

Sosland Journal

A Collection of Essays

Written for the 2009-2010

Ilus W. Davis Writing Competition

by

Undergraduate Students

at the

University of Missouri - Kansas City

Competition Coordinator and Editor - Kristin Huston

Table of Contents

Preface & Acknowledgements	1
Introductory Level	2
The Literacy Sponsor and the Culture of Power Alexandra Alpough	3
In the Defense of Islam Mikayla McLean	7
Intermediate Level	10
An Event to Remember Matthew Parish	11
The “Authentic” War Film Carly Burdg	24
Racism, Imperialism, and Art Claire A. Jehle	27
Advanced Level	31
The Heart is a Dustboard Jennifer L. Nielsen	32
Maternal Rejection Within Victorian England Alexandra Bennett	43
Crazy Kristin Whittington	50
Special Section: Southwest Early College Campus	56
Introduction Dr. Jane Greer	57
The Impact of a Writing Center in the Inner-City Samantha Curfman	59
Writings Centers: Getting the Word Out Logan Masenthin	63
Writing Centers and ESL Students Ngan Nguyen	67
Contributors	71
Teachers	73

Preface & Acknowledgements

Light a fire with your words. Let language be the spark. These are the thoughts that go round and round in my head as I finish editing this year's edition of the *Sosland Journal*. Every year I am inspired and amazed by the work our students produce in the composition classroom. And every year, the competition grows more fierce, the writing more skilled and passionate. Every year the writing acts like a flint, igniting a spark, showing others what is possible through the power of words. This year, we are being treated to a full-fledged fire.

As you read the essays chosen for publication this year, I encourage you to let them ignite that spark within you. Let the words of our accomplished students show you just how powerful language can be. Let them be a reminder that rhetoric is a powerful tool, perhaps the most powerful one we have. And let it serve as a reminder to us all that our voices can be heard and that our words have the power to change the world.

It is through language that we understand our lives, our most personal relationships, and our innermost thoughts, feelings, and desires. Through language we can try to make sense of the most heinous acts, we can give a new voice to victims, and we can sing out in joy or celebration. It is through language that we bind ourselves together and share the universal nature of the journey called life.

Our writers each express an aspect of this journey, and their writing invites us to see the power of language as a tool to bring us all together. Their writing lights a fire. Their language is the spark. I hope that the fire brings light to you as you read their words.

Even the best writing, the most powerful, would not be heard without those who champion the authors and the writing itself. In this case, gratitude goes out to the instructors, who inspire their students to achieve greatness through their writing. Also, many thanks go out to the readers, Muffy Walter, Kelly Mathews, and Craig Workman, who spent hours reading the full pool of essays. And to the judges, Dan Mahala, Patrick Puntteney, and Richard Delaware, who had the most difficult job, choosing among the many excellent entries to decide who would be published and who would win the Ilus. W. Davis Writing Competition. I would also like to send gratitude out to the fantastic Jane Greer, who helped organize the inclusion of a special section of writing from high school students. Finally, I would like to extend a huge thank you to our benefactors. The *Sosland Journal* could not be published without the generous philanthropic work of Rheta Sosland-Hurwitt and the Sosland family. It is our hope that the *Sosland Journal* reflects the Sosland family's commitment to excellence in education.

Thank you!
Kristin Huston, Editor *Sosland Journal*

Introductory Level

Introductory Level Winner

The Literacy Sponsor and the Culture of Power: How do they Connect?

Alexandra Alpough

In life people are born with a blank slate with regards to their literacy. In order to fill this slate each individual has a variety of literacy sponsors that provide them with the information they need in order to successfully interact with the cultures that surround them. These sponsors can come in a variety of forms. For example, sponsors of literacy can be parents, teachers, religious leaders, friends, television scriptwriters or lyricists, among others. In fact, according to Deborah Brant's Sponsors of Literacy, "sponsors are powerful figures who bankroll events or smooth the way for initiates"(167). This means that they either directly or indirectly provide the initiate (the person being sponsored) with the information necessary to succeed within their culture of power whether it is their environment, a job, time at school or simply life in general.

I have a wide variety of literacy sponsors. My main sponsors of literacy are my parents because they have already lived through many of the situations I am currently experiencing. The pastor at my church is also another main literacy sponsor in my life because he provides me with information on living a Christian life.

My friends also play roles as literacy sponsor in my life because they also have a variety of experiences that I have not experienced myself. For example, my friend Kelly is one of the sweetest and most self-confident people I have ever encountered and she is also deaf. She is always willing to cater to the fact that very few people are able to communicate with her via sign language. As I got to know her we quickly became friends and my immersion into the deaf culture quickly began. In my experiences with Kelly, she taught me new words and phrases everyday. She was always quick to correct my mistakes but followed her corrections with encouragement to keep trying. She was so excited about my interest in sign language that she had her interpreter teach me new words and phrases as well. Soon I realized that any break in my immersion into sign language would be detrimental to my learning. So Kelly and I began to communicate only through sign language instead of her writing notes when I didn't understand. I also became a mini translator for her when other students wanted to communicate but knew no sign language. The more I used my newly developed literacy, the easier the language became and the more enjoyable it was to use. Even though Summer Adventure Club, where Kelly and I met, came to an end Kelly still continues to sponsor my literacy in sign language. After adventure club I began to visit her house where sign language is one of the main forms of communication. Kelly and I work for the same company so I translate information from the customers to her and vice versa. Of course this is only one example of the way a literacy sponsor can affect an individual and it should be

remembered that literacy sponsors can affect people in ways other than literal language.

There is a strong connection between the sponsorship of literacy and “the culture of power” which is discussed in Lisa Delpit’s *The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People’s Children*, a chapter in *Other People’s Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. Delpit’s culture of power specifically discusses the interactions in a classroom setting but the aspects of power she discusses are relevant to other parts of life outside of the classroom as well. Understanding the power culture directly relates to literacy sponsorship because it is the sponsor’s job to teach the initiate the skills necessary to properly interact with others in each aspect of the power culture.

According to Delpit there are five aspects of power that are absolutely necessary to discuss. The first aspect states “issues of power are enacted in the classroom” (24). In this area, Delpit is considering the power of teachers over the students as well as the curriculum developer’s power over the teachers. This aspect of power can easily be expanded from a literal classroom to a place of employment or a family living environment. In an employment setting the teacher would be the people in management positions and the lower employees would be the students. The managers would play the role of the teacher because the managers should be attempting to train the employees in the ways of the company they work for in order to help them improve their skills and advance in the company. In a family setting the parents are the teachers and the children are the students. This is an obvious example because it is the job of a parent to teach their children the proper ways to interact with society both in public and in private. In both of these situations issues of power are clearly enacted in such a way that the literacy sponsor holds the power and the initiate is learning from the power holding literacy sponsor.

The second aspect of power states that “there are codes or rules for participating in power; that is, there is a ‘culture of power’”(24). Here Delpit is speaking of the linguistic forms and presentation of self in response to interactions with the different power sources. Being a young suburban African-American female I have dealt with the concept of “acting black” for the majority of my life. All of the schools I attended prior to UMKC were predominately white schools. As a young person the majority of my friends were Caucasian. My literacy sponsors did not surround me with a lot of stereotypical black culture like sagging pants or improper English. Instead I was raised in a world that provided me with the basic codes or rules for interacting with corporate America. Keeping this in mind, I attend church at a predominately black church in Kansas City Kansas. My literacy sponsors there have taught me the discourse for interacting with individuals that do not necessarily use correct grammar or carry themselves the same way that I do. Because I have been exposed to a variety of power cultures I have noticed that there are proper codes for participating in each one. When I am with my church members I still am myself but I do not always use my vocabulary to the full extent unless I’m speaking with adults. When I’m talking to my church friends closer to my age instead of discussing the latest episode of *Jonas* I’ll talk about Lil Wayne’s new album. Prior to my learning the proper

codes for interacting with the young people at my church I was constantly told that I “acted white.” Later it was explained to me that I was told this because I was speaking in proper English and the majority of my music library was rock oriented. This same perception was carried over into my suburban high school where my friends tell me they view me as more white than black even though I’m not biracial because I don’t have a “ghetto attitude.” In fact, when I get upset and break out of the code for suburban interaction they refer to it as “letting my ethnicity show” because from the perception they were raised with the “ghetto mentality” of not acting educated demonstrates being black. Of course, I believe that they have a skewed perception because of their environment since not all African-Americans speak improper English or carry themselves like Lil Wayne. This being said, I agree with Delpit that these codes for interacting with power exist. You have to know how to connect with the power culture because if you do not know how to properly communicate with the people who possess the power then you will not be able to gain any power for yourself.

The third aspect of power states, “the rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power” (24). This aspect of power goes hand in hand with the second aspect of power because it explains why you need to follow the rules or codes of the culture of power. If the rules reflect the culture of those that have the power then you need to follow their lead in order to gain power of your own. In my previous example I explained how my literacy sponsorship prepared me for the rules/codes of the culture of power. In order to successfully interact with the different power cultures I shift my behavior to reflect the culture of my literacy sponsor who has obtained power in the specific culture that I am working to gain power in. In the passage Delpit speaks about how children from middle-class homes tend to do better in schools than those from a non-middle class home because the culture of school is based on the culture of the upper and middle class since they hold the economic power of the country. This trend tends to occur because the students from middle class homes tend to have literacy sponsors that have already learned the codes for interacting with this particular culture while those from non-middle class homes have not necessarily done so.

The fourth aspect of power states, “if you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier” (24). This is true for almost any situation because it is always easier to complete a task once you know the proper way to do it. As an International Baccalaureate (IB) junior I had a particular English teacher who was very difficult to understand when it came to what he wanted from our writing. For the longest time a lot of students in our class, myself included, were having trouble in the course because we did not know how to write our papers to meet his expectations. Finally I began to talk to some of my friends who were IB seniors who had had the teacher the previous year. These students quickly became my IB literacy sponsors. They explained how to write to this teacher and what he meant when he gave specific directions in class. Once they explained the rules to me my scores in the class quickly and drastically improved. After the

rules were explained to me it was easy for me to learn how to interact with the power holder as well as become a better writer.

The fifth aspect of power states that, “those with power are frequently least aware of-or least willing to acknowledge-its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence” (24). When looking at some of my middle school classmates who have formed an exclusive clique it is easy to see this power aspect at work. In the clique there is clearly a leader who is planning the activities and calling the shots while the other girls just follow her lead. When anyone observes the group the leadership hierarchy is clearly painted. There is one girl at the top then the other girls that follow (almost similar to the social hierarchy of the front steps in *Gossip Girl*), but when you speak to the girl in charge she does not ever acknowledge that she runs the show. When you speak to the other girls in the clique about their plans for the weekend or what they want to do they always say, “Umm.. I don’t know I’ll have to ask Abbie.” By saying this it is obvious that they recognize the power structure of their group even though, as Delpit stated, the one with power is least willing to acknowledge it. This ties in with having a literacy sponsor because it is quite possible that they learned this behavior from various television shows or even their own families where one parent has more power in the relationship than the other.

In conclusion, the relationship between literacy sponsorship and the five aspects of the culture of power are very clear. Without a proper literacy sponsor an individual will have a more difficult time fitting into the culture of power because they will not know the proper rules of that culture or how to discover them. Delpit says, “if schooling prepares people for jobs, and the kind of job a person has determines her or his economic status and, therefore, power, then schooling is intimately related to that power”(25). With this being said, if a literacy sponsor prepares people for entering the culture of power, which determines how much power they obtain then literacy sponsorship plays a large role in determining the initiate’s role in the culture of power.

Works Cited

- Brandt, Deborah. “Sponsors of Literacy.” *College Composition and Communication* 49.2 (May 1998): 165-85
- Delpit, Lisa. “The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Education Other People’s Children.” Chapter in *Other People’s Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. p.21-47. New York: The New Press, 1995.

* Name has been changed

In the Defense of Islam

Mikayla McLean

“Islam is a religion of peace.” The American public has long heard this phrase, often recited by Muslim advocates for peace and political dignitaries seeking cultural understanding. Yet many Americans find it difficult to reconcile the concept of a peaceful Islamic faith with the contradictory evidence presented to them. Popular media portrays followers of Islam as an anti-intellectual, violent people, bent on ridding the world of anyone whose beliefs do not mirror their own. American relations with the Islamic nations of the Middle East over the past half-century have resulted in a skewed perception of the foundations of the Islamic faith and the character of its followers. Indeed, American culture perceives almost all religions very similarly, as massive organizations that are built upon a cornerstone of basic beliefs and guidelines that dictate the lives of the adherents. In this way, the complexity of spiritual faith and religion are reduced into singular organisms that can be easily packaged and categorized. As can be seen in America’s narrow misinterpretation of the Islamic faith, American culture tends towards representing religions as monolithic institutions with narrow, linear belief systems that define the entire population of their followers.

The American media paints a distinct portrait of Islamic culture. News coverage of the ongoing struggle across the Middle East offers up to the American public a snapshot of what has become the mental image of the entirety of the Islamic populace. Suicide bombers wading into masses of people and detonating the explosives strapped to their chests. Children with hollow eyes lifting AK-47s, the length of which would dwarf their own height. Robed and bearded men sitting on dusty floors, pouring out a message of destruction with hate blazing in their eyes. With these icons, popular media forms an image that pervades every nuance of American interaction with the Islamic world. There is an almost unnamable suspicion and no small measure of fear with which Americans approach the entire concept of Islam and the people who adhere to its precepts. And with American political and military interactions with Middle Eastern nations comes, inevitably, a scrutiny of Islamic government and social structure. If the images projected onto the American psyche are to be trusted, Islamic nations abhor personal freedoms and seek to maintain government control over all aspects of their citizen’s lives. Islam can easily be defined as a theocracy, with the religious doctrine serving as a rule of law. It is no wonder, then, that Americans approach the growing number of Muslims residing within their borders as a clear threat to the American way of life.

When looked upon as a facet of the larger Islamic faith, this perception of a violent, fundamentalist Islam is not *entirely* incorrect. There is ample evidence to prove that there are followers of Islam who look to violent means to achieve the goals they feel are laid out for them in the Qur’an. And there are plenty of passages within the Qur’an itself that urge Muslims to engage in struggles against those who do not follow the Islamic doctrine. But it is when this evidence is used to suggest that every Muslim believes in the sanctity of violent jihad, that

every Muslim seeks to overpower the western philosophies of democracy and personal gain with a militant Islamic regime that there is fault. According to John Renard, a professor of theology and a doctor of Islamic studies, Islam shows “the fastest rate of growth” among global religions (Renard133). The rapid spread of the Islamic faith demands a closer look into the complexities of Islam, free of the prejudices and biases that plague the American mindset. If there were ever a time to make the effort to set aside the stereotypical, cut-and-dry perception of Islam in favor of a deeper understanding of its abundant features, it is now.

But the solution to curing America’s incessant typecasting of religious dogma is not a simple one to find. The American perception of Islam is deeply ingrained into the culture, likely more deeply than most realize. In order to effectively understand the nuances of Islam, it is imperative that America step back and examine the ways in which it interprets religious institutions as a whole. Religious expression comes as a response to spiritual revelation. Each person who practices a religion is responding to a revelation in a personal, unique way. Yet too often in American culture, religions are defined by a narrow set of beliefs and rituals that encompass the entire scope of the religion’s principles. Stereotypes, the inevitable result of all social interaction, are rampant throughout religious interpretations. Religious institutions, and by extension the followers of a particular religion, are typified in such a way that a person’s individual beliefs and interpretations are lost. In place of understanding, the popular culture reduces the complexities of religion to bullet-point factoids that are considered to be true for every person who makes a claim to a religion.

The danger inherent in packaging people in this way is perceiving others as something less than a fellow human being. Religion is used in the place of cultural recognition to classify and project upon others the image the culture creates for them. In her essay “Afraid of Ourselves,” Diana Eck makes the claim that “being judged as a group, not an individual, erases the human face and is the first step toward the dehumanization that gives rise to hate crimes” (Eck 702). An effort must be made to break away from the religious brands that plague modern society. In the same way that Americans fear and misunderstand Islamic society, many Muslims harbor an age-old suspicion of western tradition and culture. Islam is not only a religion; it is a way of life and a mode of being. By continuing to maintain an incomplete view of religious traditions, America perpetuates the issues of cultural misunderstanding that permeate the entirety of global religious conflict.

Islam is not a religion of peace. Nor is it a religion of violence, of oppression, or of intolerance. In the same way that every Christian, Jew, Buddhist, or Hindu does not practice in the same way as every follower of their chosen religion, so too does Islam exhibit a diverse spectrum of spiritual beliefs. To say that Islam is any one thing, be it peaceful or destructive, is ignoring the issue of cultural diversity. America is founded upon the ideal of religious freedoms, and to continue to ignore the issue of prejudice against a religious identity is to blatantly violate the principles that create the bedrock of American culture. As national and cultural borders become increasingly blurred, the need for a common ground between varying global identities grows even greater.

America has the opportunity to do away with ignorance and embrace a deeper understanding of foreign cultures, if only her people can find the courage to lead.

Works Cited

- Eck, Diana L. "Afraid of Ourselves." *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing*. 7th ed. Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen, & Bonnie Lisle. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. 693-707.
- Renard, John. *101 Questions and Answers on Islam*. 2nd ed. New York: Gramercy Books, 2002. Print.

Intermediate Level

Intermediate Level Winner

An Event to Remember: An Investigative Analysis of Anti-Semitism in Kansas City

Matthew Parish

In a 1965 letter to the editor in *The Kansas City Star*, the author, known only as L.R., outlined details of an anti-Semitic attack on his/her property¹. I will prove in this paper that L.R. is actually none other than Suzanne Statland, a prominent Jewish philanthropist in Kansas City, who wrote the letter not only in response to the vandalism in general, but also to call attention to the anti-Semitism in Kansas City. I will first introduce Suzanne Statland with a character analysis, which will give the letter in *The Star* context, followed by an in-depth analysis proving her authorship of the letter. Finally, I will relate her character and authorship to the anti-Semitism in Kansas City in order to explain the reasoning behind her letter and her anonymity when publishing it.

Suzanne Statland was "often stirred up about things" and she had "a very strong capacity for indignation"; she "was never passive on any issue"². Statland was someone unafraid to share her opinion with anyone who would listen. Mary Sweeney, a friend and supporter of Statland, wrote to her in May of 1974, explaining that she had lost her home in Kansas City, and was now living in "a room in a rest home where most of the patients are retarded" (Sweeney). Sweeney described her situation as "very depressing," though she was "trying to teach [a little boy] the alphabet." Statland responded to her friend's letter first by congratulating her for "doing good things there," teaching the young boy, and then by saying that "[her letter's] tone saddens me and makes me understand that you are not happy there. What can be done? How can I help?" (Letter to Mary Sweeney). This desire to help and better people's lives is what prompted Statland to form the Friends of the Library.

Suzanne Statland created the Friends of the Library and was its first president. Statland formulated the group, whose "main goal would be to provide extra funds for the enrichment of the [University of Missouri-Kansas City Library's] resources," from her own ideas, along with insights from Dr. Kenneth LaBudde, in May of 1965 (Letter to Ken). Her idea, which was the most well known contribution she made to Kansas City, quickly became a reality and on February 9, 1966, the organization held its first purchase meeting (Letter to the Friends). The Friends of the Library has made many contributions to the UMKC Libraries since its inception, most recently donating over \$26,000 to purchase new materials in 2009 (Mattison).

Statland kept herself well-informed on local issues and often involved herself in Kansas City's political and economic scene. In 1965, for instance, she

¹ See Figure 1, page 4.

² Statements cited from Personal interview.

inquired to the Superintendent of Parks, Frank Vaydik, about "the feasibility of building bicycle paths" in Kansas City (Letter to Frank Vaydik). She argued in the letter that "adults in greater numbers [were] beginning to ride bicycles for [...] health and [...] recreation," and she cited an economic study conducted in Johnson County, Kansas. Statland's comments demonstrate that she had done her research.

Statland engaged in another economic issue in the fall of 1964. This time the issue was a downtown "parking problem" (Letter to Bob). Downtown retail businesses claimed that they were being affected by the high rates charged for parking in downtown garages. On October 13, Statland wrote a letter to Robert D. Rubin, Vice President of Parking Systems, Inc.³, outlining six points that she thought would be helpful in improving his business as well as the company's relations with downtown retailers. She recommended actions such as offering "minimum purchase=free parking" deals and taking a "firm and more aggressive stand" on the issue (Letter to Bob). Statland's comments on the parking problem and her inquiry about the bicycle paths relate her continued concern about local political and economic issues in Kansas City. Statland also contributed to people's personal issues, speaking out when justice was in jeopardy.

Russell J. Storey "was arraigned [...] on a charge of first-degree robbery" in January of 1974 after he was seen outside the apartment of a man who had been "beaten repeatedly" and, in effect, later had to have "surgery to remove his left eye" ("Man, 35"). Statland, after reading this story in *The Star*, wrote a letter to the prosecuting attorney requesting that he "add another charge [of...] mayhem or battery" on the grounds that having to have an eye removed "is a terrible tragedy for any human being" (Letter to Ralph Martin). Statland's concern for justice and her fellow man is clearly indicated in this response to the article.

Statland continued to be active in the local community throughout her lifetime, working with many charities like Saving Union Station and First Offenders (Personal interview). These examples give only a glimpse of the extent to which Statland involved herself politically, but are the most relevant to my paper's discussion of the anti-Semitic attack in 1965. Now, having given some insight into Statland's character, I can begin the process of proving her authorship of the 1965 letter in *The Star*.

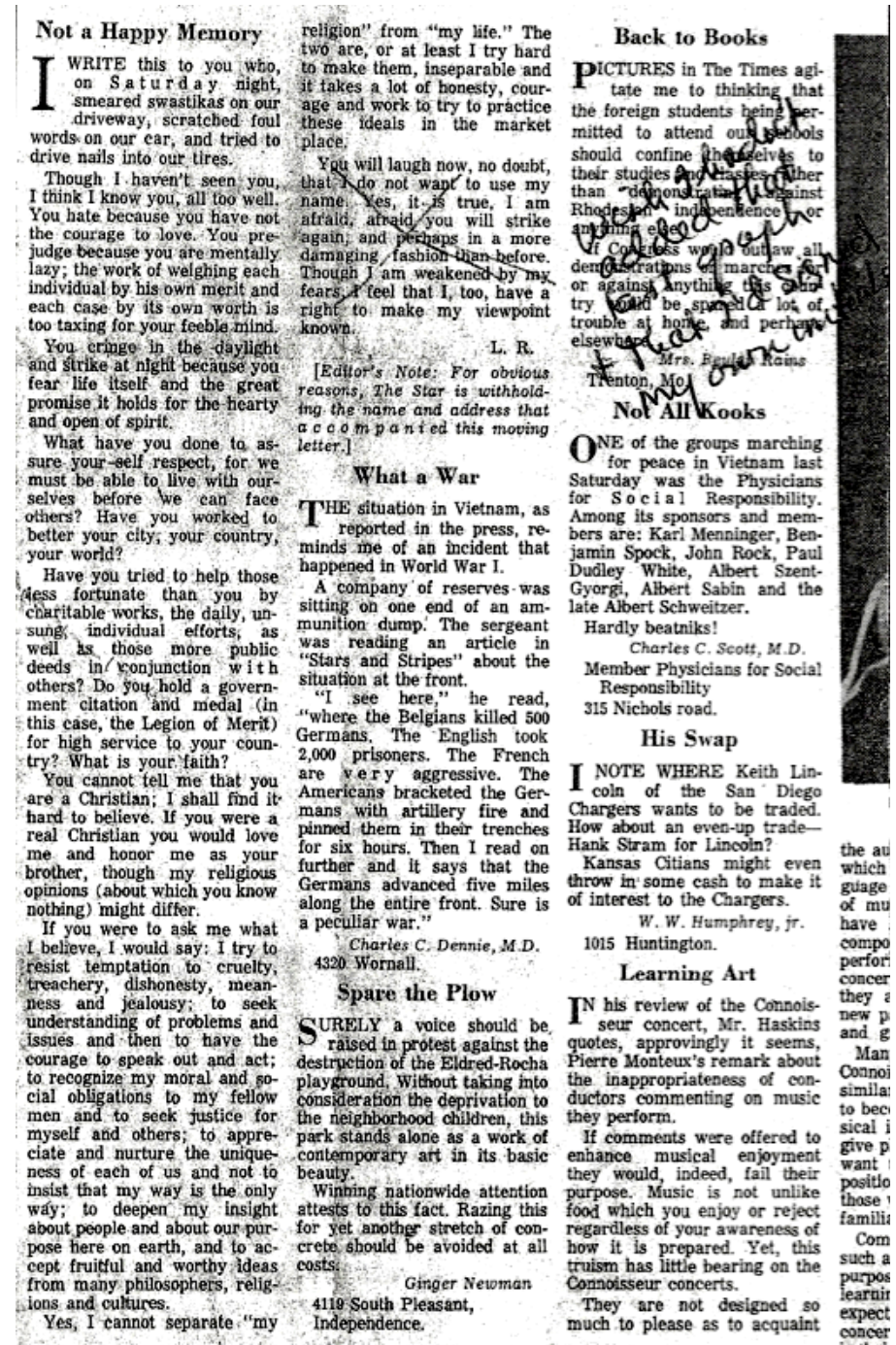
First, an annotation found on a newspaper clipping⁴ of the 1965 letter can be connected to Suzanne Statland through an analysis of her handwriting. The annotation, which is handwritten in pen, marks out the last paragraph of the letter and reads "wish I hadn't added that last graph & that I'd signed my own initials." My first instinct upon reading the annotation was that it must have been written by Suzanne Statland; however, as the letter was submitted anonymously by "L.R.," it was necessary for me to prove that the annotation was indeed written by her. I proceeded to prove this theory by focusing on two forms of analysis, the first of which was an examination of the annotation handwriting.

³ A company operating six parking garages in the Kansas City Metropolitan Area (Rubin)

⁴Figure 1, page 4

The handwriting found on the newspaper clipping has a significant characteristic: the letters "h" and "d" both have a very distinct loop on their stems. This characteristic becomes even more distinct when combined with other letters making "th" or "wh" digraphs. Using advanced photo editing software, I extracted these specific characters in order to show them apart from the rest of the handwriting⁵. I used the same method to extract samples of handwriting known to be Suzanne Statland's from various pages of her

Figure 1: "Not a Happy Memory". Newspaper clipping, Suzanne Statland Collection in Holocaust Studies (Box 1 Folders 32), LaBudde Special Collections, Miller Nichols Library, University of Missouri-Kansas City.



⁵Table 1

Table 1: Examples of "looping stems"

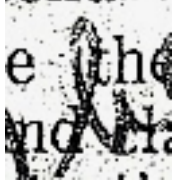
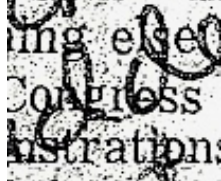
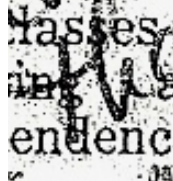
Letter "h"	Letter "d"	Digraph "th"
 <p>Handwritten examples of the letter 'h' showing a looping stem. The text includes 'enu', 'e the', and 'no tr'.</p>	 <p>Handwritten examples of the letter 'd' showing a looping stem. The text includes 'es m u', 'ing else', 'Congress', and 'nstration'.</p>	 <p>Handwritten examples of the digraph 'th' showing a looping stem. The text includes 'Masses', 'ing', and 'endenc'.</p>

Figure 2: Super-imposed handwriting

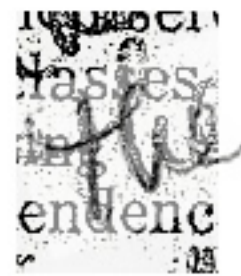
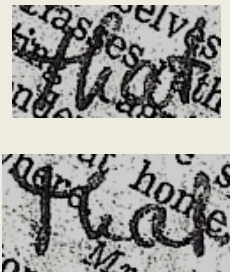
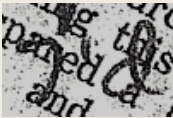
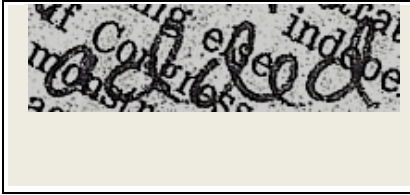


Table 2: Comparing annotation's handwriting to that of Statland's

Handwriting found on the newspaper clipping	Handwriting found in Suzanne Statland's notes
<p data-bbox="126 1018 483 1054">Digraphs of "th" and "wh"</p> 	<p data-bbox="565 846 1507 930">that that The the</p> <p data-bbox="592 961 1507 1050">the the The then</p> <p data-bbox="537 1098 1507 1161">thank theology theory therapy</p> <p data-bbox="542 1203 1479 1304">there there. they thing</p> <p data-bbox="574 1325 1442 1423">thanks <u>this</u> those</p> <p data-bbox="592 1455 1458 1528">who who what</p>
<p data-bbox="232 1556 380 1587">Letters "d"</p> 	



did

did

donations

handwritten notes⁶. From here, I created a table to compare multiple instances of the handwritten letter "d" as well as the digraphs "th" and "wh" found in the clipping annotation to those found in Statland's notes⁷. I found that handwriting known to be Statland's had the same characteristic looping stems as that of the clipping annotation. I then took my handwriting analysis one step further by using the same software to superimpose a sample of Statland's handwriting onto one from the annotation⁸. When superimposed, the two samples are very close to exact matches, leading me to conclude that Suzanne Statland wrote the annotation found on the newspaper clipping.

As my second form of proving that the annotation was written by Suzanne Statland, I wanted to contact a witness to her doing so. I first attempted to locate one of her living relatives to accomplish this. I utilized an online database⁹ to search for Suzanne Statland and eventually found that she had no living relatives, but that her husband was survived by Alice Nast Statland¹⁰--his second spouse. Luckily, I was able to contact Nast and set up a personal interview. Nast was not, unfortunately, well acquainted with Statland at the time the letter was published. She did, however, comment that "in almost every one of [Statland's books] there were annotations and comments [...] written into the book"¹¹. I concluded then, with this support from my interview with Nast and my extensive handwriting analysis, that the annotation found on the newspaper clipping was indeed written by Suzanne Statland. I further concluded from those analyses that the 1965 letter published in *The Star* was also written by Statland because her annotation comments on the choices she made while writing the letter.

I also took a closer look at the content of the 1965 letter to the editor in relation to the various activities that Suzanne Statland was involved in as a second method of proving her authorship of the letter itself. In the letter, L.R. proceeded to describe his/her impression of the vandal's character based on his actions¹². S/he described the vandal as "mentally lazy" and asked if he had ever done anything "to help those less fortunate". L.R. then proceeded to describe him/herself in comparison to the vandal, saying that s/he tried "to seek understanding of problems and issues and then to have the courage to speak out and act; to recognize my moral and social obligations to my fellow men and to seek justice for myself and others". L.R. admitted in the final paragraph of the letter--the one marked out and annotated--that s/he preferred to remain anonymous out of fear that the vandal "will strike again [...] in a more damaging fashion." The final sentence L.R. wrote merged all of the aforementioned qualities into one profound statement: "I, too, have a right to make my viewpoint known."

⁶ Found in Box 1 Folders 1, 31, and 36 of the Suzanne Statland Collection in Holocaust Studies and in Box 3 Folders 29 and 32 of the Suzanne Statland Papers.

⁷ Table 2

⁸ Figure 2

⁹ usa-people-search.com

¹⁰ Due to the duplicate last names, Alice Nast Statland will, from this point forward, be referred to as Nast.

¹¹ All of Nast's quotes come from my personal interview with her.

¹² All references and quotes in this paragraph are cited from the letter titled "Not a Happy Memory."

The statements L.R. makes about his/her own character continue to support the theory that L.R. is, in fact, Suzanne Statland. Statland had the courage to speak out to both Robert Rubin and Frank Vaydik through her understanding of the downtown parking problem and of the economic study on the bicycle paths issue. Statland recognized her moral and social obligations to her fellow men by being supportive of Mary Sweeney's attempt to teach the alphabet to a little boy and then offering to help her find a better place to live. Finally, she sought justice for herself and others by speaking out and demanding justice for a man who was robbed and lost one of his eyes. The author of the 1965 letter is indeed Suzanne Statland, as clearly indicated when comparing L.R.'s self-described character to that of Statland.

Statland's motives in using the specific initials L.R. are unknown, but I attempted to reveal them as a final form of analysis of her letter's content. I had the privilege during my interview with Nast to be joined by Mrs. Molton Green (Jean), who was a long-time friend of Statland's. Neither Green nor Nast could think of any connection between Statland and her use of these initials. Furthermore, I could find no use of these initials in any of Statland's other documents during my research. This evidence does not indicate any specific motive in using the initials, but one could speculate further on the reasons behind it. Perhaps it was an alias Statland used in other documents that I did not have the opportunity to peruse; perhaps she knew the identity of the vandal and used his initials as a way to identify him. I can only conclude from my research that Statland's use of the initials was simply a means of random anonymity.

I have proven so far that Suzanne Statland wrote the 1965 letter in which she responds to the anti-Semitic attack on her property, but there is one remaining piece of this puzzle that must be put together: what made this attack on Suzanne Statland's property an act of anti-Semitism? This question must be answered before I can analyze the reasons behind Statland's use of a public medium.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines anti-Semitism as "hostility toward or prejudice, discrimination against Jews"¹³. By definition, Suzanne Statland would have to have been Jewish for an attack on her property to be an act of anti-Semitism. I found three pieces of evidence during my archival research which strongly support the argument that Suzanne Statland was Jewish. The first fact supporting my argument is that the Suzanne Statland Papers are stored in the Jewish Community Archive; this fact alone, though circumstantial, could be proof enough that she was Jewish. In those archives, I found a bulletin¹⁴ from the Jewish Family and Children Services, known to be "the oldest existing Jewish institution...in the 'Heart of America'", addressed to Mrs. Harry Statland--otherwise known as Suzanne Statland--which also implies that she was Jewish (Schultz 250). Finally, there is a letter to the Jewish Community Campus of Greater Kansas City found in the Suzanne Statland Collection in Holocaust Studies¹⁵ that is copied to her and also lists her as a member of the Disbursement Committee for that institution. After finding these three pieces of evidence, I again utilized my opportunity to interview Nast. To a very simple question of "was Suzanne Jewish," Nast responds: "very definitely [...] as was her husband."

¹³ "anti-Semitism." *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. Web. 18 Nov. 2009.

¹⁴ Box 3 Folder 32

¹⁵ Box 1 Folder 1

The second, though most apparent, reason that this attack was an act of anti-Semitism is found in Statland's description of the vandalism: "you [...] smeared swastikas on our driveway, scratched foul words on our car, and tried to drive nails into our tires" ("Not a Happy Memory"). The swastika is commonly known as the symbol of the Nazi party, and many people identify it as an anti-Semitic symbol as well. When asked for her thoughts on the swastika as an anti-Semitic symbol, Nast comments that "certainly the Nazi symbol is an anti-Jewish symbol." Gary A. Tobin explains in his book, *Jewish Perceptions of Antisemitism*, that as an act of vandalism "antisemites may [...] paint swastikas" (12-13). Furthermore, he says that "violence [...] is the most severe and dangerous act of antisemitism, and it is perpetrated against both property and people" (12). Having established Suzanne Statland as Jewish and the swastika as an anti-Semitic symbol, the fact that the vandal "smeared swastikas on [Statland's] driveway" identifies this attack on her property as an act of anti-Semitism.

I have proven, through the process of identifying Suzanne Statland's Judaism and the details of the vandal's actions, that Suzanne Statland was a victim of an anti-Semitic act of vandalism to which she responded via an anonymous letter in *The Star*. The remaining question, then, is why? Why was Statland a victim, and why did she choose to respond anonymously through such a public medium?

There were many factors that may have caused Suzanne Statland to become a victim of vandalism. Any one of the political activities I mentioned at the beginning of this paper could have contributed to an outburst from a number of people. None of them, however, were directly tied to Statland's religious beliefs, which brings into question why she was a victim of an *anti-Semitic* attack. When asked about this incident, Jean Green couldn't "remember any special incident in 1965" that would have caused Statland to be a target of an anti-Semitic attack. Nast described Statland as a "political activist involved in community politics," which again implies no tie to her religious beliefs or even Judaism en masse. There were possible reasons to simply vandalize her property if a person didn't agree with the political aspects of her involvements, but certainly Statland did not invite anti-Semitic provocation through any of her political actions. This information leads us to again ask why, then, was Statland a victim of an anti-Semitic vandalism? On the topic of anti-Semitism, Nast observes:

There is often no direct reason to express anti-Semitism having to do with an event; it is simply a way of expressing, using anything as an excuse, or not even needing an excuse. Just when anger was needed to be expressed, that was the way to do it. It shows up, just spontaneously sometimes, without even any kind of recognition of what the cause may have been for the outburst.

Buried in the question, then, lies the answer: there is no particular provocation for acts of anti-Semitism; it simply exists, manifesting itself in many ways, only one of which is vandalism.

I found, while perusing the 1965 book of *The Kansas City Jewish Chronicle*, two other examples of the form that anti-Semitism took during that period. An article in the March 19 issue reported on "the existence of a great deal of discriminatory housing practices directed towards [...] Jews" ("Testimony"). This represented one of the subtle and unspoken forms of anti-Semitism. A law that "would make discrimination in the sale, renting, or financing of housing unlawful" was proposed in a meeting of the Johnson County Board of Realtors the same week, but it went opposed ("Testimony"). Vida Goldgar commented in her October 1 editorial on the "covert feelings" of people who would deny "any charge of anti-Semitism," saying that "the latest [Anti-Defamation League] report cites all sorts of percentages and 'hidden' feelings of these silent scorers" (Goldgar). This represents the most basic, and what was probably the most common, form of anti-Semitism: silent animosity.

There is, then, a spectrum of severity that all forms of anti-Semitism fit in. James W. Scott summarized this spectrum in one statement: "slurs, jokes, and a few broken windows are at the beginning. The final solution is in Belsen" (Scott). Belsen is, of course, the extreme: a concentration camp that killed tens of thousands of Jews. Scott further analyzed anti-Semitism as existing "in small, cruel ways in society [...] it appears in unspoken quotas for schools, businesses, and professions." Nast agrees with Scott on this issue: "[anti-Semitism] existed, and exists, just directly under the surface." The silent animosity is seen again here, with anti-Semitic feelings being bottled up, repressed, and buried "directly under the surface." What created those feelings could be a mixture of any number of things, one's parental influences or childhood experiences being only a few. It is understood, then, that the attack on Suzanne Statland's property did not reflect on any of her actions, but simply existed as an expression from the higher end of the anti-Semitic spectrum.

It is clear now why Suzanne Statland was a victim, but it is still to be discovered why she chose to respond to this attack anonymously through a public medium such as *The Kansas City Star*. Statland used this public forum not only to respond to the vandalism in general, but to highlight the anti-Semitism existing in Kansas City as well. As she pointed out in her letter¹⁶, she believed that she had "a right to make [her] viewpoint known." I believe that Statland published her letter in *The Star* so that the people who were ignorant of or otherwise chose to ignore the anti-Semitism in Kansas City would finally see it. Statland outlined the details of the vandalism because she wanted to identify it specifically as anti-Semitism, and show Kansas City that it did exist, closer than they may have thought. She submitted the letter anonymously to avoid invoking another attack, and in doing so she also pushed the attention away from herself and onto the real issue of anti-Semitism. Statland then described her opinion of the vandal's character to identify feelings she associated with anti-Semites. Her

¹⁶ "Not a Happy Memory"

last paragraph, though she regretted writing it later, served as a reminder that acts of anti-Semitism cause terrible feelings of fear and anxiety. I believe that Statland used a very effective method to make people think about the anti-Semitism that was going on in Kansas City.

I have proven in this paper, using various analyses of handwriting, content, and examples of Suzanne Statland's political, economic, and personal involvements, that the anonymous letter in the December 1, 1965, edition of *The Kansas City Star* was written by Suzanne Statland. Furthermore, I have shown that Statland wrote the letter not only in response to the vandalism itself, but to highlight the ongoing issue of anti-Semitism in Kansas City, hoping that doing so would make a difference. Whether her letter made a difference at the time or not is unknown, but it has definitely made an impact on my life.

While conducting this research, I gained a completely different perspective on anti-Semitism and racism in general. I had, of course, learned about the Holocaust and anti-Semitism in high school along with all of my classmates, but the true horror of the event and the consequences of anti-Semitism never completely registered with me. I found, by getting to know Suzanne Statland through her documents and acquaintances, that conveying the history of anti-Semitism with deep feeling and connection is of the utmost importance if we are to prevent another genocide of any race. This responsibility falls on our shoulders as the survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust continue to dwindle in numbers. Gary A. Tobin comments on this issue: "as the Holocaust becomes a more distant event in time, the social restrictions against antisemitic statements and thinking seem to be eroding" (Tobin 61-62). I believe that it is imperative for us to confront this issue head-on and take a stand in order to affect a continuous decrease in anti-Semitism as well as racism in general. May we all be as courageous as Suzanne Statland in confronting the important issues that we face today.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Brackney, Herbert W on behalf of Frank Vaydik. Letter to Suzanne Statland. 6 May 1965. Suzanne Statland Papers (Box 3 Folder 2 Loc #0560kc), Jewish Community Archives, Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Kansas City, University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- Goldgar, Vida. "Koffee Klatch: The Hebrew Signs Show a State of Mind". *The Kansas City Jewish Chronicle*. 1 Oct. 1965: 10. Print.
- Jewish Family and Children Services. Address. Suzanne Statland Papers (Box 1 Folder 32 Loc #0560kc), Jewish Community Archives, Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Kansas City, University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- "Man, 35, Held in Beating; Victim's Eye Removed". *The Kansas City Star* 1 Jan. 1974: 8. Print.
- Mattison, Mark. "Proposals for 2010 Annual Gift Grants Now Being Accepted". *UMKC Friends of the Library*. University of Missouri-Kansas City, 21 Oct. 2009. Web. 16 November 2009.
- Morgan, John A. Letter to Jewish Community Campus of Greater Kansas City. 14 Jan. 1987. Suzanne Statland Collection in Holocaust Studies (Box 1 Folder 1), LaBudde Special Collections, Miller Nichols Library, University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- "Not a Happy Memory". Newspaper clipping. Suzanne Statland Collection in Holocaust Studies (Box 1 Folders 32), LaBudde Special Collections, Miller Nichols Library, University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- Rubin, Robert D. Letter to the public. 14 Feb. 1962. Suzanne Statland Papers (Box 3 Folder 4 Loc #0560kc), Jewish Community Archives, Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Kansas City, University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- Scott, James W. "Madness of Anti-Semitism Persists". *The Kansas City Star*. 3 Feb. 1974. Print.
- Statland, Alice Nast and Jean Green. Personal interview. 30 Oct. 2009.
- Statland, Suzanne. Handwritten Notes. Suzanne Statland Collection in Holocaust Studies (Box 1 Folders 31, 36), LaBudde Special Collections, Miller Nichols Library, University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- Statland, Suzanne. Handwritten Notes. Suzanne Statland Papers (Box 3 Folder 29 Loc #0560kc), Jewish Community Archives, Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Kansas City, University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- Statland, Suzanne. Letter to Bob [Robert D. Rubin]. 13 Oct. 1964. Suzanne Statland Papers (Box 3 Folder 4 Loc #0560kc), Jewish Community Archives, Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Kansas City, University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- Statland, Suzanne. Letter to Frank Vaydik. 4 May 1965. Suzanne Statland Papers (Box 3 Folder 2 Loc #0560kc), Jewish Community Archives, Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Kansas City, University of Missouri-Kansas City.

- Statland, Suzanne. Letter to Ken [Kenneth LaBudde]. 19 May 1965. Suzanne Statland Papers (Box 3 Folder 29 Loc #0560kc), Jewish Community Archives, Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Kansas City, University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- Statland, Suzanne. Letter to Mary Sweeney. 28 May 1974. Suzanne Statland Collection in Holocaust Studies (Box 1 Folder 1), LaBudde Special Collections, Miller Nichols Library, University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- Statland, Suzanne. Letter to Ralph L. Martin. 19 Jan. 1974. Suzanne Statland Collection in Holocaust Studies (Box 1 Folder 1), LaBudde Special Collections, Miller Nichols Library, University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- Statland, Suzanne. Letter to the Friends. 16 Jan. 1966. Suzanne Statland Papers (Box 3 Folder 29 Loc #0560kc), Jewish Community Archives, Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Kansas City, University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- Sweeney, Mary. Letter to Suzanne Statland. May 1974. Suzanne Statland Collection in Holocaust Studies (Box 1 Folder 1), LaBudde Special Collections, Miller Nichols Library, University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- "Testimony Reveals Anti-Jewish, Anti-Negro Housing Discrimination in Johnson County". *The Kansas City Jewish Chronicle*. 19 Mar. 1965: 2. Print.

Secondary Sources

- Michael, Robert. *A Concise History of American Antisemitism*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005. Print.
- Tobin, Gary A. *Jewish Perceptions of Antisemitism*. New York: Plenum Press, 1988. Print.
- Schultz, Bella E. *Jewish Education and Philanthropy in Kansas City*. Diss. U Missouri-Kansas City, 1982. Kansas City: UMKC, 1982. Print.
- Schultz, Joseph P. *Mid-America's Promise: A Profile of Kansas City Jewry*. Kansas City: Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Kansas City, 1982. Print.
- Selznick, Gertrude J. and Stephen Steinberg. *The Tenacity of Prejudice*. New York: Harper & Row, 1969. Print.

The “Authentic” War Film: Hollywood’s Distortion of Historical Accuracy

Carly Burdg

To assign criteria for the film genre “epic,” anyone would see that war, whether as a primary or secondary plot element, would certainly play a part in defining the requirements. Would historical accuracy be a similar requirement, though? Most importantly, would historical accuracy in a film about war be a requisite? It seems to be forgotten when it comes to other sorts of epics. The debate about historical accuracy in cinema is not limited to the war picture, but, when addressing war movies, it raises a more interesting question about how their viewers will remember the film and in turn, the war itself. Recreating the battlefield on a Hollywood lot is not only physically difficult but mentally nearly impossible, and film directors and producers prefer it that way. War films, even the most graphic, shy away from showing protagonists in any sort of brutal, savage or barbarous light. Even anti-war films distance their characters from the savagery they are attempting to condemn. This manipulation of storytelling affects true historical memory by altering the images of war participants to render the material more morally acceptable.

A cinematic representation of war is integral to an individual's perceptions of the experience; only some have seen war firsthand, but almost all have seen a war or anti-war film at some point. For many, war films are solely responsible for informing our perception of the conflict in question. War is a base, brutal and barbarous thing; all parties experience and take part in atrocities. The ability to deal with and remember such events is often times manipulated or skewed; after all, “contests over public remembering were certainly not pervasive in most nations after World War II,” (Bodnar, in Winter 859). To deescalate the traumatic aspects of the war experience was a concept readily embraced, especially by Hollywood. The “lonely, isolated, damaged or suffering individual in film could and did point to the need for collective action” (Winter 859), specifically remembering the film and, by extension, the war the film represented as a victimizing experience. While the soldiers were heroes, they were also the unfortunate souls caught up in an evil greater than themselves, rather than playing a part in the villainy. Years and years of this kind of filmmaking has stripped most historical accuracy of war experiences from collective memory.

Prime examples of this image manipulation exist in the popular epic *Saving Private Ryan*, mainly through the portrayal of the American soldiers. When the film was released in 1998, it garnered much praise for its accurate portrayal of the true horror of battle and its graphic but telling depictions of actual combat (Bodnar 805). The overarching theme of living a life worthy of sacrifice resonates universally, and, as film historian Thomas Schatz observes, as quoted by J. David Slocum, “the WWII film has continued to develop ... to revisit the most heroic episode in the American Century” (35). Even in the stunningly gruesome scenes, director Stephen Spielberg makes his soldiers adverse to violence and desiring the war to be over as soon as possible. As John Bodnar

suggests, Spielberg “preserves the World War II image of American soldiers as inherently averse to bloodshed and cruelty” (805). This archetype serves not to give us an accurate depiction of war, but to enforce the memory of these events and men as heroic and selfless. Indeed, many men in war *were* heroic and selfless, but neither *Saving Private Ryan* nor any war film chooses to highlight the fact that for every American killed, there was a German killed just as brutally. Historical memory is altered by the intentional portrayal of war in this fashion.

The anti-war film is another interesting example of how Hollywood, even in its attempts to strip the gloss and soft focus away from its blockbuster counterparts, fails to accurately inform historical memory in its imagery. In films like Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, a solitary figure is used to focus the plot into a cohesive story. The huge amounts of conditional experiences in war are selected, narrativized and “thereby give shape to the random material of history” says author Anton Kaes in his article titled “Public Memory in the Age of Electronic Dissemination” (309). Even if the character is quite obviously disliked, such as Martin Sheen's Benjamin Willard in *Apocalypse Now*, we as viewers are given some reason to cheer for him, like his mission to assassinate Kurtz, because if not, then what is the point? Willard is a victim of his circumstance, a guerrilla war fought with the flimsiest of moral standards. Because these films are structured in such a fashion, it nullifies any actual historical content by forcing these characters to stand as the single relatable point to the gross tragedies of war. In his article “The Memory of History,” author Michael Frisch goes so far as to call these films “anti-historical,” claiming such films “say almost nothing about the real history and impact of the war” (13).

This phenomenon sometimes extends beyond film into other genres; in Tim O' Brien's memoir-like Vietnam War novel “The Things They Carried,” a platoon marches to a village called Than-Khe after a soldier in the group is assassinated by the Viet Cong. The soldiers “burned everything, they shot chickens and dogs” and “trashed the village well” (16). Even when the protagonists are clearly and deliberately committing acts of brutality generally reserved for antagonists, they are still the victims, acting out of grief and the injustice done to the dead Ted Lavender. This is the ultimate escape from coming to terms with soldiers' real experiences, and film strikes this type of chord so frequently with its viewers that it naturally follows to for viewers' memories to be fashioned thusly.

What does this mean for collective war memory as a whole? Instead of remembering wars from a purer perspective based on first-hand accounts or more historically accurate sources, the experience of war is marred by these cinematic images. As Bodnar says, these “stories of glorious rises and tragic falls dot the landscape of American cultural memory” (816). Whether or not soldiers were actually heroes, soldiers are heroes thanks to film and these films are so much more accessible than a veteran, a museum or even a history book (a push of a button brings up *Saving Private Ryan* or *Apocalypse Now* on the TV and a book requires a hugely time-consuming trip to the library or bookstore). Widely-digested films “resituate [sic] past events in the immediate experience of the viewer” (Kaes 309). In terms of memory, primacy and recency, recency is

almost always the victor, abandoning the actual experience of wars decades past in favor of the newest blockbuster that features heroic soldiers.

War and anti-war films, despite their best intentions for accuracy, are manipulating true historical memory of the war experience. Showing soldiers as heroic and even anti-heroes as a single relatable point of the film prevents any sort of accurate discourse of collective war memory. To relieve the tension of such horrible cruelty, the victim is the universal constant of a war film protagonist. Even in myriad criteria for that “epic” war experience, the heroes are victims still, fighting against an injustice they are shown to take no part in. War and the truth about it is not a desirable firsthand experience, but since historical memory is important and even critical for a culture, we fight our battles from the comfort of our couches or theaters.

Works Cited

- Bodnar, John. “*Saving Private Ryan* and Postwar Memory in America.” *American Historical Review*. 2001: 805-17. Web.
- Frisch, Michael. “The History of Memory.” *Radical History Review*. 5.1981: 9-23. Web.
- Kaes, Anton. “History and Film: Public Memory in the Age of Electronic Dissemination.” *History and Film*. 2.1990: 308-23. Web.
- O'Brien, Tim. “The Things They Carried.” Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1990. Print.
- Slocum, David J. “Cinema and the Civilizing Process: Rethinking Violence in the World War II Combat Film.” *Cinema Journal*. 44, 3.2005: 35-63. Web.
- Winter, Jay. “Film and the Matrix of Memory.” *American Historical Review*. 2001: 857-864. Web.

Racism, Imperialism, and Art: Heart of Darkness

Claire A. Jehle

Joseph Conrad's book *Heart of Darkness* has been proclaimed to be one of the best short novels of the English language. It has been studied in countless universities and high schools by an innumerable number of students. It has been critically reviewed many times since its publication in 1902. Conrad is commended by many for his style, storytelling abilities, and for the intentions and themes of this work, which was the first literature to be published before the World Wars which contains an anti-imperialist message. *Heart of Darkness* has also been condemned by some critics as racist, particularly by Chinua Achebe, whose critique of *Heart of Darkness* from 1975 was the to point out and discuss racism in the story. Achebe even goes as far to say that it should not be considered a literary work of art, as so many critics have proclaimed it to be. After releasing this critique of the novel, the literary world responded with numerous critiques that defended *Heart of Darkness*. The racism that appears in the book cannot be denied by anyone who reads it through the lens of the twenty first century. Conrad, or rather Conrad's character, Marlow, even goes so far as to call into question the very humanity of the Congolese people. Alternatively, Conrad is able to express in this novella the dichotomy of the human soul, of every human soul. Not only is his writing style compelling, he crafts his words carefully in order to create a novella which is multi-layered, allowing it to be perceived and interpreted in countless ways. It is that fact that causes Conrad's work to be read by students across the world, critiqued by some of history's greatest literary minds, and recognized as a great work of art.

The racism present in Conrad's work is undeniable. Conrad, or is it Marlow?, is constantly referring to the Congolese natives as "shadows", "things", "it", and "niggers" He takes great pains to describe the extreme blackness of every Congolese person he encounters. Achebe points out that Conrad's obsession with the word "black" seems to be at a troubling level of intensity. Achebe also brings up the issue of language. Throughout the novella the Congolese characters are only given voices in two parts of the work, where they speak in shortened sentences in broken language or are resigned to grunting. Furthermore, Achebe writes that this work cannot be considered a work of art because it forces two groups of people to be pitted against each other:

Africa as setting and backdrop eliminates the African as a human factor. Africa as a battlefield devoid of recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril...And the question is whether a novel which celebrates this dehumanization, which depersonalizes a portion of the human race, can be called a work of art. My answer is: No it cannot. (Achebe 9)

It is true that this work dehumanizes the Congolese natives. He calls into question the humanity of these people. "They howled leaped and spun and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity – like

yours – the thought of your remote kinship with this wild passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough” (Conrad 32). Conrad’s narrator admits fear at the thought of being the same species as these people. There is nothing more bigoted than referring to a race of people as inhuman, and although, surely, Conrad was affected by the prejudice of his time, this kind of dehumanization is wrong and inexcusable.

In order to make a statement about the exploitation, cruelty, and immorality of colonialism, Conrad uses Africa as the backdrop to compare the behavior of the European colonialists to that of the African savages. “Conrad portrays the moral bankruptcy of imperialism by showing European motives and actions as no better than African fetishism and savagery” (Brantlinger 285). In other words, Conrad is trying to show us that even these savages, these inhuman things, can compose themselves better than our own European brothers. He uses this form of racism deliberately as a tool to convey the true messages and themes in his novella; the deterioration of the human soul, and the depravity and degradation of imperialism.

While it is true that the racism present in this work is undeniable, the work’s artistic validity is undeniable as well. Conrad’s writing and storytelling styles have been praised highly since the publication of this novella. Conrad offers us a writing style that is very ambiguous which lends to the darkness of his story. For example, Conrad never fully reveals the truth about Kurtz’s actions and life, including the Intended, who has a good deal to do with the themes of the book. But perhaps the most intriguing thing about Conrad’s ambiguity is that he chose to have two narrators to tell the story; the story of our main character, Marlow is being recounted by an anonymous narrator aboard a different ship on a different river. This removes Conrad two degrees away from the ideas and feelings of his main character. Conrad also writes Marlow with the same ambiguity as he does the rest of the novella. Marlow’s feelings and emotional state are never truly expressed in the book, the reader is left to guess them given the story that the anonymous narrator is telling the reader about Marlow’s experience. This ambiguity has allowed the book to be interpreted in many different ways, but most commonly by critics this work is seen as a criticism of imperialism.

It is clear in the book that Conrad is trying to express to the reader the horrible state of health and lifestyle that has been imposed on the natives by the European government trying to rule them. He tells us that the natives are sick and dying and that no one will help them. He constantly tries to display the disorganization of the bureaucracy they have imposed. But more importantly he tries to express the lawlessness and depravity that this kind of imperialism can result in. Conrad raises these points not by telling his readers outright about the atrocities being committed, he simply allows Marlow to tell his story as he saw it. Marlow even almost defends British imperialism, even though throughout the rest of the book he is describing the darkness that imperialism can bring:

What saves us (the British) is efficiency – the devotion to efficiency. But these chaps (the Romans)... They were no colonists... They were conquerors, and for that you only want brute force – nothing

to boast of...It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale...The conquest of the Earth, which mostly means taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea – something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to..." (Conrad 4)

Marlow contradicts himself and shows us the double standard that colonial powers use to justify their actions, mainly on the grounds that what they are trying to do has a humanitarian purpose, when this is never the case. Conrad uses this comment to show that British imperialism is no better than Roman imperialism is no better than European imperialism. Imperialism is imperialism. Marlow condemns the Romans because he says they took many human lives and robbed people, when really that is exactly what we see happening in the Congo throughout the novella. Then he goes on to say that it is not a pretty thing, it's a horrible thing, a disgusting thing, but if you believe in this "idea" than it is ok, because the colonial intentions are good. Conrad uses this statement to show that this kind of logic is ludicrous. There is obviously no redeeming "idea" when it comes to imperialism, the only thought for the imperialists is to exploit a nation of less powerful people in order to gain more wealth for themselves. "The colonists' actions are prompted by greed and corruption; their expressed mission is an absurdity" (Spegele 327).

Even Kurtz's deterioration can be blamed on imperialism. Imperialism left the Congo in a state of lawlessness, as I mentioned before, and this allowed Kurtz to do whatever he wanted. He was also driven by the capitalist / imperialist need for more and more wealth. And to obtain that wealth, he went to extremes. He enraptured a village of native people who worshipped him like a god, and killed for him. The power and money was too much for Kurtz to resist, and eventually he loses his control and his sanity. In doing this, Kurtz also raises moral and philosophical questions about human nature. He shows the duality of Kurtz's soul. On one hand he is a charismatic, talented, articulate, war hero, and on the other hand he is a blood-thirsty monster.

This work by Conrad has many more themes and messages beyond racism and beyond imperialism too. Conrad's exceptional writing style made it so that *Heart of Darkness* is always contemporary in its politics and other themes. Not only does it contain an important message about imperialism, a stance which was radical for it's time, it contains messages about human nature and the power of the human soul, which is why this book is considered to be a great work of literature, and why it should be considered a great work of art.

Works Cited

- Achebe, Chinua. "An Image of Africa" Research in African Literatures Vol. 9, No. 1, Special Issues in Literary Criticism (Spring, 1978), pp. 1-15 JSTOR. 03 Nov. 2009 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3818468>
- Brantlinger, Patrick. "Heart of Darkness; Anti-imperialism, Racism, or Impressionism?" Heart of Darkness. 2nd ed. Ross C. Murfin. New York; Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996. 277-298.
- Conrad, Joseph. Heart of Darkness.
- Spegele, Roger D. "Fiction as Political Theory: Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness'" British Journal of Political Science. Vol. 2, No.3 (Jul., 1972), pp. 319-337 JSTOR. 09 Nov., 2009 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/193600>

Advanced Level

Advanced Level Co-Winner

**The Heart is a Dustboard:
Abu'l Wafa Al-Buzjani, Dissection, Construction, and the Dialog
between Art & Mathematics in Medieval Islam**

Jennifer L. Nielsen

*"All this sewing-together and tearing-apart bewilders me,
my mind reels at the variegations of affirmation and obliteration.
The heart is a dust-board, he the geometer of the heart:
what a marvel of figures, numbers, realities and names
he inscribes!"*

- Jelaluddin Rumi, *Persian Sufi Islamic Poet,*
"The Lovers' Tailor's Shop" (14, p. 81).

When Jelaluddin Rumi composed these lines, it is easy to imagine that the wandering sufi was standing over the shoulders of a Baghdad geometer, breathlessly watching him perform one of the most confounding dissection-construction puzzles of Abu'l Wafa al-Buzjani in the dust-laden surface of a medieval work board. The maddening beauty of the obliteration and reconstruction of complex geometric figures would have been enough to send the mystical Rumi into rapture about the nature of the creation of the universe.

Truly a geometer of the heart if there ever was one, the Persian mathematician and astronomer Abu'l Wafa al-Buzjani (AD 940-998) was awarded by his peers the title of "mohandes" geometer – a title for the most skillful and knowledgeable professional geometer of his day (6, p. 10). Today he is widely considered one of the most outstanding Islamic mathematician-scientists of the tenth century. His impressive resume includes the introduction of the concepts of tangent, secant and cosecant for the first time, the compilation of in-depth mathematical manuals for use by businessmen and artisans, and a collaboration with Al-Biruni to use an eclipse of the moon to determine longitude differences between Kath and Baghdad (12, p. 93; 1 pp. 9, 92,). He was also the creator of several intriguing geometric dissection-construction puzzles which have been baffling mathematicians, enlightening artists, and rescuing lucky minds from boredom for over one thousand years.

Puzzle 1: The Tricky Triangle

"Draw three identical triangles, and one smaller triangle similar to them in shape, so that all four can be made into one large triangle."

–Abu'l Wafa Al Buzjani (2, p. 95; 11, pp. 83, 116; 13, p. 292)

This deceptively simple instruction may trick you into thinking that the larger

triangle has to enclose all four triangles, but good luck trying to find such a solution. Al-Buzjani's own solution was expressed using the following slightly baffling illustration,

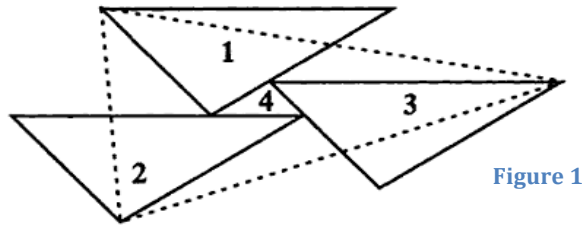
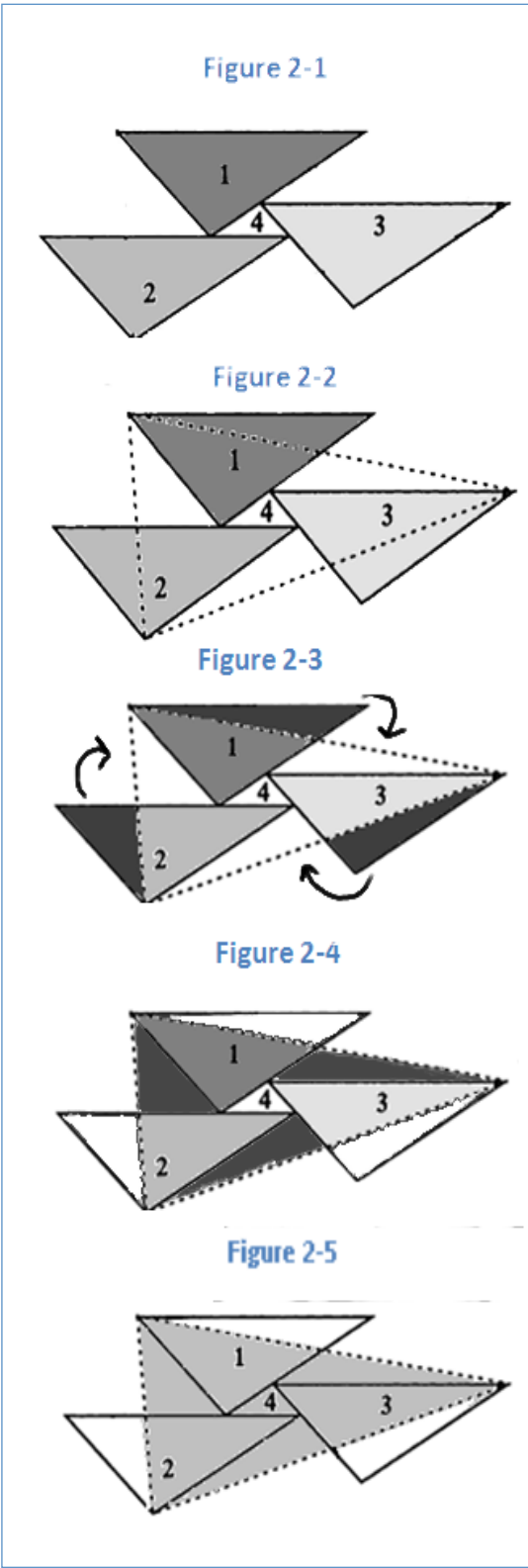


Figure 1

at which a first glance may yield simple annoyance. If one is not thinking in terms of a dissection and reconstruction, the triangles do not appear to be “made into” the larger triangle at all.



Abu'l Wafa Al-Buzjani's Tricky Triangle – Steps to The Solution

1. First place three identical triangles around a smaller similar one as shown so that the corresponding sides of the identical triangles are parallel to one another (See Figure 2-1).
2. Join three vertices of the identical triangles (one of each "type," each from a different triangle) with lines as shown to make a large triangle (Figure 2-2).
3. Now, for the "trick." Note the portions of the three identical triangles that are external to the large triangle, shown darkened (Figure 2-3). "Cut out" these three pieces and flip, rotate, or otherwise manipulate them so as to "paste" them into the "empty" portions of the large triangle.
4. See that the pieces fit exactly, as shown.
5. Now we have one large triangle and we have arrived at Al-Buzjani's solution.

How The Tricky Triangle Works

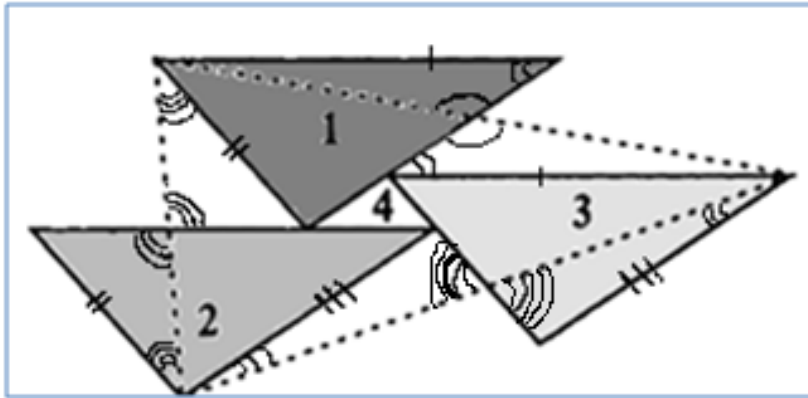


Figure 3

The “tricky triangle” can be viewed as a sliding dissection puzzle. The external portion

of Triangle 2 is cut and then rotated and slid into the empty space above Triangle 2 adjacent to Triangle 1. The external portion of Triangle 1 is likewise cut, rotated and slid into the empty space above Triangle 3 adjacent Triangle 1. Similarly, the external part of Triangle 3 is cut, rotated and slid into the empty space under Triangle 2 adjacent to Triangle 3.

Because corresponding sides of the three identical triangles are parallel, we can see even before our operation that each “cut out” external triangle is congruent to the triangle it is pasted into by the ASA (angle-side-angle) theorem. In each case, one side of an external triangle is already known to be congruent to a side of an “empty” enclosed triangle (since these sides also happen to be corresponding sides of the original identical triangles). Furthermore, in each case, one angle of the external triangle is alternate interior to an angle in the empty triangle it is pasted into, and one angle of the external triangle is vertical to one of the angles in the empty triangle. Thus we see that what at first appears to be a conundrum reduces to a cut and paste problem utilizing simple Euclidean geometry.

Mosaic Makers

The tricky triangle puzzle highlights a common problem faced by tilers of mosaics in Abu'l Wafa's day: cutting apart and rearranging tile-pieces so as to assemble them into larger geometric configurations (6 p. 11). In the complex world of abstract creations in medieval Islam, a wonderful dialog was ripe for unfolding between artists and mathematicians (10, p.193). Artisans of the day often used approximations in achieving patterns, and while this was sufficient for small scale pattern working, in much larger mosaics spanning entire walls of mosques, the errors could become compounded, letting slipshod craftsmanship eventually show. Thus more and more precise methods of construction and dissection such as only could be introduced by excellent mathematicians such as Al-Buzjani were necessitated. It is suspected that Al-Buzjani utilized cut and paste methods “for two purposes: to prove the correctness of certain

constructions in a concrete way that could be easily understood by the artisans, and to present the constructions in such a way that the figures could be used to create new decorative patterns” some of which “became quite popular” (10, p. 193).

Buzjani wrote that “A number of geometers and artisans have made errors in the matter of...squares and their assembling. The geometers made errors because they don’t have practice in applied constructing, and the artisans because they lacked knowledge of reasoning and proof.” (qtd. in 6, p. 10). Al-Buzjani participated in meetings between mathematicians and artisans and was called on to give instructions in “geometric constructions of two or three dimensional ornamental patterns [and]...the application of geometry to architectural construction (qtd in 6, p. 10).

Bad Geometry

At one of these meetings, Buzjani explained how a common method of cutting and pasting constructions was incorrect. “Some of the artisans, [trying to create a larger square from three squares] locate one of these [three] squares in the middle and divide the next one on its diagonal and divide the third square into one isosceles right triangle and two congruent trapezoids and assemble together as it seen in the figure” (qtd in 6, p. 11).

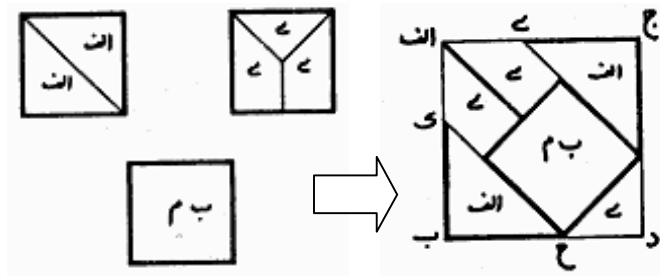
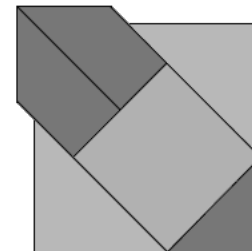


Figure 4-1 - Incorrect construction of a square from three unit squares. From original Persian. (Arrow added.) (6, p. 10.)



4-2 - Purposefully exaggerated depiction of underlying error.

The “solution,” as drawn up by the artists and in demonstration by Al-Buzjani (see figure 4-1), appears to be correct, but can be shown imprecise. It is true that the resulting shape has four right angles, and that it *appears* that each side of the larger shape is one unit plus one half of the diagonal of the unit square. But Buzjani denies that a square has truly been constructed from three squares because of this very fact, relating that “we know that each of the sides of this square is equal to the side of one of the [unit] squares plus half of its diagonal [but] it is not possible that the side of the square composed from three squares has this magnitude...[as] the diagonal [line] of the [unit] square [which is divided in two by that diagonal]... is irrational but [that same] line [as it appears in the larger shape]... is rational since it is equal to the side of the [unit] square ...plus half of it.” It is not possible for a rational number to equal an irrational number, so the construction is “fanciful” and we “know that it is false.” (7, p. 614.) An

using the same basic concepts we applied in the first triangle puzzle, we may take triangle MZH and put it in the position of triangle BGM , and by the same basic argument, triangle DGE can be moved to triangle WEK , triangle ABO can be moved to triangle DIO , and triangle WHE can be moved to triangle ZLE and we have thus completed the puzzle. The figure of Al-Buzjani's dissected square became popular in Islamic ornamental arts, and can be observed today in Iran in numerous mosques including the western *iwan* of the Friday Mosque in Isfahan (10, pp. 176,177; 5).



Figure 6 - panels from the Friday Mosque in Isfahan depicting Al-Buzjani's dissected squares (10)

A Novel Proof of the Pythagorean Theorem

Abu'l Wafa Al-Buzjani used his dissection and construction method again to create a novel geometric proof of the Pythagorean Theorem. Two unequal squares are added together to make a third square.

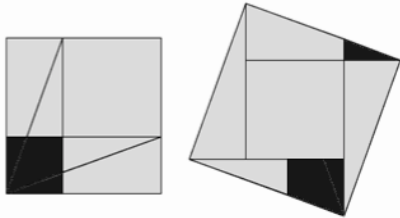


Figure 7-1 – a small square and a large square, superimposed, are dissected and then reconstructed into a larger square, in a geometric “proof” of the Pythagorean Theorem.

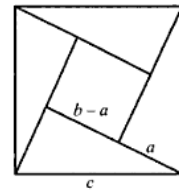


Figure 7-2 – Showing that c is the hypotenuse and that a and b are legs of the right triangle

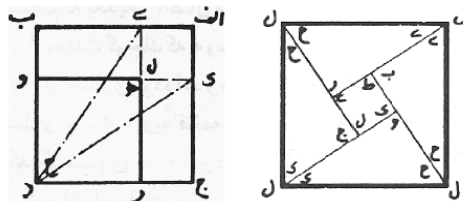


Figure 7-3 – Drawing from original Persian text

That two equal squares are easily combined into a bigger square was known since the time of Socrates, but Abu'l Wafa's method works even if the squares are different. In Abu'l Wafa's proof, a small square is placed to share the corner and two side segments of a larger square. Then a larger triangle is built up by dissecting both the large square and the small square and adding the large square to the small square to make a bigger square. In figure 7-1, the small black square is a^2 , the large grey square superimposed behind the small black square is b^2 , and the larger square made from adding a^2 and b^2 is c^2 . In the final square, as shown in Figure 7-2, a , b , and c can be viewed as the hypotenuse and other sides of a right triangle taking up part of the square.

Squares from More and More Squares

Ab'l Wafa worked with many more multiples of squares in his dissections, and was interested in the general problem of assembling a "square equal in area to n unit squares." He distinguishes two cases in his treatise "On Assembling Squares if their Numbers is the Sum of Two Squares", being Case 1: "if the number [of unit squares] is the sum of two equal squares" (or $n = 2m^2$) and Case 2: "if the number [of unit squares] is the sum of two unequal squares" (or $n = 2ab$, where a and b are non equal, natural numbers). In case 1, his method has been described using the following process: "Cut the $2m^2$ squares in halves along a diagonal and arrange the $4m^2$ congruent triangles into a big square consisting of m^2 squares of area two unit squares." His method for Case 2, covering squares of different size (as we saw in the proof of the Pythagorean Theorem) can be summarized as "From $2ab$ unit squares, compose four right-angled triangles with length a and width b . Then assemble these triangles around a square consisting of $(a - b)^2$ unit squares. If x is the side of the square obtained in this way, $x^2 = (a - b)^2 + 2ab = a^2 + b^2$." (10, p. 174).

The Last "Puzzles"

We have covered a small number of mentally stimulating puzzles and puzzle-proofs that were composed using the dissection-construction methods popularized by Abu'l Wafa Al-Buzjani. Many more constructions in this spirit were undertaken, generally in order to explain more complicated mathematical operations, such as solutions to cubic equations, for artisans and skilled workers who did not necessarily have prerequisite knowledge such as conics (10, p. 197). In some cases, the original, more purely mathematical arguments have been lost, while simpler and more approximate demonstrations recorded by "scribes whose training had not covered constructive geometry" (10, p. 198), and the pieces created from such arguments by such artists, are all that have survived the sands of time. This leaves us, at times, unable to answer questions about just how modern a treatment of mathematical problems the mathematicians of Al-Buzjani's time may have reached.

We will close with a final burning question: Could Al-Buzjani and some of his contemporaries and followers have used dissection-construction methods, and

other artisan-friendly treatments, to explain the concept of quasi-periodic, and even truly aperiodic, tilings to artists?

Aperiodic tile sets, sets of tiles allowing infinitely many distinct tilings, also known as “quasicrystals” are a phenomenon generally believed to have been first discovered by Roger Penrose in the 1970’s, and are a “hot” topic of application in solid state molecular physics. The mathematics needed in a detailed investigation of this topic is beyond the scope of this paper, but a little teaser shall be left to the interested reader in the following figures.

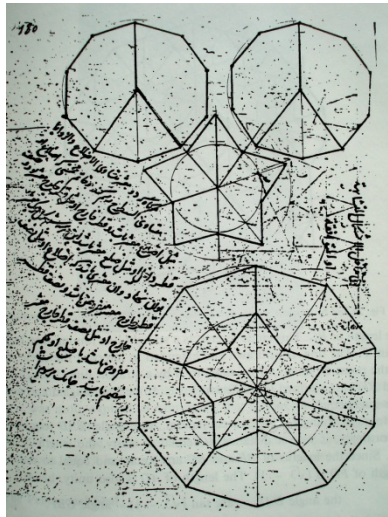


Figure 8-1 Pentagonal Seal from Medieval Islamic Document “On Interlocking Similar Or Congruent Figures”, Paris, Bibliotheque National ancien fond Persan Ms # 169 (4, p. 285)

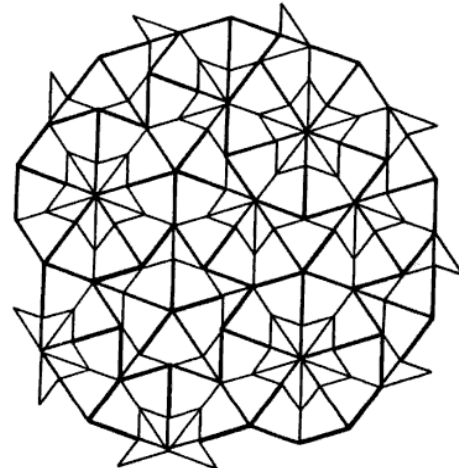


Figure 8-2 Aperiodic Penrose Tiling c1977, Scientific American (4, p. 286).

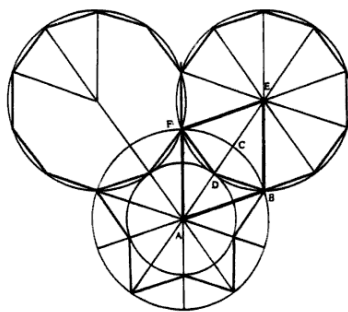


Figure 8-3 Interlocking decagons and five pointed star (4, p. 291).

There are differences between the patterns in these pictures, to be sure, but according to one recent paper, a pentagonal pattern occurring in the tiling of the medieval Maragha mosque “is readily... obtained by a transformation of the Penrose pattern... [and] deviates from a true cartwheel Penrose tiling only in several geometric and artistic adaptations” (9, p. 85). This is enough to raise questions in the minds of several 21st century mathematicians and leading

theoretical physicists (8, p. 85; 12, p. 284), and even inspire some relevant debate about the interdependence of art and science. According to mathematical historian Wasma'a K. Chorbachi,

“[T]he true patron of the scientists who wrote these ancient manuscripts was art. It was the artisans and the architects who called for the services of science and scientists to assist them solving the design problems that they were facing. And as in the case of Islamic art in the past, science must come to the service of the arts, whether we are talking today of Islamic art, of Western art or of art generally, today more than ever before...[I]slamic tradition is so strong that, if we are in touch with the language of the present time and ground ourselves in this strong old tradition, we can arrive at an expression that is not only contemporary but could be meaningful and valid in the coming century.” (8)

It can easily be argued that Al-Buzjani couldn't have known about aperiodic tiling, and it is unlikely that there were mathematical tools available at this time to fully flesh such complicated ideas out. But, as we may surmise with Rumi, who saw the creation of the universe in the swirl of numbers on the dustboard of a mathematician, Al-Buzjani was a geometer of the heart. Whether the mosaic-makers realized it or not, they were onto something special, and perhaps even in mathematics, among the intuitive ahead of their time, the heart occasionally “has its reasons of which reason knows nothing.” (Blaise Pascal, 1623-1662)

May reason continually strive to catch up.

References

1. Breggren, JL. *Episodes in the Mathematics of Medieval Islam*. Springer-Verlag, 1986.
2. Danesi, Marcel. *The Puzzle Instinct: The Meaning of Puzzles in Human Life*. Indiana University Press, 2004.
3. Chorbachi, Wasma'a. In the Tower of Babel: Beyond symmetry in Islamic Design. *Computers & Mathematics with Applications*. Volume 17 , Issue 4-6 (January 1989)
4. ----- and Arthur L. Loeb. "An Islamic Pentagonal Seal." *Fivefold Symmetry*. Edited by Isvan Hargittai. World Scientific. 1992.
5. Faidherbe, Lyceé. Les Symétries du Carré. (Images 30 and 31). http://home.nordnet.fr/~ajuhel/Weyl/weyl_D4_R4.html. Accessed March 1, 2010.
6. Jaban, Slavik and Reza Sarhangi. Elementary Constructions of Persian Mosaics. R. Sarhangi and S. Jablan, *Elementary Constructions of Persian Mosaics*, Math Horizons, the Mathematical Association of America, September 2006, PP 10-13.
7. Imhausen, Annette and Victor J. Katz. *The Mathematics of Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, India, and Islam: a Sourcebook*. Princeton University Press, 2007.
8. Lu, Peter J. and Steinhardt, Paul J. "Decagonal and Quasi-Crystalline Tilings in Medieval Islamic Architecture." *Science Magazine*. <http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/315/5815/1106/> Accessed February 12, 2010.
9. Makovicky, Emil. "800 Year Old Pentagonal Tiling." *Fivefold Symmetry*. Edited by Isvan Hargittai. World Scientific. 1992.
10. Ozdural, Alpay. Mathematics and Arts: Connections Between Theory and Practice in the Medeival Muslim World. *Historia Mathematica* 27 (2000), 171–201
11. Petkovic, Miodrag. *Famous Puzzles of Great Mathematicians*. AMS Bookstore, 2009.
12. Suzuki, Jeff. *Mathematics in Historical Context*. MAA, 2009.
13. Wells, David. *The Penguin Book of Curious and Interesting Puzzles*. Penguin, 1992.
14. Wilson, Peter Lamborn. *Sacred Drift: Essays on the Margins of Islam*. City Lights Books, 1993.

Advanced Level Co-Winner

**Maternal Rejection Within Victorian England: How Lady Isabel
Refuses Her Children
In Order to Embrace Herself**

Alexandra Bennett

Within Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*, one of the most shocking and sensational passages occurs when Lady Isabel abandons her husband and children in order to live with an iniquitous villain. Prior to this departure, Lady Isabel experiences a fairly comfortable life at East Lynne. Her husband dotes on her excessively, and she takes great pleasure in her beloved children. Despite such happiness, Wood describes how Lady Isabel brews for too long on the possibility of her husband's infidelity while simultaneously spending too much time in the dangerous presence of Sir Francis Levison. With these circumstances in motion, Isabel makes the reckless decision to leave her family members and the life they had cherished together. As readers encounter this grievous passage, most are left in utter bewilderment. Mr. Carlyle has taken special care to ensure Isabel's every desire, so what is her motivation to leave this affectionate spouse? Furthermore, how can she bare to part from her beloved children knowing that she will never see them again? And lastly, how is Isabel able to wish for and even embrace the death of her illegitimate child? With this paper, I hope to provide satisfying answers to these questions as I explore the occurrence of maternal rejection within Victorian England. It could be said that Isabel's impulsive decision to leave her offspring is just a plot device on behalf of Wood. I accede that there is probably some truth to this assertion, especially considering that *East Lynne* is a sensation novel. However, I also submit that Wood is reacting to the British world surrounding her and subsequently commenting on its confining roles of motherhood for female citizens. By allowing Isabel to fall from her angelic pedestal, Wood demonstrates an entirely new facet of the protagonist's character and allows her to experience more freedom than she did as a committed mother. In this paper, I will argue that Isabel's first count of maternal rejection against her and Mr. Carlyle's children is the result of an early marriage that she was ill-prepared for, and that her second count of maternal rejection toward her and Levison's illegitimate child is spurred on by a lower social status and need to escape socially-defined stigmas.

Beginning with the initial count of maternal rejection, it is important to first take stock of Lady Isabel's circumstances. Prior to marrying Carlyle, Isabel is an orphan teenager who possesses little prospects for the future. Both her mother and father have died, and she is left with no place to live and no means with which to support herself. Her aunt and uncle, Lord and Lady Mount Severn, allow her to live with them at Castle Marling. Unfortunately, this is an extremely unpleasant arrangement for Isabel. Lady Mount Severn continually directs her hostile jealousies toward the young relative, and Isabel is left lamenting, "it is a

miserable home, and I cannot remain in it. I have been awake all night, thinking where I can go, but I cannot tell. I have not a friend in the wide world" (117). Considering such dismal conditions, it makes sense as to why Isabel trades this solitary life for one of permanent union. She is desperate to escape her bad-tempered relatives, and the opportunity of marriage presents a favorable alternative.

Commenting on the occurrence of these hasty nuptials, scholar Zsuzsa Berend highlights the idea that many Victorian women rejected the prospect of marriage so as to more fully develop as individuals. In her article "The Best of None! Spinsterhood in Nineteenth-Century New England," she describes how some women were "convinced that their lives served a higher purpose. Female self-direction . . . was not an ultimate good but a stepping stone to a life of usefulness and service, a life in accordance with God's purposes" (942). Espousing this viewpoint, certain women within the Victorian period rejected their children even before conception. These women believed that their lives would be more productively spent without the addition of a husband or offspring, and they did not see singleness as a selfish or undignified status. Berend's discussion appears to be especially significant in regards to Wood's literary comparison of Barbara Hare and Lady Isabel. After not receiving Carlyle's proposal like she had anticipated, Barbara gradually arrives at a comfortable state of singleness. She no longer desires the love of a man and instead focuses on other pursuits, such as the elevated goal of redeeming her exiled brother. Conversely, Lady Isabel marries at a young age and is therefore unable to fully self-actualize. It is perhaps because of this early marriage that Wood relates the tragic night in which Isabel disregards her family in order to realize the identity that she has never known. Wood's plot development might thus suggest that women who enter into marriage while still possessing internal lack are potentially charting a course towards failure within the realm of motherhood.

Aligning with this thought on internal lack, Nancy Fix Anderson lists further historical evidence in regards to mothers who abandoned their children. She notes that for Victorian women, the family setting was likely to elicit both feelings of love *and* rage. The feelings of love resulted from the strong bonds between various members of the household. These affectionate relationships were foundational to the Victorian family model. Additionally, Anderson also notes that familial relationships were primarily determined according to the husband's wishes and consequently a source of maternal rage. She explains, "The rage, particularly against patriarchal authority, was often manifested as religious rebellion, or, especially among women . . . of familial murder and escape. The family, therefore, idealized as a sanctuary from a stressful world, was in reality often a source of tension and disquiet" (287). Discussed here, the Victorian family environment was not always gratifying or even endurable for female participants. Male members controlled the relationships within the home, and this left many women feeling helpless, futile, and occasionally angry enough to leave their families.

This dichotomy of domestic power is evident within the scenes of *East Lynne*. One example occurs in the Hare household, where Justice Hare requires

his wife and daughter to remain completely silent in regards to Richard's supposed crime. Another example takes place within the residence of East Lynne, where Carlyle hides privileged information from his wife regarding Richard's legal case. It is in part this furtive control that will eventually drive Isabel into a domestic rage. Wood describes, "Lady Isabel almost gnashed her teeth: the jealous doubts which had been tormenting her all the evening were confirmed. That man whom she hated – yes, in her blind anger, she hated him then – should . . . pass the hours with Barbara Hare!" (271). As depicted here by the narrator, Isabel's anger is a real and violent force within her mind. For months, she has been tracking the interactions between Carlyle and Barbara. When she asks Carlyle for more information, he refuses to provide her with any relief on the subject. Over time, then, Isabel becomes increasingly suspicious and resentful of her husband's deeds. She still feels affection towards him and their children, but her festering rage will ultimately overpower her ability to remain inactive.

On one fateful night, then, Isabel decides to leave the residence with the intention of never returning. In a final note to Carlyle, she details her feelings of anger and betrayal, stating, "When years go on, and my children ask where their mother is, and why she left them, tell them that you, their father, goaded her to it . . . but tell them at the same time that you outraged and betrayed her, driving her to the very depth of desperation, ere she quitted them in her despair" (280). Clearly, the familial situation at East Lynne is more upsetting to Isabel than it is beneficial. She does not want to leave her children, but the confining marital situation leaves her with few alternatives. Though Isabel's departure represents the primary climax within the novel, such abandonment is not merely a fictitious plot device. By incorporating the tragic situation of Isabel, Wood is able to demonstrate how the restrictive roles placed on women are counterproductive in nature. These socially prescribed roles are meant to keep wives submissive in their homes, but instead they drive mothers to feelings of intense rage and the desire to abdicate all domestic duties. As shown with the first count of maternal rejection, some Victorian women did not find fulfillment in their marriages, and they thus sought drastic means in order to remedy the problem.

Looking beyond the first count of maternal rejection, it is also important to investigate the second incident in which Lady Isabel desires the death of her illegitimate child. After quitting East Lynne, Wood's heroine disappears with the deceitful character of Sir Francis Levison. The two take up residence in France, and Isabel soon becomes pregnant out of wedlock. Once the baby is born, Isabel feels extreme pity for the child, knowing that his reputation will forever be marked by illegitimacy. She is also worried that her reduced income will not provide for their needs. Audiences may feel pity for the fallen heroine's difficult circumstances, but they are also bewildered by her rejection of the helpless babe. Wood depicts, "It was the ill-starred child of Lady Isabel: she pressed its little face to her bosom, and her first feeling was a deep thankfulness that it had been so soon taken away from the evil to come" (321). As noted in this quotation, Isabel is actually relieved when the child dies in the train crash. She considers the child's passing to be an ideal solution to the problem of its illegitimacy as well

as an erasure of her sexual transgression.

Some readers might castigate Lady Isabel for such perceived parental cruelty. However, many scholars contend that such actions of maternal rejection were normal for lower class women living in nineteenth century England. Scholar Hera Cook notes that an unwanted pregnancy was oftentimes an overwhelming burden for lower to middle class females. Because of this, the possibility of pregnancy was always a looming concern. If single women like Isabel did become pregnant, they usually felt extreme shame and regret because of the societal pressure to restrain from extra-marital coitus. Cook describes pregnancy as “one of the great desirable outcomes of sexual behavior, but prior to the development of effective birth control in the mid-twentieth century, conception was also an uncontrollable risk. Pregnancy, and the resulting child, is both a physical demand upon the mother and a continuing economic cost for the best part of a decade” (915). As noted by Cook, Isabel’s pregnancy could have been a desirable outcome. Because of her lower social class, though, it makes sense as to why she rejects the baby. Isabel no longer has the economic security through Mr. Carlyle. Moreover, she also refuses to accept any monetary support from the unrighteous Levison. These circumstances greatly reduce her annual income, and the child becomes more of a burden than a blessing. Using Isabel’s actions of maternal rejection, Wood is able to accurately convey the severity of unplanned pregnancies for women of lower social standing in Victorian England.

Besides her lower social class, it is also plausible that Isabel rejects the illegitimate child in order to escape the socially-defined stigma of pregnancy out of wedlock. Ginger Suzanne Frost discusses this topic in her article “‘The Black Lamb of the Black Sheep’: Illegitimacy in the English Working Class, 1850-1939.” Frost notes that for working class women, the prospect of bearing a child outside of marriage was shame-ridden and oftentimes too difficult to endure. She relates, “Unmarried women wanted to avoid the disgrace and shame and so abandoned or murdered their infants . . . Servants in particular were prone to infanticide, since they could not possibly care for an infant in their jobs, but other women also committed the crime, usually from a combination of poverty and fear of disgrace.” (296-7). As noted here, many working class women resorted to maternal rejection in order to distance themselves from the shame of their actions and to then envision a different, more respectable future. This point seems especially applicable when trying to process Isabel’s rejection of her child. Considering the baby’s eventual death, it seems that Wood once again provides her protagonist with liberation through the mechanism of maternal rejection. Furthermore, her writing might also be castigation against the English bastardy laws of the time. Frost notes that these laws were the harshest throughout all of Europe and that other nineteenth century authors were also subversively speaking out against them in their writing. It seems that Isabel’s rejection of her illegitimate child might thus be a harsh rebuke in regards to England’s illegitimacy legislation that so negatively punished both parent and child, especially those of the lower classes.

Adding a final interpretation to the second count of maternal rejection, Kate Flint turns her attention to a change that is surfacing within recent scholarship on

gender studies. In her article, "Recent Studies in the Nineteenth Century," Flint writes that scholars are beginning to reevaluate the inclusion of maternal rejection within literature. Instead of interpreting poor mothering habits as a negative representation, it might actually be more appropriate to view such inclusions as the mechanism in which female characters come into their own identity. From this viewpoint, one can see that Victorian authors do not portray their female protagonists as unsuitable mothers in order to chastise them or to provide a moral message for audiences. Instead, these authors incorporate instances of maternal rejection so that their female characters can demonstrate a wider range of emotions, actions, and propensities beyond those of the limitative Victorian society. Flint describes these violent female characters as ones who reach "popular apotheosis in the 'unnatural' figure of the murdering mother, and also of the ongoing determination in feminist literary scholarship to disrupt the tracks—so well-worn as to have left deep wheel ruts—of the domestic angel and her demonic counterpart" (884). As shown in this quotation, Flint asserts that authors like Wood are able to emancipate their female characters by allowing them to partake in seemingly evil acts of maternal rejection. As opposed to slipping into sin, these female protagonists encounter their greatest hour as full-fledged individuals that can determine their own course without regard to anyone else. This idea seems to align with Wood's depiction of Lady Isabel. At first, audiences might be baffled when they read of Isabel's familial rejection and subsequent pursuit of a selfish love interest. Considering Flint's article, though, it can be argued that Isabel's fallen character is more representative of a self-reliant and liberated personality because she is able to temporarily escape the confining norms of motherhood.

An example of this freeing perspective is seen when Isabel returns to East Lynne to work as the hired governess. With this job, it is true that Isabel's social status is significantly lower than when she was the mistress of the house. However, it is crucial to note that Isabel consciously makes this decision on her own terms. Wood exemplifies, "She had passionately loved her children; she had been anxious for their welfare in all ways: and, not the least that she had to endure now, was the thought that she had abandoned them to be trained by strangers. Would they be trained to goodness, to morality, to religion?" (390). In this scene, Wood clearly relates Isabel's love for her children and her continued interest in their wellbeing. The problem is not that she does not care for them, but it is that Isabel was previously unprepared to fully devote her life to motherhood. As such, Isabel leaves the role for a time and is then able to ascertain what she truly desires. She makes the bold choice of returning to East Lynne so that she can properly raise her children. Reading this passage alongside Flint's research, one can confidently state that this is Isabel's glorious moment of apotheosis. She is finally living according to her own wishes, and she cares little for the opinions of others. Her decision to return to East Lynne is extremely brash, and it is unlikely that she would have made such a move before her acts of maternal rejection. At this point in her self-development, Isabel is now her own unrestricted person, and she will do what she wants despite the possibility of being discovered.

Within the novel *East Lynne*, the incidence of maternal rejection is both perplexing and tragic. Audiences encounter this plot occurrence not only once, but on two different occasions. Moreover, both counts relate to the same female protagonist. Attempting to comprehend this situation, readers are likely to first experience bewilderment and then some anger or resentment towards the absent mother. This was the response of the flighty Afy Hallijohn, who states, "A brute animal, deaf and dumb clings to its offspring: but *she* abandoned hers" (396). As verbalized by Afy, it is natural to question the actions of Lady Isabel. She is the one that leaves her children based upon the erroneous assumption that her husband is engaging in an extra-marital affair. Isabel will then repeat the act of maternal rejection once she births her illegitimate child. I acquiesce that such responses of resentment are appropriate and even valid when interpreting the actions of Wood's heroine. However, one should not neglect to consider the evidence left by Wood that denotes a far more complex problem within Victorian England. Wood carefully documents that Isabel did not marry for love, but for escape. She also spends significant time discussing Isabel's hidden unhappiness at East Lynne as well as the problems associated with her lower social status in France. With these details, Isabel's maternal rejection seems to suggest problems within the time period that greatly affected real women. The role of motherhood within Victorian England was not simple, and women were oftentimes left seeking an escape from the confining situation. Wood's heroine is an embodiment of this social problem, and the sensation novel's plot development shows that even the most beautiful and outwardly perfect individual is not exempt from the suffocating demands of prescribed gender roles. Afy eventually agrees with this: "lady angels go wrong sometimes, you see; they are not universally immaculate" (333). With this, there is little reason to demand maternal perfection from Wood's female protagonist. Audiences should instead contemplate the societal pressures that contribute to Isabel's rejection of her children as well as how this maternal rejection allows her to more fully embrace her own identity.

Works Cited

- Anderson, Nancy Fix. "Family." *Victorian Britain: An Encyclopedia*. New York: Garland, 1988. Print.
- Berend, Zsuzsa. "The Best of None! Spinsterhood in Nineteenth-Century New England." *Journal of Social History* 33.4 (2000): 935-957. *Project MUSE*. 2 Apr. 2010
- Cook, Hera. "Sexuality and Contraception in Modern England: Doing the History of Reproductive Sexuality." *Journal of Social History* 40.4 (2007): 915-932. *Project MUSE*. 3 Apr. 2010.
- Flint, Kate. "Recent Studies in the Nineteenth Century." *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 44.4 (2004): 873-923. *Project MUSE*. Web. 1 Apr. 2010.
- Frost, Ginger Suzanne. "'The Black Lamb of the Black Sheep': Illegitimacy in the English Working Class, 1850-1939." *Journal of Social History* 37.2 (2003): 293-322. *Project MUSE*. Web. 1 Apr. 2010.
- Wood, Ellen. *East Lynne*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005. Print.

Crazy

Kristin Whittington

“A mental hospital called Valumark? What kind of name is that?” I snorted with laughter and sat down under the pay phone in the Valumark adult ward lobby. I assumed my perkier 1950’s housewife voice, and continued. “*‘When my suicide attempt failed, I knew I wanted a hospital that would be a good value for me and family. After all, I was going to live to have to pay the bill!’*”

Laura and I were cracking up. Finally.

Thank God I had finally gotten ahold of her. I couldn’t receive calls there, and could only call people on the pay phone in the World’s Most Depressing Lobby. Valumark’s patient care obviously didn’t extend to letting patients access their support system in the outside world. I opened a twin-pack of saltines I had nabbed from the cafeteria. I had forgotten how much I liked them—the salty crispiness, the latticed edges. Technically, patients weren’t allowed to take food back to the ward—probably not cost-effective, but I guess I was skinny enough they were making an exception.

“So what happened?” Laura’s voice was quiet with concern. Crumbs began to dot the industrial-gray carpet, which was so rough my ass was getting rug-burned through my chinos.

“Well,” I paused as I crunched the crackers, finally swallowing them so I could continue. “I guess I just went CRAZY-AHAHAHAHA.” I tried to laugh like Vincent Price, then quieted down when a few nurses looked over at me from the nurses’ station. It was straight in front of the phones and only 25 feet away, probably on purpose so they could listen in on patients’ conversations. So I started whispering. “But Sylvia Plath crazy, not Hannibal Lector crazy.”

“Oh Kristin.” Laura chuckled, then sighed. “I’m just so sad that you’re hurting...”

I scrunched my back against the textured grey wallpaper and cursed the short phone cord that kept me from lying down on the carpet. Damn public phones. “So today we had art therapy and drew pictures, and watched some totally lame video about bad family relationships, and then I went for a walk with Mike, who is one of the counselors here.”

“Ooh,” Laura giggled. “The mental hospital sounds kinda like summer camp!”

“It IS like summer camp!” I hissed into the phone. Whispering wasn’t working. “Except instead of kids it’s all old people!”

Valumark was where a local nursing home sent their patients with mental problems. In the adult ward, I was almost 35 years younger than the Margarie, who had checked herself in. Everyone else was from the nursing home, and old enough to be my grandparent. There were kids' wards too—the ward for teenage girls was right next to ours, and the top part of the door separating the lobbies was usually open so the nursing staff could talk to each other.

“Has Chuck come to see you?”

“Yeah. We have visitation hours every other day, and he's come every time after work. How're you dealing with the Nick drama?”

While she started telling me about her disintegrating engagement to Mr. Big Man On Campus, I started watching Harry as he worked on the community puzzle in the middle of the lobby area where the pay phone was. His brows sank in quiet concentration as he fingered the puzzle piece. He seemed completely oblivious to me on the phone in front of him to this left, and to the nurses buzzing around behind him. If you were to ask Harry why he was there (which you should never do—that's just rude. Half of mental patients would be offended and half would have no idea what you were talking about)...anyway, if you were to ask Harry why he was there, he would blink rapidly and tell you he had killed his son. He obviously felt really awful about it, because he was so grief-stricken he was in the mental hospital. But his son had come to visit last night, and Harry had bent over in confusion, blinking back tears and backing away from him. I couldn't stand the unfairness of it, and had gone back to my room to curse God and his abandonment of the world.

In his happier moments Harry thought I was his grandson, and patted me on the back and tried to pick invisible tape off my slippers. The tape-picking had annoyed the nurse who was sitting in on our morning group counseling session, and when she told him to stop, Margarie explained to her that Harry thought I was his grandson. For someone who works with mental patients, the nurse seemed unreasonably annoyed by this.

“Well, I do look like a 10-year-old boy,” I had piped up, grabbing my grown-out pixie cut with one hand and curling the other arm to show off my paltry bicep. The counselor leading the group thought that was funny.

I crunched another saltine, then cleared my throat.

The phone was getting hot on my ear as Laura's story about Nick got longer and longer. I watched as Harry pursed his lips, trying to find a home for his puzzle piece—the same one he had been holding 10 minutes ago. For a moment my stomach clenched, and I sank back against the concrete wall, squeezing my eyes closed to shut him out. Then I flung all my limbs out around me and stretched out on the floor as far as the phone cord would let me. I crunched

another saltine loud enough for the nosy nurses to hear, wondering if Laura would feel better if I “accidentally” tore Nick limb-from-limb and spread his remains across campus. Probably not. I sighed and rolled my eyes, thinking that people as oblivious and uncaring as Nick shouldn’t be allowed to exist.

“I’m so sorry things with Nick are so hard. I just don’t understand it.” I kept feeding quarters to the pay phone until I ran out, and after we said goodbye I sat there until the sunlight started to fade on Harry and me.

The next afternoon the lobby was empty except for a couple of nurses I wanted to avoid at the nurses’ station. One kept trying to convince me I needed better boundaries and the other had told me that once she had seen Bob Berdella hiding in the bushes on a street corner. I tiptoed stealthily over to the half-door separating the adult ward from the ward where the teenage girls were, hoping that standing just to the right of the nurse’s station wouldn’t elicit lectures or weird stories about local serial killers.

“What are you doing out there?” A dark-haired nurse from the girls’ ward frowned when she saw me through the half-door. “Oh. You’re the girl from the adult ward. Sorry. I thought you had sneaked out of here. Did you want to read some magazines? I’ll tell the nurses in your ward.”

She was nice. Mike the Counselor had suggested to the nurses that I might like to read the magazines over in the girl’s ward. I was bored to tears by the *Better Homes and Gardens* all over the adult ward. I hated that magazine: better than what? And who was the judge of that?

Sometimes in the afternoons the nurses let me in to the girls’ ward lobby. Today it was pretty quiet, and just as oppressively grey and beige as the adult ward. Annie and Destiny were cutting pictures out of Seventeen magazine to glue on to pieces of construction paper. The kiddy safety scissors cut like crap, and Annie was complaining loudly to one of the nurses. “But they DON’T WORK!!” she huffed, her face getting blotchy.

“Remember what we talked about Annie. Take a deep breath.” The dark-haired nurse’s tired recitation had a sing-song dullness to it. “if you lose your temper you’ll lose your scissor privileges.”

Annie sat back down.

She was 15, the daughter of a pastor at some Baptist church. We got to talking about her dad and her faith the first time I met her. I told her I was a Christian, too.

“Do you believe in the Holy Ghost?” she had asked aggressively, as though it were the litmus test of proper faith.

I wasn't sure why she was asking, so I just said yes.

“Good.” She had sat down by me and started poking my hair. “I like your barrettes.”

“What's up?” I said as I hopped on to the beige couch by Annie. The coffee table was covered in tattered magazines, everything from *Highlights for Kids* to *Seventeen*. Destiny sat across from us in a faded tan La-Z-Boy. She was holding a different baby doll today, and pulled up her bright pink tee shirt to nurse it. Destiny was 14, and so sweet it hurt. She had deep dimples on her dark cheeks when she smiled. Her little sister was at Valumark too.

“Why're you here?” Destiny had asked shyly the first time I met her.

“Oh, lots of reasons. What about you?”

“Lots of reasons. Mostly 'cause I bit my Gramma.”

I had given her a wan smile, as though I discussed Gramma-biting on a regular basis. “So why'd you do that?”

Destiny had raised her eyebrows at me as though I were asking the dumbest question ever. “I don't know!”

The nurse glanced over at us and saw Destiny nursing her doll. “Destiny, nursing your doll in public is not appropriate. Put your shirt down, please.”

Destiny pulled today's baby doll out of her shirt.

They cut pictures for a while, and I tried to make sense of the chopped up magazine articles. We talked about how they didn't like school and I told them to hang in there for college, because all school before college basically sucks. They started rating the cuteness of N'Sync and The Backstreet Boys. Annie was totally going to meet Justin Timberlake because her cousin knew his neighbor or something. They thought he should get a prize for being the cutest.

“Who do you like best?” Destiny asked me. She was burping her doll.

“Oh, I don't know. I already have a boyfriend.” Plus Justin Timberlake was my younger brother's age. Yuck.

“You do? Is he cute?” Suddenly all the girls wanted to hear about was Chuck. They said they were going to watch for him when he came to visit me.

“I have a boyfriend. He’s my fiancé.” Annie sucked in her cheeks and tossed her long blond hair.

“Oh really? What’s he like? How do you know him?” I asked.

“Well, he’s here too, and we have some of our classes together. His name’s Bryan. He’s been here for two months, too. And we’re going to get out of here and get married.”

Destiny thumped her doll on the back and started to cackle. “You’re going to marry someone you met in a MENTAL HOSPITAL?” she bent over laughing. “You must be CRAZY!”

In a split second Annie had jumped up on to the couch, her face contorted and fists clenched. She leapt over the magazines on the coffee table and landed on Destiny, who started screaming as Annie body-slammed her. Annie pummeled and kicked, shrieking, “WE’RE NOT CRAZY! WE’RE IN LOVE!”

I leapt over the back of the couch and ran for the half-door. The attending nurse was shouting for help and trying to pry Annie off Destiny. I turned back just long enough to see another nurse arrive with a syringe full of sedative. I guessed that Annie was going to lose her scissor privileges.

Later that week I finally got some quarters to call Laura again, and we were giggling so hard about the girls’ ward incident, I almost choked on the raisins I had pilfered from the cafeteria.

“So yeah. Lots of drama.” I tried to catch my breath and finish chewing. My legs were falling asleep from sitting cross-legged on the carpet. I stretched them out in front of me and we were quiet for a moment. “Oh, and I got a report card when my parents and Chuck came for visiting hours tonight.”

“Oh yeah? Have you stopped being crazy yet?”

“On the positive side, ‘Kristin is encouraging to other patients and a good role model for the girls in the young adult ward.’ Thank you, thank you very much.” I tried to do my best Elvis impersonation. “But my tendency to use ‘humor and people-pleasing to avoid feelings’ is a concern.”

“Hm. What do you think about that?”

I paused and closed my eyes, slowly chewing my raisins as I slumped back against the scratchy grey wall.

I swallowed, and rolled my eyes as I opened them. “People-pleaser? I think they’re full of crap. I hate people—they should be concerned about that.”

I started giggling. So did Laura.

**Special
Section:
Southwest Early
College Campus**

Introduction

Dr. Jane Greer

The University of Missouri, Kansas City is a university that is committed to being actively engaged with the Kansas City community. For the past four years, UMKC earned a spot on the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, the highest federal recognition a college or university can earn for promoting volunteerism, service-learning, and civic engagement. Students and faculty in Architecture and Urban Planning have designed redevelopment projects for post-Katrina New Orleans. Students and faculty in the School of Pharmacy work through Project Outreach to educate fourth- and fifth-graders about safely using medicines and the perils of drug abuse. Students and faculty in the School of Computing and Engineering invest their time and energies in ARROWS, a summer immersion experience for area high school students and teachers that allows them to explore career possibilities in Science, Technology, and Engineering, and Math.

The College of Arts and Science's English Department has also been deploying its intellectual and creative energies for the betterment of the wider community. The English Department is home to the Greater Kansas City Writing Project, which works to improve writing instruction at all grade levels by organizing professional development opportunities for teachers throughout the metropolitan area, and the English Department's poets and novelists routinely offer free public readings of their work at venues throughout the city. Even the curriculum for English 110, the first-year composition course that is required for all university students, focuses on issues of civic engagement and asks students to research local issues as they work to further develop their reading and writing abilities. Most recently, the English Department faculty, staff, and students have been engaged with teachers and students at Southwest Early College Campus (SWECC).

As a partnership between the Kansas City, Missouri School District, UMKC, Prep KC, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the Kansas City Area Life Sciences Institute, and Donnelly College, SWECC seeks to bridge the gulf between secondary and post-secondary educational institutions and to ensure that its graduates have all the tools they will need to be successful as college students. Indeed, SWECC students can begin taking college classes as early as ninth grade, and the school's goal is for all students to earn at least twenty hours of college credit before they finish twelfth grade.

The following three essays were written by SWECC students— Samantha Curfman, Ngan Nguyen, and Logan Masenthin. Along with their classmates in Djana Trofimoff's Sophomore Honors English class, Curfman, Nguyen, and Masenthin, worked throughout the year to become experts on Writing Centers and to lay the foundation for SWECC to open its own Writing Center Fall 2010.

Generously funded by a grant from Prep KC, Ms. Trofimoff's students were able to visit Writing Centers at UMKC, the University of Kansas, and Johnson County Community College. They interviewed the academic

professionals who direct Writing Centers, the tutors who work there, and the students who avail themselves of the services offered at Writing Centers. The high school students read published research on Writing Centers, presented their own findings to a wide-range of stakeholders, and made recommendations to school administrators about how SWECC should go about establishing its own Writing Center.

Samantha Curfman offers here an impassioned plea for establishing Writing Centers in urban high schools. For Curfman, Writing Centers can serve as a positive space where the individual needs of students who may be writing below grade level can be met, and she also observes that even students who are strong writers benefit by serving as tutors and further developing their own communication skills. Ngan Nguyen's essay focuses more particularly on how Writing Centers can serve students who are just learning the English language. She synthesizes an expansive body of research and succinctly articulates several key strategies that tutors and Writing Center professionals can use to better serve students for whom English is not a first language. Finally, Logan Masenthin argues that a Writing Center must use multiple communication channels to explain its mission to key constituencies. According to Masenthin, catchy slogans, classroom visits, a useful, user-friendly website, and print materials can all be rhetorically effective ways for a Writing Center to establish its profile in a school community. While all three of these young scholars offer readers important information about Writing Centers in secondary schools, their essays also stand as impressive models of research-based writing. Curfman, Nguyen, and Masenthin deftly orchestrate a conversation among the sources they cite, never losing sight of their own rhetorical purpose, and their arguments unfold in clear, fine, strong-boned paragraphs and sentences that are easily accessible to readers.

Curfman, Nguyen, Masenthin and their classmates were assisted in their year-long project on Writing Centers by several members of UMKC's English Department, including Thomas Ferrel, Director of UMKC's Writing Center, Melanie Burdick, English Department Coordinator for the High School/College Program, and Jane Greer, Associate Professor of English and University Liaison for SWECC. While the engagement of these faculty members with constituencies beyond the UMKC campus is yet another exciting example of the university's commitment to civic involvement, even more exciting is that students like Samantha Curfman, Ngan Nguyen, and Logan Masenthin and their classmates are similarly developing their skills as civic participants who can use words to build better worlds for themselves and others. Because of their efforts, SWECC's Writing Center will be a place where students can seek assistance in writing lab reports and history essays, draft college admissions essays, write love letters, find an appreciative audience for their poetry, and join with others to share their creative energies and explore the power of language. *The Sosland Journal* is proud to include their essays here.

The Impact of a Writing Center in the Inner-City

Samantha Curfman

As a student who has attended inner-city public schools over the course of my entire educational career, I have seen too many of my peers fall far behind. They lack skills that should have been taught early on, especially in writing. They have trouble with basic grammar and punctuation, and as more challenging work is added on, the students lose all confidence and just give up, ultimately losing their chances at college and future success. But it is not their fault: these students have been failed by our country's education system, a flawed system that is in dire need of reform. The question is: what can be done to ensure that students in the inner-city are able to receive the skills necessary to achieve success in college and in their careers? Writing centers play an enormous role in providing students with skills in writing and speaking, and can improve the quality of education in the inner-city, enabling all kinds of students to achieve success.

The unfortunate reality is that students are simply not being prepared for college. According to a 2001 report by the Center for Civic Innovation, only 70% of public high school students graduate and only 32% of all students leave high school qualified to attend college. The statistics are even more shocking for minority students: the same study shows that only 20% of black students and 16% of Hispanic students are ready for college upon leaving high school, compared to 37% of white students and 38% of Asian students (Greene). "Writing and School Reform" proves that national writing achievement fares just as poorly. This report states that 22% of 12th grade students write below basic level and 78% of students write below proficient. This indicates that students can write "fairly run-of-the-mill prose." The students demonstrate a "limited grasp" of complex thought. "They are able to organize their thoughts and provide some detail, but they cannot systematically produce writing at the high levels of skill, maturity, and sophistication required in a complex, modern economy" ("Writing and School Reform").

With the emphasis states put on assessments in primarily reading and mathematics, many do not realize the true importance of writing, historically and presently, in our society. Our country's freedom was achieved because of a revolution that was started by the Declaration of Independence, a written document. Historic leaders, such as Thomas Jefferson, César Chavez, and Martin Luther King, Jr. have given voices to our nation's people, allowing the oppressed to rise against injustice ("Writing and School Reform"). In modern society, one would be hard pressed to find something that was created without involvement with writing. Our movies, television, and music all began with writers. According to the National Commission on Writing, "More than 90 percent of mid-career professionals recently cited the 'need to write effectively' as a skill 'of great importance' in their day-to-day work" ("Writing: A Ticket to Work"). The work force's ever-increasing demand for workers with excellent critical thinking skills translates into the need for good writers, because writing is essentially

thought on paper. Therefore, a good writer can translate into a good thinker (“Writing: A Ticket to Work”).

If writing is such an important skill, then why is it not being taught to students? The problem is that many teachers are “too constrained by prescribed curricula and classroom overcrowding to provide much one-on-one help” (Feltenger). This one-on-one help is necessary for the many students who have very little writing ability, but teachers often do not have the time to meet with each of their students. This is where a writing center can come in. “Writing centers are constructive spaces where students can receive individualized support and guidance throughout the writing process” (Feltenger). They do not replace writing instruction by a classroom teacher; instead, they reinforce concepts taught by the teacher. In a writing center, students can meet individually with tutors to discuss their work at any point in the writing process, from prewriting to drafting. Tutors do not just give the answers; instead, they work with the student to help the student discover what they want to say and how to say it.

There are numerous benefits to creating a writing center in an inner-city high school. Writing centers are able to accommodate any student, even one that writes below their grade level. This is because the focus of each tutoring session is the need of the student and because each session only focuses on a specific topic, the tutor will be able to focus on the quality of the information taught, not the quantity. Students are able to develop skills in all aspects of writing, from basic grammar and sentence structure to formatting, style, and the writing process. Learning the writing process provides a strong foundation for new writers, and each step, such as using sources, defining a thesis, and creating drafts, becomes increasingly easier.

Writing centers provide a positive environment for students. At a writing center, the focus for an assignment is not the grade; instead, it is the quality of the writing. This allows better writing because when a student sees a tutor “wholly [as] an ally, students are more willing to take risks, connect [themselves] to the material, and experiment. [This] is the source not just of learning but also of genuine development and growth” (Childers). The tutor is not grading the student, or even forcing him or her to make certain corrections. The tutor is just a guide, making suggestions without judging the student. This creates a more laid-back environment, eliminating much of the stress that a student might feel when discussing their work with a teacher.

Being school-wide institutions, instead of just being for English assignments, writing centers can be helpful for just about any subject, from biology teachers assigning lab write-ups to Spanish teachers that assign reports about Spanish culture. Teachers will not have to worry about wasting valuable class time having to teach students the writing process; they could just send the students to the writing center to develop their papers. In addition to grasping a better understanding of the subject matter, students are able to understand that writing does not just apply to English: it transfers from one subject to another.

Tutors are also benefited by the writing center. In addition to being able to get any extra help with their school assignments, they can also build several

important skills that could make them successful in later careers. An obvious skill is writing; tutors are able to improve their own writing skill when they help identify and correct others' mistakes. Tutors also build excellent communication skills: they have to effectively communicate to the student and clearly explain concepts. They have to speak in a way that makes the student comfortable and willing to open up. Tutors learn to listen and think quickly.

Although the benefits that a writing center provides should be enough reason for a school to open a writing center, there are certain obstacles that are faced by many who try to open their own writing centers, particularly in the inner-city. Public schools often face an "administrative hierarchy," and even small changes to the school's budget would require a wide-spread "buy-in" to the idea. Writing centers are a huge investment requiring a substantial amount of time and money. Space must be set aside, resources must be bought, and supervisors must be paid. Careful budgeting and teaching a writing center's benefits are ways to convince administrators.

Another way to convince administrators could be providing an example of a center that has been proven to work. After discovering in a review that their district's writing instruction was inadequate, Wisconsin's New London school district began implementing a system of change. This system involved teacher development programs and creating a district writing assessment, which was given to students in 1982. This test established a baseline for any improvement that would come with the changes in writing instruction. When compared to a list of certain grade-level expectations, 60 percent of 12th grade students were found to be writing below the objectives. Fifteen percent of these showed need for remediation. It was evident that writing needed to be improved, and along with reviewing the language arts curriculum, the district began opening writing centers. With careful budgeting, several were built in junior high and elementary schools, and the success of the centers inspired the district to open a writing center in the senior high in 1985. Student use, faculty interest, and administrative support were proven to be successful, and scores from the 1982 assessment improved dramatically in the following years. The percentage of students scoring at or above grade level in 1987 was 73%, compared to 43% in 1982. The percentage of students requiring remedial help decreased from 15 percent to only nine percent. New London's decision to create writing centers not only improved test scores, but improved the atmosphere of the schools as well, bringing teachers, administrators, community members, and even students together. New London's story proves that good writing, budgeting writing centers efficiently, and getting students and teachers motivated are all attainable goals (Behm).

Many solutions have been proposed to help reform our system of education, but none have yet to work. The problem is that these solutions do not put any focus on a necessary skill that many American children are not currently taught: writing. Being successful in college and most careers requires the ability to effectively communicate your ideas through writing. Without these skills, the next generation's César Chavez or Martin Luther King, Jr. will not be able to make significant improvements to our world; something must be done to prepare

these future leaders. Implementing writing centers in inner-city high schools will give writing support to the students who need it the most. These students will finally be able to learn how to write and speak effectively in several subjects. The safe, positive environment that a writing center provides will keep urban students off the streets and in the classroom, where they can finally learn the material needed to get into college, and ultimately earn their degrees.

Works Cited

- Beers, Kylene. "The Genteel Unteaching of America's Poor." National Council of Teachers of English. March 2009. Web. 19 Apr. 2010.
- Behm, Richard. "Establishing Writing Centers Throughout a School District: A Case Study in Defeating Yeahbuts and Ifonlys." *The Writing Lab Newsletter* 12.6. February 1988. Web. 1 Apr. 2010.
- Childers, Pamela. "The Secondary School Writing Center: A Place to Build Confident, Competent Writers." *Praxis: A Writing center Journal* 2.1 (2004). Web. 1 Apr. 2010.
- Feltenberger, Alicia. "Opening the Door to Discourse: Cooperation, Authority, and the Inner-City High School Writing Center." *Praxis: A Writing center Journal* 5.2 (2008). Web. 1 Apr. 2010.
- "First Student Staffed High School Writing Center in Brooklyn Established From St. John's/Nazareth High School Collaboration." *St. John's University*. 12 June 2008. Web. 19 Apr. 2010.
- Greene, Jay. "High School Graduation Rates in the United States." Manhattan Institute for Quality Research. Apr. 2002. Web. 24 May 2010.
- Harris, Muriel. "Writing Center Concept." *International Writing Centers Association*. Web. 1 Apr. 2010.
- Kent, Richard. "Creating Student-Staffed Writing Centers, Grades 6-12." *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal* 4.1 (2006). Web. 1 Apr. 2010.
- Meuller, Greg. "A Call to Action: Embracing the Need for High School Writing Centers." *The Writing Lab Newsletter* 30.10 (2006): 10-11. Web. 19 Apr. 2010.
- "Writing: A Ticket to Work... Or a Ticket Out." *The National Commission on Writing*. September 2004. Web. 19 Apr. 2010.
- "Writing and School Reform." *The National Commission on Writing*. May 2006. Web. 19 Apr. 2010.

Writing Centers: Getting the Word Out

Logan Masenthin

How can Southwest Early College Campus create a successful writing center? A lot of different ideas could answer this question, but a writing center that no one knows about is not of much help to anyone. That is why it is a necessity to advertise them well. There are many different ways of getting the word out about writing centers, and nearly all of them are useful. In order to create a successful writing center at Southwest, we need to make advertisement a priority and explore it from all different angles.

The first thing you should look at while brainstorming advertisement ideas is who to target as your audience (“Top 10 Tips”). At Southwest, we will be targeting mostly high school students. We have not yet decided if we will accept community members or younger students as well, but those things should be figured out before we take any major advertisement steps.

Once we know our targeted audience, we should come up with a catchy slogan and/or logo that will aid in any advertisement attempts (“Top 10 Tips”). This is a way for the students of Southwest to recognize the writing center and for our advertisements to stick out. Having an image should help unify us as a writing center and also help our advertisements be more effective.

While advertising our writing center, there are two main points that we need to emphasize. The first is that the purpose of a writing center is not just to proofread papers but can help with all parts of the writing process. The second is that anyone can get help at a writing center; it is not limited to beginning writers (“14: Writing Center Publicity”).

While keeping these things in mind, the first steps of advertising our writing center should be kept pretty basic. An online article titled “14: Writing Center Publicity” contains a lot of good ideas for this. We can tell others about the center and what it offers; and if given the opportunity to talk about it, we should. This means that if anyone asks us a question about the writing center, we should either be prepared to answer it or be able to refer him or her to someone else. It also means that if we are given the opportunity to speak at an event or meeting, we should take the opportunity to advertise our services. On top of that, starting simple conversation about the writing center and always remaining positive will look great for our writing center.

Another simple idea for advertisement is to have the tutors give classroom visits throughout the school. This will help students get their questions answered, learn a little more about the writing center, and know how to apply the center to all of their classes, not just English. Things like this, just as simple as getting the word out, are sure to bring attention to the writing center.

One thing bound to attract people to our writing center is bright, clever material. We can make posters, flyers, pamphlets, and signs, and post them all over the school. A writing center mentioned in “14: Writing Center Publicity” has the logo of a pencil, and they display posters in the shape of pencils all over campus. The Montreat College Writing Center in North Carolina displays posters

with intriguing questions or statements. Some of the questions include: “Where does the comma go?” and “How do I format footnotes?” One of the statements says: “I need to write 10 pages, but I only have 3!” (“14: Writing Center Publicity”). Things like this, or simply posting arrows in the direction of the writing center, will bring people in.

Another great way to let people know about the writing center is to have a detailed schedule available to everyone. While visiting the University of Kansas’ writing center, I saw a rectangular plastic case on the front door of their main center containing multi-colored papers. The visible paper on the top was a schedule of the writing centers’ hours, and I assumed that the ones underneath it were similar. If the writing center were closed on a certain day, or if there was a particular month where the hours changed, the paper on the top could be easily replaced with one of the papers beneath it. This would be a great way for our writing center to let people know when they could come in and get help. In addition, we could place schedules in the center and around the school, available for anyone to take.

One advertisement technique recommended by “14: Writing Center Publicity” is to give away free materials. Anything with our name and information on it will remind students that we are there. We could give away bookmarks, pencils, stickers, etc. Getting things for free will also make coming to the writing center more enjoyable, because everyone loves free stuff. When thinking of it in this way, we could also consider giving away things without our information, like paper and books. Anything that makes people want to come to the writing center is an effective way of advertising.

Another incentive for coming to the writing center could be that it was required in some classes. For this, we need to build partnerships with our faculty (“14: Writing Center Publicity”; Barnett 1). I discovered on various visits to writing centers with the Honors English class at Southwest, how important it is to be connected with the teachers that work in the schools. Many teachers require that their students visit the writing center, and many recommend it. It would also be a lot easier to give classroom visits if the teachers are on board. On top of that, partnerships with anyone could be helpful. One possibility is libraries.

The writing centers at the University of Kansas and the University of Missouri – Kansas City both have strong partnerships with their school libraries. One of the centers at the University of Kansas is located directly inside a library, with all of its resources readily available. Additionally, the tutors at the University of Missouri – Kansas City refer their students to reference librarians in order to aid them in research. Both writing centers combine their resources and knowledge with the libraries’ in order to become stronger as writing centers. We should make sure and do this with our library at Southwest. The combination of the writing center with the library will not only make for a better writing center, it will also make for better advertisement. If we have our librarian on board with us, she or he can recommend us to anyone who comes into the library.

The partnerships do not have to stop there. We can create partnerships with the school newspaper, whoever makes the morning and after-school announcements, the Student Council, and more. These people might be able to

help us start creating more formal advertisements. We can put ads in the newspaper (“14: Writing Center Publicity”). We can talk about the writing center on the intercom. We can make announcements at community events. There are endless possibilities.

Once we start getting into more formal advertisements, or maybe even before, we need to think about creating a website. Every successful writing center has a website. The Johnson County Community College Writing Center website shows their hours and tells a little bit about what they do there. They also have some online resources, which can be very helpful to the people who go to the writing center (“Writing Center”). The University of Kansas and the University of Missouri – Kansas City writing center websites are very similar.

It is also very important that our website can be easily accessed. One way to do this is to register at a writing center database. At the “Writers’ Conferences & Centers” website, anyone looking for a nearby writing center or conference can simply put in a few guidelines and search for what they are looking for. That way, if anyone is actually looking for us, we can be easily found (“Welcome to WC&C”).

Once someone finds our website, there are a few good things we should include on it. In addition to basic details like our writing center’s location, schedule, and contact information, there are a couple of things that should be very helpful. One thing that looked useful on the University of Missouri – Kansas City’s writing center website was a calendar of events (“News and Events”). Not only should our website show the events we are holding, but it will also take work to make these events take place. While interviewing a few of the tutors at the University of Missouri – Kansas City’s writing center, I found out that making people feel welcome and excited to come to the center is a very effective form of advertisement (Ramirez; Waples). The people there hold frequent events that are sometimes not related to writing at all.

Some of the non-writing related events include movie nights and game nights (Ramirez; Waples). These things are intended to simply get people acclimated to the writing center environment, and know that they are always welcome. This type of advertising would be great for Southwest’s writing center—to get people excited about the center and also to help unify our school.

A lot of other events held at the University of Missouri – Kansas City’s writing center do relate to writing. They hold poetry slams often, where people of any age, race, or religion are invited to come share their poetry with others. Even some of the students at our school have attended these events. They also have events to celebrate holidays.

During International Writing Centers Week, from February 15 to February 19 this year, the writing center at the University of Missouri – Kansas City held events for every day of the week. On the 15th, which was President’s Day, they invited students to come in and write letters to the president while enjoying tea and socializing with others. For the rest of the week, they invited people to add their own additions to a visual text, participate in a Mardi Gras themed poetry slam, graffiti the bathroom walls in other languages, enjoy a free stack of pancakes, add to a collective short story, and come get refreshments while

playing a game called “Exquisite Corpse.” They also invited people to create late Valentine’s Day cards all week (“International Writing Centers Week”). Events like these will help students get interested in the writing center, and Southwest’s center would be wise to hold them often.

The neat event ideas were not the only thing I pulled away from interviewing the tutors at the University of Missouri – Kansas City. Another important thing I learned from them was how crucial location can be. The location of our writing center needs to be accessible, visible, and somewhere that students will want to go. It also needs to be close to an exit or entrance if we decide to involve the community as well. These things are important because if all of our advertising techniques are successful, but no one knows how to find the writing center, we have essentially failed. This would be unfortunate.

Southwest Early College Campus’ writing center has the potential to be terrific. I know we will have great tutors and great programs, so we need to make sure that everyone gets the most out of it. To do this, we need successful advertisement. It will be a lot of work, but I know that we have the ability to make this writing center thrive.

Works Cited

- "14: Writing Center Publicity." *Tutor.edu*. Montreat.edu. Web. 5 Apr. 2010.
- Barnett, Robert W., and Lois M. Rosen. "The WAC/Writing Center Partnership: Creating a Campus-wide Writing Environment." *Writing Centers and Writing Across the Curriculum Programs: Building Interdisciplinary Partnerships* (1999): 1-225. Web. 14 Apr. 2010.
- "International Writing Centers Week." *UMKC Writing Center*. University of Missouri-Kansas City, Feb. 2010. Web. 5 Apr. 2010.
- "News and Events." *UMKC College of Arts and Sciences: Writing Center*. University of Missouri – Kansas City. Web. 5 Apr. 2010.
- Ramirez, Sarah. Personal interview. 9 Oct. 2009.
- "Top 10 Tips for an Effective Advertising Campaign." *AllBusiness.com*. All Business: A D&B Company. Web. 14 Apr. 2010.
- Waples, Lindsay. Personal interview. 9 Oct. 2009.
- "Welcome to WC&C." *Writers' Conferences & Centers*. The Association of Writers & Writing Programs. Web. 5 Apr. 2010.
- "Writing Center." *JCCC: Writing Center*. Johnson County Community College. Web. 5 Apr. 2010.

Writing Centers and ESL Students

Ngan Nguyen

You are beginning to write a paper for a class. All of a sudden you just realize you do not know how to start: you are stuck. What can you do? Chances are using a writing center as a resource may not come to mind if you are a high school student. A writing center can be a helpful resource for students who have no where to go to for assistance. It can also encourage students to be more confident in their writing, as well as help them generate ideas for their writing. This, of course, is speaking from the perspective of all students, including students whose first language is not English. For these particular students, writing for American universities and high schools can be a challenge: a challenge that can be overcome with the right techniques, tutors, and resources. To understand the relationship between writing centers and ESL students, it is important to know: the main challenges ESL students face when writing papers for American universities and high schools, what resources and strategies are the most helpful to ESL students, the impact of culture in writing, and the importance of helping ESL students become more successful writers.

There are many challenges that arise when one is writing a paper: content, the flow of ideas, and clarity; not to mention the daunting task of revising and editing the paper itself. Challenges such as these can make a student feel too discouraged and even intimidated to write a paper. For English speaking students these problems can be solved after a short session or two with a writing center tutor. ESL students may need more than two tutoring sessions, especially for the more advanced English composition assignments. ESL students struggle mostly with grammar and the organization of ideas, so much that they may shy away from or avoid writing these papers. As authors Shanti Bruce and Ben Rafoth state: “. . . students who have not yet mastered a linguistic form, concept, sentence type, grammatical unit, or vocabulary word tend to avoid types of writing that put them in the position of having to produce what they find difficult” (ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors 9). Many ESL students come to American universities and high schools knowing a sufficient amount of English, but when asked to write for an important assignment, they often need more resources than the MLA handbook and books and sites pertaining to grammar. They need additional help- a one on one session with someone who has a thorough knowledge about writing and working with people.

All writing centers are created with the same purpose: helping everyone progress in their writing. Having a writing center at Southwest is extremely crucial. Betsey, a tutor at Johnson County Community College's writing center, agrees that “having a writing center is necessary -no one can crank out a perfect paper.” A writing center can form the basis for a better school with students who are better writers and who are more eager to write. There are many students at Southwest who do not speak English at home, and a writing center would have a significant positive impact on these students. When asked about the prospect of having a writing center at Southwest and how it can be used to benefit her, ninth

grader Binh An Nguyen replied, "I would use it to help me understand about grammar and the mistakes that I made throughout my writing and it will also help my college essay when I get to college." This high school student, so much like the ESL students in American universities, have a hard time writing papers due to the differences in their language and the English language. The limited help from their English teachers is not enough to secure proficiency in their writing. Their teachers have a large number of students to attend to, making it harder for these students to get the amount of help they need. With a writing center, they can have longer sessions with writing tutors and these writing tutors can build more of a relationship with them, making it more helpful for tutors to see patterns in their writing. Thus, they can develop more drawn out strategies to help their classmate's writing skills in the long term.

Many writing center tutors, after becoming well acquainted with their classmate, develop strategies and techniques that can help ESL students retain grammar knowledge. A notable difference in how a native English speaker asks tutors for help and how a nonnative English speaker asks for help is apparent. "The native English speaking student has invited you to critique her writing- the whole text; whereas, the ESL student has invited you to critique his English- the language," (ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors 71). For native English speakers then, the key tutoring strategy used in most Writing Centers-- focusing on content, flow, organization, and clarity, and then grammar--can be very effective. For ESL students, such a tutoring strategy is also important but it can be puzzling at first. This is a highly effective strategy, and the authors mentioned above even went back to the overall goal of a writing center to prove their point, saying "the goals of writing centers today reflect Stephen North's 'idea' of writing centers: to produce better writers, not better writing." Authors Shanti and Rafoth also explain why tutors should focus more on the whole content of the paper, stating that "tutors should remember that second language learning never proceeds in a linear, smooth manner. Learners may backslide and use a wrong form due to their overuse of a new grammar rule" (ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors 27). Paul Kei Matsuda even gives tutors advice on what to do if the writer asks for grammar correction: "try not to deny the request right away- explain that you need the writer's intended meaning first in order to make grammar errors."

Aside from the strategies created by writing center tutors, ESL writers can visit writing center websites of different universities for additional help. These websites include information on resources and step-by-step strategies and guides that can help their writers when they are at home. The writing center site of Yale University provides their students with tools to help them improve their writing on their own. These tools are designed for all students, but can be very helpful and are highly suggested by teachers to ESL students. Some strategies include starting papers a little earlier, beginning a language notebook, and collecting writings. On a similar note, Case Western University's writing center emphasizes the positive effects of having a student keep a notebook of all recurring errors. Having the right resources and strategies will ensure the

progress of an ESL student, but understanding the impacts of culture in writing is what forms a foundation for these resources and strategies.

Understanding of the cultural differences of ESL students can aid writing center tutors in developing effective strategies that can be helpful to these students. For example, tutors having one on one sessions with ESL students should be aware of: “ [the ESL student’s] patterns of perception and thinking, language and nonverbal behavior, forms of activity, forms of social relationship, perceptions of the world, and perceptions of the self” (ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors 4). Looking out for each of these things can help the tutors see the students in a brighter light. Tutors will be able to understand ESL students and acknowledge the amount of impact culture can have in writing, ensuring the success of a tutoring session.

Another more prominent way, a writing center tutor can understand the impact of culture in the writings of ESL students, is by understanding the differences in writing structures and expectations in different countries compared to the United States. “Most writing tasks in US universities and high schools are based on cultural conceptions about clear writing and effective argumentation-ideas that may not be shared by ESL writers” (ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors 73). A suggestion may be to have a talk with the ESL student before starting the tutoring session to obtain a better understanding of the point he or she is trying to get across with his or her writing and what that student was taught at previous schools. That way, tutors are able to develop more effective strategies that can fit the writing needs of that student.

It is very important that writing centers cater to the needs of ESL students because every year more and more students, from all over the world, are attending American universities and high schools. One statistic found that the number of international students enrolled had gone up to 10% and increased 3.2% in 2006-7. Another, more recent, statistic found that the number of foreign students enrolled in the 2008-9 school year had increased by 8%, the highest it has ever been. Many of these foreign students are coming from countries such as India, China, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. We want to ensure the success of all our students, especially those who are not from the United States and who may have a more difficult time writing, especially since most of the curriculum in American universities and high schools requires writing a paper.

ESL students tend to struggle the most when it comes to writing a paper for an assignment. Having a writing center that is able to accommodate their needs can have a tremendous positive impact on these students as well as encourage them to remain in American universities and high schools. Many writing center journals, such as Praxis, have shown that after visiting a writing center, ESL students have seen a significant amount of improvement in their overall writing skills. Of course, this is true for all students, but especially for ESL students. Not only will having an ESL program at writing centers help the ESL students, but also the writing center tutors. Writing center tutors will have a better cultural understanding of their ESL students, thus, it will be easier for them to develop more effective strategies for their tutoring session with nonnative English speakers.

Writing centers are ranked as one of the most important tools used by students. It will not only help students make their writing more effective and clear, but also encourage them to continue with their writing. This couldn't be more true for ESL students; they often struggle adjusting to the English language and face many challenges involving grammar, and the organization of sentences. Tutors can help these students overcome these challenges by understanding the cultural context of their writing, and developing strategies that will help them in the long run. Finally, the importance of helping ESL students become better writers can help ensure the success of all students attending American universities and high schools, especially because of the increase in number of international students enrolled. The main goal of a writing center is to help all students become better writers, including ESL students.

Works Cited

- Betsey. Personal. 1 March 2010.
- Case Western Reserve University. Writing Pedagogy, 2005. Web. 03 April 2010.
- ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 2004. Print.
- Feuerbacher, Kelli, Hagan, Jenny, Kim, Hye-Kyung, Sweets, Craig, & Yeorn, Hye-Mi. "The ESL Experience in the Writing Center: A Review of ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors." *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal* (2005): n. pag. Web. 30 March 2010.
- Matsuda, Paul Kei. "Facing ESL Writers in the Writing Center." University of New Hampshire. 17 April 2004: 1-2. Web. 30 March 2010.
- Nguyen, Binh An. Email. 17 April 2010.
- "Record Number of International Students in the U.S. Higher Education." IIE Network. The Institute of International Education. 16 November 2009. Web. 17 April 2010.
- Redden, Elizabeth. "More Foreign Students --Everywhere." *Inside Higher Ed*. Inside Higher Ed. 17 November 2007. Web. 10 April 2010.
- "The Role Of An ESL Tutor." Richmond University. n.d. Web. 10 April 2010.
- Yale University. Yale College: The Writing Center, 2009. Web. 31 March 2010.

Contributors

Alexandra Alpough is a Kansas City native currently studying Medicine at UMKC. She enjoys reading and writing creative pieces and has a strong passion for music.

Alex Bennett is currently studying Secondary Education and English Literature at UMKC. After graduating, she plans on teaching English in the Kansas City area and also in foreign nations. In the future, she would like to obtain a master's degree in English and to continue writing for a larger audience.

Carly Burdg is twenty-four years old and will graduate in December 2010 with a degree in Communication Studies. She is looking forward to starting a career in event coordination or non-profit fundraising. Carly loves to spend time with her family, friends, and boyfriend.

Samantha Curfman will be a junior at Southwest Early College Campus in fall, 2010. She hopes to study sociology. When she's not studying, Samantha enjoys running and playing basketball.

Claire A. Jehle is a 22 years old studio art major at UMKC. Her main medium is acrylic paint, and she usually paints nude figures. She has seven sisters including an identical twin.

Logan Masenthin is a junior at Southwest Early College Campus. He is interested in writing and directing films that will have a positive influence on the world.

Mikayla McLean is a junior at Blue Springs High School. She has been an insatiable reader since childhood and started writing when she was in seventh grade. Mikayla is a member of the National Honor Society, a People to People Student Ambassador, and a freelance writer for a local newspaper, *The Examiner*. She hopes to study English Literature at UMKC in the fall of 2011.

Ngan Nguyen will be a junior at Southwest Early College Campus in fall 2010. She is not sure about her plans after high school, but one thing she is sure about is that she enjoys drawing and music.

Jennifer L. Nielsen is an explorer of math, science and the humanities. She loves nature, research, animals, and spending time with friends and family. She is president of the UMKC Society of Physics Students and is a member of the Culinary Arts Student Association.

Matthew Parish is currently a sophomore attending the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Matthew is working toward his master's degree in computer science

along with a minor in Spanish, which he hopes to have completed in 2013. Matthew's research has recently been noted by the Undergraduate English Council and he plans to continue his research involving education of the Holocaust.

Kristin Whittington thanks her lucky stars that she is no longer crazy. She is a senior getting a Liberal Arts degree with minors in Chemistry and English. She finds writing to be a handy tool for processing the past in order to move into the future. Kristin lives with her husband Chuck and their menagerie in a home they are renovating in the Historic Northeast. She would like to thank Chuck for being a literal and figurative rock star and thanks Laura for being a wonderful friend and inspiring writer.

Teachers

Sara Crump

Richard Delaware

Kristin Huston

Ben Moats

Ted Otteson

Lindsey Quinn-Osman

Helen Stead

Daniel Watson