Color

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/32-10essay.html

Angela O'Brien

Let's play a describing game. Imagine you were trying to describe what a tree looks like to a child. What is the first word you would use to describe it? You would probably say that it is green, wouldn't you? How about a cloudless sky; Blue, right? Are those too simple? OK, how would you describe a car to a friend; Its color and brand? (*Look at that red Mercedes*). How about a person? The color of their skin, hair, eyes, and clothes are the first usual adjectives. Try to quickly describe an object without using any adjectives having to do with color; It becomes difficult. From this it is easily concluded that almost everyone is blinded by color. Other than what the object is, its color is the first thing most people notice. Color holds an important role in describing and enjoying things. How often do you notice anything else as easily as you notice color? For example, do you sit and notice the clarity and form of dripping water the way you notice a bright sunrise?; a tree trunks texture the way you notice a rose in bloom? Unfortunately the enjoyments of small detail is lost to so many busy people today. Many only allow themselves to take in what is most obvious. Everyone should use their skills and abilities to notice and enjoy the small things, for there are many people in the world who can see less, and enjoy more.

Annie Dillard comments in her essay "Seeing" about how some born-blind patients, after an operation that gave them sight, saw the world. "In General the newly sighted see the world as a dazzle of color-patches. They are pleased by the sensation of color, and learn quickly to name the colors, but the rest of seeing is tormentingly difficult" (Dillard 76). One of the first things the patients could perceive is color. The different colors seemed to innately cause them joy, but all other aspects of sight such as distance, depth, space, and shape were foreign concepts and therefore terribly difficult to understand. Unlike those patients who could not understand common visual concepts but understood color quickly, I am the opposite. I have had vision my entire life and have learned to analyze and understand many of the complexities of sight, just as other sighted people can, but color is a concept I struggle with and cannot fully understand; I have never seen color.

I have what is called Achromatopsia which is a non-degenerative genetic eye condition in which the cones of a person's eyes do not function. For those who don't know, the back of your eyes, which is called the retina, contain two types of vision cells called cones and rods. Cones allow one to see colors, details and in bright light. They are your primary vision cells. While rods, on the other hand, allow one to see just shades of gray and are used primarily for night vision, therefore are very sensitive to light. Well sighted people use both cones and rods to have full vision. Those with Achromatopsia, such as me, do not have use of their cones which results in seeing absolutely no colors, just a spectrum of shades of gray. If that is not

enough, since the ability to see fine details is lost, and rods were not meant to be used to see in daylight, those with Achromatopsia are usually legally blind and have eyes that are highly sensitive, even blinded, by bright lights.

Since I was born with Achromatopsia color is not something I have ever had the privilege to see. Sunsets, rainbows, flowers, things that many people enjoy for their colorful beauty do not attract me in the same way. Often if I see a rainbow I am more fascinated by the fact that I even found one, because they blend into the sky, than whatever colors it is supposedly made out of. I see everything as a shade, dark, light, mid- shades, and everything in-between. Instead of color variation to distinguish things I use shade contrast. The more things contrast, such as white on black, the more it pops out to me. I use my own perceptions to understand the world around me.

Perception is “the process of organizing and interpreting sensory information, enabling us to recognize meaningful objects and events” (Myers 231). Everyone has their own perceptions. Here is an example of how I interpret the world:

It is around 4:30pm in January in the Pacific Northwest. The sun (or what I suppose is the sun because it is not exposing itself) lights up the corner of the sky. I see no ball, no mass right now, just light brightest in that part of the sky. I suppose it is a sunset (or will be soon). The winter gives the clouds a dark shade making them appear as stains in the light sky, the way that tea stains on paper leave slightly darker stains in random blotches. In the other end of the sky where there is less "sun"light to discern the sky from the clouds are strips and spills of lighter and slightly darker shades. I suppose the sky is the lighter shade popping up and slashing through the heavier color, but some days I am not sure.

The sky (sun) is such that I can see with minimal (or at least what I call minimal) squinting, which means I can see the sky, buildings, people, and most importantly movement. I can see vehicles and people move in “real time”, as opposed to the days where it is bright and I must blink a few times a second. On those days my sight is limited to whitewashed stills that I see every time I blink. On dimmer bright days I can see in-between my blinks; on brighter bright days the light is so blinding that I must see with the after image when I blink. Right now though, I can see them stop and go, slow down and speed up; I am not afraid to cross the street as I walk home. I can walk with my head up and know I won't run into someone or something. Movement is important, depth is important, and distance is important when you are trying to get around by yourself. In the sun I cannot see those things with complete accuracy, but today is good and tonight like all nights will be good. I can open my eyes (for longer than a tenth of a second) and see.

The evergreens are deep and rich with their dense shades. The bare leafless trees look duller in comparison; they allow their richness to fall away when the seasons change, but their twisted, dancing branches remain. Even the grass has subtle variations of colors or it could be the reflection of the light (which is what color is) which gives it that appearance. The

field is a sea of neutral with little apparent variation except when one strains to see its shadows in the evening light. The dried tips of the field grass look pale and lifeless next to the younger freshly cut yard grass.

From a distance the parking lot of the corner church has brush strokes of lighter; I believe those are the deeper spots where leftover rain water has glazed and the sun reflects. As I step over to them they disappear from my sight because the light is not reflecting off of the puddles from this angle. Water does two things, it stains a dark spot on anywhere it can soak in and it reflects and shines that in which it can't soak into.

As the sun is now out of sight over the horizon and the sky is not yet night, for a short time colors come alive to me, the deep darker colors I love. Though my eyes begin to blur if I try to see a detail, I am happy to see the whole picture. I can open my eyes with no pain, wide and full and take in the panorama. What a treat this is.

The way I see is different not just because I have never seen color. I have never had 20/20 vision, or 20/200 vision for that matter, I am legally blind and cannot see well in the light, but I have never seen any differently so I do not regret my sight, I get along well enough the way I am. When I think about it and compare my vision to that of my family's I have to admit that my vision in many areas is lacking, but most of the time I do not consider myself blind. *Blind people can't see; I can see; therefore I must not be blind.* Others also constantly forget that my vision is so bad; even my own family members forget and do not understand what I can and cannot see. They wonder how they could have forgotten something that should be so obvious; they realize it is because I am a good guesser. I adapted to make up for what I lack in sight and by having good abilities to see even when I can hardly see. I can look around for subtle cues such as sounds, shades, movement, and direction, those mixed with assumption and a lot of problem solving gives me enough to go on that I can guess or pretend I can see the same as others do. Erin McGraw talks in her essay "Bad Eyes" about how she too has poor vision, Myopia in her case, and that she learned to navigate through a hazy world "by memory and assumption" (156) just as I do. I am around people who can see quite well, so I have developed a way to live in this world with little attention brought to me. Most have told me that aside from my reading an inch away from a page and squinting they would have never guessed I am legally blind and completely colorblind.

Stubbornness and independence, I am told, have been in me since birth. My parents were always terrified that I would get seriously hurt because I could not see. Like most children I ran, jumped, and climbed all the time, and like most I went through lots of Band-Aids. *If the other kids were doing it, I could do it better.* I wanted to be treated just like the other kids. I knew my limitations and would ask for help if I desperately needed it, like if I was looking for someone or I needed help reading something, but I would only ask my family; I did not want to appear weak or unable to do things that everyone else could do. McGraw is not as stubborn as I; she accepted help from her friends and family when she was younger. At one point she asked herself, "Did I resent all of these explanations and asides, pronouncing slowly as if for the dimwitted? Not on your life. Friends and family were making things easy for me, and

after years of constant unease, I was happy with that” (164). Unfortunately McGraw became lazy because she no longer tried to figure things out for herself anymore. She stopped trying to visually see and she stopped trying to understand. Since I did not treat myself like a blind person I do not act like a blind person; I am independent; there are few things I cannot do myself.

Many people have adapted a way of seeing even without vision. The blind feel, hear, and taste their surroundings to see. Their concepts are completely different from those of the sighted. For those who are completely blind from birth distance is merely the amount of time it takes to reach the destination not how far it is away; shape is the texture of an object not its appearance; space is what is immediately around the person not the expanse of everywhere. Their perceptions are guided by their senses, which cannot go beyond what they have ever known. Even if they are given an operation and their sight is restored, “[a] disheartening number of them refuse to use their new vision, continuing to go over objects with their tongues, and lapsing into apathy and despair” (Dillard 76). The new sight is frightening. Everything is just lights; form and shape are not things that they have been exposed to. They are but infants blinking into the light with no knowledge of what anything means. As one gets older the brain does not learn as easily, so concepts that we sighted think of as simple common knowledge because we learned them weeks after we were born are daunting tasks for the naturally stiffened minds to wrap around. Dillard writes of a blind young woman who was given sight through an operation but sadly she did not embrace her new sight; she would close her eyes and walk around the house in her former mindset (Dillard 66-67). By closing her mind from this new experience, she rejected her new gift.

How often do you think about what you see? How often do you pay attention to anything other than what you already know of? Sight is probably the most treasured sense, but much of its abilities are so often unappreciated. Most people don't look at the world the way a child does, enjoying every sight, asking why things are what they are. Children have a greater understanding of sight than adults because they use it more. Adults think they know it all and have seen it all, but when you think you know everything you stop paying attention, and life becomes more about routine than enjoyment.

McGraw learned her lesson about no longer paying attention. She realized she was no longer seeing the world; she was looking past it into her own world where everything was well and dandy, which would not be all bad except she was not seeing what could hurt her, so she made a change. She began to notice things again the way a child does, in detail and wonder. “The college co-ed who didn't notice trash and graffiti has become a woman who scours every scene, vigilant in her pursuit of jarring notes, infelicitous details. She has learned to look, and to pay attention (McGraw 168).

Just because one cannot see does not mean they should stop trying to understand the world around them, and just because one can see does not mean they are at any less risk of forgetting to use their abilities and perceive. It is bad habit to live your world in a haze only wishing to focus on what you already see, being blinded by color. If you close your eyes and

stop trying to learn as the blind young woman did you will waste your abilities. If a colorblind / legally blind person like me appreciates sight more than a fully sighted person, then something isn't correct. Use your perceptions and understand what you see, why you see, and how you see, then you will be able to respect and enjoy your gift.

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noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/33-12art.html



Amber Still

Sock drawer

Oil, 18" x 24"

blood moon tango

 noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/34-10creativewr.html

Anjolie York

he walked up

and offered his hand with a crook of an eyebrow

and what the hell, i thought, as i stood up and

accepted his embrace.

close in he pulled me

touching cheek to forehead

breathing in his neck like a fine wine

i felt uncertain and

almost too tired to care

when i caught the scent

beneath the dozen other men who'd pushed themselves into the fabric of my blouse.

and my step faltered in his soft embrace.

he told me

small steps

he told me

softly

he told me

just breathe

he told me

good girl

and holding my hand ever so low

asking shoulders to slide down spine
lightly fingertips upon fingertips
i traced stars along the curve of his palm
a strange sound catching in the back of my throat
the moment he broke through to the center
and when the last song of our tanda was spent
i couldn't bring myself to look him in the eyes instead
i slid off the dance floor and out of my shoes and out the door
like Cinderella and wouldn't you know it was midnight
as i ran across the puddle-strewn street
into the sanctuary of my four wheeled chariot
and drove myself home.

something like hard candy

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/35-11creativewr.html

Anjolie York

i curve around

to vallestrewnmonuments

breathing into yourskin

flecks of gold highlight

silver strands drawn tightinfists

"please"

i reach up

to hold your face in one hand

to feel the shapes of bridgesandalleyways

to touch where my eyes could not see

to swallow you whole

snip snap synapses

mine mine mine

for a moment

i kissed

my soul

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noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/36-13art.html



Sandra Vuolo

Egg & Persimmon

Oil, 3.25" x 6.25"

The Power of Persuasion: How Does it Influence Your Spending? (In-Class Essay)

noisywater.whatcom.edu/site_1011/pages_1011/37-11essay.html

Lora Stoeckl

Brainwashing is often thought of as something that happens only in Sci-Fi movies, yet it is happening all around us in the form of commercials and mass media advertising. The advertising industry uses modern technology to influence our buying decisions. These marketing ploys are exposed in the 2004 PBS Frontline documentary “The Persuaders” directed by Barak Goodman and Rachel Dretzin. This video is a candid portrayal of how advertisers abstract our personal preferences to use against us and gives us insight into the motives of product manufacturers. Data mining companies such as Acxiom compile information about us that is collected from researchers, focus groups, surveys and customer records from credit card companies. This data is then sold to Marketing firms who use it to target certain groups to influence what we buy, what we eat and who we vote for (ch. 6). Fortune 500 companies pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to market research guru Clotaire Rapaille to “crack the code,” which he describes as a mental connection between a word and its unconscious meaning to us. The purpose of this is so that advertisers will know which words push our emotional buttons and cause us to purchase items that make us feel a certain way (ch.4). In addition, research uncovered by Douglas Atkin shows Americans have a cult-like devotion to certain products that meet their need for a sense of belonging and marketing associates have taken advantage of this trend (ch. 2).

Author Robert Scholes expands on these ideas in his essay: “On Reading a Video Text.” Scholes describes our ability to recognize the “metonymic connection” or relationship between a product and a myth, as “cultural knowledge” (par. 8,9). What he is saying here is that we must identify the ideals the manufacturers are trying to sell us, not just the products they are promoting. These can be anything from a sense of love and devotion to pride in our country or an optimistic outlook for the future. The goal of the advertisers is to create an association in our minds between a certain product and strong positive feelings we have about life. A good example of this is the notion that baseball is an American pastime.

One thing the marketing industry is well aware of is that consumers are fed up with the barrage of commercials being thrown at us in every form imaginable. As Naomi Klein reveals in “The Persuaders”: “I have a quote in my book from an advertising executive who says consumers are like roaches. You spray them and spray them, and after a while, it doesn't work anymore. We develop immunities” (ch. 1). This statement implies that we have become so desensitized by mass amounts of advertising that we have begun to tune it out and the commercials just don't affect us anymore. We also have the ability to block pop-up ads and bypass TV commercials, making it more difficult for advertisements to reach us. In response

to this awareness marketing analysts have learned to adapt their methods so that we cannot avoid their tactics. Products are now being promoted in movies of all types and some movies are even paid for by companies who want to push their merchandise (ch. 3).

Marketing executives may take offense to the idea that their tactics could be considered “brainwashing”, and they might argue that they are benefiting society by helping us choose quality products that make us feel good inside. However, their ads fail to discuss how most products are not any better than those of their competitors or that they may be promoting items we have no need of at all or that products like cigarettes, soft drinks or candy may cause a negative impact on our health.

You may be wondering: How do we circumvent this manipulation of our minds? How can we reverse the effects advertising has had on our generation? Advertisers compare Americans to roaches that become immune to bug spray, but are we like roaches in other ways as well, by consuming everything in sight? This may not be far from the truth. In our culture we are self-indulgent and self-centered. We thrive on instant gratification and want and expect the best of everything. Are the problems that our younger generation is facing due to the mass advertising they have been exposed to? Have parents become a counter-influence to our youth as well by trying to keep up with the Joneses?

Scholes believes “What [Americans] really lack, for the most part, is any way of analyzing and criticizing the power of a text” (par. 9). In paragraph ten he goes on to say “In this age of massive manipulation and disinformation, criticism is the only way we have of taking something seriously.” Scholes solution, which he calls “Ideological Criticism,” is the ability to set aside the emotional response we feel from watching a video text, in order to critically analyze the intent of the videos content, which may be deceptive or misleading. Teaching this type of awareness in our schools will be part of the solution (par. 9). In effect, Scholes is saying that we must guard our minds against mass media propaganda and impulse buying. If we take Scholes advice it is important to remember that advertisers will continually be adapting and evolving their strategies to influence us in different ways, therefore our critical analysis skills will also need to be adapting and improving as time goes on.

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