CITY
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Outstanding Student Writing
From All Disciplines

Jane Mushabac, Editor in Chief
Preface

In City Tech Writer Volume 6, we go to Mexico and MOMA and the moon. In Vietnam we watch a man and wife smuggle their small children to safety; in Canarsie a young woman dramatically overcomes low expectations; in St. Vincent we roast breadfruit on an open fire.

The writers share their knowledge of new technology and respect for timeless values. They discuss distributed computing, and health. They bring thoughtful questions to bear on e-English, and human dignity. They consider cutting edge research, and works of art, plays, and fiction. As always, the variety of disciplines, cultures, and eras that are represented reminds us of City Tech’s great span of interest in our world.

I thank the faculty throughout the college who have inspired students to achieve excellence and submitted nearly two hundred pieces of outstanding writing from their courses; Prof. Mary Ann Biehl, Advertising Design and Graphic Arts Department Chair, and Prof. Nasser McMayo whose ADV 4700 students produced fifty appealing cover designs; Prof. Lloyd Carr, the journal’s Art Director since its inception, as always coordinated the graphics, including preparing the cover for production; the Reproduction Center’s Kiros Haile who did a handsome job of printing the cover, and Director of Campus Services Jeff Novak who coordinated this support; and Chief Laboratory Technician Steve Caputo, and printers George Pompilio and Peter Pompilio, who produced the volume with care and competence. I’m grateful to President Russell Hotzler, Provost Bonne August, and Dr. Stephen Soiffer for their invaluable support and encouragement from the top; and the President’s Executive Assistant Marilyn Morrison and Assistant to the Provost Imelda Perez for their great help and thoughtfulness. Professors Armando Solis, Carole Harris, Stella Nicolaou, Matthew Gold, Betsy Calhoun, Renata Budny, Maura Smale, Anne Leonard, and English Department Chair Nina Bannett graciously thought through questions of many kinds; Advertising Design and Graphic Arts Office Assistant Lucille Taylor was ever helpful; student Avril Miller in the Faculty Commons helped too; and English Department Office Assistants Lily Lam and Laura Kodet have been resourceful and efficient—and wonderfully generous.

Most of all, however, I thank the student writers whose work has been selected for publication in this volume. They make teaching a great pleasure. Their writing is direct and bold.

Jane Mushabac, Editor in Chief
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Each listing provides the title and author of a work, and the professor and course for which it was written

Napalm in the Morning
Dang Nguyen
Professor Mushabac, English 1141

Folding@Home: One Way to Change the World with Your Laptop
Amanda Duong and Leah Suter
Professor Solis, Biology 3350

Viral Genomics: The Future of Vaccination?
Latoya Blake
Professor Solis, Biology 3350

Natural Phenomena and the Built Environment
Osmany Cabrera
Professor Calhoun, Architecture 1121

Development of Architectural Technology and Craft in Gothic Cathedral Construction
Daniel Egan
Professor Calhoun, Architecture 1121
Visual Perception
Kacy Charles
Professor Nicolaou, Advertising 1100

Stone Veneer Curtain Walls
Jessica Castillo
Professor Mishara, Architecture 2400

Food Memories: Growing Up in St. Vincent
Avril Miller
Professor Hoffman, Hospitality Management 4989

e-English: A Natural Evolution of Our Language?
Erin Grabe
Professor Smale, Library 1201

To the Rescue
Bryan Hou
Professor Goodison, English 2000

Delubrum:
A Video Game Background Story
Carlos Farje
Professor Lansiquot, English 1101

Tim Burton
Patricia Persaud
Professor Goetz, Graphic Arts 1110

Rhinoceros
Alyson Carney
Professor Vey, Theatre 2380

Mirror Images
Dennis Yu
Professor Ferrell, English 2001
“A Good Man Is Hard to Find” and *Leviathan*
Shomari Johnson
Professor Di Donato, English 1121

**Bayview**
Sophia Rodriguez
Professor Berger, Speech 1330

**Rebirth at Thirteen**
Juliana Edwards
Professor Berger, Speech 1330

**Significant Events**
Amanda Yeung
Professor Budny, Restorative Dentistry 1115

**Policy Analysis: The Quarantine of Typhoid Carriers**
Luis Dequesada
Professor Bohm, Health Services Administration 3602

**Epidemic Is Pressing Issue for New York Trees**
Anna Soyfer and Pablo Mota
Professor Arrigoni-Restrepo, Biology 1201

**Urban Epidemic**
Natrell M. Fisher
The Adolphus Lee Poetry Award, 2010 First Prize

**Date Rape**
Sonia Hall
Professor Berger, Speech 1330

**An Entrepreneur’s Dilemma**
Dionne Mobley
Professor O’Halloran, Hospitality Management 1105
**Income and the Food Choices We Make**  
Yandra Vargas  
Professor Stewart, Hospitality Management 1203

**Food, Family, Travel**  
Carlos E. Santiago  
Professor Hoffman, Hospitality Management 4989

**Food Memories of Mexico**  
Diandra Tobon  
Professor Hoffman, Hospitality Management 4989

**Discrimination and Identity Conflict I**  
Gary Mai  
Professor Rodriguez, Psychology 2401

**Discrimination and Identity Conflict II**  
Dynia Mariano  
Professor Rodriguez, Psychology 2401

**Discrimination and Identity Conflict III**  
Jaselyn Diaz  
Professor Rodriguez, Psychology 2401

**Discrimination and Identity Conflict IV**  
Leandro Jack  
Professor Rodriguez, Psychology 2401

**White and Black Fathers Aiming to Abolish Segregation**  
Jennifer Chan Wu  
Professor C. Harris, English 2101

**“Sonny’s Blues”**:  
**Family History and the Heritage Cycle**  
Arabia Dodson  
Professor C. Harris, English 2001
Frederick Douglass:  
An American Slave Learning to Read  
Yesenia Martinez  
Professor C. Harris, English 1101

Cuts to Funding for CUNY  
Stjepan Lukic  
Professor Gold, English 1101  
The Student Government Leadership Award, 2010 Second Prize

Moroccan Wedding  
Yousra Nasr  
Professor H. Miller, English 1121

The Little Foxes  
Vincenzo Laccona  
Professor Vey, Theatre 2380

For the Birds  
David Bettencourt  
The Charles Matusik Fiction Award, 2010 Third Prize

Sisters  
Kimberly La Force  
Professor Mushabac, English 1141

Doctor’s Park  
Jason E. Walkowiak  
Professor Mushabac, English 1121
Napalm in the Morning

Dang Nguyen

Prologue

He was angry at the world. Working 9-5 at a dead end job. Little education and too old to get one. All he could do was grind it out. Work 9-5 followed by coming home for dinner and sleep just to do it all again. The world had robbed him of his life. The world he knew would not suffice. He must start anew. And to do that he must face countless perils that littered the road.

The land knows not who owns it. 
The air knows not who breathes it. 
Freedom knows not who chases it.

I

Nations laid claim to whatever they could. The rise and fall of nations became obscured by the nations with power. No new nation could rise without the blood of its people being shed. The small nation of Vietnam rose only to fall to those north of them. They rose up and won freedom only for it to be short lived. The Chinese quelled them again and ruled for the next thousand years. For a millennium the small nation lay dormant until it could rise again. Countless lives were lost to break free from the shackles of the Chinese. But still, Vietnam saw nothing but bloodshed. Long after the nation of Vietnam rose again, they still did not taste freedom. All they did was survive long enough until someone else took over. Freed from one oppressor, they faced another.

The French who were on the other side of the hemisphere laid claim to the land. Over 125, 000 sq. miles of land, they only saw plantations. Natives of the land were only viewed as cheap labor. The French had long abused a nation that has great pride. For nearly a hundred years the French clasped their hands around the throat of Vietnam until the second war of wars swept the world.
Many nations sent young men to fight battles on foreign soil in the war of the world. Millions of lives lost to stop the Axis of Evil from gaining supremacy. Throughout all of this, the small nation was worked to the bone for a cause not its own. With France fighting a fierce battle on the other side of the hemisphere, the French’s grasp on Vietnam weakened.

They stood and watched the French withdraw only to see themselves passed on along to the Japanese who came in and mistreated them too. Vietnam would not taste the sweet nectar called freedom. Instead of planting crops and raising cattle, the nation was turned into a war factory for Japan. Bombs, ammunition and weapons of destruction came from a land of such beauty and nature. The war dragged on and the death toll climbed higher. The war did not end until the Americans did something inconceivable. The Japanese, men of great honor, pride, and sacrifice held out. Many lives were lost in the Pacific and many more followed them after the dropping of the bombs. With Japan crippled, it was the most opportune time. And to taste freedom the Vietnamese must fight once again. Men of grand schemes rose and stood. Men of great pride stood and broke free from their shackles. From the Chinese to the French to the Japanese, this nation knows only to fight and survive.

The Japanese were withdrawing to recover from the aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And the French were itching to come back in and take control. Vietnam could no longer stand under the feet of the French and Japanese. This nation could no longer take the abuse. Men who longed for freedom stood and rebelled. The Viet Minh stood and fought. Ho Chi Minh stood and fought. Ho declared, "The last time the Chinese came, they stayed a thousand years. The French are foreigners. They are weak. Colonialism is dying. The white man is finished in Asia. But if the Chinese stay now, they will never go." These men did not fight for fame or glory. They bled for life. They bled for pride. They bled for freedom.

II

Born into a land that knows nothing but pain, he survived. He lived a peaceful life in the south but at a cost. The lives of his countrymen were being lost up north and the only life he knew was on the farm. At an early age he saw countless hardships. Even at a young age he was laboring. Farming was the standard way of living for those in the countryside. Waking at dawn only to work till nine at night was the life of a country kid. At the age of five he was in the fields dropping seeds into burrows. To be efficient you had to move quickly. While walking in the freshly plowed burrows, you had to drop seeds as you went moving fast enough so by the time the next lane is made it covers the previous lane. The feet ached and crusted over with calluses while the heels burned raw. Walking long distances was no longer a problem.

Six year olds should be out monkeying around not actually being a monkey scaling trees for coconuts and bananas. One does not directly scale the
tree. The best way to climb a tree was to wrap towels around the hands and feet. Then one would shimmy up and down the tree like a caterpillar. And if you manage to slip? The only safety device was two belts linked together strapping you to the tree. After a dozen times, the fear of heights left you. At the ripe old age of seven he was milling rice and grinding coconuts. Milling rice was tedious labor. The muscles pulled taut as the arms became rubber from the hours of smashing rice kernels. Kernels of rice were placed into a heavy wooden bowl and smashed till the outer layers peeled off revealing edible white rice.

At the age of nine the labors seemed endless as he took control of the fields. The miles on the toned and chiseled legs continue to add up as he plowed the field. Every step taken to push and shove the plow forward rippled through the foot, jolted its way up the calf, vibrated into the knee and was absorbed into the thigh. Those strong-toned legs continued to push forward even with the responsibility of watching the younger ones working in the field placed on his slender shoulders.

Just over ten years old and he learned to use an axe to chop coconuts. Chopping coconuts can be dangerous work. An axe that had seen too many years of work and abuse in the hands of a careless person could result in fatal injuries. An axe head held in place by flimsy wire could come loose at any moment. Gripping the handle with blistered and calloused hands was not ideal. Strike too softly and the coconut won’t split, then you’ll need to do twice the work. Strike too hard and the shell shatters sending shrapnel all over the place.

At thirteen years old, he finally tasted some freedom. Being put in control of the potbellied pigs was not much of an upgrade but it was better than the mindless chopping of coconuts and plowing the fields. The half-mile trek to the butcher was not fun by any means. The potbellied pigs prodded each other and trotted down the road while their two-hundred-pound weight shifted back and forth. Great care must be taken when walking on the road, as the weather-beaten mud path could give out at any moment. The slow long trek was a needed breather. Listening to the oinks and squeals, he got lost in his thoughts. Mindlessly following the pigs he dreamed about grand things. A good high-paying job, an easy life in the city and a good wife to take care of the house. The rumbling of a motorcycle woke him from his daze. The pigs were forced to the side of the road. He watched the bike speed by and wished he had one. Continuing the march, he followed the pigs hoping to keep them in line and on track. Whipping the pigs would only cause them to freak and scatter. And if you don’t think keeping pigs in line is hard, then try catching five skittish pigs weighing twice as much as you.

At age fifteen he got his first taste of city life. With the younger kids old enough to take care of themselves, he earned the freedom from the countryside. Loading the coconuts and bananas onto the back of the motorbike, he hopped on.
It was rickety at best. The family bought it second-hand just the previous year. The bike had seen better days, probably it had two or three owners before it got to his family. Popping the clutch and firing the throttle—the bike started up like a rusty chainsaw. The rumbling shook him uncontrollably. Clutching the bike tightly only made it worse. The shock just rippled up the thigh, snaked its way along the spine and released into his hands gripping the handlebars. The coconuts and bananas must be tightly packed so they don’t crack or bruise. They had to be packed in a rectangle or pyramid for balance on the bike. After years of selling the harvest in the city, he grew accustomed to the ways of city life.

IV

Freedom came at a cost. Freed from the responsibilities of the farm, he got lost in the fast-paced life of the city. The westernized north was far from the life he knew in the south. He marveled at how one nation could be two separate worlds. Living in the countryside and farming gave way to living on his own and enjoying city life. Every so often he would travel back to the farm and check on his parents. The five years traveling back and forth between the country and city only served the disconnect faster. In the city he had access to everything he needed. Food, clothing—shops lined the streets. Beautiful women walking up and down the road. Soon the little boy farming in the countryside was lost inside the smooth-talking city slicker. He wowed and wooed many. One day a beautiful young lady came across his sights, a daughter of a physician. And as expected she came along and got wooed too. Who wouldn’t fall for a handsome young man like him? He impressed her with gifts and sweet talk. She was showered with promises of a good life and riches.

But soon she would find out that life with him was not perfect. She worked hard every day of her life taking care of her siblings. She was diligent in the tasks set for her. He tried to find the easy way out of everything he did. He was a free-spirited partyer, out drinking and having fun all night. When they married, his father-in-law gave him a job as a fisherman and transporter. That only served to be destructive to this young couple. He gained more freedom with this new job. He would spend days out at sea away from home. And she did what every wife did and that was tending to her husband’s family. Life in the city is not much different from the country for those who are not wealthy. Her days started early and ended late. At dawn she would be up feeding the animals. By 8 she would have had to draw water from the well for the day’s usage. As 10 o’clock rolled by she would have breakfast laid out on the table. Near noon she was at the back of the house washing the laundry in the pond. Soon after she would be collecting wood to light the stove for lunch. The day half over, yet there was still no rest in sight. After clearing the table and washing the dishes, she set out to feed the animals once again. Nearing the end of her day, she was out back collecting the laundry. Before it got too dark, she once again scurried down the path to the well to draw water to fill the container for the shower. Lost
in thought as she stared into the dancing fire that was cooking dinner she knew it was almost over. Her day only came to an end when she was watching the water in the pond ripple as she washed the dishes. Life for her was not much different before and after getting married. All her life, all she did was take care of family.

V (excerpt)

Since his first breath of life, his nation had done nothing but shed blood. For the first seven years of his life, he witnessed war. No one should ever have to witness war, let alone children. He saw the French try to lay claim to land on the other side of the continent. He saw his fellow countrymen fighting each other for freedom. And in the end, France lost, Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh won. Vietnam stood free and over a million lives lost. Freedom did not come freely. And peace would not follow so easily. Peace never comes so easily. There was only one year of peace before another war broke out. Even after years of fighting, Vietnam was free, but it was not free from war. Soon it battled itself. The north ruled by Ho Chi Minh turned on the south that was backed by the Americans. And once again Vietnam was at war.

VI (excerpt)

Just as he was starting the journey of life with his wife and two newborns it came to a screeching halt. In 1955 men with lots of money and power couldn’t leave well enough alone. And for that he was angry at the world. In that instant the world changed and he became forever angry. He believed he could wait the war out. Once these guys played their little game out things would be normal again, he thought.

He was wrong. War was not a little game, it was a cancer. It lay dormant for years before it reared up and showed its ugly ways. It spread and attacked all around it. The young, the old, the weak, even the strong succumbed to its vile ways.

As the war spread like wildfire, he decided to flee his homeland. Leaving all that he knew, he packed up his family and left. Leaving everything he couldn’t take with him, he started his journey across his war-torn homeland. His wife scraped and scrounged whatever she could from the family to earn the two gold bars which amounted to $2000 U.S. for the fare. With the promise of paying the money back she said her farewells. Leaving behind her brothers, sisters, and elderly parents, she had to go. She had to go for her children. She buried two children in this land and she was not going to bury another two.
The cross-country trek was perilous. With border patrols and enemy scouts roaming, the jungle was no place for a man, his wife, and two small children. A one-and-a-half-year old son was crying for something to silence his stomach. A six-month old daughter who could barely sit up sucked on an empty bottle. The jungle was no place for children, let alone infants. Endless endangerments lurked in the forest. Silence was a must, closely followed by careful vigilance. Countless patrols roved through the forest making it hard enough, and a crying baby does not help the situation. How does a mother silence a hungry baby when there is no food? How does the mother keep her own stomach from grumbling? The husband’s reproach snapped his wife out of her daze. “Keep the boy quiet or we’ll all get caught,” he snapped.
Folding@Home: One Way to Change the World with Your Laptop

Amanda Duong and Leah Suter

What is Folding@Home? It is a distributed computing project which studies protein folding, misfolding, protein aggregation and related diseases. Protein folding is the physical process by which a polypeptide folds into its characteristic and functional three-dimensional structure from a random coil. We, two students in the Bioinformatics course (BIO 3350), conducted an experiment in which we downloaded the folding software application and used our laptop computer to help understand how proteins are assembled, or folded. The purpose of the folding experiment was to find out how proteins assemble themselves and why they sometimes misfold. This misfolding is related to many serious diseases that can occur.

Folding@Home uses computational methods of distributed computing to simulate problems millions of times more challenging than previously tackled. To take part in the Folding@Home project, people throughout the world download and run the software, banding together to help the Pande laboratory at Stanford University study protein folding.

Distributed computing is a new field of study which seeks to solve a large problem. In order to solve this large problem, it is split into small parts and given to many different computers. The solutions are then combined to develop a solution for the larger problem. A distributed system consists of a group of independent computers connected by a network and equipped with distributed system software. This software enables the different computers to organize their activities and to share the resources of the system hardware, software, and data. The independent computers are made to work together to achieve a common goal.

A protein is a macromolecule consisting of a chain of amino acids which are joined together by peptide bonds. Our body is made up of trillions of cells, of all different kinds: muscle cells, brain cells, blood cells, and more. Each of these cells contains many different kinds of proteins. Proteins have various functions: they can provide structure (ligaments, fingernails, hair), help in digestion (stomach enzymes), assist in movement (muscles), and play a part in our ability to recognize stimuli (membrane receptors) and respond to infection (antibodies). The amino acids, building blocks of proteins, are in a specific sequence for each protein, which gives the protein the ability to fold into a unique molecular structure.
Amino acids are small molecules made up of atoms of carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, sulfur, and hydrogen. To make a protein, the amino acids join to form an unbranched chain. Each amino acid has a small group of atoms called a side chain, sticking off the main chain which is the backbone, which connects them all together. There are twenty different kinds of amino acids, which differ from one another based on what atoms are in their side chains. These twenty amino acids have differing chemical and physical properties: some are acidic or alkaline, some are hydrophilic or hydrophobic, and some are significantly larger in size than others.

Protein folding is the process that occurs when a protein molecule spontaneously assumes its complex three-dimensional shape. Each protein exists as an unfolded polypeptide when translated from a sequence of mRNA to a chain of amino acids. Amino acids of differing properties then interact with each other to produce a distinct three-dimensional structure of the folded protein, known as the native state, which is the operative or functional form. Protein structure is uniquely determined by the amino acid sequence.

Even though proteins are just a long chain of amino acids, they don’t stretch out. The protein folds up and collapses tightly onto itself to form a blob. When folded, the protein keeps some amino acids near the center of the blob, and others outside. It also keeps some pairs of amino acids close together and others far apart. Every kind of protein folds up into a specific shape. Most proteins fold by themselves into the specific shape, but some proteins need extra help to be folded into the right shape. It is important to study proteins because they do so many amazing things for the body, but before they do, they have to fold or assemble themselves. The purpose of the folding project is to find out how proteins assemble themselves and why they sometimes misfold.

Misfolding occurs when the protein is folded into an unusual or incorrect tertiary structure. Failure to fold into the intended shape usually produces inactive proteins with different properties including toxic prions (microscopic protein particles similar to a virus but lacking nucleic acid). Several neurodegenerative (characterized by the gradual and progressive loss of nerve cells) and other diseases are believed to result from the proliferation of misfolded proteins. Diseases that can occur from misfolded proteins are Alzheimer’s, mad cow, Huntington’s, and Parkinson’s disease.

When we first downloaded the folding program we were inexperienced about how it worked, what it did, or what we were supposed to do. Soon after, we realized we could see a visual display of the protein and the progress of its folding. We continued to research more information about the program. The program itself had a log file that kept updating the information about the protein and what project it had been working on. Also, the website contains a great deal of information about the computer program and about the project as a whole. We were able to learn so much just from browsing the website.

One of the projects we worked on with our PC laptop was project 6330. In this project, we were assigned two small peptide fragments to fold. These fragments have been found experimentally to fold up into distinct structures.
Specifically, in an aqueous solution, the Fs peptide folds into a helix, and the C-terminal peptide from Protein G folds partly into a hairpin shape. Points are assigned to each project, as a measure of the amount of work done to complete it. Project 6330 had 104 points.

When you receive a project, your computer is expected to use a certain amount of disk space and RAM, but some projects require more computer resources than others. So when the contributors use resources beyond the typical client, more points are given which are considered bonus points. Larger work units usually receive bonus points.

Work units are the projects you are given to complete by the Folding@Home software. After you are given work units by the server, the process is completed by the Folding@Home application in your computer and cannot be modified. Work units are not all the same size. Some proteins are much more complex than others, so some work units count for more credit than others. For example, a work unit that takes a computer two days to complete may be worth fewer credits than a work unit that takes the same computer a week to complete.

From the time when we downloaded the program, which was on May 5, 2010, the Folding@Home program completed eight work units and approximately 540 points. To complete a work unit, the computer has to be connected to the internet. While we were observing the progress of one work unit, the program’s server was collecting the data from that unit from our computer. The program worked on one work unit at a time and after it finished, another protein segment was automatically downloaded.

This project has been very successful in its endeavor to solve the problems relating to protein folding. On the Folding@Home website, a results page provides the links to all the related articles that have been published in peer-reviewed journals. The articles are fairly technical, but they clearly show the progress of the Folding@Home project. The very first article, published in 2000, talks about how distributed computing is more effective than a supercomputer by having more processors available than a supercomputer.

The Pande lab is the founding scientific group of Folding@Home. Headed by Dr. Vijay Pande, the lab is part of the Departments of Chemistry and Structural Biology at Stanford University, and works on theory and simulations of how proteins, RNA, and nanoscale synthetic polymers fold. Folding@Home is a non-profit endeavor dedicated to science research, and the data is freely available for others to use. The results are also submitted to scientific journals for publication and then posted to the website.

This project was a new experience for us. We helped fold proteins using only a laptop. For our work, we got certified by the Pande lab for completing work units and accumulating points. We decided to continue to work with the Folding@Home program and continue to contribute to scientific research. Folding@Home is an easy program to use. All you have to do is download the program and it does the work for you. With one click, you are changing the world, one computer at a time.
References


Viral Genomics: 
The Future of Vaccination?

Latoya Blake

Human immunodeficiency, influenza, hepatitis, and the common cold: each of these ailments is familiar to us today, some more severe than others. What they all have in common is that they arise from different forms of viruses. Viruses are parasitic microorganisms whose primary mission is to commandeer a host cell, replicate its destructive genetic code, and infect your body. They are unresponsive to antibiotics and require vaccinations to prevent them or antiviral drugs to inhibit their development. Viruses such as the common cold virus can develop and display symptoms in as little as two to three days and spontaneously leave in two to fourteen days without any antiviral drug [1], whereas HIV can display “flu-like” symptoms in the initial stages and then lie dormant for up to ten years while slowly progressing to AIDS [2]. With such a broad spectrum of degenerative abilities, scientists have turned their attention toward these parasites in efforts to discover how they work and how we can put a stop to them; so far they have found that the answer lies in their genomes.

All living organisms from humans to viruses have a genome, which is the complete set of genetic material, including all of its genes. The study of the genome of an organism and the extensive studies of genome mapping and sequencing are referred to as “Genomics.” Genome sequencing is the process of determining the exact order of all the nucleotide bases in a genome, while genome mapping is the process of locating a specific gene on a particular region of a chromosome and determining the relative distances between all the genes on a particular chromosome [3]. Genomics also includes the study of genes in an organism at the DNA, mRNA and protein levels [4]. Overall, the field of Genomics is an ongoing effort to “decode” the genetic material of an organism, identify its various component genes, and figure out how these genes are related and expressed or changed under certain conditions [4].

The field of Viral Genomics is fairly new and involves the sequencing of the genetic material of viruses, which can be composed of DNA or RNA. This area of Viral Genomics started in 1995 with the sequencing of the Haemophilus influenzae virus [5]. Since then, the methods of sequencing have advanced, and there has been a massive growth in available resources including several online databases that scientists can use to submit and publish their sequenced viruses and research similar findings. Databases such as NCBI’s Microbial Database have over 2,000 completely sequenced viruses [6] and the efforts to sequence more continue; today there is at least one complete genome sequence for every major human pathogen [7].
One of the driving motives behind sequencing pathogens is the radical impact it is making on the field of vaccine development. Vaccinations have played a key part in controlling or eliminating life-threatening diseases and helping prevent pandemics. However, the licensed vaccines we have today are only the beginning of what scientists can create because of the growth of Viral Genomics. It has been said that “the arrival of the genome era has revolutionized vaccine development” [7]. The availability of these sequenced viruses has changed the approach to the field of Vaccinology, which is the study and methodology of vaccine development.

Vaccine development before the genomic era followed the culture-based methodology devised by Louis Pasteur over a hundred years ago, namely to “isolate, inactivate and inject.” By exposing someone to an inactivated version of the pathogen and introducing it to that person’s immune system, any subsequent attacks by an active pathogen will be recognized and fought off. This method worked for viruses such as polio, tetanus, and some strains of influenza. However, scientists began to get frustrated as conventional Vaccinology began to prove inadequate for pathogens with certain attributes. Pathogens with high antigenic variance cannot be cultivated in a lab, and do not have a suitable animal model of infection. An antigen is anything that triggers an immune response. Viruses such as influenza have a high antigenic variance, which means that they change their surface proteins to evade an immune response from the host. Antigenic drift, a slow continuous process of genetic and antigenic change of a virus, can generate a virus with an entirely new surface antigen [8]. This process is what causes several strains of the same pathogen. Antigenic variances, along with T-cell dependent immune responses, are the primary obstacles to the model of “isolating, inactivating and injecting”; it is difficult to inactivate the virus due to the constant change in its surface antigens. Over the years there have been three documented types of influenza along with multiple strains of one type [9], and this is only one of the many viruses with a high antigenic variance or T-cell dependent immunity. Conventional Vaccinology strategies would simply take too long to produce effective vaccines in the event that new viral strains emerge.

Now, moving away from the culture-based approach, let us enter the genome-based approach to Vaccinology. The availability of viral genome sequences has led to the “development and application of high-throughput analyses that enable rapid targeted identification of novel vaccine antigens” [7]. With advancements in sequencing technologies and bioinformatics, more information about the subject pathogens can be found and made available for use in studies of vaccine development. Methods such as reverse transcription are used for RNA-based viruses to transcribe RNA to DNA for analysis. There are two primary ways to sequence a genome. The first method is called the “BAC to BAC” method which is slow but exact, and the newer method is called Whole Genome Shotgun Sequencing which introduces speed [10]. The general strategy of sequencing an organism’s genome is to cut up the genetic material, sequence each segment individually, and then piece the segments back together to form the complete genome. The two methods differ in how they cut up the genetic
material, how the segments are put together after being sequenced, and whether the genes are mapped before they’re cut up initially. The “BAC to BAC” method has steps, such as mapping all the chromosomes before initially cutting them up, that the Shotgun method skips; because of this convenience, viral genome sequencing done today is primarily done using the Shotgun Sequencing method.

Whole Genome Shotgun Sequencing [11] allows scientists to read long stretches of DNA quickly by cutting it up and sequencing the smaller pieces side by side. Each small piece of DNA is then inserted into a DNA vector which results in a viral particle containing cloned genomic DNA. This collection of viral particles is referred to as a library; a genomic library is a set of DNA pieces that make up one genome sequence. To read the nucleotide bases, the data are then sorted by the computer, which reads and compares all of them at once and puts them in order by overlapping the ends to create one whole sequence. By using this method, scientists are able to determine the entire sequence efficiently and use it for analysis. They determine the genes that are coded and expressed, along with the proteins that come from them and the antigens the organism is capable of showing on its surface. They can then use that information to target vaccines to that specific pathogen using its genome sequence as a map.

To date, there are a number of novel strategies that have been advanced in the field of vaccine development, including those that have arisen from the fields of Genomics/Reverse Vaccinology, Pan-Genomics, Transcriptomics, Functional Genomics, Proteomics, Immunomics, Structural Vaccinology, and Vaccinomics [7]. Each of these computational and data-driven strategies has proven to be a powerful tool in aiding the field of vaccine development. They are outlined below:

Genomics/Reverse Vaccinology analyzes the genome of a pathogen using computational means to find the complete set of protein antigens the organism has the potential to express. Pan-Genomics analyzes the genetic material of several organisms of a single species to identify common antigens to target with potential vaccines. Transcriptomics looks for genes expressed under certain conditions and analyzes the RNA transcripts under specific conditions. Functional Genomics analyzes the role of genes and proteins under specific conditions. Proteomics looks at the complete set of antigens that are actually expressed on the surface of the organism under specific conditions by examining the proteins that exist in the organism. Immunomics looks for the antigens that induce an immune response from the host system. Structural Vaccinology analyzes the 3D structure in efforts to find how it interacts with antibodies. Lastly, Vaccinomics analyzes the response of the host immune system to vaccinations based on the host phenotype, genotype, and SNP’s.

By using one, or a combination, of these approaches, scientists are now able to have more insight into the pathogens’ genome, transcriptome, proteome, and immunoproteome in efforts to find new vaccines. Soon the goal of finding vaccines for pathogens that are rampant today will be in reach. This is all attributed to the efforts scientists make to sequence these pathogens and make the sequences available for analysis; in essence, Viral Genomics is not only the
present but it is the future of vaccine development, and it will continue to have a major impact on science and the world health situation as we know it.

References


Natural Phenomena and the Built Environment

Osmany Cabrera

While humanity is physically pathetic and weak, we excel at adaptability and ingenuity. We build shelters that protect us from the elements and coax food out of the ground. Where groups were able to secure consistent high yield food sources, they developed skills and arts that would catapult them into the lofty heights of civilization. Despite modernity's exponential progress within all realms of our lives, it seems that we evoke equal amounts of dangerous predicaments. What role does the built environment possess in mediating our relationship with nature and its nourishing ecologies?

The great Aztec empire of Mesoamerica is often marveled at for its pyramids and archaeological history. Much less celebrated but worthy of further investigation was the Aztec method of agriculture which was used to feed a population of over two hundred thousand people.

Chinampas, meaning upon reed baskets, was a broad system of interconnected man-made islands suitable for large-scale urban agriculture built upon the lake surface surrounding the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan. These islands were created by first driving posts into the lake bottom, then between these posts building an enclosure with branches and reeds from the lake and local marsh area. Fertile soils scooped up from the lake bottom were piled atop and within the woven reed beds to create what would become the planting surface. The root systems of maize, bean, and tomato crops would further reinforce the soil beds to prevent erosion from the lake waters that nurtured them. On the corners of each bed a willow tree was planted so that its strong roots would anchor the chinampa to the lakebed. The consolidation of these chinampas eventually created a matrix of arable land rigid enough to even support huts that the farmers and their family lived in [1].

Aside from being a successful agricultural model, chinampas also provided a myriad of urban solutions. Proper sanitation is vital for any sedentary society. The Aztecs incorporated their sanitation system into their agricultural system. Human excrement was used as a compost ingredient by being mixed with organic matter creating something analogous to cow manure: humanure. The duel benefit of this was a constant supply of soil-building elements for use in food production while also freeing the villages from diseases caused by poor sanitation. As far as urban planning is concerned, the Aztecs were truly an ecologically intelligent people whose civilization evolved in alliance with the environment that sustained them.
The colonizing civilization that replaced the Aztecs differed greatly from them. The Spanish settlers did not care much for the chinampa method of agriculture, despite its ecological brilliance. Opting instead for the mono-cultural cropping conventions of Europe, they devised schemes to drain Lake Texcoco’s entire lake basin under the rationale of accessing its fertile lakebed soils. Short-term productivity quickly led to the sterilization of the former Lake Texcoco due to the aggressive agricultural practices of the ill-advised Spaniards [1].

The ecological legacy of the Aztec empire is nowhere to be found in modern day Mexico City. Quality of life has degraded to the point that it is said that the residents of Mexico City inhale fecal dust blowing off during the hot dry season near what is still called Lake Texcoco, causing a panorama of diseases like typhoid and hepatitis [2].

With a population of twenty million people sprawling over the entire Mexico Valley, the fate of this region to sustain itself has been, and remains, in question. Mexico City is not alone in the dilemma resulting from interfacing their built environment with the squandering of life-supporting ecological equity; much of the world’s developing nations are faced with this paradox of progress.

Thomas Malthus, 18th-century economist, proclaimed, "humanity is multiplying its population at a geometrical rate while increasing its life-support systems (food, shelter, water) only at an arithmetic rate" [3]. Embracing the Darwinian dictum of survival of the fittest, Malthus professed that the majority of humans are designed to suffer and die far short of their potential life span, and thus tolerate death by disease and starvation [3]. Buckminster Fuller, visionary architect and engineer, on the other hand, was convinced that 20th-century man now possessed the potential to grant every person on earth adequate housing, food, and water. Invoking the increasingly efficient materials and technologies developed in the industrial revolution, Fuller made it his life's work to design and build sustainable infrastructure while preserving the ecological wealth of the planet.

Facing the doomsday tabloids of climate change, we’ve seen that a large push for the greening of our built environment seems to have taken hold in the conversation over the future of human civilization on the planet. Adapting a chinampa-like method of urban design to house and feed the world’s cities may seem idealistic, but American architect Michael Reynolds has been building houses that follow the chinampa logic for the past forty years. He calls them Earthships.

Earthships are a form of self-sustainable houses that generate all of their energy, food, and water by tapping what Reynolds calls the natural phenomena of the sun, wind, and rain [4]. Reynolds brings forth a new paradigm in architecture and our relationship with the environment. Much as the Aztecs utilized organic wastes for the foundation of their successful chinampas, Earthships make use of industrial waste by regarding used car and truck tires as building materials indigenous to every developing region of the world. By ramming dirt in the tires and stacking them nine levels high, an indestructible
wall is created which carries a high degree of thermal insulation properties. Solar panels generate energy for the energy-efficient appliances of the interior. The roof collects rainwater from the sky and funnels it into cisterns that provide water for drinking and cleaning. Grey water and black water are treated by the food-producing indoor garden, and what is left is directed to the outdoor planters.

Earthships provide a viable solution that is ecologically intelligent. They move away from the extractive method of sustenance by designing an alliance with the natural environment, all the while supporting our primordial and modern needs. Hundreds of Earthships have been successfully built across the globe. We humans are inextricably linked to both the ecological and our own built environment. We must regard them in tandem as we continue to evolve on a planet that also undergoes drastic changes. Adaptability and ingenuity are perhaps the hallmarks of our species; they will be the source of our sustainable endeavors as we propel towards the clouds of uncertainty in our future.

References


Development of Architectural Technology and Craft in Gothic Cathedral Construction

Daniel Egan

At the fall of the Roman Empire, administrative bureaucracy was lost to the society of the Middle Ages. With this loss, many professions, including that of a learned architect, were lost. Master builders relied on copying buildings from antiquity. The development of new construction styles and techniques was stagnant until the end of the Romanesque period and the advent of the Gothic. The Gothic period renewed architecture as a profession. This did not happen in a vacuum but was caused by the socio-political changes of the time. During this period, Gothic architects redeveloped the tools and methods that modern architects use today, such as drafted drawings and models. Today’s architects can link their work to these innovators and the rapid development of techniques that they fathered.

It is not clear when the craft of architectural planning first began, but evidence in the construction documents from antiquity like the marble plan of Rome and a full scale elevation of a pediment of the Pantheon [1] indicates that planned construction has been a profession striving to express an idea as long as civilization has existed. With the advent of the Gothic period, it became essential for architects to test ideas on paper because they were experimenting with new construction methods and building design in their projects.

This explosion of construction came about because of a shift in economics and governance from the small kingdoms and clergy to the re-emerging affluent laity and the cities they lived in during the late 13th century. The cities of the merchants and bankers became patrons of construction with the blessings of the crown and vestments. Cities run by this class along with the clergy and sovereignties wanted to express their temporal power with the construction of massive cathedrals that would be more impressive than those of their neighbors and outsiders with whom they traded. This desire to outdo the most recent major construction brought about the resurrection of detailed architectural drawings [2].

The aristocratic class in these cities would elect a civil authority or council that would choose from a number of submitted ideas for a proposed project [3]. The architects, who would either be from the learned class or a master mason, would have to express their ideas concisely and with salesmanship. These architects used models and detailed drawings of their proposals to convince the council that their ideas were best suited to meet the needs of the project [2]. Drawings would be on parchment and details such as
statues and tracery would be highlighted with the use of color [2]. Only a few examples such as Michael of Firibourg’s Parchment Façade of the Cathedral of Strasburg still remain [4].

The models would not be to scale but would convey the overall idea of the structure in three-dimensional form. Most were constructed in paper maché and did not survive the ages, but a few remain which are mostly made of wood, and some done ornately in metal. The use of models for this purpose is well known because many architects and patrons immortalized their involvement by having a statue of themselves holding a model of the church added to the structure [2].

Document presentation was also important because the drawings represented, as they do now, the objectives of the contract between the council and the architect. During the gothic period, the precedent of the patron buying the intellectual property—the drafts and designs—was first established [4]. These documents also allowed continuity, a necessary ingredient for large projects and, as they do today, assured accountability.

During construction, the ideas that had been approved by the council needed to be translated from the design parchment to the actual building as closely as possible per the contract. This was done by the use of working drawings. The use of scale and orthogonal drawing would not be conceived until Alberti during the Renaissance [1]. Without the use of scale, translation from parchment to construction had to be done using true-to-form drawings of what was to be constructed. The master mason and the architect (if the mason was not also the architect) spent most of their time in the production of these drawings. This work was done in what is called the Trace House or Masons’ Loft [5].

The best preserved of these lodges is located at the Cathedral of York. It is a large open room, thanks to the scissor-braced roof and the French trusses spanning over 20 feet [6]. The lodge has an open floor made of plaster of Paris. The plaster covers almost the entire floor. This allowed for the drawing out of large windows, details, and vaults to be done on a smooth, white surface. It was also easily scratched which assured that set lines stayed set. Studies of the scratches that come through on the floor yielded the original drafts of the aisle window of St. Mary’s chapel, a church also in York. The plaster of Paris also allowed for a new canvas to be made by simply coating over the top of the previous floor [6].

The architect then had to communicate the drawing accurately to the journeyman who was then to carve it. On rare occasions, drawings would be inscribed into a stone floor or a wall that would be out of public view once the building was complete [2]. This was done so that the drawings could be used time and again as the years passed. Most often templates would be made out of wood, iron or zinc from the tracing floor [3]. Many templates still remain in the trace house in York [2]. The architect would use standardized symbols, letters and numbers to indicate the direction of grain and types of cuts. It took tremendous skill to create these drawings, as stated by Maude: “Geometry and draughtsmanship were important on the tracing floor. Whole stone vaults, to be
suspended high above the nave, had to be set out full size and cut on the ground to bring to life the designs and structural elements conceived on parchment” [5].

Present-day architects, in line with their Gothic predecessors, strive to communicate their ideas to the two major parties involved in the construction of a building: the patrons who are paying for the project and whom the architect must convince to hire him; and the workers who will inevitably construct the building but need detailed instructions to carry out the architect’s conception. Gothic architects developed the skill sets that are still used today to achieve the same goals: get the job and get the job done.

References


Visual Perception

Kacy Charles

My expectation of the Design and Color course was that I would learn about hue and how best to apply it to design. I was enthusiastic and looked forward to learning as much as possible in order to become the “ultimate designer.” For our first class, the professor presented the New York Times Magazine. We analyzed ads, adding to our knowledge of design. We examined the focal point, tension, full and monochromatic color, high and low contrast value, and what works and does not in the composition of an ad. I was elated with my first session. It was very informative and engaging. I was excited about our next meeting. We were about to explore black and white!

Our first assignment was to draw a black square. I thought that’s interesting, but how hard can it be to draw a square? I went home, drew the square. After several attempts, this proved to be more tedious than I had anticipated. I finally settled on a piece. We presented our work and it was critiqued. During the presentation, attention was drawn to the white space on my pad. I had purchased a large, wrong-sized pad. The focal point, the square, was secondary to the white space around the square.

To create the “perfect” square, the composition of it has to be a specific size and balanced within the negative space. The draftsmanship must be flawless with a high value contrast. With this achieved, the square would create perfect tension. The existence of tension is to draw the observer to the piece displayed, hence the focal point. I was determined to master the square.

After several more attempts at perfecting the square, I made some observations—I needed to use the finest tools, so I changed the brand and points of my markers. I focused more on detail. With every project, my perception sharpened. After three weeks, I finally made it work.

Our next assignment was a 3D project, to give a two-dimensional figure the illusion of being three-dimensional. I was able to execute it in two sessions. I learned that a change, even of the smallest measurement, minus 1/32 of an inch, created an impact. We then went on to a line project. I used a rectangle. The rectangle has a personality of its own. It directs the eye vertically and horizontally. During the next two weeks we examined the inception of pattern and rhythm using squares, rectangles, and circles. Pattern is the repetition of a shape, and rhythm includes a variable within pattern.

Grey tones using gouache was next. We had to show the effortless transition of the eye from a dark tone to a lighter one. The gouache in itself was a challenge. After a few attempts, I was able to simulate the shift of the grey tones. Next was monochromatic and then full color.

For four weeks, I struggled with the gouache. I was extremely frustrated and discouraged, feeling that my draftsmanship for the final pieces did not work.
It’s a very fast-drying paint, adding too much water produces streaks and unevenness, and the pressure applied with every brush stroke must be consistent. I tried different techniques to no avail. It was a battle of perseverance. It came to the point where I hated the sight of gouache. Another issue was when I managed to paint a “decent” piece, it was ruined by my removal of the artist’s tape. But I never conceded. I gradually made adjustments, replacing artist’s tape with painter’s tape, working on being more graceful and precise with my brush strokes, using as little water as possible, and removing the tape as soon I had done the painting, producing exceptionally clean lines. I decided to take control and made it work. What took me weeks of struggling, I finally did in under twenty minutes.

The most valuable part of the course, and one which continued through the semester, was when Professor Nicolaou went through the ads. We analyzed them in every session. It was informative and inspirational. What stuck with me was the teachings of Bauhaus that “less is more” and “form follows function.” I was able to apply everything I learned in Design and Color to my other courses. It proved especially useful when I designed spreads for my typography course. I applied pattern, Form Follows Function and Less is More in my designs. I also realized my level of taste was refined. Ads which I previously thought were great, now looked overworked and busy. Essentially, it does not matter how creative you are. The underlying principles of design are needed to create that perfect piece. This course has by far exceeded my expectations.
I remember hearing a curtain wall defined as “that thing that keeps people from falling out of a building.” While that may be true, we can get a little more specific and technical with its definition. A curtain wall is the exterior enclosure of a building that carries no structural load other than its own weight and that protects the interior of the building from outside elements. Other loads that a curtain wall needs to be designed for are wind and seismic loads.

Curtain walls arrived in buildings at the same time as steel frameworks. Beforehand, the exterior walls were load-bearing; and as buildings got taller, the walls at the base of the buildings had to become thicker. There was a loss of space due to the thickness of the walls; so then in the late 19th century, when steel skeletal framework began to be used, the exterior walls, as a result, became thinner. Although in these early stages of development the exterior walls were still somewhat load-bearing, they were reaching a point where the steel framing was the “skeleton” of the structure while the curtain wall was its “skin.”

Just as there are different kinds of skins, there are different kinds of curtain walls. One of the most popular is the glass curtain wall. Others are metal and concrete curtain walls and brick veneers. One of the most recently developed is the terra-cotta rain screen. However, we will focus on another kind of curtain wall, the stone veneer.

Stone has often been associated with massive structures, from the Great Pyramids of Giza in Egypt to the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona. However, with the creation of curtain walls, stone can be used on any kind of building from small office buildings to looming skyscrapers. With technology making stone an easier material to work with, any building can achieve that majestic, natural look that stone creates. And unlike early stone structures, modern stone buildings do not use colossal stone blocks.

Stone veneer panels are prefabricated into various forms. The most important part of a stone veneer curtain wall is the stone itself. The stone can be any kind of rock from sandstone to granite. It is usually cut to very thin pieces, usually less than an inch thick. The stone panels are then reinforced, either by a metal backing or a lightweight metal honeycomb system. They also may have insulation and moisture barriers already in the panels.

Then the stone panels are attached to a secondary wall system, which can range from concrete masonry units to metal studs, by means of anchor plates, metal clips, or even adhesives. Anchor plates are attached to the stone panels, and the plates in turn are attached with a screw through the exterior sheathing to the metal stud. For a metal clip system, there is a metal runner that is attached to the stone panel, and another to the secondary wall, and these runners have a particular shape that interlocks with the others, thus clipping the panel to the
wall. For adhesives, construction-strength epoxy is used in combination with angles and screws that attach to the back-up wall. Then other components to the system are used as well, such as the insulation, the flashing, and other moisture barriers.

The stone veneer curtain wall, like any other system, has its pros and cons. It comes in all colors, ranging from earthy browns to vibrant reds and blues, with different patterns and finishes, such as grooved, sandblasted, or even polished. The stone veneer curtain wall is well suited for most environments. This system is also relatively low maintenance, only requiring replacement of the sealant every few years. Another positive is that its thickness provides good sound insulation. But although stone veneer is prized for its beauty, easy maintenance and sound insulation, it is very costly to produce. The stone may have to be imported from other parts of the world. Also the stone can pose a fire hazard; stone cracks under intense heat and, in a fire, pieces of rock may very well come down from the structure.

Stone veneer curtain walls recreate the elegance of ancient stone structures of our past. With advances in construction technology, stone can be used today in virtually any structure of any size. As we continue to press forward in technology, we can keep the solidity of our past with the natural strength and beauty of stone.

References


Food Memories:  
Growing Up in St. Vincent

Avril Miller

The heritage of West Indians is very traditional and routine. It is customary on Sunday to have the biggest lunch of the week, such as rice and pigeon peas (they were frozen from around March to last until November) with baked chicken, ground provision which consists of steamed plantain, sweet potato, and/or dasheen. The meal is completed with a vegetable or potato salad. The baked chicken sometimes is substituted by stewed pork, stewed beef or curry mutton. The incentive to clean your plate was rewarded with some of Mummy’s homemade custard or coconut ice cream. Oh, how I can recall that wooden ice cream tub with the outside hand crank to churn or turn the rock salt and ice between the canister and tub. The salt was used to prevent the ice from melting before the liquids became ice cream. I can remember my mother on a Saturday evening seasoning up the meat by marinating it. Chives from Ms. Catherine’s backyard and peppers along with other garden herbs were all rubbed down on that meat, and if that was not enough, the bowl was covered and shaken to make sure not a patch was missing.

On Saturdays more eating options appeared; they were referred to as Creole food. First breakfast is either corn meal, arrowroot, or flour porridge, none of which I enjoyed. Then there is lunch which is the traditional boljou—breadfruit roasted on an open fire in the yard on sticks supported by two to four big stones if no coal pot was available; and this is accompanied by stewed salt fish with vegetables. This dish today remains a tradition, but thankfully it has evolved to an everyday/anyway dish. Freshly squeezed lemonade, mauby or the juice from the fruits in season was the beverage for Saturday’s lunch. Other options for Creole lunch were callallo soup with crab, coconut dumplings, sweet potato, and slices of young breadfruit. A Saturday would not be complete without “pig trotters,” “cattle head,” or “cattle tongue souse,” served with roast breadfruit. Breadfruit is a food that is cooked in various methods suitable for the occasion. It can be steamed, roasted, used in salads, made into chips and fried when stale.

As I saw my mother’s Saturday chores, I often thought I didn’t want to be a housewife. In the village a young lady was not considered a model figure if she didn’t carry out the traditions or customs in the proper way. For instance, every Saturday Mummy would be kneading up dough to bake bread. This is followed by the outside oven being lit. This was a red drum with a cut out door in the front. Two shelves were placed inside, and at the bottom a lit coal pot with a fire going inside. On the outside at the top of the oven would be another fire made from coconut fiber, coconut shell or sticks, anything to spark a fire and
keep it going until the bread was baked. The scent traveled throughout the neighborhood along with the scent from other homes doing their usual weekend baking. Breakfast Sunday morning was mummy’s homemade bread with eggs from local yard fowl, or fried black pudding.

In the village of Belair, on weekends, everyone looked forward to Ms. Mida passing through, skillfully balancing her tray of coconut slices or tarts; and in her hand was a baking sheet with potato pudding or ground nut sugar cakes. We also paid a visit to Ms. Little’s yard for black pudding and cooked breadnut. I looked forward to this as an outing. We couldn’t get mummy to break the habit of insisting that we drink fruit juice or mauby that was made at home; the other children got to have their weekend treats with Ju-C (soda), and that was tempting to watch.

As I reminisce about my childhood days, I think of similar incidents with Annie-Haucks Lawson. Growing up with both parents meant adjusting to different eating habits, foods, and atmosphere. My dad raised rabbits and sheep. However, his eating habits were not limited as all sorts of wild meats including iguana, manacou and yard fowl were on the dinner table. The rabbit and mutton were for special occasions like Christmas, a birthday or anniversary. The wild meats were cooked when my dad’s friends came by to socialize (or “hang a lime”). The lime always started in our yard during a moonlight night over a game of draughts or dominoes. I loved the scent of manacou swung over an open fire singeing the hair. That was the only time my brothers and sisters were allowed to mingle among the crowd. The men stayed in the yard eating and drinking lots of alcohol, good old local sunset rum, while the food was brought to us in the house. Children were not to get involved in adult gatherings or conversation, especially when alcohol was involved, but we could hear their conversations and smell the alcohol from a distance.

Attending Sunday school wasn’t optional. Each child was guaranteed 25 cents or more for the collection plate at church. It was not until long after that most parents found out that the offering was going to Ms. Yearwood’s tray. Ms. Yearwood sold all kinds of treats and was not lacking in color—bright colors were one of her trademarks. The tray had colored popcorn or disco corn, and the brightest blue and green popsicles. There were also coconut fudge, sugar cakes, tamarind balls, lemon balls, and doughnuts. Of course my sisters were not spared the rod. I was the only one not to get a beating because I was the youngest.

At a young age I was separated from my dad. My mom moved further away into the city. Our eating habits changed a bit. Perhaps God’s plan was never for us to be hungry. How better can the love for food get as we lived close to the harbor where the young men went fishing and our neighbor, Ms. Cyrus, worked at the fish market. Fish was on the menu when we lived with dad, but not on a regular basis. Being in town now, we had fish of all colors, shapes, and sizes. Ms. Cyrus was punctual in her delivery of fish, along with limes and a hand of green banana. Mummy was left with no other choice than to go to the market to get some eddoes and okra to make a boil-in—fish along with other foods cooked up in one pot with white sauce. But our traditions were slowly
fading away after we adjusted to town life. The homemade bread on Sundays was replaced by bread in a bag bought from the supermarket or one of the mobile bakeries. We had more red meats packed in trays and the chickens were big, but not as juicy as the fowl from Dad. Nevertheless, on Christmas and special occasions, the rabbit meat, mutton, and sometimes beef were brought by my father.

My mom and older sisters begin to experiment with different dishes. The fish was used for fish pies, fish cakes, baked, grilled, and fried and sometimes stuffed with farine—grated cassava squeezed to remove the water—then baked in a copper pan over an open fire and constantly turned until crisp. Eventually I became interested enough to experiment myself. I first made green banana chips, coconut fudge and sugar cake, and then I graduated to the famous pelau – brown rice cooked up with chicken and peas in one pot.

As everyone grew up with urban exposure and the era of cookbooks, cable, and travel integrated into our lives, traditional culture gradually became history. When I worked for a French company where the chef prepared some irresistible pasta dishes with cheese sauces, I developed a passion for pastas. I do not have a favorite dish per se, but I have a passion for sea food and savory desserts. When I long for some home cooking I often cook stewed smoked herring with steamed sweet potatoes, plantain, coconut dumpling, and banana.
e-English: A Natural Evolution of Our Language?
Erin Grabe

Human communication is in constant flux. Thanks to the internet—the world’s most ubiquitous technology—netgeeks across the globe have created a new language, internet slang, as a testament to this flux, if to no other end than to save keystrokes. The new words, acronyms, abbreviations, and non-verbal symbols comprising this new internet lingo are so rampant that they have started to infiltrate oral communication. Quickly, new titles are being coined for this phenomenon, such as netspeak and e-English. Linguists like Professor David Crystal claim that this geek speak is adding new dimensions to the English language, broadening its range and expressiveness, and they are encouraging others to embrace it. Studies are being done by scholars like Naomi Baron and Amanda Pawelski to determine who is responsible for its development, proliferation, and frequency of use. In fact, the rise of internet lingo has become such a hot topic that even news organizations like National Public Radio have debated the issue on the airwaves. In the wake of this linguistic wave, an interesting debate has materialized, a debate that warrants (unabbreviated) thought: does the rise of internet speak represent the natural evolution of the English language, or its demise?

Unlike many curious phenomena in the English language, it has been seemingly easy for researchers to pinpoint the origins of e-English. Computer networking and internet search tools laid the groundwork for what would become a boom of instant and text messaging, centered around transmitting text (Baron, 2008, p. 13). Ostensibly, a researcher need only analyze the quantity, quality, style, demographic use and frequency with which people text and instant message, then, to adequately explain its origins and development (Crystal, 2008, p. 89-92). However, the picture is perhaps more pixilated than it appears at first glance. The abbreviated language patterns resulting from the recent rise of instant, text-based communication are not an entirely brand new means of human communication. Indeed, a thorough examination of language outside of computer-mediated communication (CMC) reveals similar tendencies that predate mobile phones and personal computers (Crystal, 2008, p. 37). For example, rebuses—pictures used to represent the sounds of words—were used in Ancient Egyptian writings. Their modern, geeky equivalents would be the use of the letter y instead of writing why or the substitution of an 8 in the common expression c u l8r (see you later). These very same tools are found in many
languages. For instance, French-speakers are wont to type *7ac* (pronounced “set ah say,” spelled *c’est assez*), meaning *that’s enough* (Crystal, 2008, p. 41). We may skillfully surf our QWERTYs and think that these devices are clever and new, but, as Crystal points out, we are “only doing what generations have done before us” (2008, p. 41).

In the late 16th century, the phrase *God be with ye* was in common use. Over time, this popular farewell evolved—due in part to its similarity to greetings like *good morning*—into the common farewell in modern English, *goodbye* (Oxford, 2005). Just as a vowel, consonant or whole syllable was omitted to form a contraction in the case of *goodbye*, CMC users create word shortenings to suit their needs such as *aftn* for afternoon or *btwn* for between (Crystal, 2008, p. 47). Deliberate misspellings are also common in CMC, misspellings such as *cuz* (because), *luv* (love) and *thru* (through). David Crystal points out that nonstandard spellings such as these are so much a part of English literary tradition that entries exist in the *Oxford English Dictionary* dating as far back as 1828 (2004, p. 48-49).

However, despite our long-lasting tradition as English-speakers of simply spelling things wrong, it is essential to note that at no point in our history as human beings has communication been so readily available at such a low cost—once your internet or mobile device has been purchased and service contracts signed, of course (Baron, 2008, p. 4). The domestication of these technologies, Naomi Baron asserts, is “challenging our assumptions about interpersonal communication and calling for us to rethink conventional notions about spoken and written language” (2008, p. 5). According to Baron, the fundamental difference between the current CMC movement and other previous forms of widespread communication (remember the landline telephone?) is control over when, where, and how well we communicate (2008, p. 5-6).

Due to the popularization of CMC, through which millions of people are typing billions of messages every day, internet vernacular has begun to crop up in oral communication (Ulaby, 2006). This trend received an onslaught of bad hype towards the beginning of the 21st century as linguistic purists claimed that the use of text language was becoming indistinguishable from proper English by younger generations, though David Crystal finds little to no evidence to support this claim (2008, p. 151). Citing sporadic examples in teenage schoolwork where an abbreviation or two has crept in, Crystal counters with direct acknowledgments from a number of teens that there is a time and place for using text language—and academic writing is not one of them (2008, p. 152-153).

Does the origin of the headlines slamming geek speak lie in the fact that they were all typed with one finger? Though internet lingo is used by people of all generations, it is truly the younger generation, namely, the one that grew up with computers, that has catapulted text abbreviations into the spoken word (Pawelski, 2008, p. 2-3). The reluctance to accept this linguistic trend’s validity may be nothing more than an older generation’s inability to bridge a generational gap. Through a direct study Pawelski found, though, that the number of users of the internet that embrace internet lingo is highest in the young, lowest in the
middle-aged and, surprisingly, curves back upward in the elderly (Pawelski, 2008, p. 12-13). Susan Herring, a professor at Indiana University, reminds us that language can draw “a generational line in the sand” and separate “an in-group from an out-group” (Ulaby, 2006). It is not uncommon to hear a teenager say book instead of cool, because in mobile messaging the keys for the respective words are found in the same location. Similarly, a fly on the wall in a high school hallway may hear the expression I less than three you because a less than symbol ( < ) followed by a number 3 in CMC forms the shape of a heart: I <3 U (Ulaby, 2006). To put it bluntly, perhaps the younger generation might like to think that with such code, they will keep their territory free of incursions by their elders.

If words are symbols that have been mutually agreed upon to represent or convey a certain meaning, then, as symbols, they may be left open to interpretation, revision, or evaluation.

This task is often performed by linguists skilled in etymology because without a common understanding of a word, its meaning may be lost in translation from one ear to the next. Knowing that words morph and that our online communications will only continue to evolve, we should not be so eager to write netspeak off. Often when a word or definition is tinkered with by non-linguists, the unskilled toiling over the language is met with criticism. Such is the case, it seems, with language developing via computer-mediated communication.

E-English is not new, nor is it just for the young and American. The phenomenon would be much easier to dismiss were it an American fad, akin to the utterances of Bart Simpson. Various methods for keeping messages brief or instilling emotion into them have already been thought up. This language surge is instead an international movement that boasts the participation of the whole technologically-advanced world in the creation of a new slang based on electronic communication. Though the younger generation may make up the majority of CMC language-originators, the elderly—wishing to stay hip—are more common users of weblish than, say, their offspring. In other words, the generational gap seems to span the middle-aged, joining the youngest and the oldest.

Though internet lingo may have initially appeared to save keystrokes, it has evolved into a method of inserting colloquialisms into the way we type. It stands to reason, then, that if the way we speak has influenced the way we type, then the way we type can do the same for speech. Linguists, scholars, teachers and parents believe that a clear-cut line between our communication patterns needs to be drawn between formal academia and informal interactions. As a method of individuals relating to one another, CMC was not born to replace English. Students inserting internet lingo into formal interactions may quickly be corrected by their professors. The correction then becomes a part of the teaching process and not necessarily the death rattle of language as we know it.

Is it time to add Netspeak 101 to English as a second language courses? Rather than make that leap, it seems more appropriate to establish a solid foundation for the English language first. Without that, the frequently evolving
and individually tailored netspeak would be lost anyway on the clueless. When computers first adorned a vast percentage of people’s homes it was not uncommon to hear people remark: “I don’t need to know how to spell. I have spell check.” If that is true, then perhaps it is also true that we do not need to learn how to speak because we have a shortcut for that in the form of netspeak. As a means of expression, an extension of our language or a shortcut to informal notes and updates within mass social media, netspeak has its place. Provided there is a strong basic understanding of “proper” language first, this slang may be akin to cadence in poetry or the conciseness of a telegram. To adopt an evolutionary platitude, it is a linguistic survival of the fittest. Though in constant flux, e-English is fit—and by no means on the verge of extinction.

References

To the Rescue
Bryan Hou

[Students were asked to compose a narrative of twenty-six sentences beginning each sentence with a different letter of the alphabet, in order. Also they needed to include one sentence fragment and one grammatically-sound sentence that is 100 words long. Prof. Goodison]

After getting the news about Roran in trouble with the empire, Eragon and his dragon made the harsh journey back to Carvahall to save his brother. Barely able to accept the thought that it was his fault for the trouble now heading towards Roran and the village, Eragon turned his stride into a relentless race to save them. Carvahall, a town between the raging torrents of the Anora river on the east, and mountain ridges of the Spine towards its north, finally came into view. Dreading the situation, Eragon prepared for the worst. Even Eragon could not recognize his own village anymore: a once peaceful and quiet village now turned into a fortified stronghold with men scurrying to barricade the roads with large tree trunks while the women dug trenches to prevent any incoming attacks; doors and windows of houses were sealed shut and fortified to withstand attacks; also men and older children wore armor and tools once used to earn their livelihood were now used for war, several houses were charred from flames that indicated an earlier attack took place, and several wounded or dead villagers were seen lying beside Girtude's house.

Far beyond the village, Eragon noticed a camp of soldiers and two strange black figures. "Go ahead," said one of the black-clad figures to the soldiers—this made Eragon believe that they were Ra'zac. Hideous creatures that were not human and summoned by a shade to do his bidding.

In an attempt to land in the village, the villagers believed Eragon was an enemy from the empire and were preparing to attack him. Just before a villager was about to release his strung bow, Roran stopped him. Knowing little about dragon riders, Roran did not recognize Eragon. Looking closer he finally realized it was his little brother, who disappeared after their farmhouse was attacked by the Ra'zac looking for something. "My god, is it really you? Eragon?" asked Roran, and Eragon nodded "yes." “Nothing we can do right now, but wait, we don't know what the Ra'zac are planning . . . ” continued Roran, as his voice weakened. ". . . Out of resources, we cannot hold out much longer."

Positioning himself and his dragon close by the soldiers' camp, Eragon and the villagers planned an ambush. "Quickly now!" screamed Eragon, as he flew into the air on his dragon and initiated attack. Running out from all sides, the villagers cornered the Ra'zac and the soldiers, and a battle began. Swords clashed, blood spilled—the fight lasted thirty minutes before the rest of the soldiers retreated.
"They are running away!" yelled one of the villagers, as others started cheering. Usually this would have been a triumph for Eragon, winning a battle, but this time it was not. Viewing the crowd, he saw Roran on the ground. While fighting in the battle, a soldier had shot an arrow and hit Roran in his right chest. "Xaise heill," chanted Eragon, using the ancient language of the elves to heal Roran, as he was too exhausted to try his usual magic. "You mustn't die on me now!" cried Eragon. Zonked out, Roran closed his eyes.
Delubrum:
A Video Game Background Story

Carlos Farje

The year is 2108 AD and humanity now lives on the moon. Colonies consisting of separate layers and sectors have replaced the traditional streets and avenues of the old century. High-speed elevators and railways have made the automobile an artifact of the past. Technology has steadily improved upon the concepts of the twenty-first century. Despite the advance of social equality, discord in the colonies is ever-present. As such, a group exists to keep the peace: the APIB (Allied Police and Investigations Bureau). At the top of the APIB ladder is a specially-trained group of detectives who handle only the most tasking cases. This is a story of the APIB’s best detective.

Detective First Grade Les Grazer is a seasoned pro; gang hits, cop killings, serial killings, murder-rapes—he has seen them all. Twenty-one years since his promotion, he leads a stable life with his wife and has a daughter in university. A private, stoic man of high standards, his reputation at the force has always been noted. Grazer works alone, relying only on his unique intuition and his weapons. There is never a case too big, never a failure to dwell on—Grazer hasn’t run into a challenge he could not meet. That is, until today.

Today was supposed to be another ordinary work day—another Wednesday, another victim, and another story to be unraveled. Grazer receives a transmission from APIB HQ: “There is a suspected Homicide in S8L3. Detective Grazer, please respond to the scene.” Grazer steps out of the SL elevator and into the innards of the New Aegis rail line, the site of his new case. He surveys the crime scene carefully, examining the blood splatter on the iron rail tracks. The detective begins to voice notes into his AISA (Artificially Intelligent Satellite Assistant). “Adult female.” The body, now faceless, has no other wounds. “Pummeled. Probably with a blunt object...” Robbery was not the motive. The victim’s bag was still curiously wrapped around her shoulder, her holo-phone still in her front pocket, and on a gold necklace, the cross pendant still glimmering in the darkness. “That looks familiar...” There are no initial signs of sexual assault. “No blood trail, no footprints, nothing.” As the detective wraps up his canvas, the stationed cops go for their traditional “numb-the-nerves smoke” outside. Before exiting himself, Grazer, from the edge of the station platform, notices a red figure in the deep of the tunnel. He calls out to it; there is no response. The red figure glows as brightly as a photographer’s dark room; Grazer found a child’s rotting body in one some weeks ago. It didn’t matter what it reminded him of—he runs after the figure.

A half mile into the tunnel, as his 48-year-old legs fail him, he looks back. There is no tunnel behind him; the walls, tall and imposing, seemingly
caved in behind him without a sound. He turns around again, only to see the figure vanish into the blue darkness. A sudden echo could be heard from deeper within. A cry? No, it was the sound of agony. He takes a few steps forward and feels his left foot sink slightly into a puddle. He points his AISA—now only functioning enough to provide him with a light source—to the ground: it was a small pool of blood. The situation gets more ominous as he progresses through the tunnel. The only other tools available to Grazer are his “relic”—a term coined by his colleagues for the centuries-old .44 magnum he carries—and his standard issue beam rifle. The beam rifle is capable of burning human flesh in an instant and fires at a speed of 100 rounds per minute. Though powerful, it will overheat after prolonged use. Needless to say, the detective is well-equipped for most, if not any, situation. With no choice left but to move forward, Grazer arms himself and searches for a way out.

As he progresses further into the seemingly endless tunnel, he begins to see a series of numbers slowly traveling across the ceiling. The detective follows the numbers to an opening in the left wall—the three-meter high entrance oddly shaped in the form of a cross. Looking inside the passageway, Grazer sees construction lights, suggesting there may be an exit nearby. As he enters, Grazer recalls his daughter’s sixteenth birthday; he had given Lisa a diamond cross pendant. The lights begin to flicker erratically, and his AISA suddenly activates and relays Grazer’s earlier notes: “Robbery is unlikely. Diamond cross pendant is still intact.” The same echoing noise from before could be heard from the tunnel. As the detective turns around, he sees a group of short, obsidian-black creatures approach, their scythe-like arms dragging along the ground. Behind them, the red figure reappears and again travels further down the tunnel, as it erupts with pulsating white waves of light. What did all of this mean? Could it be related to the murder of the woman in the station? The detective will have to choose between pursuing “the red” into the tunnel or finding a way out of it.

While playing Delubrum, I’d like for players to think of the game as something they have control over. Emphasis will be placed on the character’s actions which will be used to progress the story, as well as to entertain certain viewpoints about the game’s world. Any person that likes psychological thrillers should be able to enjoy the convoluted storyline. Also, fans of the survival horror video game genre should find the game play to their liking, as exploration, puzzles and limited inventory will be implemented. There are many underlying themes that will provoke thought and discussion. I want players—for the most part—to interpret things for themselves instead of the game providing cut scenes that detail concrete answers. The player will have the final say in determining the ending to Delubrum.
Monday, March 8, 2010, was the class field trip to the Museum of Modern Art. The train ride couldn't go by fast enough. I eagerly waited in lines for tickets and the coat check. Finally we took the escalator up to the showroom. Upon entry into the exhibit I was astonished by what I was looking at because the doorway to the showroom was the mouth of one of Tim Burton’s creations. Walking through this portal instantly felt like leaving this world and entering his mind. As I walked around, I saw people gawking at anything and everything. I was particularly attracted to five pieces. After walking through a second time I narrowed them down to three.

One that caught my eye was a color pencil sketch of Edward Scissorhands. I liked it because it was entirely made of scribbles and scratches. It was an effective piece because in its roughness it resembled the edginess of Edward’s character. The piece consisted of cool colors (violet, blue, teal) and greys. It was a basic sketch from a story board for the film, but it was powerful because it expressed a mysterious personality. It looked as if it had been drawn effortlessly, which gave me the impression that he created it straight from his imagination without any planning.

Near the beginning of the exhibit was a portrait of an eyeless woman. It took me a while to realize it was Sally from “The Nightmare Before Christmas.” It was a remake of the character’s wardrobe. The piece, mainly consisting of cool colors, made her stand out effortlessly because she was drenched in the complementary color of her hair, blue. Her dress had a hypnotic design and she had a small tattoo on her left arm. The proportions of her neck and body cause the viewer to focus on her chest. Comparing the character’s final design and this one, I can say that she went through a lot of development. This painting shows a seductive side of her, whereas in the movie she seems more sweet. This piece is intimidating because her dead eyes pierce you and seem to follow you wherever you move. Despite all the creepy details, she was not at all scary to me. The bottle of poison on the left side of the table was a nice touch.
My ultimate favorite was one entitled “The Last of its Kind.” It was a 9x12 painting made up of colors from the chromatic grey scale and an asymmetrical balance because of the direction of the swirl. On the lower right was a cow. In the center of the painting was a red spiral target that unwound into an arrow that pointed to the cow. The piece seemed somber because of the expression on the cow’s face. The swirl set an unwinding mood, like it was leading to the end. It was so simple, but I loved it. In some ways the vibe of this reminded me of a PETA advertisement. The cow, being the last of its kind, might encourage one to be a vegetarian.
For our final project, my group got assigned our first choice, *Rhinoceros* by Eugene Ionesco.

This play was set in the 1950s in a small town in France that was neither rich nor poor. The play was first performed in 1960. Eugene Ionesco wrote it as an absurdist play. He took a serious matter and spun it off to be comedic.

Ionesco wrote this play as an anti-Nazi act. It was based on people being stripped of their individuality and uniqueness. Everyone was turning into the same thing. Not one person was different from the next. Society did that to the people of this small town by turning them into rhinoceroses. Ionesco compared that to the Nazis doing that to people, and eliminating anyone who was different.

When I read the play I didn’t think of the Nazis or the 1950s. I thought about the message it was sending. I saw that Ionesco was sending a message to people about keeping your individuality. Don’t be afraid to be different or to break away from the “norm.”

Everyone in the play was the same, and in the end all became rhinoceroses. The only one that stayed a human was a man named Berenger; he is the only person in the town who did his own thing. He was different from everyone else. He did not give into society and act the way everyone else did.

Another thing I thought about after reading this play was how it related to me, and the time I live in now. Would this play be able to send the same message if the given circumstances were different? Would it mean anything if the play was set in our own time instead of in the 1950s?

I think it would work in any time period with a different set of given circumstances. It is a strong message that can relate to anything. Yes, it was written to relate to bad times and the Nazis, but you can change that to fit into things going on in the world today or in the 1960s, 1970s and probably in years to come.

Take a high school setting and all the peer pressure kids have. The play can be set in a high school where kids are being pressured into drugs or sex. All those who give in are the ones who turn into hypothetical rhinoceroses. And the people who dare to be their own person, well they stay who they are. That situation can be set in any decade and any place.

If you look at today’s society, you see everyone striving to look the same and act a certain way because of the media and commercials, television and the news all telling us to do, say, and buy certain things. There is not a whole lot of individuality today. Even people who say they are different are still different in a group of people who dress, look, and act the same.
We chose to do our production of the play in the same time period as it was written for, in the 1950s. Even though it can be set in any time or place we all agreed that we liked the setting of it and wanted to leave it the way it was.

We wanted to focus more on sending the message than trying to change the play. I didn’t think that the 1950s was a hard time period to relate to.

I want people to walk out of the play with the same message that I got from reading it. I want them not to be afraid to be different. Don’t change yourself to please anyone else. Especially young kids and teenagers should see this. They should know that it is okay to be different and be who you are and no one should have anything to say about it. Don’t let someone influence you to be different than what you want to be.

Sometimes you can’t help but be different, for instance by being another race or ethnicity. You shouldn’t be ashamed of that either. That’s why the Nazis were trying to change people. They wanted anyone who wasn’t like them gone. In today’s time I think we have come such a long way that we should all look past each other’s differences.

I would love to really do a production of Rhinoceros because I believe in the message and believe that everyone should know it. In this generation it is important to be your own person and be different, and I think that people of all ages should know that.
What does it take to become a man? Reggie and Aaron are two similar characters in the novel *Indian Killer* by Sherman Alexie. Reggie is a mirror image of Aaron and they both follow paths that lead them to violence. Driven by their fathers’ influence, these individuals learn to develop anger and hatred toward whites and Indians. Their classical conditioning by both their fathers causes Reggie and Aaron to act violently. Through violence, Reggie and Aaron display characteristics that mirror their fathers. Their fathers are models of what it means to become a man.

Reggie’s violent behavior is a direct conditioning learned from his father, Bird, a white man who married an Indian woman. Bird taught Reggie American and Indian history, and hit Reggie when he answered questions incorrectly. Bird taught Reggie to hate Indians. He did not want his son to be another “dirty Indian” or Indian at all. Reggie develops hatred for his father and for white men. After Bird slapped Reggie and bloodied his nose, Bird said “I want you to know I’m doing this for your own good. I don’t want you to end up like all the other Indians”’ (94). Reggie’s father was actually teaching him the importance of power. He dominated Reggie while he was still a child and unable to defend himself. He instilled in him the idea that all Indians were weak and stupid. Bird has taught Reggie that knowledge is power over the weak and that he can express his power with violence.

Aaron’s similar conditioning to violence begins at an early age with his father, Buck, a single parent raising his two sons, Aaron and David. When Aaron and David were children, Buck told them to hide in a structure used for hunting. They were waiting for Indians to come on their land to steal roots from the ground. With guns in their hands they awaited the arrival of the Indian family and then shot above their heads to scare the Indians away. What kind of parent would allow their children to shoot at other human beings? Buck was trying to teach his children to protect what they own through violent acts. Buck explains, “And those Indians are stealing from us. They’re trying to steal our land. We just can’t have that!” (65). Buck teaches his children that violence can be used to remove unwanted Indians from their property. The people trying to steal from Aaron, he was taught, would always be the Indians. Aaron is conditioned to protect himself and his family with violence in order to become a man like his father.

Reggie used what he learned from his father to strengthen his masculinity. Reggie learns that power over another individual was a test of his strength. A man who knows more can do whatever he wants to the weak. Bird’s reason for abusing Reggie as a child was his lack of knowledge on the history questions that were given to him. Reggie reflects his own violent behavior onto
white people. This is Reggie’s idea of how a man should treat others when tested. When Reggie encounters a white man sleeping on a football field, Reggie began to test the white man’s knowledge. “Yeah, you know I was one of those guys who raised the flag at Iwo Jima?” ‘Iwo what?’ Reggie kicked the white man” (256). Reggie was showing dominance over the white man. He wanted to prove his powerful knowledge and strength to a weaker individual. His violent behavior mirrors what his father did to him when he was a child. He wanted to prove that he was a man with his superior knowledge.

Aaron’s father taught Aaron that he must protect what belongs to him with violence. Aaron targets Indian people because of his brother’s death; he blames all Indians for stealing his brother away from him. It is always the Indians who are trying to steal from him and he must use violence to scare them away. Buck had told Aaron in his truck, “‘You’re his big brother. You’re supposed to take care of him.’ ‘I’m sorry.’ Buck backhanded his son and bloodied his nose” (122). Buck put the blame onto Aaron. His weaker brother was stolen from them and Buck uses force to express his anger. Aaron will inflict his anger onto any Indian he can find because of this. He must prove to himself that he is a man by getting revenge for what was stolen from him. This leads to my final thoughts about what a man is.

Reggie and Aaron’s fathers show what effects parents have on their children. Teaching racism to children can lead to violent behavior. Being a man has its limits and it does not have to be proven through violence. Every individual is responsible for his or her own life. Violence does not discriminate, yet racism is the driving factor that leads two different individuals in this novel to mirror each other. It is important for parents to be responsible for what they teach their children. Children are just a mirror image of their parents and violence breeds violence in all families.

Reference

“A Good Man Is Hard to Find” and *Leviathan*

Shomari Johnson

An author can take many different approaches to stimulate a reader’s interest in a piece of literature. Conflicts between supernatural beings—or an endearing love story that ends tragically—may be ways of captivating the audience. What we should note is that despite how strange a work of fiction may be, there is usually some basis for it in reality. Ideals, stereotypes, imagery, and even character rationales have strong foundations in reality and, presented in fictional works, give them life. It is because these characters and their tribulations share the same fundamental ideas as readers, that readers are able to identify with a character—or assess that a character is insane. Flannery O’Connor’s story, “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” thrusts an unwitting family into a fatal situation with a convict who is seemingly sociopathic. By analyzing O’Connor’s story with the help of *Leviathan*, the 1660 classic work by Thomas Hobbes (the creator of the “social contract” and one of the greatest political philosophers), we can better understand the actions of the convict.

In “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” Flannery O’Connor tells the story of an extended family on a road trip to Florida. The grandmother accompanying the family doesn’t care for the Florida expedition because she would rather visit some of her companions in Tennessee. After mentioning that a criminal is on the loose and is en route to Florida, the grandmother suggests that the family should visit a plantation from her youth. In the midst of trying to find the plantation, the family is involved in a car accident and is stranded on the side of the road where they meet The Misfit, the criminal mentioned in the papers. The family is then systematically killed while the grandmother pleads for her life. In an act of self-preservation, the grandmother attempts to appeal to The Misfit’s piety and surprisingly enough it is discovered that he was a church going man at some point. However, despite the similarities in their religious upbringing, it is clear that their views are radically different regarding the topic and this is solidified with the murder of the grandmother.

The meeting of the grandmother and The Misfit quickly becomes a violent affair as all the males of the family are immediately killed once the grandmother voices that The Misfit is in fact the criminal on the loose. Perhaps if she had not recognized that he was the escaped convict, then the family could have been sent on their way. Tragically, it is this definitive interchange that gives The Misfit shape as a character. When asked about the crime he committed, he says, “ ‘Turn to the right, it was a wall... Turn to the left, it was a wall. Look up it was a ceiling, look down it was a floor. I forget what I done lady. I set there and set there, trying to remember what it was I done and I ain’t recalled it to this..."
day. Oncet in a while, I would think it was coming to me, but it never come’” (354). The Misfit never actually explains why he was imprisoned but it can be inferred later on that he murdered his father. Why O’Connor purposely leaves unknown a satisfying answer to this question is actually irrelevant, and an understanding of Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* can provide an explanation of his character.

In *Leviathan* Hobbes says that nature has made all men equal in the faculties of the body and of the mind. He then says, “From this equality of ability, arises equality of hope in the attaining of our ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies. . . ” (Hobbes 63). Since nature has made humans equal in their abilities, then we are also able to be equal in our efforts to obtain things that we desire. In addition, because of the equalities created by nature, a fear of being deprived of what one hopes for or desires, and even a fear of being stripped of one’s life and liberty, is created. The fear of the loss of one’s life and liberty, caused by the equality created by nature, propels us into a war of everyone against everyone. Hobbes says that ultimately we all naturally act in our own self interest and, because of this rampant paranoia, people act out of fear and attack others in anticipation of being attacked themselves for the fruits of their labor or the convenient seat of power that they might possess. By creating a social contract that limited some of the natural rights given to each individual for the betterment of everyone, we can achieve peace.

As an escaped convict, The Misfit has willingly broken the social contract and reassumed all of the rights given to him by nature. “‘I found out the crime don’t matter. You can do one thing or you can do another, kill a man or take a tire off his car, because sooner or later you’re going to forget what it was you done and just be punished for it’” (354). With these natural rights The Misfit has no qualms about committing crimes and sees a futility in atoning for his actions because despite how anyone lives his life, only death awaits him. The Misfit doesn’t have any fear of the consequences of his actions and this sends the grandmother into a panic causing her to make an appeal to his ethos.

The grandmother says that Jesus can save him if he would only pray, but The Misfit does not care much for this option because his understanding of religion is radically different. O’Connor writes:

“Jesus was the only One that ever raised the dead,” The Misfit continued, “and He shouldn’t have done it. He thrown everything off balance. If He did what He said, then it’s nothing for you to do but throw away everything and follow Him, and if He didn’t, then it’s nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you got left the best way you can—by killing somebody or burning down his house or doing some other meanness to him. No pleasure but meanness . . . ” (355)

The grandmother was hoping that The Misfit would succumb to the idea of a higher power, but it is clear that he resents the idea and message that Jesus has sent. In *Leviathan* Hobbes says that to keep all parties honest in a social
contract, a common power is needed to pass judgment and keep them in awe. The Leviathan. The Misfit, with his newfound freedom from prison and his refusal to throw away his life to follow Jesus, has no mortal or deity to keep him in check. These circumstances are why he appears to be remorseless and uninterested in considering the brutal murder of the family.

The rationale of the criminal is much less surprising once we take the reality of the situation into account. However, the reason why he decides to murder the family still comes into question. Hobbes writes:

> Again, men have no pleasure, but on the contrary a great deal of grief, in keeping company, where there is no power able to over-awe them all. For every man desires that his companion should value him, at the same rate he sets upon himself: and upon all signs of contempt, or undervaluing, naturally endeavors, as far as he dares, (which amongst them that have no common power to keep them in quiet, is far enough to make them destroy each other), to extort a greater value from his contemners, by damage; and from others, by the example. (63)

When two parties that aren’t bound by the same power encounter each other, it becomes a battle of self-preservation if either party bears any ill will. It is now clear that if the grandmother did not recognize The Misfit at the beginning of the story, then the family would not have been murdered because there would have been no incentive for them to report him to the authorities.

When reading literature it is important to remember that many elements are taken from real life. The analysis of a story or character can yield further insights if appropriate outside sources are taken into consideration. At first glance the relationship between the work of fiction, “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” and the philosophical doctrine of Leviathan may seem farfetched, but upon closer analysis, the correlation is obvious. By using Leviathan for a deeper analysis of O’Connor’s work, motives for the seemingly inexplicable actions of a mysterious character aren’t so wild after all.

References


Bayview
Sophia Rodriguez

The Bayview Projects of Canarsie, Brooklyn: a community of low-income minority families, drug dealers, drug abusers, gang bangers, and victims. Victims of abuse—physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional, and victims of ignorance and of contentment with mediocrity—victims of their environment. For fourteen years I called this place “home;” attending the neighborhood schools up until high school.

I had always been told that I was smart and mature for my age, and I was constantly being praised for my artistic talent, having taught myself to draw in the second grade. And since the third grade I had always been in the “Gifted Program” of the schools I attended, where my classes had labels such as “Astral,” “Ace,” “Enriched,” and so on. I had always been that kid in class who’d annoyingly jump up out of her seat, hand raised, begging “Me! Me!” to the teacher while the rest of the class sat with unlit bulbs above their heads. I had always been that girl in the class who would talk up a storm while the teacher was lecturing, and when called on to repeat what was just taught, would recite the lesson as if it were the lyrics to my favorite song (which I suspect simultaneously embarrassed and pleasantly surprised the teacher.)

Despite being that girl, I never saw myself as being any different from my peers and neighbors. We all lived in the same sad place, and we all had some sad story to share coming from families broken in one way or another. We all used food stamps, shopped at the discount store, and by the second week of the month were anxiously, once again, awaiting the first of the month to arrive. And more importantly, we were all a part of the sad cycle that our parents were a part of, whose parents were a part of, whose parents were also a part of. . . you get the picture. We’re all going to procreate here and our kids will have their kids here, and eventually we’ll all die here. That’s how it is in Bayview. Once you’re in Bayview, you don’t leave unless, of course, you’re moving to the projects of another neighborhood.

Sometime in the middle of my eighth grade year, the test for the specialized high schools was being administered. At the time, I had never heard of Brooklyn Technical, nor of Stuyvesant or any of the other schools for which the test was designed. I decided to take the test partly because my friends were taking it, and partly because it was an excuse to leave my neighborhood; the test was administered in downtown Brooklyn, at Brooklyn Technical High School. Before I took the test, I studied using the practice test booklet given to the students by our guidance counselors. When I first opened the booklet, the critical reading and logic sections were a breeze for me. After calculating my total points, I had scored no less than an 80% on all the practice tests in those sections. But when I began testing myself in the math section it seemed as if I was
deciphering hieroglyphics—only that probably would have been easier than decoding the foreign expressions on the page! So I went to my math teacher for help. She told me that the school was behind academically, and that they were focusing on teaching what would be on the state and city-wide standardized tests and that’s why the math seemed so complicated. She explained a few problems to me, and every day both during art class and after school I’d study and teach myself this math that was so new to me, using the explanations in the answer key to guide my learning. Eventually the time came to take the test and I felt good about my performance. So did my classmates, apparently.

I was absent on the day the students received their scores, and came to school the day after. My classmates and teachers excitedly explained to me that only one student in the school had made it to Brooklyn Tech and insisted that I hurry to the guidance office to see if it was me. “Congratulations Sophia! Brooklyn Tech is a very difficult school to get into, you should be proud!” Naturally, I was proud of myself, not because Brooklyn Tech was “a difficult school to get into,” but because I’m a competitive person and I just beat everybody in the school! “Owww! Go me!” I went back up to the third floor to my classroom and had planned to act as if I didn’t get in but my wide grin refused to disappear in time and so, gave me away. My ego felt satisfied, but I still hadn’t actually realized what I had accomplished. I kept telling everyone, “yeah I got in . . .calm down though, it’s not a big deal, it’s not that serious!” It took a couple of weeks of teachers congratulating me and pointing and saying things like “That’s the one, that’s the girl that got in” before I truly reflected on what my success on the test meant. It meant that, for one, I beat the odds. Coming from Bayview Projects, you don’t excel, you don’t overcome, and you don’t reach for anything that even seems unreachable. Well, I came from Bayview Projects, I excelled, I overcame the deficient education I had received in school, and I reached to learn and practice things that at first seemed too far outside my frame of knowledge to understand.
Rebirth at Thirteen
Juliana Edwards

It was December 2, 1993. I was thirteen years old. It was a hot Thursday afternoon in Medellín, Colombia. The sky was blue, the sun was out, and like every afternoon we were stuck in traffic, lots of traffic. You could feel the sweat running down your forehead. The 85-degree weather kept spiking up in a closed window sedan without a/c. Car horns honking, motorcycles accelerating, buses rushing. Radios were on, different kinds of music made the afternoon even more overwhelming.

Over the past ten years, the hectic city had been a daily witness of car bombings, kidnappings, beheadings, and the assassination of three presidential candidates. Over a thousand police officers dead. Two hundred judges had been killed. Planes were bombed. Kids were shooting kids. Nothing seemed to be changing any time soon.

Being stuck in traffic during rush hour with your window rolled up so that nobody would steal your watch was just part of the day. Looking over your shoulder whenever you heard a motorcycle getting close was just part of preventing getting caught in a shootout. Driving over a dead body lying on the sidewalk was the part not one day could miss. Being thirteen in one of the world’s most dangerous cities at the time was nothing out of the ordinary for someone who’s only known that type of life.

I remember the traffic finally started to move on that Thursday afternoon. Little did I know, it was about to stop again when the radio announced that the world’s richest, most brutal drug trafficker, the billionaire godfather of international drug dealing, Colombia’s cause of sorrow, “Pablo Escobar,” was dead. Killed by the Colombian Army and lying barefoot on a rooftop.

Nobody could believe what they were hearing. It was like a bucket of cold water had just been dumped over your head. Suddenly, it wasn’t hot anymore. It was the moment every Colombian who had been a victim of violence, the way my family had, was waiting for.

On our way home, which happened to be a few blocks away from the city’s morgue, I saw the crowds gathered. Some celebrating as if the National Soccer Team had just won The World Cup. Others crying rivers over the man that provided them with food to eat and school for their children. I felt my heart sink. For a minute I felt bad for the man I many times wished didn’t exist. I was confused. Would it really be the end of the violence I had been a witness to since I could remember?

Would I be able to walk peacefully around the neighborhood without having to hide from a shootout? Yes, I would. Would I be able to have a childhood like the one I saw in the movies but nobody I knew actually had? Would I ever see a dead body again? Not ever.
Pablo Escobar was more than a name. He was the subject of conversation during breakfast, and he would make his way to lunch and dinner depending on the massacre of the day. Nobody I knew actually met him in person but boy did we see the consequences of his evil. He was part of my life. He was part of my fears. He taught me with actions the meaning of the word death at a very young age. He is the reason my childhood’s memories are dark.

As the years went by and my memories of him became part of my past, I realized the world was a better place without him. Violence will always exist, but my family, as well as many others, was born again the day he died.

After I moved to the United States and left my childhood memories in the past, I decided I would cherish the freedom life gave me as an adult. It was the same freedom it owed to me as a child. That part of my life is buried but one thing has carried on to my adult life: The fear Pablo Escobar brought to me as a child only made me stronger as an adult.
Significant Events

Amanda Yeung

Though I have only lived two decades, my life has been marked by several events that have changed me significantly. It started out with the day I was born, unexpectedly, as a cleft palate baby. I’ve undergone surgery more than five times together with many hospital appointments that caused me to be unable to focus in school. For years, no one could understand what I said because there was a gap in my mouth that interfered with the sounds I tried to make.

My mother told me that I had about four operations when I was an infant. From what I remember, the anesthesiologists would always let me choose what kind of gas mask to wear: chocolate, vanilla, or strawberry flavor. I was stuck inside a case with open air holes so the doctors could reach me. I even remember a glimpse or possibly a dream of my family in hospital clothes coming to visit me in the recovery room. This memory was probably when I was starting to really comprehend what was going on with me. That was the start of growing up and trying to find ways to shut the jar of tears that I was going to store up.

When I was in the fifth grade, I had another operation. I had to wake up early in the morning, at about 5 a.m. My mother and I went to the hospital and waited for the surgeon whom we called “Dr. Super.” Right when he came, I followed him and did not know where he would take me. I had separated from my mother and my heart started to beat fast. In the operating room, after I was put to sleep, a small piece of bone was taken out of my hip and put into my palate to close up the hole in my mouth that had caused me to have speech problems. The doctors kept telling me how brave I was and even though I was afraid at first, I was happy that I could finally talk better and feel more confident in school.

After that surgery, I learned to adapt to the new formation of my palate, but I had an under-bite that required two operations in the summer of 2005. I had to wear a Rigid External Distraction (R.E.D.) device on my face that connected to my jawbone. Since it was hanging on my face, I went through hazy days indoors. For about two months I could not eat meat, vegetables, or any solid food that required me to chew, and I lost about twenty pounds. I ended up looking like a skeleton that could faint any second. This test of life taught me to have patience and endurance while I watched others enjoy the normal things they had. It also taught me to appreciate what I do have in life because worse things could have happened to me.

The doctors I’ve met in my life have always told me that I would become beautiful. To me, that means nothing. I’ve grown up learning from the Bible that beauty comes from one’s inner self. The outside can be as good as one wishes it to be, but the heart, not the outer disguise, is what
makes an elegant swan. As I have grown to experience pain in a different way from the pain in others’ stories, I’ve learned to find beauty in what may seem a tragic story to me. I’ve appreciated being me and let life go on and even dare share the experiences I’ve gone through so others can endure the problems they view as tragic. When I see someone with a disability of some kind, I befriend them because their stories may be heroic—like mine—in facing the difficulties of life.
Policy Analysis:
The Quarantine of Typhoid Carriers

Luis Dequesada

[In 1906 the New York City Dept of Health had to decide what to do about the infamous cook who became known as Typhoid Mary. This paper is a retrospective policy analysis on the thinking that went on for years about what to do with her and others like her. The issues highlighted remain relevant to this day in the management of contemporary communicable disease. Prof. Bohm]

I’ve recently been appointed as the New York City Department of Health’s administrator in charge of reviewing a recent proposal to quarantine all carriers of the highly contagious typhoid fever while they test positive for the presence of the disease. The quarantine proposal has come as a result of an infected cook named Mary Mallon who was recently quarantined by the Department of Health because she has in fact been spreading this highly communicable intestinal disease to the families who employ her. The quarantine was done to prevent the spread of the disease to other people as she is a cook and therefore handles food.

I’ve identified three potential legal and political problems with this proposal to place all carriers of typhoid fever under quarantine. The radical nature of aspects of the quarantine will definitely attract media attention and therefore cause awareness that people are being quarantined against their will. Such a move will raise the brow of many civil liberties groups and is sure to cause mass protests. This is a problem particularly because the political image of the Department of Health will be compromised by such a move. Civil liberties groups will easily justify an argument against the quarantine because of the lack of due process associated with the way we are conducting this action. We shouldn’t, as a department, seem as though we are impinging on people’s civil rights.

The next problem is that quarantine alone will not cure or eliminate the incidences of typhoid fever. The medical community will definitely expose the fact that we are confining people who have the disease, but who is to say the disease itself will cease to exist? What if many more become infected? What will happen to those already quarantined? How will the quarantine approach directly address the pathologic process itself? A quarantine without some sort of pharmaceutical response, for example, a vaccine, will do nothing more than prevent those in custody from spreading the disease.
The final problem is that quarantine isn’t the most cost effective method of dealing with the disease. What will happen if the disease reaches epidemic proportions? Are we to hold each and every carrier under quarantine? This will mean a vastly increased demand for facilities to hold the carriers. The city will have to hire people to work in these sectors, such as doctors, nurses, and epidemiologists. In addition to a medical labor force, the city will have to provide treatment, medications, and therapeutic services for the infected. Such a move will prove disastrous for the already tight city and state budgets. Such a proposal will be very expensive in the long run, without the promise of stopping the disease.

The quarantine can only be successful in the short run. Overall, such a policy will not work. It poses a dynamic moral, ethical, and, socio-political conflict; and it will cause civil unrest. Housing the infected in no way will stop the disease; it will fail to do anything but isolate those already infected in a very costly manner. Quarantine will fail to yield any significant positive results; however, it will certainly cause damage.

We must take a different approach. An alternative strategy would be only testing food handlers for typhoid. This strategy would yield far more effective results. Perhaps new jobs would have to be created; however this approach would prevent any but food handlers from being held in quarantine camps. This method would considerably narrow the population affected by the policy and thus would be the more humane alternative. We’ve learned from the example of Ms. Mallon that there is a particular concern and concrete evidence that infected food handlers play a major role in the transmission of typhoid fever. Testing the food handlers, who incidentally are the largest known carriers of typhoid, for the disease is a far more direct way of dealing with this issue; and thus far more beneficial than only quarantining them; we would not only see a sharp decline in the incidence of typhoid, but we would also be treating people with the respect and dignity they deserve.

While quarantining food handlers carrying typhoid may not be the best alternative strategy in controlling the spread of the disease, a policy of doing nothing would be far worse. And if it did nothing, the Health Department’s reputation would be forever marred. The chances of disease transmission under the “do nothing” policy would be extremely high. An epidemic could become a pandemic, and eventually, a plague. In this scenario, quarantining is the more beneficial policy, but only a temporary policy.

In determining policy we need to consider a few other important points. An overall reduction in incidences would be of primary importance. Quarantine implies controlling the proliferation of a disease, and quarantining food handlers would certainly provide good insights on the quarantine approach. Public opinion is also an important consideration; after all, the Department of Health ultimately serves the interests of public health, and with this trial effort, we could see the public’s response, perhaps through polls, surveys, newspapers, and political involvement. Another point for measurement would be the overall costs that such a policy would generate. This is quite important as local, and city
budgets affect our governments and tax payers. If too much funding is required to enforce such a policy, then ultimately, it will not be a very good choice and the public will resent it.

Clearly it is easier to control the movement of individuals when they are not free to roam on their own, a situation that is probably impossible in all but the most authoritarian human societies as noted in Sattensfield & Herring 2003. Their article exposes the ineffectiveness of multiple quarantines in the past, which were limited mostly to travel and trade. For example, during the influenza pandemic of 1918-1919, quarantine was a strategy used by public health departments (Sattensfield & Herring 2003). Another article gives the example of Lome, Nigeria; aggressive attempts were made to protect the citizens there as well as British troops from the flu pandemic by quarantining known cases. Troops were confined to their barracks, and there were closures of schools and churches. Even so, influenza took hold in Lome, demonstrating the futility of even the strictest isolation and quarantines when applied to a disease as contagious and difficult to contain as influenza (Patterson, 1983). These attempts were similar to the Ms. Mallon case because they had a similar goal, to control a communicable disease; however these techniques yielded ineffective results. Influenza still managed to spread, as is the case with typhoid fever.

As administrator in charge of reviewing the quarantine policy under consideration, I have found multiple issues that prove that a strategy of total quarantine of infected typhoid carriers would be ineffective, as well as costly and damaging to the reputation of our department. Examples from the past have shown that a total quarantines is ineffective in combating the spread of disease. The benefits of alternatives to quarantine greatly outweigh quarantine alone and these alternatives can be well measured by the public’s response, and by economic and biological outcomes.

References


Epidemic Is Pressing Issue for New York Trees

Anna Soyfer and Pablo Mota

Insect-caused epidemics have become an increasingly pressing issue in the New York metropolitan area. Many different insect species have been documented over the years as being hazardous to the ecosystems of this area, but two in particular have acquired a great deal of attention over the last two decades due to their serious rate of infestation and consequent obliteration of a number of tree species. The *Anoplophora glabripennis*, more widely known as the Asian Longhorned Beetle, has been infecting over twelve different species of trees. The Emerald Ash Borer, also originally from Asia, has been the main predator for ash trees. These two insects in particular show great resistance to any environmental or weather-related changes since they destroy the trees from within. And at the same time, the death rate for targeted trees for these particular insects is high. What do these pests look like? How did they get into the metropolitan area in the first place?

The Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) was first discovered in McCarren Park, Brooklyn, in 1996. It has been said that this beetle may have first migrated on a cargo shipment coming from China in a wooden pallet. In general, Asian Longhorned Beetles can reach an approximate length of 1 to 1.5 inches, and are distinguishable by their black thorax with white spots and four-inch-long banded antennae. They have six appendages and some may have blue extremities. The antennae of males are 2.5 times longer than their body, while the ones of females are only 1.3 times their body’s length. They use their long antennae to sense the sex pheromones of potential mates.

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is a beetle that belongs to the genus *Agrilus*, and the species *planipennis*, and its origins can also be traced back to Asia. In its larval stage, it has a worm-like structure with a segmented body and dimensions of roughly 1/25 inch (1 millimeter) in diameter and 1.0 inch (26 millimeters) in length. On the other hand, in its adult stage it has a bullet-shaped body, (i.e. narrow and elongated), with dimensions of about 0.33 inches (8.5 millimeters) in length and 1/16 inch (1.6 millimeters) in width. Its body is a dark emerald green and it has black eyes and a flat head. The Emerald Ash Borer was brought to the North America in the 1990s in cargo shipments from Asia. Research shows that this species of insect has killed many millions of trees in the United States, and has the potential to wipe out billions of ash trees if it spreads nationwide. The average time it takes for this beetle to kill a tree is two to three years.

These two insects are very similar yet have slight differences. After mating, they lay 60-90 eggs in the bark of a tree. It takes an average of seven to
fifteen days for these eggs to hatch. At their larval stage they are considered more
dangerous than at all other stages, because as soon as the egg hatches, the larva
starts eating its way through the phloem making “S” shaped patterns called
galleries. The tree’s phloem is vital because it brings water and organic nutrients
produced during photosynthesis to the tree. As these larvae grow and get older,
they continue to chew their way through the phloem layer, automatically
damaging its tissue. This is obviously bad for the tree. The larva then undergoes
pupation, and becomes a pupae, which finally matures and becomes a full-grown
adult beetle. In their adult forms, the two beetles are similar in that they are
completely harmless to trees, since they only feed on leaves and twigs in order to
replenish their body with energy. Also, both insects make their way out of trees
by creating exit holes. They differ, however, (and can therefore be
distinguishable from one another) in the length and shape of the holes they
create. The Asian Longhorned Beetle forms dime-shaped holes approximately 50
millimeters in length while the Emerald Ash Borer creates “D” shaped holes
about 4 millimeters long. Both beetles assault healthy and stressed trees of any
age, as long as they are at least four inches in diameter. The Asian Longhorned
Beetle is a hazard to various tree species including: ash, elm, birch, European
mountain ash, hackberry, horse chestnut, London plane, maple, willow, poplar,
Katsura, and mimosa trees, while, as previously mentioned, the Emerald Ash
Borer only targets ash trees.

The eradication of both these insects has become nearly impossible
due to their sophisticated way of development and given that they destroy trees
from the inside, entirely cutting off the trees’ nutrient supply. Scientists have
found it very hard to identify infected trees before they die. The perfect way to
stop these beetles from continuing the obliteration of these trees is by
intercepting them before they reach their larval stage, when they are still eggs. By
destroying the eggs, larvae formation will be prevented, and therefore no harm
will be done to the trees. The only methods developed so far to accomplish this
goal consist of removing infected trees in order to stop the spreading of the beetle
to other nearby trees. Scientists have also been experimenting with wasps that
have the capability to kill the larvae, sensing the eggs inside of the bark and
placing their own eggs right next to them so they can hatch and produce larvae
that can feed off the beetles’ own growing larvae. Many agricultural
organizations acknowledge that these beetles are spreading due to the
transportation of widely used products such as firewood and nursery stocks. As a
way to stop the spreading, therefore, local and state authorities have restricted the
movement of firewood in certain states and are urging people to attend seminars
that will educate them on the danger posed by these beetles to our environment
and how moving firewood and nursery stocks is a way to promote their
spreading; the public also needs to learn how these insects can be identified and
reported to environmental organizations.
References


Urban Epidemic

Natrell M. Fisher

Stars in the hood don’t just come out at night
You catch many stars that have fallen in the light
They wander the streets in search of a stage
No screenplay in sight, no script, no page
In search of that stage but got lost in a bag
Lost track of the track marks lost track of their swag
Lost children, and family, lost in the streets.
Lost their shimmer and shine, lost their life & lost me.

Who am I?
I was the dust from that star
That began to plunge deep,
Into the crevice and into the crease
Into her baby, into her veins,
What the fuck was she thinking, was this woman insane?
She was high, she was hooked from her very first hit,
And I was hooked to a nectar
That came from no tit.
A slight prick, a quick plunge
Of a loaded syringe,
Fastest token to the bloodstream for the ride to begin.

The eyes lower, the heads nodding
Lost in euphoria so good.
No Caution, no Safety.
Another “Shooting” Star
Falls in the hood.
Date Rape
Sonia Hall

Most people think of rape as someone jumping out from behind the bushes and overpowering you. Forty-two percent of rapes that happen, however, are date rape, where the rapist is known by the victim. I was only fourteen years old and didn’t know anything about date rape. I am part of that forty-two percent. I knew my attacker. We’d gone roller skating, to movies and parties, played tag in the streets, and he also came to church with my family and me.

Some rapists prefer to know their victims, so that they are able to get closer to them or trap them in a vulnerable position without arousing any alarm or fear. He asked me to follow him to his house to get his basketball; we were going to the park. He invited me in and I was hesitant because this was my first time ever going to a boy’s house. My older brothers always told me never to go to any boy’s house, but I trusted this person. He lived with his older sister. Within five minutes after we entered his house, his sister and her friends left. Then for some reason I felt uncomfortable standing in his living room. He never yelled at me, he was never aggressive towards me, we were always laughing, he showed no signs. He turned on the TV and told me to sit; he’d be ready in a minute; so I sat watching TV. He came and sat next to me, then in a split second he jumped on me saying, “How long you think a man can wait.” He proceeded to unbuckle my pants, it wasn’t easy for him, I put up a fight, he didn’t expect that. He got irritated and before I knew it, there was a box cutter on my neck. In his Jamaican accent, he said, “Take off your pants.” I still said “No.” He placed the blade on my leg and pressed. Tears rolled down my cheeks not from the cut of the blade but because I knew I lost; I gave up. It didn’t last long but it felt like hours. When he was finished, he told me to stop crying. With the blade in my face, he said he knew I wanted it too and I better not tell anyone. He got up and went to the bathroom. I don’t remember putting on my pants, but I do remember running the four blocks to my house. On that hot summer day, July 14, as soon as I reached my house I immediately jumped in the shower. I scrubbed my skin until it started to burn. For the next couple of months I confined myself to my room. I allowed no one to touch me, I felt dirty.

Ninety-five percent of date rapes are not reported; I’m a part of that percent. I didn’t report it; I believed it was my fault. I was ashamed and I blamed myself. Why did I go to his house? My brothers had warned me. My social life died. I stopped going outside, I was afraid of running into him. We all had the same friends. My friends wondered why I stopped going outside, no more skating, no more jumping rope. They said I’d gotten boring. I wasn’t boring, I was just ashamed. I stopped play-fighting with my brothers, which we’d done so many times before, because it reminded me of fighting him off. I didn’t want to remember that moment.
About a year passed, and my cousin convinced me to go to a party with her. As soon as I walked in, there he stood looking at me with a smile on his face as if nothing had happened. He walked over to me and touched my hand. I instantly started to shake. He still had a hold on my life. Then I realized that he was with a young lady that I knew. I walked over to her and in front of all of our friends (now was my chance to get my life back), I yelled as loud as I could, “HE RAPED ME.” His reply was, “She wanted it.” In that moment I felt I got my life back. No more hiding. No more blaming myself. No more feeling ashamed. Every one moved away from him and I walked out of the party with my head held high and a smile on my face. I was free. It was not my fault.

Now my son and I play-fight, I speak to women in shelters, and I’ve spoken to my daughter and her friends about this crisis. I am able to share my experience and let them know that it is never their fault. Don’t be ashamed, you can get your life back; I did. Even though I am still a loving caring person, I am more conscious about the friends I choose and the people I allow in my inner circle. The scar is fading but the memory lives on in me.

So I leave this with you. Always be alert whenever you’re feeling nervous or your date’s mood suddenly changes. Be firm and straightforward in your relationships. When you say NO, say it loud and clear and make sure he understands your resistance. Trust your instincts! If the situation makes you uncomfortable, be calm and think of ways to remove yourself from it. First and foremost, examine how you behave with men, especially those behaviors that could be misinterpreted and leave you in a risky situation.
An Entrepreneur’s Dilemma

Dionne Mobley

Anyone who goes into business does so for one key reason: to make money. As I have contemplated the prospect of being an entrepreneurial pastry chef, I envision being successful and gaining a good return on my initial investment since I have a natural talent for baking and picture developing a keen business sense. Once I have completed my studies at City Tech, I will be that much more masterful at creating desserts which will captivate the eye and the palate.

There’s just one glitch in this whole scenario—most traditional bakery items are made with pure butter, sugar, whole eggs, creams, and rich sauces. These are most definitely ingredients known to “pack on the pounds.” More healthful alternatives to those ingredients are available. For example, a pastry chef could sweeten with pure fruit juices, use egg whites or egg substitutes, and bake with whole wheat flour or flax meal and soy. However, I am not sure about the average American, but as for me, I’m very discriminating and prefer good-tasting but bad-for-you baked goods. I tend to think American consumers would be more inclined to have an experience that makes them feel good, that is, eating very savory foods and desserts, as opposed to going for the bland, cardboard-like “healthy” counterparts.

Nonetheless, with society in general becoming more health conscious, there may be a market going forward for healthier desserts and bakery items. As an African-American, I am keenly aware of the poor health status of a majority of people in the African-American community. I certainly do not want to contribute to the high incidence of diabetes, stroke, heart disease, obesity and hypertension that currently plagues my community by tempting it with very delicious yet extremely fattening desserts. My concern is not just for the African-American community, but for society as a whole. The prevalence of obesity has steadily increased in the United States between 1976 and 2008. “…unhealthy food is convenient, accessible, good-tasting, heavily promoted, and cheap. Healthy food is harder to get, less convenient, promoted very little, and more expensive. This alone would predict an overweight nation” (Brownell, p. 199).

Several people have encouraged me to consider opening a bakery with a health spin, so as to make desserts which are appealing but better for you. I have not made a decision as to which road I will take as I am early in my hospitality management studies; I do know, however, that my conscience will play a key role in my decision making.

A market for this kind of eatery/bakery definitely does exist; in May 2010 the website examiner.com rated the seven best vegan restaurants in New York City. If seven restaurants are featured, there must be many more to select
from. There are also several vegan bakeries in Manhattan; I would have strong competition.

In conclusion, I am definitely interested in making “good money.” This money, however, could possibly be made in such a way that I do not have to feel guilty about or responsible for the poor health of our city. Before making a decision, I would have to conduct market research, observe trends, locales, purchasing/buying habits, and especially the habits of consumers that I will be marketing to more specifically. Once my final analysis is completed, I will be equipped to make an informed decision and forge ahead with my business plan without looking back and without regrets.

A final thought, if I do open a traditional bakery, I would want to be involved in community efforts to promote a healthy lifestyle with physical activity and balanced meals. I am embarking on my own personal journey to become healthy by losing weight—being active on a daily basis, and eating well. I will be more credible if I am a living testament to being healthy, someone not just talking the talk, but actually walking the walk.

References


Our income can have a drastic effect on many aspects of our lives, such as the clothes we buy, the places we live, and our modes of transportation. One aspect that is greatly affected is the food that we eat. Living in a low-income neighborhood has shown me how hard it is to have affordable access to simple items such as fresh fruits and vegetables. Being part of an underprivileged community means that our healthy food choices are very limited. Since fast food and junk food in general are the most readily available items, we tend to go for those items more often. The situation is so bad that the government is trying to keep people from purchasing junk food with food stamps.

Food and income gaps go hand in hand all over the world. The simple fact that the more you earn, the better food choices you have is a sad reality that we have been living with for centuries. Although new food assistance programs have been developed in recent decades, the scarcity of healthy food that is readily available in low-income neighborhoods remains a great problem today. In Mark Winne's book, *Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty*, Winne discusses how living in urban communities puts a strain on the effort to eat healthy. As Winne notes, the lack of healthy food also leads to health issues. The lower the quality of food is in a neighborhood, the higher the possibility of obesity, high blood pressure, depression, and diabetes. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, low-income communities tend to have much higher diabetes and obesity rates than communities with more food options.

I was born and raised in a low-income community in the Bronx. From as far back as I can remember, for every five streets you crossed, you could easily find at least three fast food places, one of them being McDonald’s. Other food options were: Chinese restaurants, bodegas, and Burger King. It was a rare occasion when the main dish of a meal was either a fish or salad. The reality is that most of the salads most low-income people can afford come in one of two ways: either using food coupons for “fresh” produce, or buying and or receiving canned vegetables and fruits from a food pantry in a church. I would see people in my community, including myself, who would go to the church lines or even soup kitchens a few times a month, in hopes of getting access to what we all considered good food. We would stand on these lines for hours, expecting to get
better food than the type we normally had. At times, things were so bad that on days when we couldn’t afford breakfast, we would go to a church where a bus on the street served vegetable soup and hot chocolate with loaves of bread. Whenever we had enough money, such as on big holidays like Thanksgiving or Christmas, the entire family would pitch in to prepare a part of a meal that they could afford to make. Some Thanksgivings we would go to the food pantry in hopes that we would get lucky and receive a turkey.

Living in a low-income community has an impact on the food choices we make and these choices affect our health. People in these communities have a higher risk of health problems. Being surrounded by so many food options that are unhealthy and affordable leads us to choose quantity over quality.

References


Raised by a Puerto Rican family of food aficionados has had a great influence on my love for the food industry. I consider myself fortunate to come from a line of cooks and restaurateurs with a passion for our cuisine. My earliest childhood memories stem from the kitchen and the preparation of delicious meals created by my aunts, uncles, and parents. These childhood experiences played a great role in my decision to enter the hospitality field, and pursue my dream of following in my family’s footsteps and serving the food of my people.

My mother loved to travel. As children, my sister and I visited Puerto Rico almost every summer. My parents wanted to expose us to as much of our culture and island as possible, so we always went to our family’s houses for the summer breaks. My grandmother Anatolia’s house (which is now where my mother lives) was the Rodriguez family meeting center. It is here that my first memory of food takes place. Anatolia was resourceful with her land and property, as are most working-class Puerto Ricans on the island. Her backyard was like a tiny country farm, home to many trees including avocado, coconut, and tamarind. She also raised chickens, and kept the coops in the corner of her backyard. My first food memory as a child was having a fresh egg directly from the coop at the age of three. I can still remember the freshness of the egg, and how impressed I was that it did not come from a supermarket cardboard carton. I also remember the yolk being a deep, rich yellow color—which I now know is an indicator of quality. The freshness of products in Puerto Rico is important to the cooks in my family, especially my mother, who continues to use her mother’s land to its full potential. This same land that was once host to chicken coops is now home to my mother’s trees and garden, where she grows grapefruits, green bananas, limes, cilantro, culantro, and oregano.

The celebration of the Christmas holidays is a food feast for my family that continues on the island. The Rodriguez family has always gathered for Christmas Eve. The preparation is an involved performance where my uncles and mother get together to slaughter a pig. My mother collects the blood in a bucket and gathers the entrails. The process of making blood sausage is vividly engrained in my memory. I can still see my mother adding rice, herbs, and spices to cook with the blood. Afterwards, she cleans out the intestines until they are ready to be stuffed with the blood stew. I was mesmerized by the process, and, at the time, shocked by the entire ordeal. But I now see this experience as having been one that bound me closer to my heritage and family traditions. These memories remind me of where I come from: a line of amazing, talented cooks.

Traveling to Asia was an exciting trip in my young adult years. My
friend Matthew moved to the outskirts of Tokyo and invited me to visit with a few of our friends. It was great having a guide who was familiar with the prefectures of Japan, and comfortable enough with his Japanese to get us around. He lived a couple of hours outside of Tokyo, in Washimiya, a small suburb of the Saitama prefecture, whose houses and apartment buildings are surrounded by beautiful bonsai gardens and fields of freshly grown produce. Matthew took us to a dinner at a traditional Japanese restaurant; we took off our shoes at the entrance and were escorted to a private room with sliding bamboo doors. The food was incredible, and different from the American Japanese food I was accustomed to from, for instance, Go Sushi Restaurant on St. Mark’s Place in the East Village. In New York, Mochi Cheese is an egg roll shell stuffed with cheeses, fried, and served as an appetizer. The Mochi Cheese dish in Japan was more delicious than the simplified American version. In Japan it was made with rice pounded out into a cake, fried in a cast iron skillet, covered with cheeses and chopped scallions, and eaten directly out of the skillet. This experience at the restaurant in Washimiya was interactive and authentic.
Food Memories of Mexico  
Diandra Tobon

As an American who grew up in Mexico, I remember when I was seven or eight years old waking up every morning and eating my breakfast with my brothers in front of our house with a lady who made fresh memelitas by hand. These are blue corn tortillas made with fresh cow cream and fresh Mexican cheese. They were topped with one of her three sauces, red and green spicy sauces, which my brothers loved, and a tomato sauce which was like the red sauce but for those like me who didn’t want it spicy, was without chilies. We also had fresh squeezed orange juice which my grandmother put a raw egg into to make us strong and smart.

While continuing to grow in the warm climate of Mexico, I remember by the time I was twelve years old I discovered my favorite dish, besides pizza, which was carne enchilada (a pork steak with a spicy sauce made of “chile costeno, chile guajillo, thyme, clove, cumin, oregano, garlic, a little bit of water and onion and then you let it sit for a day”) accompanied by Mexican rice and refried beans. My grandmother would try to make this dish almost every day so I would eat because I was very picky with food. Although that is still my favorite dish, each day there was a different meal on the table. My grandmother one day would cook cecina, a salted smoked meat, another day chiles rellenos — poblanos or jalapeno chilies stuffed with melted Mexican cheese or diced pork and covered with egg wash and fried. She made mole de Puerco, bistec encebollado, chilate, “pastas,” and even drinks such as agua de orchata, agua de Jamaica, plus some typical pastries like arroz con leche.

I remember going with my grandmother to the market at 1 pm to buy goods and ingredients for our meal at 3 p.m. I remember visiting every stand in the market to buy fresh cream, fresh cheeses, meat, vegetables, and fruit; and while passing by every stand and even on the stairs you could hear the vendors telling you and screaming at you pasele guerita (come in), que va a llevar (what are you going to take?) and telling you their offers like una bolsa de galletas a 10 pesos (a bag of cookies for 10 pesos), etc. It was very exciting going to the market, but sometimes it was a nightmare because you couldn’t even walk through since so many people were coming in and out.

For celebrations like birthdays, Christmas, and New Years Eve, my family and I used to do a simple and tasty dinner. For example, we made tortas with all the usual ingredients like ham, cheese, tomato, lettuce and put it in the toaster-oven; we would buy cakes of tres leches. My uncle sometimes would roast a turkey or we would go to Yozocuta, Huajuapan, to eat sea food; our favorite was mojarra—fried fish with Mexican rice and a salad. We would also
eat *cocktail de camarón*, shrimp soaked in a mixture of tomato juice, ketchup, lime, onion, and avocado. I remember those moments that we spent with the family in Mexico City, drinking *atole*, made of ground cooked corn, diluted in water and combined with milk, cream, and cinnamon; in cold weather, we’d have hot chocolate or *champurrado* with freshly baked bread that could be smelled from far away making your mouth water. When biting into it, you could feel the sensation of soft bread and its flavors in every bite.

I recall my first interest in baking and pastries while I was in junior high school. The teacher was Prof. Lourdes, who happens to be my aunt on my grandfather’s side. She was the pastry and cooking professor at our school in Mexico; she always taught us pastry dishes, usually cakes with decorations. Even though all my classmates and I loved to bake rather than cook, my aunt would have cooking classes too—and she made us cook.

My visit to Cancún was one of the most exciting trips that I ever had with my classmates and a valuable one because this trip set my future and what I really wanted to do with my life: travel and learn from other cultures, from their beliefs to their food and customs. From this trip I keep in mind two unforgettable dishes from Cancún, which were not familiar to me, *cochinita pibil* and *sopa de lima*. The first is a Mexican dish, a baby pig marinated in citrus juice like lime or lemon, with annatto seed and vinegar, and then wrapped in a banana leaf and slow roasted. The *sopa de lima* is a clear lime soup made with chicken broth, shredded chicken and crispy tortillas which are the only way I will have my soup, but without the shredded chicken.

I have grown up in a family and in a culture where food comes in many varieties; this helped me develop my passion for my major in Hospitality Management.
Discrimination & Identity Conflict
Gary Mai

Everyone I know, including me, has been stereotyped and been the target of prejudice at least at one point in their lives. Prejudice and stereotypes can cause identity conflict because when people are being judged on something they can’t change, they are bound to question themselves.

I’ve had personal experiences with identity conflict. In elementary school for me, race wasn’t an issue at all. Everyone was more or less equal and the only thing that changed your social standing in my school was if you had cool Pokémon cards. People were jealous that during Chinese New Year’s, the Chinese kids got red envelopes with money. I felt cool being Chinese. For some reason that I still don’t understand, the second I stepped into middle school, this all changed. For some reason, some people (including a teacher or two) picked on Chinese people just because of our race. I was probably called a chink within the first week of the sixth grade. Suddenly, being Chinese wasn’t as cool any more. Obviously, I was still proud to be who I was, but I was a little overwhelmed at first. I couldn’t—and wouldn’t—want to stop being Chinese, but would coming to this completely new world of middle school affect the types of friends I could make? In elementary school I was friends with basically everyone and I wasn’t going to start being a loner.

After being thrown into this seemingly different world, I thought to myself, what do I do? My Chinese peers tried different ways to deal with the prejudice that they probably weren’t accustomed to either. Some became shy and just avoided people. Others stuck with people who wouldn’t racially discriminate against them: their fellow Chinese. But I didn’t want to limit myself to just one group of friends when there were potentially more. After reading the articles about identity conflict this semester and then looking back, I’m very glad I acted the way I did. I didn’t take race into consideration when I made friends; I was friends with whoever wanted to be my friend. Sure, there were those who didn’t want to get to even know my name because of my ethnicity, but there were just as many if not more people who, like me, didn’t care about race. Those with prejudice who actively discriminated against Asians, I simply avoided. It actually worked out very well because even with the racist kids around, they wouldn’t pick on me because I had a big circle of friends.

I have been the target of discrimination, but I have also discriminated against others. On the subway is where the stereotypical thoughts kick in because, when a mass of people constantly come and go, I obviously can’t get to know everyone, so stereotyping becomes a way to protect yourself. For example, I see a group of loud teens running into a subway car, shoving each other and scaring the little kids on the train. Stereotyping the group, I put away my valuables where they can’t be seen, or in a less pleasant scenario, snatched.
Though there is a possibility the teens are just hyper with their teenage hormones and would cause no harm, there was also a possibility, learned from personal experience, that loud teens, especially those in groups, will cause trouble. Other examples of my discrimination include avoiding people in rags who are preaching/screaming about God (I didn’t want to wait for them to start smiting people before I switched cars), and also the homeless who sleep on the train (I moved because I know I wouldn’t be able to stand the smell for the whole train ride).

Though I too have expressed prejudice toward others, I actively try to suppress most of these thoughts because living in New York City, surrounded by diversity, has taught me that everybody is different. There will be the homeless person that gets killed trying to save a woman he has no connections with. There will be the religious priest that has raped boys for decades. In this world, many things just aren’t predictable. Though stereotypes can be helpful in avoiding certain dangers, people must not let them dictate and cloud their judgment; otherwise these thoughts may turn to prejudice and discrimination, which is basically the core reason behind every war in human history.
Many factors contribute to a person's identity. A New Yorker born in the Philippines, I’ve experienced identity conflict around my nationality. When I arrived in New York City in my early teens, I strived to fit in by acting and speaking like the teenagers around me. I slowly lost my capability to speak my native language in hopes of losing the accent that my friends noticed I had. I also started dressing and acting like those at school. But once I graduated high school and met more Filipinos, I found myself going back to my native roots, especially speaking more Tagalog. I realized that there is no shame in being different and that I could be both, a Filipino American.

My experiences with identity conflict were not only about my nationality. My religious beliefs have also been in question since I was a youth leader for a Christian youth group, and at my job worked with non-believers. I saw myself acting one way at work after being questioned about my beliefs too many times, and acting another way with the Christian group. It was a bit easier to embrace my religious beliefs when I was around others like me. I would pray before meals when I was around my believer friends, but become secretive when praying around my other, non-believer friends and associates. Religion is a hard identity to embrace because of the society that we live in, but knowing that I do not have to display my beliefs to anyone but God makes it easier for me.

Being a woman in the culinary world has also opened a different type of identity conflict. Five years ago when I was starting in the restaurant industry I had many people suggesting to me that instead of becoming a pastry chef as I wanted, I should train to become a restaurant manager. But the help of one very kind admissions advisor made me realize that regardless of my size and gender, I have all the skill sets needed to become a successful pastry chef. Nonetheless I have much to prove to become a pastry chef; that is why I strive to learn everything I can, to prove myself to all those people who have doubted my career choice.

Another identity conflict I face almost every day does fall into questions of my nationality because I have a Bengali boyfriend. But slowly I am realizing
that although his Bengali culture is very dominant in our relationship, we are also slowly creating our own tradition that compliments both our cultures. Since both our families have a strong Christian background, our relationship is also helping with the way we live our religious lives. Both my boyfriend and I just have to compromise a lot to incorporate both of our cultures in our relationship, but having pretty similar cultures also helps with compromising.

My reaction to identity conflict changes with time because I realize that as I grow older, I start accepting who I am and what I have been given. It is always tough to be different, but it does become a little bit easier to be different in a city with such diversity. And with so many resources and people who are willing to support my ideas and choices, it is easy to live with the choices I make.
Discrimination and identity conflict were never something I thought about. After reading Willie Perdomo’s poem/spoken word piece, “Nigger-Reecan Blues,” and Rodriguez-Ouellette’s book chapter on “Religion and Masculinity in Latino Gay Lives,” I realized that it is something I have experienced as well as seen first hand.

My parents migrated to the United States from the Dominican Republic; I was born in New York. My first language is English; I learned most of my Spanish in high school. When I was sent to the Dominican Republic with my grandmother the summer I was eleven years old, and a family friend would come see me everyday to teach me Spanish, I was called “gringa” or “la Americana” by the children who lived in the neighborhood. When I was asked “what are you?” I would say Dominican because that’s what my parents are, but I was told that I wasn’t Dominican because I wasn’t born or raised there; I was American. Then in New York when asked the same question and I answered American, I would be asked again, “no, like what are you? Like from what country”? This confused me! So as I got older I would answer the question “what are you” with “my parents are Dominican.” I didn’t understand why I had to be categorized. I don’t even see how it would change who I am or how it is important. But being asked “what are you” has become something I am used to. When I answer that my parents are Dominican and people don’t believe me, I am like okay, then. If I were to go by the idea that we learn about ourselves from how others judge us I wouldn’t know who I am.

I never saw it that I was being discriminated against when I would be stopped in the train station for bag checks, even if it would happen every week on my way to school no matter what time of day it was. Discrimination wasn’t something I thought about ever until recently. I was standing on the corner of Fordham and Grand Concourse in the Bronx one night with my mother, waiting for our ride home. I’m not a Bronx person at all, don’t know much about it besides that my internship is located on that block. As my mother and I were talking she repeats to me to “just ignore him.” I didn’t know what she was talking about. Apparently an African-American man standing behind me was saying, “you fucking spic.” I heard it after he came around pointing his finger in my face as he was running for the bus. The man continued to repeat the same comment as he walked towards the bus facing my mother and me. A man standing against a jewelry store walked towards us to look at the man and ask if we were okay. I answered yes with a confused face. At this point my mother is
still telling me to ignore him as he gets on the bus with everyone who was getting on staring at him.

I can’t really say I have never discriminated against a certain group because I have as well, but not to the extent of that man. There was one time when I didn’t want to go to the internship site I was assigned to by the college because it was with adults with developmental disabilities. I was really upset because that wasn’t the population I wanted to work with. I tried to get the school to put me in a different site, but they didn’t have any available. I then told myself that majoring in human services I would have to be around different vulnerable populations. After being in the internship for two semesters, I think back on how I felt in the beginning and I can’t believe I acted that way! I didn’t feel good about it.

Everyone is different; no one is exactly the same even if you are the same gender, race, ethnicity, and so on. Judging others doesn’t help with a person’s own identity conflicts. People feel they have to put people in categories making it difficult for a person to break out of that image in people’s eyes. It seems there will always be identity conflicts and discrimination; the only way of changing our prejudices is through knowledge and personal experience.
Discrimination is something which we all more than likely experience at some point in our lives. Its malicious character leaves its victims with a feeling of low self-esteem and rejection.

Growing up on the small Caribbean island of St. Vincent, with a population of about 130,000, and where approximately 90 percent of those people are of the same race and ethnicity, moving to New York, as you can imagine, has been a rude awakening for me. Of course no country is entirely free of racism although I feel like my homeland is, but it’s the unfortunate scale and history of racism of large countries like the United States which worries me. Coming to New York to further my education, I had decided to put all those melancholy thoughts behind me and give New York the benefit of the doubt.

New York City College of Technology is a perfect example of diversity. But it was in this multi-cultured setting where I encountered my first experience of discrimination, or so I thought. I was on my way to class on my first day of the semester and couldn’t find the room. As I walked on the floor, checking each door, I saw a white European-looking woman student who appeared to be as lost as I was. In an attempt to break the ice so that we could at least help each other out, I asked her if she was lost. To my embarrassment, she didn’t even look in my direction. It was like I was invisible; she just simply went along her way. Although embarrassed, I was giving her the benefit of the doubt, thinking that there was a chance she didn’t hear or even see me, although I saw her freeze for a second when I spoke which signaled to me that she heard me. As slim as I thought the chances were that she didn’t intentionally ignore me, I couldn’t help but wonder if I was the one discriminating against her by falsely accusing her in my mind. My first genuine thought about that experience was that she didn’t intentionally ignore me, I couldn’t help but wonder if I was the one discriminating against her by falsely accusing her in my mind. My first genuine thought about that experience was that she ignored me because I was black which is labeling her as being racist, but was I the racist one? Am I wrong to even assume I was ignored because of my skin color? I honestly cannot answer that question. However, I do not consider myself a racist because I hold no malice towards anyone who hasn’t done something malicious to me or anyone I know, and if I was a racist, I probably wouldn’t have even spoken to her.

That experience was not what I was looking forward to as I started a new life pursuing my bachelor’s degree in architecture in a foreign country. Although I have no intention of remaining in New York, while I’m here I would like to live in peace and harmony with everyone around me regardless of their race or background. That experience, as simple as it may seem, had a powerful negative impact on my life and still does. Since then I’ve found it difficult approaching anyone from a different race, not because I despise them, because I don’t, but because I’m afraid of the rejection. I find myself constantly debating in my mind
whether I’m racist or not, or if I deserve to be discriminated against because of the many stigmas that are associated with black males. Is it that I’m going crazy, or is this what they call an identity crisis?

My deep Christian culture and nurturing has molded me into someone who is peaceful and friendly, but I must add, discouraging to the concept of gay and lesbian life. However, I find myself sympathizing with the four gay Latino males as they sought to find their identity in the battle between Christianity and gay masculinity in Religion and Masculinity in Latino Gay Lives, by Eric M. Rodriguez and Suzanne C. Ouellette.

The book describes the terrible experiences that these four males encountered trying to find peace with themselves and an unforgiving society which is predominantly anti-gay. Similarly, world renowned poet Willie Perdomo in his masterpiece spoken word rendition of “Nigger-Reecan Blues” vividly paints a picture of the discrimination and racism he and many other mixed Latinos experience on a daily basis. He emphasizes the fact that he is constantly in a battle, defending his culture and ethnicity, which amounts to his identity, against the forces of discrimination which exist in society. He seems positive and proud that he knows who he is, just as the gay Christian males are positive they are both gay and God-fearing. Just like me, they know they’re not racists. However, I think we lose confidence in ourselves, and our identity is therefore jeopardized when we face the challenges of discrimination. Discrimination is unfortunate because we are all unique in a way, and we should learn to appreciate each other and stop prejudice from even further infiltrating and damaging our societies.
White and Black Fathers Aiming to Abolish Segregation

Jennifer Chan Wu

In “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” Martin Luther King Jr. replies to the accusations of fellow clergymen about the direct action he took to stop segregation. King addresses each of the accusations made by the white clergymen and gives reasons to persuade them that what he is doing is right, proper, and necessary. King uses sarcasm, religious and historical examples, and questions, to appeal to his fellow clergymen’s better or moral side. King also uses fatherly examples to appeal to the clergymen, not just as pastors but as men, as fathers—city fathers, as well as parents.

In his Father’s Day sermon at the Westhampton Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, in 1964, “This Is My Father’s World,” Richard A. Harris also uses the topic of fatherhood to speak to his congregation about segregation. Harris was a white pastor, one among a small group who supported the civil rights movement, and his sermon presents five guidelines to stop segregation. In his sermon he tries to persuade his own white congregation to do something about segregation because it isn’t moral and, in God’s view, we are all equal. Harris is directing his words specifically towards men—fathers—because he knows that in order to change some minds, he will have to start changing the minds of the men first, the heads of households. In 1964, men were still the head of a home; Harris as a father himself wants to convince the men first because convincing them will be like convincing their families at the same time.

In these texts, King gives examples of his personal experience with segregation, while Harris gives examples of segregation that are handed down from his black friends. Even though King is black and Harris is white and they have different approaches to outlawing segregation, they both have the same purpose: to give black people the same rights that white people have because in the end we are all God’s sons and daughters; we are all brothers and sisters.

In King’s letter, he speaks from the heart by sharing his daily struggle and pain living in a segregated country. When the white clergymen tell him to wait, he reacts strongly, saying:

I guess it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, “Wait.” But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will . . . and when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, brutalize and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of
poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly
find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you
seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can’t go
to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on
television, and see tears welling in her little eyes when she is
told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see the
depressing clouds of inferiority begin to form in her little
mental sky, and see her begin to distort her little personality by
unconsciously developing a bitterness towards white people;
when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year old son
asking in agonizing pathos: “Daddy, why do white people
treat colored people so mean?” . . . then you will understand
why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the
cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to
be plunged into an abyss of injustice where they experience the
blackness of corroding despair. (292-293)

In this quote, King is pouring out his everyday experience to his fellow
clergymen; he is trying to show as much as possible the injustice that Negro
people have to deal with in their everyday lives. King wants to touch the hearts of
those white men and relate to them in as many ways as he can. Surely, those
clergymen have sisters, brothers, and children, and they would not “wait” and do
nothing if any injustice was done to any of them. King relates to the clergymen as
fathers and men. As fathers, how can you explain segregation to the little ones,
boys or girls? Or as men, as heads of a home, how can you let injustice happen
to your own family and do nothing about it? King uses emotions to appeal to his
fellow clergymen in order to make them realize that direct action is more than
necessary and should be done now in order to outlaw segregation.

Similarly, Harris gives fatherly experiences to relate to his white
community. In his sermon Harris preaches:

Try also to put yourself in the position of a Negro parent.
“How,” one such parent recently asked me, “do I tell my six
year old son that there are certain places he cannot go because
his skin happens to be black?” Several from our church helping
with the Negro Vacation Bible School group at the Fulton
Baptist Goodwill Center this past week have noted that, at
picture-coloring time, many of these Negro children positively
insist on leaving the faces white. Is this not a tragic symptom
that even their young minds have come to realize that their own
black skin represents a stigma? Many, if not most, Negroes
have discovered that it is impossible to have segregation
without damaging the self-esteem of the segregated minority.
Inevitably, there evolves a superiority-inferiority relationship.

(3)

Like King, Harris shows the difficulties a Negro family faces under
segregation, especially the pain a Negro father experiences in his daily life.
Harris hasn’t experienced anything like what King has experienced. He is an outsider looking in, while King, of course, is an insider. In Harris’s example about the black children wanting to leave their faces white, it is clear that not only Negroes but white men from the bible school notice the impact of segregation on the children, who feel inferior because of their skin color.

In his letter, King wants to touch the hearts not only of fathers as parents; he also wants to reach the fathers of the community, the leaders of the city. He says,

Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of police brutality is known in every section of this country. Its unjust treatment of Negroes in the courts is a notorious reality. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negroes’ homes and churches in Birmingham than any city in this nation. These are the hard, brutal and unbelievable facts. On the basis of these conditions Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the political leaders consistently refused to engage in good faith negotiation. (290)

King is clear about the type of injustice Negroes have to bear because of the segregationist minds of the city police. These facts would change if only the “city fathers” would agree to negotiate with the Negro leaders. Just as fathers, the heads of a household, can change the minds of their children who look up at them, so too the city fathers, the leaders of a city, can set an example to those policemen or those who are looking up to them. The fathers, or leaders, of a city have a big impact on those under their command, and the people can be good or bad, depending on the city fathers’ will. According to King, if the city fathers can set an example and directly act towards outlawing segregation, it will be a big jump towards equality.

For Harris, fathers or parents have the magnificent power to stop passing on prejudice to their children; and for this to happen, tension is needed for positive change. In his sermon he addresses this issue and says:

The third thing we can all do is to work to change the climate of opinion. This climate today is essentially negative, charged with tension. Each of us can have a part in transforming this in the places where the impact of our influence can be felt. Halford Luccock reminds us that the dinosaur . . . is gone . . . The reason: the climate changed. We can kill off the monster of prejudice, too, if we honestly seek to change the climate of the day in which we live. There is no better place to begin than with our own children. Make sure that the prejudices with which we are infected are not transmitted to them, crippling their lives. (3-4)

For Harris, tension is something negative, but in some ways, as for King, it is necessary. For Harris tension is needed to change the “climate of opinion” and kill off prejudice in our lives. In this quote Harris is encouraging his congregation to take the negative tension and turn it into something fruitful so that things like prejudice can be finished. Harris is trying to make his
congregation picture prejudice as something big and monstrous like a dinosaur. Though it might seem impossible to destroy something as monstrous as dinosaurs, or prejudice in this case, it can be possible because dinosaurs don’t exist anymore and this is a fact. Thus, Harris wants “us”—fathers—to stop spreading these feelings of hate, of segregation, to “them”—the children. As heads of their home, fathers are responsible for their children’s education. It only takes as little to change the climate of opinion. Even though for King and Harris the connotation of the word “tension” is different, they both think it is useful to have tension in our lives in order to bring about change for humanity.

In conclusion, even though King is a black and Harris a white pastor, they both have the same desire to outlaw segregation and end the prejudice people have towards each other, black and white. For both of them, segregation is totally unacceptable and must be stopped from being passed on to the younger generation. We can kill off the monster of prejudice, too, if we honestly seek to change the climate of the day which we are in. There is no better place to begin than with our children, making sure that the prejudice with which we are infected is not transmitted to them, crippling their young lives. Despite their differences, King and Harris both appeal to the fathers of a community, not only as parents but also as leaders of a city. King and Harris have different backgrounds but they are both walking down the same road, the road for human rights, for equality.

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“Sonny’s Blues”: Family History and the Heritage Cycle

Arabia Dodson

Many attitudes, beliefs, and mindsets are passed down from generation to generation. They are carved into us by our parents, our families, our communities. They shape our perceptions of what we can become and on who we are. In James Baldwin’s short story “Sonny’s Blues,” from his collection *Going to Meet the Man* published in 1965, the narrator and his brother Sonny are trying to re-connect and find common ground while battling family history, the neighborhood, and their own personal demons. The narrator is an algebra teacher who is trying to save his brother Sonny, who is a drug addict and musician, from falling victim to the “darkness” that is outside. However, in order to reach Sonny and save him, the narrator must revisit his family history and his own feelings of frustration and sadness. He and his brother are both struggling to break free of the cycle of anger, helplessness, and adversity that are present in their everyday lives.

When the story begins, the narrator, who has just finished with his last class of the day, learns from the newspaper of Sonny’s arrest and drug addiction. As he gazes at the young boys in his class, he remembers the helplessness and frustration both he and Sonny felt growing up in Harlem due to their station in life; now he can see the same feelings in these young boys:

> These boys, now, were living as we’d been living then, they were growing up with a rush and their heads bump abruptly against the low ceiling of their actual possibilities. They were filled with rage. All they knew were two darknesses, the darkness of their lives, which was now closing in on them, and the darkness of the movies, which had blinded them to that other darkness. (47)

In this quote, the narrator observes that the boys that he teaches are feeling the same emotions that he and his brother felt when they were young. These young boys are all trying to escape the cycle of “darkness” that continues throughout their lives.

As the story continues and the narrator finally gets to see Sonny after his stint in jail, the two brothers take a cab to get home. It is here that the narrator experiences an epiphany that will help him become closer to his brother. In the cab, the narrator realizes as he watches the neighborhood go by that he and Sonny are both fighting the mindsets that comes from being black men raised in Harlem:
But houses exactly like houses of our past yet dominated the landscape, boys exactly like the boys we once had been, found themselves smothering in these houses, came down into the streets for light and air and found themselves encircled by disaster. Some escaped the trap, most didn’t. Those who got away left something of themselves behind, as some animals amputate a leg and leave it in the trap. It might be said, perhaps, that I had escaped, after all, I was a schoolteacher; or that Sonny had, he hadn’t lived in Harlem for years. Yet, as the cab moved uptown through the streets which seemed, with a rush, to darken with dark people, and as I covertly studied Sonny’s face, it came to me that what we both were seeking through our separate cab windows was the part of ourselves which had been left behind. (52)

Both men feel that they have been shaped by the same circumstances of growing up in the same neighborhood. They inherit a mentality that will either help them escape the “darkness” or drag them down into it. The narrator then realizes, the first of many thoughts that will help him re-connect with his brother, that both he and his brother are struggling to break free. They both are trying to recapture what they have sacrificed in order to survive in the world. Sonny is perhaps trying to regain his innocence and inspiration that he lost when he started taking drugs, and the narrator is perhaps trying to find the dreams and hopes that he used to have.

The narrator talks about the ones who escape the “trap” or Harlem. He makes the claim that, in order to escape, one must amputate his own leg, so that it can be free. This startling imagery implies that living in Harlem as a black man is a constant struggle to not only stay alive but to remain free. Like animals caught in a trap, a prison out of which they cannot escape, the black men of Harlem must cut off a piece of themselves in order to remain free. As the narrator explains, the black men of Harlem must leave something precious behind. That fragile, precious part of themselves may be their childhood hopes and dreams, a loved one, or an innocence and enthusiasm about the world that they can never get back. By losing this vital part of themselves, both Sonny and his brother struggle through anger and disillusionment in order to reclaim that missing limb.

Along with mindsets and destinies from our neighborhood, we inherit much from our family which plays a huge part in who we become. Our families are our first teachers and from them we learn our place in the world and how to react to it. The narrator recalls a memory, which further helps him realize how, even as a little child, he and the many children like him were always aware of what awaited them. He remembers his mother and how he as a child saw her when she was alive and strong; and he remembers the “old folks” and how he listened to them in the falling afternoon light when they gathered in the living room after Sunday dinner “talking about where they’ve come from, and what they’ve seen, and what’s happened to their kinfolk” (54).

The narrator pauses in this happy memory:
In a moment someone will get up and turn on the light. Then the old folks will remember the children and they won’t talk any more that day. And when the light fills the room, the child is filled with darkness. He knows that every time this happens he’s moved just a little closer to the darkness outside. (54)

The narrator explains that, as a child, his innocence was already being taken away. As a child, the narrator inherited the fear of the darkness from watching his family as they tried to shield him from their own experiences with it. The narrator continues, “The darkness outside is what the old folks have been talking about. It’s what they’ve come from. It’s what they endure. The child knows that they won’t talk any more because if he knows too much about what’s happened to them, he’ll know too much too soon, about what’s going to happen to him” (54). The narrator then realizes he fears the “darkness” for the same reason the adults do. Like a cornered animal, the narrator fears that he cannot escape his fate. He knows that he too will inherit this legacy of depression, anger and difficulty. That is why he hopes “the hand which strokes his forehead” (54), his mother’s hand, will always be around to protect him from his destiny.

As the story continues, the reader learns why it is so important for the narrator to find a way to connect to Sonny. Soon before she dies, the narrator’s mother explains how he and Sonny are very much like their father and his brother. The mother can see that Sonny will have a rough time trying not to be pulled down into their reality. She implores the narrator to look after his brother. “‘Mama,’ I said, ‘ain’t nothing going to happen to you or Sonny. Sonny’s all right. He’s a good boy and he’s got good sense.’ ‘It ain’t a question of his being a good boy,’ Mama said, ‘nor of his having good sense. It ain’t only the bad ones, nor yet the dumb ones that gets sucked under’” (55).

The mother knows that Sonny is going to need someone to lean on when he gets “sucked under,” when, and not if, he begins to drown under the weight of the reality of being a black man. The mother explains by telling the narrator the story of his father and his brother. His father’s brother was a musician just like Sonny, and he liked to perform nights. One moonlit Saturday night his father and his brother were walking down a hill drunk and having a good time. The mother relates the events that happened:

“They was coming down a hill and beneath them was a road that turned off from the highway. Well your father’s brother, being always kind of frisky, decided to run down this hill, and he did, with the guitar banging and clanging behind him and he ran across the road and was making water behind a tree.” (55)

When his father’s brother stepped out from behind the tree into the road, he was run over by a car.

“This car was full of white men. They was all drunk and when they seen your father’s brother they let out a great whoop and holler and they aimed the car straight at him. They was having fun, they just wanted to scare him, the way they do sometimes, you know. But they were drunk. And I guess the boy, being
drunk, too, and scared kind of lost his head. By the time he
jumped it was too late. Your father says he heard his brother
scream when the car rolled over him and he heard the wood of
the guitar give, and heard strings go flying, and heard the white
men shouting, and the car kept on a going and ain’t stopped till
this day.” (55)

In this scene, the mother is saying that it doesn’t matter if you’re smart,
good, or lucky; the reality is that the white world sees the black man as
something to either fear or hate. As a result, most black men are discriminated
against, treated unfairly or get in trouble with the law. The truth of the matter is
that the society has no sympathy for the black man, and, like his uncle, he or
Sonny could easily be killed for merely being the wrong color. The black man’s
very life is constantly in danger; the white men sees black men as sport or as a
form of entertainment, just like hunting deer in a forest.

Sonny, like his father’s brother, needs someone to look after him, for he
too will be “sucked under.” The reason the mother did not tell the narrator about
his uncle until now was because she wanted to protect the narrator and Sonny.
She wanted them to enjoy their childhood and freedom; she didn’t want them to
have to carry the burden of their father’s legacy. Sonny’s mother decides to tell
the narrator now because she is dying, and, as a result, realizes that she cannot be
there to protect them any longer. In order to prepare the narrator to take on her
role, she has to tell him this painful story. It will now be his turn to take care of
Sonny and keep this family secret.

Eventually the narrator finally begins to see how he, Sonny, his father
and mother are all connected through their struggle with the “darkness.” Sonny
takes the narrator to a night club where Sonny and his friends play jazz. It is only
when Sonny begins to play, with emotion, that the narrator finally begins to listen
to what Sonny and his mother were trying to show him all along:

I heard what he had gone through, and would continue to go
through until he came to rest in earth. He made it his: that long
line, of which we knew only Mama and Daddy. And he was
giving it back, as everything must be given back, so that, passing
through death, it can live forever. I saw my mother’s face again,
and felt for the first time, how the stones of the road she had
walked on must have bruised her feet. I saw the moonlit road
where my father’s brother died. And it brought something else
back to me, and carried me past it. I saw my little girl again and
felt Isabel’s tears again, and I felt my own tears begin to rise.
And yet I was aware that this was only a moment, that the world
waited, as hungry as a tiger, and that trouble stretched above us
longer than the sky. (69)

The narrator finally begins to see what has been passed down to him and
how it is connected to everything he has ever experienced. It is his family legacy,
“that long line,” as well as Sonny’s, and both brothers are finally freeing their
emotions and letting show all the pain, sacrifice, strife, fear and history through
the music. Through the music both brothers finally confront the hidden emotions that have been plaguing them all their lives. Both brothers, through the music, can finally bridge the gap between them. With this epiphany, the narrator begins to confront his own pain about losing his daughter, and he finally is able to understand his wife’s pain. He finally is able to understand Sonny’s pain as well. Therefore, he not only saves Sonny—even though he realizes that the “darkness,” or the world as it were, will still be the same, and he and Sonny will still have to struggle—Sonny saves the narrator, too. What we inherit from our families and our communities still affects many of us in our public and private lives. It is something that we constantly struggle to improve or try to break away from, but in doing so, we better ourselves.

Reference

In the chapter “Learning to Read” in Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave Written by Himself (1845), Douglass was a slave who had a wonderful owner, his mistress, who was willing to teach him to read and write, something he had always wanted to accomplish. Unlike other slave owners, she was like a teacher to him. She cared, but her husband was the complete opposite and did not believe in her ways. He wanted her to leave the slaves as they were; they were his property. The mistress had to do what her husband asked, but this change did not happen fast. Douglass had been living with their family for seven years when the mistress decided to stop teaching him. Douglass observed these changes. He understood that he wasn’t the only one affected by slavery. Watching his life from a narrator’s point of view gave him a better understanding of why things happened the way they did.

Douglass believed that slavery’s power could change the most angelic souls like his mistress. Douglass describes his mistress’s change:

Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me. When I went there, she was a pious, warm and tender hearted woman. There was no sorrow or suffering for which for she had not a tear. She had bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and comfort for every mourner that came within her reach. Slavery soon provided its ability to divest her of these heavenly qualities. Under its influence, the tender heart became stone, and the lamblike disposition gave way to one of tiger-like fierceness. (236)

Not only was slavery harmful to him; it was harmful to her. The mistress was once a sweet woman who didn’t think of Douglass as just a slave but as a person. She was a woman who always helped the needy. If she could help everyone, she would. She didn’t treat him or see him as someone who was beneath her. However, because of her husband, she slowly began to transition from a sweet lamb to an unpredictable and feared tiger. Her husband didn’t think that the way the mistress was treating Douglass was right; she changed her ways to fit the
“norm” or the way it was supposed to be. Slavery proved that it could change even the most warm-hearted person; its power was too strong for any one person to handle. Douglass watched as slavery’s power stripped away her wonderful qualities one by one, like ripping a bandage off a wound. Slavery ate away at people’s beliefs no matter how confidently they practiced them before.

An example was how his mistress changed her views about reading after being influenced by her husband.

Nothing seemed to make her more angry than to see me with a newspaper. She seemed to think that here lay the danger. I have had her rush at me with a face made all up of fury, and snatch from me a newspaper, in a manner that fully revealed her apprehension. She was an apt woman; and a little experience soon demonstrated to her satisfaction, that education and slavery were incompatible with each other. (237)

Reading a newspaper became a crime, so she would snatch the paper from him as if he were a thief who had stolen a purse. Watching Douglass attempting to broaden his knowledge filled her with anger. She now sees education and slavery as oil and water, they just don’t mix, and education should stay out of the slave’s reach. Douglass noticed that the newspaper held a lot of information that she didn’t want him to know. Knowing this made him more curious. Due to her change of heart, Douglass lost his teacher, but was determined not to give up on learning to read.

Through reading, Douglass saw that freedom could be closer than he thought. When coming across a book of fiction, *The Columbian Orator*, he was shocked by a dialogue between a slave and master.

Every opportunity I got, I used to read this book... I found in it a dialogue between a master and his slave... In this dialogue, the whole argument in behalf of slavery was brought forward by the master, all of which was disposed of by the slave. The slave was made to say some very smart as well as impressive things in reply to his master—things which had the desired though unexpected effect; for the conversation resulted in the voluntary emancipation of the slave on the part of the master. (238)

The slave in the story was smart like Douglass. In the story the slave ran away from his master three times. When he was taken back the third time, his master expressed his views on slavery. The slave used his way of speaking and knowledge to convince his master that slavery was wrong and he eventually persuaded him to feel the same, and to set the slave free; he was now his own man. Douglass was encouraged; this story could one day become his reality. Douglass saw how much more opportunity a slave would have with an education. Only good things come with learning.

Douglass surprised me by the way he observed everyone around him. He paid close attention to how people acted and how their surroundings controlled them. Being able to see the injustice of slavery and not point fingers was hard. If
not for the mistress introducing then taking away her teaching, Douglass wouldn’t have been motivated enough to get as far as he did. He was like an eagle looking after his own life. He was able to read people’s actions and map out ways to get things done, like his reading, without getting caught. He was a boy with a plan. He eventually turned into a man with a plan.

Reference

Cuts to Funding for CUNY
Stjepan Lukic

Governor David A. Paterson has proposed what would be the largest cut to school aid in more than two decades. His plan would cut school aid by 5 percent in a state that needs every single penny it’s been spending on education. New York City’s education budget has been withheld until the proposed budget goes through, including cuts amounting to millions of dollars. On the other hand CUNY is experiencing record enrollments this year, so a cut to the operating budget comes at the most unfavorable time possible.

And what are we, students and teachers, doing? Nothing! A few emails to New York state senators will not suffice to avert this injustice, especially since their replies seemed half-hearted. I believe that education is a right, not a privilege reserved for the rich. The poor will stay uneducated and the rich will continue to prosper in this country, and just this intelligentsia has driven us to the brink of financial disaster. Who is profiting from all this? The thieves just described. Anyone could have come up with a better budget for these huge corporations, whose leaders have never heard of fiscal responsibility or so it seems. Budget cuts to public education by politicians will have a lasting effect on us and future generations.

I was born in Germany and I grew up in Austria. I enjoyed the privilege of going to school in both countries. I attended the University of Vienna and did not pay a dime from my pocket for a superior education; however, later I did invest in my education at a private school as well, a school subsidized by the Chamber of Commerce, and my tuition amounted to the equivalent of my current tuition at CUNY. In 2001 the Austrian government broke a promise never to charge for education. Austrian students now have to pay $485 per semester, but the implementation of said tuition did not go over peacefully. Every Thursday we went onto the barricades and marched from the university to the parliament to protest. The protest is still going on ten years later. The student government organized the marches, and there was no money for refreshments or retail gift cards to lure students in. My friends and I supported a good cause and we were convinced we were doing the right thing even without rewards.

How could we improve the college community at City Tech? Let us march together to Albany. Students and teachers, side by side, forming an unbreakable alliance. The bonding experience would be priceless. Let us fight for the right to free, quality education. We are the future and it is in our hands to shape it.

Since it’s quite a stretch to walk to Albany, we could opt instead for City Hall. We could meet at Central Park and march down Fifth Avenue to City Hall
on a Friday afternoon. Thousands of students and professors walking side by side would have an incredible impact and would send a strong message to Albany. We could line up free concerts by musicians and stars who support education as well.

8500 teaching jobs in New York City are on the line, as well as an increased loan load for students. Let us show we’re not going to take this. We’ll help not only the City Tech community, but our entire society.
Moroccan Wedding
Yousra Nasr

Marriage in Morocco is considered the most sacred relationship. It is the signature of a contract that confirms a legal pact between the bride and the groom. The presence of two Muslim male witnesses is mandatory. This special day is called “The Milk and Date Ceremony” which is only for close family members and friends. The ceremony is typically religious. Sonnets from the Koran are sung with special relish, at least one sheep is slaughtered, and a lot of food is prepared. However, the milk and dates are served first. They represent purity and peace for the couple.

Moroccans are proud to retain their heritage. Women in particular, from both joining families, but especially the bride, need extra time for the preparation. The preparation may last months, because they want their dresses to be handmade and intricately beaded. The bride’s mother is thinking about timeless, traditional embroidered items. Her daughter has to have delicately beautiful handiwork to give an alluring display to her future home.

Once the day of the wedding is set, at least two weeks before, the serious preparations begin. The celebration lasts from three to seven days. Women play the major role. Relatives, friends and neighbors all help each other prepare delicious sweets and pastries, bring special dishes for the ceremony and help make the house bright and colorful. They create textures and patterns for decoration. Meanwhile the bride and groom’s parents go to officially invite their guests. In Morocco it’s considered rude to call and invite guests over the phone especially if the occasion is a wedding. It takes a lot of time to invite the guests in person in order to physically and emotionally share the joy before the actual ceremony.

Early in the morning, the day before the wedding, the bride accompanied by female relatives, friends, and neighbors goes to the hammam (public bath house) that her parents have rented for three or four hours. With lit candles and cries of joy the women help the bride bathe. Then they overlay her with henna and with milk which is meant to protect her from every evil. From the hammam, the whole group goes to the hair salon. As soon as the bride comes back, she is supervised by female attendants to celebrate the henna party. During the party the attendants, the neggafates, dress her in an elaborately ornamented white or green kaftan. Then they ornament her with jewelry and beautify her with special makeup, making elaborate designs of henna on her hands and feet. The bride must be patient and settled in the same position for many hours to get these henna designs. Meanwhile waitresses are making the rounds with sweet mint tea and mouth-watering sweets. Emotional singing comes from all through the house. The atmosphere gets splendid when the young girls interact with the
music and start to perform their distinguished dances in front of the bride. They sway shoulder to shoulder in a circle, all while moving their hips. In the midst of this joyous time, the groom and his family arrive bringing the cow, and endless gifts of food and other items. Magnificent flower bouquets brighten the great day with their aromatic fragrance and coordinated colors. At some time in the afternoon the cow is slaughtered, and if there are many guests, some sheep also.

The day of the wedding comes. The groom is named the king and the bride the queen. With the help of the neggafates she wears the golden crown, jewelry, and several beautiful elaborate silk dresses that she will change throughout the ceremony. All the women appear like princesses, in ceremonial dresses and with their hair and make-up beautifully done. As the ceremony starts, waiters serve mint tea and elegant cookies made with almonds, sesame seeds, and honey, while the guests dance to the traditional music as the presentation of the bride begins. She is seated on a circular cushion and carried high on the shoulders of women, and the groom on the shoulders of his friends. At some point, the guests start gathering around the tables, a lot of food is served, especially two or three delicious courses of meat and chicken. The wedding food involves all the senses, from the scent of the saffron to the irresistible taste of spices and delicate combinations of salty and sweet dishes. Meanwhile, excited music of trumpets and drums fills the inside and outside of the house. The bride and the groom sit on the throne, change their dress several times, exhibit their happiness and welcome their guests. Some time during the night, the future couple leaves the ceremony for some privacy.

Festivities last throughout the week. Friends and relatives visit the couple in their new house, congratulating them and presenting them with more gifts.
The Little Foxes

Vincenzo Laccona

On September 23, 2010, I saw *The Little Foxes* performed at the New York Theater Workshop, and analyzed the theatrical contract by comparing two aspects of the performance. To do this analysis, first we distinguish how the characters relate to the audience, which can be described as presentational or representational. Second, we distinguish whether the elements of production such as character interactions and behavior, scenery, costume, lighting and sound can be described as realistic or nonrealistic. This production of *The Little Foxes* used an array of approaches to portray a story of greed and family betrayal.

In this production the convention of “the fourth wall” was used, as the actors wanted us to believe that they could not see us and were going about their usual business. This form of contract is called representational as the audience is viewing the play as they would a movie. There is no actor to audience interaction. If the actors were to acknowledge the presence of the audience through asides or soliloquies, then we would refer to the contract as presentational. It was amazing to watch the actors portray their characters so intently that as a member of the audience I felt invisible. Even during monologues or scenes where there wasn’t much movement or communication, it was as if we were sneaking a look into these people’s lives.

We must also analyze if the play proposes a realistic or nonrealistic contract. This refers to the degree to which the play’s production elements resemble everyday normal life, or if they are more abstract based on underlying meanings. It is usual for a play to have elements of both approaches without losing its credibility.

This production of *The Little Foxes* had many realistic elements. The play’s setting is the year 1900 in the South. The characters in the family are upper middle class. In addition the play presents the family’s post-Civil War African-American servants. What was realistic in this production was the way the actors were true to the southern dialect. The family rendered the idea of educated, upper class individuals by not using as strong of a Southern twang as the actors
playing the servants, Addie and Cal. This is realistic to the time and place the play was set in. Another example of realistic contract was the lighting used in the production. The entire play was set in a home. The lighting used was that from chandeliers typically used in a home of this kind. The light bulb was patented for use in the United States in 1878 by Thomas Edison, therefore an upper middle class home would more than likely use electricity rather than other sources of energy to light their home.

In contrast with the setting, however, the staging of the production was a bit far-fetched. The stage was set as a room carpeted entirely in purple, and surrounded with wood trimming. The use of the color purple, which portrays royalty, abstractly suggests high class. It was also far-fetched that there was no furniture except for two chairs, a stool, and an organ. These props were moved around by the cast to suggest different rooms. The actors mostly leaned against the walls and sat on the floor.

A single staircase in the middle of the set led up to another part of the home, which was visible to the audience on a large flat screen television meant to look like a framed work of art. This television gave us the illusion at times of being in another room or place altogether. In the beginning of the production the screen portrayed Johns Hopkins Hospital where Horace was lying in a bed; later this screen showed rooms such as the kitchen or an upstairs room in the house, or the airport. Other unrealistic, anachronistic elements were the use of an electric coffee maker and the last visual on the screen of Alexandra on a moving walkway in a modern airport terminal.

The wardrobe of the cast was also unrealistic. They wore very modern attire, which would not have been worn in that period, the early 1900s. The actors also had visible tattoos, which also would not have been proper in the South in that time.

The interaction of the cast members at times did not strike me as realistic. I find it unrealistic that there would be so much violence between family members and so much incestuous behavior between Regina and Ben. I know amongst cousins in this era marriage was very common, but a brother-sister relationship of this kind seemed improbable.

Lastly, a very unrealistic element was the use of sound. At times music played to change the mood or invoke a feeling with the audience. Sound was also used when the organ was played giving the illusion that Birdie was actually musically inclined.

This production of *The Little Foxes* was surprisingly true to the play while at the same time it used many new effects. It is extremely interesting to experience a play on paper and then use all our senses to analyze how it is portrayed on stage from another individual’s perspective. It is not always necessary for a production to adhere closely to the play itself to illustrate the same theme or meaning. Individuals will respond differently to a play and embrace their own ideas and staging based on their own beliefs and what they would like to see in the play.
References


For the Birds
David Bettencourt

Every morning I would look out my window and count the birds playing outside. There were always plenty of birds. Watching their brilliant feathers shimmer in the sunlight was the best part of my childhood. I found their presence to be uplifting, which was actually a big part of why I moved back out here with my wife. We left the city after my father died. We're still not sure how he died, but it was not so much as a month ago. It's been rough—having the birds helps.

Now that the winter has passed, there haven't been any birds. It's strange in the spring not to see any, especially in our neck of the woods. My wife thinks they might have simply found a different place to belong, though I am reluctant to say that. To believe that is to believe that my home was no longer welcoming. I took several walks around my property to search for the birds and to my surprise they were everywhere, just not near my house. They were in the trees, singing their songs, building their nests and playing their games. And I swear, at one point they stared their stare.

My discovery was strange and unsettling. My wife though, is finding my behavior strange and unsettling. She thinks I'm obsessed but I'm not. Not yet, anyway. I decided to put out some feed to attract the birds. All day I sat in wait and nothing. Not a single bird, just a strange feeling of dread, as if I had violated an unwritten contract with them. As if by bribing them with the feed, I had sullied their image of me and my home. Maybe I was looking too much into the situation. I went to sleep that night with birds on the brain.

When I awoke the next morning I was shocked. The feed had brought the birds back. Fourteen birds. Fourteen lifeless birds. I don't know what did it but it couldn't have been the feed. At least, I don't think so. I examined the yard. It was definitely not the feed. Each bird looked like it had been through hell. A great bird war of sorts. Beaks, talons, feathers. Everything was everywhere. I didn't know what was wrong. I was concerned. My wife keeps telling me I shouldn't be, that it was a matter for the birds. But I was concerned, worried that my childhood home had become a tombstone, but also just concerned about the birds.

I spent two hours respectfully cleaning up my yard and for those two hours I felt them. Their stare. Their eyes locked upon my every movement, as if I were responsible. I didn't look up until I was finished and just as I had felt them watching me, suddenly there they were. Tree limbs lined with birds gazing down at me. Into a soulless abyss. I didn't know what was wrong, but I decided to take my wife's advice and continue on with my life.

With each passing day the body count rose and each day, they stared. Enough was enough. That night I set up a camera in my yard to record the movements. When the sun rose, I peered out my window at my yard below and
what do you know. no corpses. It's not like I knew that it was going to happen, but I had a feeling that whatever it was that was going on wasn't going to be seen on camera. But just to make sure, I checked it anyway.

Strange. I was sure I didn't leave the lens cap on. I rewound the video and played it from the start. See? The lens cap wasn't on. For three hours it recorded fine, transitioning from sunset to twilight. But then, at three hours and twenty-four minutes into the tape, the lens cap was on. I showed the tape to my wife and, as usual, she deduced paranoia. Sometimes I think she's purposely against me.

I set up two cameras this time, one out in the back and one in my bedroom, both fixed squarely on the yard. I placed feed outside as well, in hopes that whatever covered the camera lid, would find the feed too irresistible, if only for a few moments. I went to sleep that night with a smile on my face. I felt I'd earned it.

Warm sunlight—quite possibly the best sensation to wake up to. It had been such a long time since I had slept so well. I got out of bed excitedly, ready to check my bedroom camera. When I checked it though, I was terrified. It was on the floor. Smashed to pieces. The only part intact was the memory card. I walked out into my backyard and there it was. Bodies. Everywhere. Owls. Robins. Hawks. All of them. Everything torn to shreds. Smashed. Just like my camera. Except my backyard camera—that was surprisingly intact, as if whatever did this wanted me to see its work.

I rewound the tape and viewed it carefully and just as the sun set, it began. Every single bird. One by one they entered the shot and positioned themselves directly in front of the camera, staring directly into the lens, as if trying to intimidate the viewer with its presence. By the end of the hour, the entire frame was filled and then, the lens cap was on. The camera may not have been intimidated, but I sure was. I took out the memory card and played back the footage from my bedroom camera. A decision I sorely regret.

The footage was almost identical, exactly as one would expect, except for one crucial detail. The birds were all staring up into this camera. It didn't make sense. Nothing did. And when the last bird filled the frame, the lens cap was on. I didn't know what to make of it. Was I hallucinating? Was this all a dream? It's been nearly two weeks. Dreams are detailed but never are you aware of the time frame. This couldn't have been a dream. It couldn't—even then I heard it for the first time: The breathing. About five minutes after the lens cap was placed on there was this breathing. Really heavy breathing. An almost wet, chronic breathing. It breathed for what seemed like a few minutes and then silence. I realized then that things had gone too far.

I attempted to call the sheriff's station but my cell phone had no reception, which wasn't uncommon, especially this far into the woods where my house was. I tried the house phone but for some reason, the deputy couldn't hear me. Neither could my family or friends. It was as if I had no voice. As if I was silenced. As if I wasn't meant to speak of this. That this situation, all those dead birds, and that breathing, was to be bound to me. My burden. After I made all
my calls, I waited, but no one called me back. I felt helpless. Completely hopeless. At least I had my wife. Even through our disagreements, she was there for me. We went to bed uneasy that night. I had put away my camera, cleared the yard and prayed for the best.

All through the night that breathing haunted my dreams. I couldn't get it out of my head. I awoke trembling in fear with my wife sleeping peacefully beside me. I got out of bed to wash my face and get a grip on reality. I walked out of my bedroom, down the hall, made a left and entered my bathroom. Thirty-seven steps. The counting helped calm my nerves. I washed my face and looked in the mirror to stare at the man staring back at me. Man, was I a wreck. I breathed in deeply and exhaled slowly. I felt much better. I shut off the light and began to retrace my steps back to my bed. But I didn't make it to my bed. Instead I stopped. Dead in my tracks. Stopped by a terrifying sight. My wife. In the doorway of our bedroom. Standing perfectly still. Staring.

I called out to her. No response. I stood there, motionless. Petrified. Standing and staring, just as she was. I called out her name one more time. No response. What was I to do? Under any other circumstances it was my obligation to help her but under these, I would not lift a finger. That is, until she did. She began to walk towards me, one solid step at a time, as if giving me time to react; reconcile; repent. I did the only thing I could think of. I locked myself away in my bathroom, waiting for her heavy steps to reach the door. And sure enough, they did. I was terrified. She just stood outside the door. But I could feel her staring. Penetrating the fibers of the wood, through my flesh and into my soul. It was nothing short of dismal.

Then it came. Shattering my remaining sanity. I couldn't believe it. The breathing. The really heavy, almost wet, chronic breathing. It was my wife. My beautiful wife. She was my everything and now, she is everything. My entire world teetering on the brink of this one moment. I sat, curled up in my tub, waiting out the inevitable, remembering the recording from the night before. Then the breathing stopped. All I saw was the bodies of the birds. Torn to shreds. And in those final moments, I wondered if my wife was right. That it was a matter for the birds.
Growing up on a small island, you emerge into a mystical world with a false sense of certainty.

Imagine the old lady who lives two houses down in an old wooden shack. Its claddings hang on for dear life, after outlasting a mixture of heavy rains and violent sun; they seek release from the rust laden nails that fasten them to the underlying plywood in order to bring a just end to a well-fought battle. Yet, those nails hold on and endure the sun, rain, and humidity that characterize island weather. This woman has looked seventy from the time you knew her as a child, and she still looks seventy now. She would hobble to her outdoor garden where she labors daily, planting sweet potatoes and picking peppers. Her dark hue glistens under a layer of sweat and she appears a part of nature. In the beginning of time, there was the water and the land and, on that land, she sat there in her wooden abode. Then she would sit outside in an ancient rattan chair and stare at the sky while her radio played. She knows you by the unique sound of your walk and the peculiar shuffle your shoes make when they hit the ground. Her precision has been a mystery to you, as she does not move her head to look at you but still correctly calls your name, and your sister’s name, and the neighbors’ names. Her radio is no longer sold in today’s stores. It has a long antenna and explodes with static every time a bird flies by, but she is quick to readjust it until the sound returns. Day in, day out, time passes by, life passes by, but this old lady remains the same, gardening, readjusting, and listening. Listening, gardening, and readjusting.

Continue to imagine, this time a tall red-skinned lady who serves ice-cream and cake at the parlor in the town. Her face is rigid and fierce, with
makeup that reminds you of the icing that she applies to the cakes that are sold. You remember her giving you your first ice-cream cone at five years, after a day of walking with your mom. It was one of those cherished moments from the first sprouts of childhood memories. A moment that has been recorded in slow motion along the border of the mind, and can be replayed in those quiet times that are left to recall the “good old days.” Slowly the pink door is held open for you and in your direct line of sight stands a giant glass casing neatly arranged with tubs of color. Your cheeks spread with delight and the mind blazes with confusion as you are asked the most difficult question you could ever imagine. You are asked to make a choice. You have never been asked to choose anything in your life, but today you are immediately inducted into a realm of adulthood, and you stand firmly to brace it. “That one,” and you point to the pink tub with red dots to the very top. “Cherry strawberry,” announces the server, her face rigid and expressionless. Her voice, however, is feminine, childish. She moves ever so gently to skim the top of the bucket so that the soft cream with random cherries folds on itself, until a neat pink ball is scooped and placed on a cone. A napkinned hand presents the entire concoction and Mommy holds it with your outstretched hand and guides it into your mouth. Its coldness frightens you and you force your lips closed, but the smooth sweetness hits the tongue and you are mesmerized by the contradiction of looks, taste, color, and texture. You need a definite opinion of this experience and so the second taste is received with an open mouth and a curved tongue. Only with closed eyes can you fully concentrate on the pleasures of this strange gift. This moment has solidified itself in your memory. Now you have left college and started working. You are willed one afternoon after a hard day in the office to re-find that childhood moment of solace. You slowly push open that pink door to find that very same face staring at you when you are handed another strawberry-cherry ice-cream cone.

Very little changes in island life, day in, and day out, year after year this certainty, these monotonous encounters are a comfort to a growing child, but often a detriment to the young adults who themselves hold on for dear life, weathering the frustrations of stagnant growth, shattered dreams, and redundant thoughts. Their minds are the nails rusting with the passage of time, and like the childhood memories, islanders cling to the past. Island life is bitter-sweet. You are immersed in natural beauty, the land is forthcoming and the sea is welcoming. What is it to appreciate if you never knew its worth?

Scratch, scratch, scratch……. Scratch, scratch, scratch……………………………………………………………….

The repeated noise startles Nicole into reality and she jumps out of bed in the dim morning light. She opens the bedroom door to allow her playful Jack Russell to dance and gallop at her bare feet. He imprints his excitement on her dry scaly skin. With slitted eyes she stoops down to bask in the warm strokes of a slimy pink tongue, which mops her face haphazardly. She stands up to have her body framed by streams of light from a half-risen morning sun and she takes a quick glance at the sky to forecast the day ahead. Puffy shadows her steps as she walks into the kitchen and scouts the cupboard for breakfast.
“Anna, it’s time for school, get up.”

Her eyes focus on the half emptied bag of cornmeal and she pulls it onto the wooden kitchen counter while fumbling with the knot that has secured its contents.

“Anna, get up.” She shouts in a more forceful tone.

She storms into a small bedroom where Anna lies oblivious to anything around her. Anna scratches her nose and produces a low-pitched grunt as she assumes a fetal position. Nicole shakes Anna’s shoulder gently, then vigorously and the two sisters are caught once again in their morning fight.

“Anna, go to shower, and I need to comb your hair, or you will be late for school.”

Anna’s red eyes suddenly become visible and pierce into Nicole’s face; her distinct features harden as she stumbles to the edge of the bed. She says nothing while passing Nicole. She moves through a memorized floor plan to enter the bathroom. The door slams shut behind her and Puffy retreats to Nicole’s feet to be comforted by her soothing touch. Nicole reverts to focusing on breakfast, being all too familiar with this routine. She places some milk into a pan, portioning with her eyes sufficient liquid for two bowls of cornmeal. She waits patiently for the milk to be heated by their rusty two burner gas stove, its black paint parting under command from the corrosion of the underlying iron. Nicole slowly adds a steady stream of the yellow meal to the milk, while simultaneously stirring the clash of ingredients. She continues to whip the contents into a thick creamy consistency. Then she grabs the pot and sections the meals equally between two colorful plastic bowls. Long winding vapor threads are initiated by the bowls and disappear into infinity.

“Anna, are you going to use all the water, it’s drought season, so hurry up.”

Anna’s fury is announced by the clump of frown lines on her face as she emerges from behind the bathroom door and enters her room. She eases into her school uniform that had been ironed the night before and now hangs ready from the closet handle. She takes a wet rag and wipes her faded black shoes, the dampness only momentarily masking the age of their discolored cloth texture. Anna plops down in front of a bowl of cornmeal and delves greedily into her breakfast. Clumps of the yellow custard hang loosely to her chin. She has said nothing.

The sisters were the only two members of the Antoine family who remained on the small island of St. Lucia. One by one, they had experienced the family unit dwindle. Now its youngest two members remained, torn from a life of comfort that laced their childhood memories.

Their mother Pauline was a working mother and had held her job for the last twenty-five years. She possessed an air of sophistication that never told the family of hard times. St. Lucia’s economy, however, was on the rocks. Businesses were concerned about their bottom line. They started to let go of the older employees who had been biting into the company’s profits through benefit packages negotiated in better times. Pauline was lucky to be offered a monetary
package; she grabbed it along with her experience and never looked back. That night she agonized over a drastic decision. She decided to leave St. Lucia and travel to New York. There she would reunite with a husband who had left four years prior to find work and to ease the tensions of a difficult marriage. They decided like many before them, to leave St. Lucia’s problems, and search for a better life.

New York offered opportunity, excitement, and promise for the couple, reversing the corrosion that had started to collect on their middle aged minds. Jonathan found work handling baggage at a major airline. He had studied in England and obtained a Masters in Public Health, however, with time ticking and having to support two homes, any income was good income. The airline gig also made it more convenient for the family to stay connected. Jonathan enjoyed the best of both worlds and seldom passed a month without merging island certainty with the new found New York sass.

The two older siblings Charles and Miriam Antoine had left the island to continue their education. They both received partial scholarships and pursued engineering degrees. The Antoine family kept in contact with frequent conference calls in an attempt to close the gap that distance left.

Pauline and Jonathan Antoine had been childhood sweethearts. Their four children could repeat word for word the accounts of their childhood love affair that developed into a fascinating marriage. They were two characters with distinct personalities that made for comical clashes, but the deep love they shared, and the loyalty to their family, provided a foundation that safely supported all their children. The couple made it a rule not to argue in front of their children, for they both shared the dream of shaping their young brood with messages from loving parents who modeled optimism. Portraying one aspect of human emotion, however, robbed their family of learning about handling conflict or managing conflict. This fundamental aspect of human interaction was concealed by hard glances and thick foggy tension that sometimes loomed over the couple for days. The children quickly learned how to maneuver through the fog. Avoidance and denial were the fog lights that guided them in the danger zone, but when the fog was lifted they would transition to playful moments again.

There were enjoyable times. Their weekends were delicious, for there was no other word to encompass the sensations felt in the household at the closure of each week. Saturday morning sunrises ignited with the smell of a souse fusion, salted pigs’ feet with caramelized onions and grated cucumbers combined with fresh warm Creole bread. Then, on most Saturdays, breakfast was followed by a trip to the market with Pauline. Local tongues in ascending crescendo harmonized in negotiations over the price of fresh produce like sweet plantains, yams, plums, mangoes, coconuts and fresh fish. Women lugging trays of colorful brilliance on long elegant black necks were still able to maintain the focus of closing a sale. Choruses of laughter completed their chant and the impact of machetes on coconut shells provided the instrumental accompaniment to this market song.
“I got these fresh on de tree this morning, I will sell it for $6.”
“I will take them, they look nice and ripe.”

Sundays brought beach excursions after a solid two-hour Catholic mass and a hearty home cooked lunch. Jonathan would never attend this mass, for he offered that he had studied the bible thoroughly in his younger years. He challenged all four children to surpass his biblical analysis. They were never able to rise to the challenge.

Down by the seashore, the golden sand warmed the soft soles of the feet but the heat was only briefly felt until the wind or seawater soothed it away. The sea was so many things. To Pauline it was a comfort and stress reliever; to Anna it was a vast open space where she experienced freedom. Both Jonathan and his daughter Nicole shared the intrigue the sea brought. It was a vast body of mystery that could tire their wonder and challenge their imaginations. Charles and Miriam used it as an outlet to explore their sexuality. Their teenage minds could only focus on the opposite sex. The sea brought a sense of solace and togetherness. It was a place where you could experience so much, for it welcomed everyone and held no judgment, then it was all washed away and the next experience was a fresh new start.

Migration and separation can affect people in different ways. Pauline got a chance to go back to school. She worked hard and long, tolerating the unfamiliar indignities of classism that Americans threw in her face. She fueled her long nights of study with dreams of a better life for herself and her family and with vivid illusions of an emotional reunion. She worried incessantly about the functioning of her children, and soothed her worries with a persistent work ethic. She and her husband lived with a family member at first, and then moved out on their own. They lived separate lives in the humble studio apartment. Their marriage had been long strained, and Pauline, although hopeful that time alone would reignite the flame of their long love affair, often found herself waking up to the presence of a stranger. Their communication centered around money. The mutual feelings of worry and struggle that they shared together in this new world only manifested itself in a growing disdain for each other.

The two years spent with Anna had aged Nicole. Suddenly she had been tossed into motherhood, trying to coordinate her activities with Anna’s and managing the affairs of the family home. She cooked, cleaned, and studied. She needed to be strong for the family and for Anna. Nicole tried to simulate the childhood that she knew.

Nicole grew up with a love of nature. As a child she spent countless times in the family’s mango tree. The back yard had a few acres of land where Nicole felt like royalty in the richness of the land, a land rich with both fertility and history. Summer vacations were full of adventure. She would step out of her school shoes and wiggle her toes in the moist dirt in the back yard. It was easy to instantaneously feel rooted to the earth when the house was only a speck in their jungle maze, a concrete rectangle which could barely hold back the encroaching branches of green. The epitome of this empire was a giant mango tree. She would encircle her arms around the thick bark, breathe in the scent of mold and damp
wood, and a sense of it would resonate through her body. This tree was smart and wise and would impart bits of its wisdom every time it had a conversation with the wind. For hours on end, Nicole sat in the bosom of its boughs just listening to the advice of the leaves.

From the very first day that Pauline left, Anna seemed to have lost the ability to smile. A prominent anger shadowed her movements and three frown lines became a permanent facial feature visible even during sleep. Nicole would wonder how a child so young could know of hurt, but Anna hurt and lusted for the love of her mother, a love that she would spend her life searching to replace. Nicole often noted the long stares Anna gave to classmates when their moms came to pick them up from school. When the sisters embraced, an air of inadequacy loomed between them. On holidays, forced expressions of surprise welcomed gifts. Nicole learned right there the importance of a mother’s love, and she experienced through Anna the vast void that remained in its absence. She would feel negativity radiating through her sister creating a dreary presence that clouded out any possibility of a smile. Nicole began to wallow in self-pity after realizing that her attempts at motherhood were constantly rejected by her sister. She lived in a cloud of skepticism. These feelings bothered Nicole, it disturbed the core of her being to see a child, and a beautiful creation and expression of love, wither in the ever-present St. Lucian sunlight. She watched her sister age before her very eyes and knew no way of providing support. Can time lost be replaced? Can damage done be reversed? A million thoughts raced through the minds of both sisters as they adjusted to their new living situation.

The role of a woman is seldom taught in the household. There are so many learned behaviors and complex undertones about what is acceptable. Mothers never tell the why of their actions but from watching them, their daughters learn the many facets of female interaction. Nicole was clueless about acceptable feminine behavior. She had spent so much time in nature and in monotone conversations, that looking beyond the physical, beyond the obvious, never crossed her mind. She lacked a mother’s intuition to know the right time to scold a disrespectful response, or the right question to ask to investigate the details of a fib. Anna’s curious and careful nature made it easy to out-wit her sister, and Pauline’s distance left her oblivious to the changes occurring within her youngest daughter. Anna turned twelve that year, and during a private celebration between the two sisters, Nicole shared how grateful she was to be a family with her. Anna’s response was blatantly direct. She simply said that she hated family. Conversation between them had been long strained and Anna walled in all her emotions. She was a walking dam, always retreating to herself for comfort, but pent up energy always seeks release and Anna’s release was through her behavior.

Many changes occurred within Anna. Physically she began to show budding breasts and her hips and waist could now be differentiated by gentle curves. She was a tall twelve-year-old with long slim legs and curious bright eyes. Nicole noted those changes, and sensed her sister’s burgeoning interest in the opposite sex. It was hard to ignore. Anna would take a longer time getting
dressed for school, glancing at herself for long moments in the mirror. She would fuss about not having enough clothes or enough money. She no longer wanted Nicole to comb her hair for school, complaining that she looked like a child compared to her classmates. Nicole was confused about how to approach the topic of boys. She was seventeen and had just found an interest in the opposite sex herself. To some extent, she envied Anna’s beauty. She was considered a nerd in her college, and her focus remained on her studies for she could not bear to deal with rejection from males who held her interest. Nicole secretly wished that she were more appealing to boys, and just looking at how her twelve-year-old sister could hold the attention of men created feelings of envy within her.

One evening at about eight, a male caller asked to speak to Anna. Nicole harshly questioned the caller about his identity, and what the call was about. She made up a lie, and told the caller that Anna was asleep. Nicole then called Pauline and asked how she should handle such a situation. Pauline was surprised that a male would call Anna. She questioned Nicole, even asking her if the caller was for her instead of her sister, then she asked to speak to Anna.

Anna picked up the phone and the three discussed the events of the night. Anna was surprised to be questioned about a male caller. She denied giving anyone her telephone number and generously offered that Nicole was often on the phone speaking to guys, way into the night. Pauline was furious and cautioned Nicole to have respect for her younger sister and consider how her actions may affect Anna. In her defense, Nicole repeated that the caller specifically asked for Anna and that she has noticed how Anna has been coming home later from school with no valid excuses. Anna assured her mother that there was nothing going on and that she had no idea who would call her. Anna’s argument was convincing enough for Pauline, and she instructed Nicole to trust her sister. The phone call ended with Anna admitting how much she loved and missed her mother. Pauline’s voice softened as she promised Anna that they would be together soon. She was doing her best to ensure that.

In the middle of the night Puffy barked loudly and scratched continuously on the door to Nicole’s room. She awoke startled and, after waiting ten seconds to adjust her eyes to the darkness, she followed her excited dog into the kitchen. There Anna stood in the darkness and her sister and the dog approached.

“What are you doing up this late?” Nicole asked.

“I came out for a drink of water,” responded Anna. “Do you want to tell Mommy that too?”

Nicole ignored the smart comment and watched while her sister walked slowly back to her bedroom. The loud thud of a slammed door resounded into the darkness. Nicole stood looking out of the kitchen window into the night while Puffy lay calm at her feet. Outside the branches swayed to reveal the direction of the wind, and a grey-blue moonlit sky embossed the green of the leaves. Something was strange. Nicole was not sure, but she sensed that trouble was near.
Nicole went back to her bed that night but she could not return to sleep. She listened to time lethargically ticking by and to the low shrill of crickets outside her window wall. She wondered about Anna’s actions. She knew that Anna was normally a heavy sleeper and slept throughout the night. She also knew that she was afraid of darkness and would have switched on the kitchen light if she wanted to get anything. Puffy was never the dog to bark for no reason, and the only time he acted in that manner was when there was a strange person nearby. Nicole made up her mind to watch Anna more closely, and to change her routine so that she could investigate her sister’s activities. She never mentioned a word to her mother, for Pauline’s mind was too clouded with guilt to be objective.

It was Nicole’s final year in college. She was an architecture major at a community college in St. Lucia and realized that she was required to spend more time on her designs. This coincided with Anna’s last year at primary school. Nicole enrolled Anna in after school classes so that it gave her more time to work on her projects daily until she could meet Anna in the late evenings. This new arrangement worked out fine, and for two months there were no problems. In the third month the lessons instructor sent out letters for an individual evaluation of each student. Nicole finished her drawings early that day and went to meet with Anna’s lessons instructor. Nicole and Anna sat side by side while the instructor praised Anna for her good work. The instructor inquired about Nicole’s age and was surprised she was only seventeen. “Where are your parents?” she inquired, and Nicole gave a brief version of their story. Anna sat quietly in her seat offering no information. The instructor then asked Anna to go back into the classroom with the other students and Nicole sat face to face with the instructor.

“Look, it is not my concern why the two of you are living alone. Anna is a very intelligent child and I have no problems with her work. I know you are young and irresponsible. A girl of seventeen may have no concern for the well-being of her sister. I just want you to be more considerate of your sister and stop making her miss lessons class. It has only been ten weeks and she has missed four classes because of having to meet you early.”

Nicole was surprised. She had no idea what the instructor was talking about.

“She missed four classes,” Nicole exclaimed in shock. “I had no idea. Anna had no excuse to miss your class, and I never had to meet her early for any reason since she started.”

The instructor mirrored Nicole’s surprise and the two of them spoke for the next fifteen minutes trying to resolve their perceptions of the situation. Nicole waited until Anna finished her class. A baffled look was painted on her face. She sat down on a wooden lunch table in the school courtyard and inhaled the scents of juice and sandwiches that had soaked into the wood from the countless lunches that had been eaten on it. The evening breezes had shifted direction and a halved sun leveled with the eye over to the west. Anna was the last of the students to leave the classroom and her back blocked the sunlight as she faced Nicole. Anna stood at the edge of the lunch table tapping her fingers impatiently
as a signal to leave. Nicole began to rise but resisted halfway and returned to the warmed wooden spot on the bench. A flicker of her hand motioned for Anna to sit. Anna was rooted in her stance while an uneasy silence blew in between them. Again Nicole motioned for Anna to sit and after a few moments, Anna balanced herself at the very edge of the table. The two sat at polar ends of the lunch table and again silence passed the time. Nicole parted her lips to speak but no sound was heard. She slid herself over to her sister and placed her palm on her back. She felt Anna’s heart thump forcefully inside and she felt her back muscles shorten in tension. “Anna,” she said softly, “I know that this has been hard for you.”

Anna fidgeted then stilled again and her head bent to observe the dirt floor. “Forgive me Anna for not asking earlier, but what’s bothering you? I feel like I am doing my best to take care of you, but you are always so angry. At first I thought it was me. Now I have no idea what it is.”

Anna lifted her head long enough to catch the sun peeking over the horizon, then she reverted to scrutinizing the dirt. Nicole continued, “Anna, just know that I am here to listen, whenever you are ready to talk. I am proud of you.”

Anna rose from the table and again waited impatiently for Nicole. Nicole, slumped with defeat, followed her sister out of the school gates. Anna turned behind, looked at her sister and asked, “What’s for dinner? I’m really hungry.” Nicole smiled, for she had learned to celebrate small successes. Then she used this as leverage to start a conversation. “We can cook something,” she replied, “What do you know how to cook?”

It was evening, and two sisters walked home together planning their evening meal. A simple conversation but nothing would be mentioned about strange phone calls, harsh responses or skipped lessons; at least not tonight. Just two hurt souls finding solace in conversation.
Doctor’s Park

Jason E. Walkowiak

Resting on the shore of Lake Michigan on the border between Fox Point and Bayside, Doctor’s Park is a quiet and peaceful place. With the Schlitz Audubon Society abutting to the north it is reminiscent of the old woods that used to be Wisconsin. A winding service road, used only by park care-givers and police, runs down a steep hill with the overhanging tree branches blocking out most of the sunlight. Riding my bicycle down the hill causes the brakes to squeal under the strain required to not get thrown off at the sharp right turn at the base of the hill. Where the road ends a small path leads up to a guard house with open topped changing areas on either side. The brown wood of the changing areas is about ten feet tall and meets with the base of the peaked roof of the guardhouse. The wooden door must be unlocked at 7:45 in the morning and removed from its hinges to be replaced with a screen door. The musty smell of wet wood mixed with the rotting algal lake smell from the uniforms and towels drying on the line in the locker room wafts up as I enter. Ahead is a small office used for first aid, with a small desk used by the Head Guard for the minimal paperwork required. To the immediate right is a door leading to a storage area as large as the office. Farther into the office and to the right is the guard’s changing area. Care must be taken when entering because there is only one and Margaret may already be in there. The single row of double-sided lockers look as if they were placed there by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s when the park was originally created. I have to duck to get under the items hanging on the drying line before opening my locker and changing into the uniform. As I exit the guard house the path to the beach changes from gravel to sand and leads down wooden steps with log handrails that split to the right and left after the first flight. This landing is the first place that Lake Michigan can be clearly seen over a bush kept trimmed for this purpose. Past the bush and down the final flight of steps, the sand extends for about seventy-five feet before beginning a short decline into the water. The early morning sun already has heated the sand and the warmth is comforting. Later in the day I will have to run so that my feet don’t burn. Three jetties sprout from the sand as the sand slopes into the water with the length of a football field between each. There are two guard stands, white wooden armchairs on a metal stand six feet off the ground, with a large striped umbrella that can be put up for shade, centered between two jetties with two row boats.
chained to the base. To the south a little past the far jetty, the beach comes to a point and the sand turns rocky along the bend. The shore past the point can’t be seen from the beach. To the north, the beach at the Audubon Society is straight and usually vacant. Unprotected by the jetties the sand has washed away leaving only rocks. Far away, at the limits of vision, all that can be made out of the curving shore line are green bluffs that almost reach the horizon.

There are three positions in life-guarding at Doctor’s Park, sitting in the chair, walking on the beach, and rowing the boat—facing land, bouncing in the waves and trying to hold your position. To launch a boat, it must be flipped upright, oars added, lifted from the stern and pushed into the lake. The bow leaves a deep furrow in the sand because the boats weigh 350 pounds. One of the guards, Aaron, is the fastest swimmer on the crew but is so lanky that he cannot launch a boat. Several mornings the Head Guard, who goes by the nickname “Stiffy,” has had the first-year guard, Aaron, trying to launch a boat for hours. It was rather entertaining and frustrating sitting in the other boat practicing my rowing while having to watch my friend, all alone on the beach struggling to get a boat into the lake. With his arms over-extended to reach the base of the boat, his chin is forced against the deck of the stern. Unable to lift it completely, he grunts, strains, and gets it partially off the ground, falls forward and then pushes uselessly against the stern because the boat won’t move with the full bottom of the boat rubbing against the sand. Slowly over the next forty-five minutes he gets the boat into the water, inch by painful inch, only to have “Stiffy” call me in from rowing to help Aaron put the boat back on the sand and do it again. I guess he is having him build muscle. It won’t be until the second summer that Aaron can launch a boat on his own.

Most of life-guarding is training and boredom. Sitting in the chair, endlessly turning your head from side to side in the blazing sun while families splash and cheer in the waves. The only time anyone actually needs help, someone usually knows before anything happens. It could be watching a weak swimmer play in the waves and waiting for him to come back up from the murky sand-filled water or watching a small child playing too close to the drop-off point wondering if he can actually swim. When there is a wind from the west, waves build as they travel the ninety miles from Michigan to Wisconsin. Sometimes waves can be generated this way and the weather on this side of the lake remains still, hot, and sunny without wind. It was one such weekend day that filled Doctor’s Park Beach with families. Part of the job is to tell parents to move their kids away from the jetties. At the shore, the undertow from large waves between jetties pushes to one side and then out, so the closer you get to the jetty, the faster you are being sucked toward the jetty and then out past it. This is how I knew in advance that a group of kids was playing too close to the jetty, even though they were three car lengths away. As I was walking toward them, yelling through a megaphone to their parents to move them farther in, I could see one of them stumble from the sideways force of the water. This one was close enough that the parents grabbed him. Two others were not so lucky. They were torn sideways into the current and ejected farther out into the lake. Not even an
Olympic swimmer could swim against that current. I dropped my megaphone, sunglasses, and helmet, and threw off my shirt as I ran to the jetty; I was still in knee-deep water but the current overtook me and I fell into it. It traveled so fast and with such strength that I fell down and had to body surf to get to the children. It pulled me through twenty yards of crashing waves until I could finally take a stroke and start to swim to them. By the time I caught up to the kids we were well past the end of the jetty. Both children immediately grabbed onto me and tried to get their heads as far out of the water as they could. I was pushed under water as the children tried to get their heads above eight foot waves. Fortunately, the trough generated by the waves allowed me to stand and get a breath. So I placed a child on each shoulder and tried to walk back in. The children were terrified as each wave crested over because they also went under water. I was terrified because I couldn’t move against the force of the current. The waves would crest over me pressing me toward land but the current from waist down was still forcing me out into the lake. I was stuck. It took three waves until I realized I was not making any progress, so I turned north. After I passed the jetty, the current abruptly ceased and I could walk freely back toward land. Once we were back to the end of the jetty, it protected us from the large waves and one of the children was able to walk back in. I carried the young girl back to the shore where her mother was waiting. I loved this summer job because I feel that by saving others I have justified my own existence.