The BRAIN: An Undergraduate Journal of Writing

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From the Editors

The BRAIN (Best-Research-And-Inquiries-Now) began its journey almost two years ago at a regional writing center association conference (East Central Writing Center Association or ECWCA for short). At one of the sessions, presenters explained how they had started an undergraduate journal, sponsored, supported, and published by the writing center at their institution. The premise, then theirs and now ours, is that every semester undergraduate students write essays for a wide variety of classes, essays that have nowhere to go except maybe the trashcan. We think the trashcan should not be the final resting place of these essays. An undergraduate journal of writing would be a place where stellar essays could go.

This premise means both that undergraduates have the opportunity to publish their very good essays (a consensus reached by teacher, student, and us), and these students also have the opportunity to contribute to the academy in a meaningful and long-lasting way. This journal’s name came later when we were struck by the realization that the emails going out across campus to departments asking for submissions to this first (of many, we hope!) issues would need to include a name so people would know exactly to what they were submitting their work. Since our writing center’s slogan is Bring Your Own Brain (BYOB), the name of the journal seemed to fit.

This first issue highlights the best of what we received from writers in junior-level composition courses, largely from two English J-courses: Women and Writing and Writing and Rhetoric II. The essays are not from English majors but from writers whose careers and disciplines are something else altogether.

The vision for the journal is fairly straightforward: to provide a space where undergraduates can submit a “really good” essay, not the traditional poem or short story submission. We wanted a journal that could showcase the kind of critical creativity that research can produce, potentially including academic essays from anthropology, hearing and speech pathology, music education, or wildlife biology, to name some of OU’s myriad of majors. We hope that The BRAIN will provide a space that may further motivate students to continue producing this stellar work.
The Best Time to be Heard
Derek Long

What is the first thing that comes to mind when hearing the word “sound”? Maybe it’s your favorite song or concert experience? The tranquility of a windy forest or a waving ocean? How about the ear-piercing scream of the child on the airplane or the maddening sound of Uncle Mark snoring in the next room as you try to sleep? Would you ever think, “Time for work”? I wanted to hear from the people who could say “yes” to this question. The industries of audio and music are not exactly fruitful in a monetary sense. They’re industries operated by gear geeks, music enthusiasts, and ambitious creators. I decided to interview three people who make a living selling, producing, and performing beautiful music, or the necessary tools to do so. I wanted to know how satisfied these people are with their passion-driven careers. Does working with music as a career ruin the enjoyment that built this passion leading me through college? Is it even possible to sustain a healthy, comfortable lifestyle with an income solely from music and sound? The three people I interviewed were Josh Antonuccio, a professor here at Ohio University and owner of 3 Elliot Recording studio, Frank McDermott, owner and operator of Blue Eagle Music Shop, and finally, Doug Sullivan, occasional street performer here in Athens. What I learned is that, even without riches, people working in music are some of the most satisfied people I have ever known.

* * * * *

So, what have you been listening to lately?

Frank McDermott: Hmm, that’s a good question. Gosh, I listen to everything across the board. Classic rock, classical; I’m a classical guitar player. Jazz Fusion stuff, all kinds of stuff. This just came in yesterday--the latest John McLaughlin record. He’s a Jazz Fusion kind of guy, been around since the late sixties probably.

Josh Antonuccio: Wow. Recently I’ve been listening to albums by The War on Drugs, Sun Kil Moon, a new album and kind of collaborative called Modern Painting, the new St. Vincent, a lot of Nina Simone, the new Cymbals Eat Guitars has been amazing. Should I keep going? There are a lot.
**Doug Sullivan**: Ooh, good question. I’m really glad you didn't ask my favorite, that’s such an annoyingly hard question to answer. Lately I’ve been listening to a lot of Flying Lotus, some Death from Above 1979 to get my punk on, some St. Vincent, but for the most part I’ve been digging this new Panda Bear album.

* * * * *

I ran into Doug Sullivan randomly outside of Redbrick one night. I had already interviewed a different troubadour, but felt like I needed to get more, and Doug was thrilled to help me out. He’s a tall, skinny guy who was, at the time, playing an old Taylor guitar. He’s a junior here at OU, though he isn't sure he’ll be here for his senior year, and he has been playing guitar for six years. He doesn't have an official job in the music industry, but he has no plans to stop playing any time soon.

I could relate a lot to Doug, except for the street playing. For some reason, I get very uncomfortable playing on the street. Especially the way Doug does it, standing by the bar with a bowl in front of him for tips. There’s also something about performing solo that I just can’t find comfort in, but have to respect others for doing.

**DOUG SULLIVAN**

*What’s so bad about the “favorite artist” question?*

Man—that is the worst question anybody could ask a musician. Shit, even people who just like music usually say, “Oh, you know, I pretty much listen to everything.” I’m gonna call bullshit. I just can’t put the label of favorite on an artist when there are so many good ones! Led Zeppelin inspired me to buy my friend’s shitty old guitar, but I hardly listen to Zep anymore. I just go through phases. One minute I’ll obsessed with the recent Mumford and Sons album, but in a week I’ll drop it for some chill, psychedelic rock.

*Was there anything in your youth you think might have lead you to your musical ambitions? Maybe a prized possession or experience?*

Well, like I said, Led Zeppelin is the band that truly inspired me. I remember my Dad blaring “Kashmir” in the living room, dancing with
my uncle. I was only five or so, but I had already known almost all the lyrics to “Stairway.” I didn’t get it, but I knew the lyrics [laughs]. Also, since you brought up possessions, that first guitar I bought from my friend is great! Well, it’s a crappy off-brand strat, but I love it, and hope to have it forever.

Why did you start street performing?

Well definitely not for the tips. College students aren’t the most willing to part with their money. I’d have to say being heard is my main motivation. I don’t have a band or anything, so open mics and street playing seems to me like the next best thing.

Ever feel nervous or judged when street performing?

Yeah, I’m nervous every now and then, and used to be far more often, but nowadays, once I play through my first few songs and get a groove going I’m fine. Really though, there’s no reason to be nervous playing on sidewalks, because nobody really listens. Sure, some might stop for a little while or glance, comment, or toss a tip as they walk by, but they have better things to do. Like getting drunk, so they tip better! As for people judging me? Fuck ‘em. Not their life to live.

Do you plan to go into the music industry as a career?

Absolutely man. I’m in the music production track of the media school, and I’m hoping to own a decent studio in the future. Even if I can’t get my own musical vision to the masses, I want to be a part of someone else’s. I couldn’t imagine doing anything different with my life. I do worry about money, though. In all my time as a musician, I have only made a few hundred bucks from gigs, and absolutely none from music sales, but I don’t let that bug me too much. Nobody does this for the money, unless they are delusional enough to believe they are the reincarnation of Bob Marley or the next T-Swift.

If you could have any job in the industry that you wanted, what would it be?

Doug: Well, there’s the obvious dream of becoming a rockstar, but I try to be realistic. I’d love to be a Music Supervisor. They are the people
who choose the songs that you hear in your favorite movies. Imagine being the guy who picked the soundtrack for *Guardians of the Galaxy*!

**Josh:** I don’t know. Every music career choice has its pros and cons. You could say you want to be a famous musician, but famous musicians are stressed out, and there’s a lot of pressure to keep producing. Some people would say they want to work in a studio, which is great, but you also have no social life, and it’s a super-competitive field. I dipped my toes into everything from music production to being an on-air personality for about three months, which I totally sucked at. That’s the beauty of that era of your life because you can try things and don’t really have to commit to anything. If you feel like it’s clicking, great, you can keep moving it forward, but it’s all about journeying through that. If you’re flexible with journeying through that then that’s part of the life of an artist.

**Frank:** Well, I’d love to revisit my youthful dream of becoming a rockstar [*laughs*]. Probably not gonna happen, but that’d be fun as hell! But, for the moment, this is pretty good. I probably won’t wanna do it forever, but for the time being it’s been a very educational experience, for sure.

* * * * *

Frank McDermott is originally from West Chester, Pennsylvania. He was a music enthusiast from a very young age and learned how to play guitar by listening to records and playing back what he could. Today, he owns Blue Eagle Music Shop here in Athens, Ohio. The shop is a picture-perfect small-town guitar store. It’s light blue in color with the Blue Eagle logo in the front and gorgeous vintage guitars in the window. I’ve stopped dead in my tracks many times to appreciate some of the guitars hung up there, almost like a museum exhibit. They couldn’t be in better hands. Frank even has a sun screen that he puts in front of the window to protect the guitars when the sun shines directly inside. Frank himself is about 5’9” with long hair and a snow white beard, just one beer belly away from Santa Claus, except Frank kept a price tag on his supply of vintage goodies.

**FRANK McDERMOTT**

*What inspired you to actually make a career in music?*
Well, I played trumpet for a while, but as soon as rock n’ roll and guitars presented themselves to me, the trumpet was kinda out the window. One particular thing, I had already started playing for a little bit, but a friend of mine in the same neighborhood, who had been playing much longer than me, came up one day and played a riff off of a Grand Funk Railroad record, of all things. And that was a paradigm shift for me, like, “Wait, they play that? You can’t play that.” Then he played it and I was blown away! I went on from there just learning riffs by dropping a needle on a record and listening over and over.

For about twenty years I did nothing but play gigs and teach privately. I moved to Athens in ’95 and started working here (Blue Eagle) a couple years later. And then in 2006 the place just became available for sale. The guy was ready to retire and get out of it. So, with no prior business experience I just said, “Alright, sounds like something to do.”

What would you say is your favorite part of what you do?

Well, what I’ve created is a gathering of cool, old, vintage guitars. That’s what my push has been since I bought this place, so there’s a lot of ‘em in here. I love them, but unfortunately because of that I don’t really hurry them out the door—I like to keep them around. Back there you’ll see a sunburst guitar; that’s the most recent addition—it’s a 1957 Gibson Les Paul Jr. in pretty close to mint condition, not quite, but that’s a really exciting one to get.

Thus the “do not touch” sign?

Exactly! [laughs]

Did you ever think you’d be the owner of a guitar shop?

Nope. Never occurred to me before moving to Athens; never even crossed my mind. It’s just an opportunity that came up, so I grabbed it and then got really fascinated with the vintage guitar market. Still, I’m pretty satisfied with where I am.

* * * * *
With such a massive change brought on by the Internet (easy access to free music, online purchase of instruments and supplies) do you worry about your business in the music industry?

Frank: Yeah, it’s definitely a factor. For example, I know most of the musicians in this town, and I know what percentage of them don’t come in here. Just because, you know, you’re home and need some strings, but just a few clicks and they’re on the way from Amazon. That’s a bummer. That’s why little stores like this go out of business all the time; they’re just losing their share of the market. But, you know, I’m hanging in. Things could definitely be worse.

Doug: Sometimes I am worried about my future cash flow, but whenever I do, I remember that I’m here for the artists. The Internet makes it easier than ever to get your music out to people, and even to specific demographics. Bands can even reach rock stardom from distributing their music for free online, so why would I feel bad about them? Definitely support the internet’s role in music.

Josh: No, I think it’s the greatest time in the history of the world to be an artist. Every artist’s main goal is to get someone to listen to their art and that was always the key problem with the modern music industry. You had a controlled pipeline where radio promoters, retail, music distribution companies, and record labels would determine who got to hear you. Now that’s been blown wide open. I mean, there’s other problems with that, but in terms of connecting to an audience and getting people to listen, there’s never been a better time. Name any other time in history where you could listen to any song ever recorded at any time, or any place. That would’ve been unthinkable even twenty years ago.

* * * * *

Josh Antonuccio is a lecturer here at OU for audio engineering, and he also owns local recording studio 3 Elliot. I’m taking a few of his courses next semester, so this was a good chance to get to know what kind of class it will be. Josh seems like a very laid back kind of guy, and he’s clearly a music enthusiast. He keeps up with new music of all genres and listens thoroughly, keeps up with the gear and software updates, and has explored many different fields of audio work. His interview was very educational for me as a musician and aspiring audio engineer. He doesn’t glorify the life—in fact he’s very honest about things like lack of
money and social life--but he also encouraged the path for those who really love the work, and that excites me.

**JOSH ANTONUCCIO**

*When did you first get into the idea of working in the music industry?*

I was growing up in Pittsburgh and we had a family friend who was half of the biggest promotion company for live music in the city, so I had access to great seats all the time. I was always going to shows. *Would you say that going into music and audio is more risky today with the advancements in technology?*

I think, by design, any entertainment industry is inherently risky. It’s like one looking to have a job in the film industry as an actor; well there’s never been a stable time to do that. There is an industry around it if you have talent. You meet the right people, you learn from it, but that has always been a truism of any entertainment industry. If you go back 15 years ago, at the height of the CD era, there were thousands, if not tens of thousands of bands that complained they never made a dime from their record label, which was the case for many people. You have to make back the money that they invest in your project, which is called recouping. Many people never did recoup, or got majorly screwed.

*What do you think about the people who talk about the “good ol’ days” of disc and vinyl formatting? How do you see it affecting specific genres or independent artists?*

I have a problem when people romanticize the CD era. I agree that, as an independent artist, if you press your own CD’s you have a better out-of-hand product to sell, but even then you always had to be making back whatever it is the label had invested in you, and many times people never got that far.

I think any genre where the people are making their way are the entrepreneurial types of people. If you look at hip-hop and the people who are developing their own YouTube channels, like Russell Simmons with Def Jam, they are pioneering a way to do single-driven videos on YouTube and making money off from it. Look at Mumford and Sons with Glassnote Records. All of these people that are not in the major label scheme, but are actually doing a lot of good business outside of
that. That was Macklemore’s whole thing! He hired a distributor, but all that was on his own. Amanda Palmer crowdsourced over a million dollars for her project with Kickstarter. There are stories within every genre of people doing that; they’re not complaining about the Internet, but seeing it as another tool in another era. There are still niches like the vinyl resurgence, which is great, but that’s just one part of it. It’d be like people with electricity complaining that they can’t burn whale fat anymore for lanterns. It’s just different! To say we should go back to flat discs with 16 44.1 files on them. Why? It’s done. Streaming is the future, whether you like it or not. That whole industry is in the process of identifying itself.

What’s the most enjoyable work you’ve done in audio?

I think what I enjoy the most is that it’s creative. There’s nothing like getting paid to be creative. It’s privilege to be welcomed into people’s creative projects, whether it’s an album or a film like, the full length films I’ve worked on either as a consultant or actually doing the post-production. It’s really fun! It’s a lot of work, but working with a team of people, or working with a band that’s looking to make a great collection of songs or a single is a very rewarding experience.

Have you picked up any hard hitting words of wisdom from anyone in the industry or from your own experiences?

Well, I just had Brian Lucy, the mastering engineer for the Black Keys, Skype in for one of my classes and he had this great ten minute talk about the life of the artist, and that really resonated with me that you just have to be comfortable with improvisation. You’ll learn something, and then you’ll change course. It’s not like I have a business plan and follow through with it; it’s much more fluid than that. When you look at it from a simplistic standpoint, like I’m gonna be a musician or engineer, you eventually learn that there’s just a diffusion of jobs that are out there. Some people have four or five jobs and they’re very happy doing that, just as long as they can be involved in the creative life. I am always learning from people, and some of the people that I respect the most? Their journeys are just all over the place. It’s never a straight line.

Would you encourage this path for aspiring music enthusiasts?
Sure. I would encourage them to aspire to discover themselves, what they’re passionate about, and how closely they can wind their passions with something they can get paid for.

* * * * *

All of these people are truly passionate about what they do, and even though none of them are particularly wealthy, all of them are satisfied. Still, even though he’s a terrific guy, while interviewing Frank I couldn’t escape a fear that I might end up an old man working at a small town guitar shop. Even though he is satisfied, that just doesn’t seem like the kind of life I would enjoy. Josh has a good grasp on the idea of a fruitful career in music. People need to explore their opportunities and apply their own ideas and creativity. The idea that we can be paid to be creative, as Josh said, is a wonderful privilege.
Introduction

Think back to the days of juice boxes, finger paints, and learning the alphabet – elementary school. You might recall a favorite teacher, one with a kind voice or motivating smile. We all encounter them at some point in our lives. For some, this becomes a memorable and positive relationship, which may blossom into a friendship or mentorship. For others, this experience is less than satisfactory and results in a distaste for the whole concept of learning. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that a ton of work happens in the classroom.

More often than not, these wonderful people go unrecognized for their efforts. They often receive blame for unsatisfactory test scores and work extra hours. The education system is becoming a less and less enjoyable work environment. So why do teachers do it? A common theme seems to be a love of the job and love for kids. It is not so much about recognition as holding on to the hope that they can make some sort of impact on their students. They find something meaningful in their work and use it as a motivation to press on.

Some people will tell you that they work to make ends meet, to keep a roof over their head, and put food on the table. Others say it is a calling, a desire for celebration of one’s talents, or need for something tangible, something to define who we are. This something is different for each person (because each person is different) and rests within the nature of each job. The nature of teaching is for the benefit of someone else. Teachers create joy in their students, provide support for their growth, and inspire them to do amazing things.

On a personal note, this idea of creating joy and alleviating pain for someone else is one that resonates with me. The desire to improve someone else’s life has been a calling to me for many years, so I am becoming a mental health counselor for children and adolescents. I do not hold unrealistic notions that this job will be able to provide me with hard evidence of my success, nor do I think recognition will come my way often. However, I am confident that, like a teacher, I will receive a
sense of deep personal satisfaction from improving someone else’s life. That will be enough for me.

I was able to speak with some teachers on this matter with whom I met by way of mutual friends. Unsurprisingly, they had similar attractions to teaching – liking children, a knack for teaching, personal love of learning. More interestingly, was that they openly acknowledged reasons why most people would find teaching unappealing, but were still able to defend their reasons for doing it. These conversations have brought me to the conclusion that it takes a special type of person to be a teacher. This person must enjoy people, need little recognition, be a problem solver, and be unselfish. Most of all, they must love what they do.

Ashley Klay

Originally I was going to school for journalism because that is what I did at Lima Senior. I was on the newspaper; I was editor. Then I started to work at the YMCA. They eventually roped me in to not just being a lifeguard, but also to teaching swim lessons. I always had parents asking me what I was going to school for. I’d tell them I was going for journalism. I wanted to be on a newspaper or maybe a magazine so I could travel. They would go, “Oh really? You’re not going to become a teacher?” I thought, “Oh, no. I can’t become a teacher, I can’t do that.”

She works in a large school district, located in downtown Lima. “It’s not the worst neighborhood, but it’s not the greatest. We don’t have any crime around.” After several years at Heritage Elementary School, she loves all of her students. “Even my little lovelies that like to challenge me.”

Teaching as a profession is like one of those little balls that you hit back and forth – a pendulum. One minute it’s completely over here, the next over there. It seems like it goes back and forth every few years. One minute you have to have your Master’s degree to become a teacher, the next you don’t. Then maybe in three more years you will again. You can’t be comfortable.

That’s something I really struggled with. I’m a perfectionist. If I plan a lesson, I want to make sure I do everything I planned from start to
When I started out, I actually used to write out what I would say. I would have cue cards like, “Okay, class. Today we are going to be...” I thought everything had to be perfect. I realized quickly that in education, nothing is permanent; everything changes.

It’s definitely changing with this common core. Right now, I heard that there is a bill in the Senate that might change it again. It is changing and it will be forever changing.

In two years, if we cancel common core and we switch back to something else, it just repeats itself. They never let it run its course. A lot of that has to do with the government because they don’t have educators in the government. They just think they know how to run schools and run the education system, but they really don’t.

I have the inclusion class this year. It means that they put the majority of students with individualized education plans in my class and I get assistance from the Title I Special Education teachers. I did not know I was going to have this class until the first day of school, so that caught me off guard.

In my class this year, I have twenty-four, which is really high. Last year my highest was twenty. Four doesn’t seem like a lot, but when you have seven on ADHD medicine, five on IEPs*, and fourteen boys — it makes for a very happening class. I have seven documented that they should be on ADHD medicine or are on it. Whether they take it or not depends if they have it or if they run out. It’s kind of on an individual basis. That was my whole open house this year. When parents or grandparents came in, it seemed like everyone was asking if I knew his or her child was on ADHD medication.

It’s been challenging. It made me question what I was doing wrong. There were points where I wondered if it even mattered. I think I just had to realize that I’m going to have different classes each year and I’m going to have to change with them. Also, I can’t compare my classes because they’re different. It’s been a good challenge because now I’m doing things I thought I would never have to do.

A few months ago, someone from Math Solutions came to teach a lesson. All I could do was sit back and watch. That’s the hardest thing to do because you have Student A biting his eraser off his pencil and

*IEP: Individualized Education Program
Student B falling asleep, but you can’t do anything! When she got to the actual math part and she started asking questions, all of their hands went up. They were answering using vocabulary that I used. It was mind-blowing because there are days that I went home and wondered what I was doing. I stand up and teach all day, and I feel like only the students who want to learn are getting it. That day was just a really big moment, when I could see that all the ones I feel like I’m not reaching are getting it. It was good to be able to sit back and see that.

I’m not one to talk highly of myself and I’ve always had that issue. It’s easier for me to listen to others tell me how they think I’m doing rather than me saying it. I like to hope that my kids see that I care about them. I tell them all the time that I love them and I believe in them. I tell them if I didn’t care, I wouldn’t push them. I have a handful of students that don’t live with parents or are homeless. I hope to impact them educationally, but I really hope that I give them that motivation or strength. I am their one person. Even if they don’t have anyone at home, they can remember that Mrs. Klay said she believed in me and cared about me. I want them to try hard because of me and remember what I did to help them excel. One day, when they’re in high school and they’re ready to drop out and haven’t had good teachers – my hope is they’re always going to be able to go back and remember that they had a really good second grade teacher that believed in them, so they keep going.

I always have a challenge student. Last year my challenge student used to growl at me and charge at me. This one just doesn’t care about school and will laugh at you when you’re correcting him. That’s frustrating. I told him, if I didn’t care about you, I would just let you sit there and do nothing, but I care about you and I believe in you and I’m not going to let you throw your education away. All the sudden tears just started streaming down his face. You break through. He still challenges me every day and he still has that little smirk on his face, but I keep in mind that I am getting through to him.

Especially on social media, there are a lot of negative things said about teachers. I had to learn to turn the other cheek. Last year, our district had to cancel a lot of days because we have a lot of walkers and it was frigid last year. The stuff that people put on Facebook; it’s hurtful. If they only knew what we had to do. It’s hard to get twenty-four kids out the door, make sure they have hats, gloves, book bags, and folders, and
that their chairs are up so the janitors can clean. The other day there were these two older guys outside and one of my friends overheard one of them say, “These teachers just think they can take their good old time getting the kids outside and they can just mosey on in when we have other stuff to do.” I was proud of her because she turned and said, “If you only knew how hard it was to get twenty-four kids out the door, you would realize that we are doing our best.” It’s the negative things like that you try not to let get to you, but there’s always a small part that gets into your ear. It affects some more than it does others. You can’t fix ignorance, I guess.

I would rather retire than get to the point where I’m miserable and don’t love teaching anymore. I can see how you get there though. We are told that we are overpaid, which is hilarious.

We are told that we’re just babysitters. That we don’t do anything all day long. I can see where that would make you start to shut down and start wondering why and believing that there is no point if you’re not being recognized. It’s sad. Now that I’m in the field, I don’t blame those teachers as much.

It’s a very hard job, but it’s very rewarding. A lot of veteran teachers say to student teachers, “Are you sure you want to do this?” I understand what they’re saying, but students need those fresh, young teachers that are excited about it. Ones that haven’t been turned off by the state or all the assessments. If I could make a public service announcement, I would say, yes, it’s going to suck. You’re not going to be put up on a pedestal and told that your job is awesome. You won’t be told that you’re great or you deserve a pay raise. It’s not anything like that, but when you go into the classroom every day and have 24 pairs of eyes looking up to you, excited to learn, they are there for you. You are there for them. It erases all the bad and makes it worth it. I hope people don’t get turned away from it because of all the politics and the other stuff. It’s for the kids. It’s about the kids. They make all the stress, pain, and everything worth it in the end.

Jenna Beougher

When I was little, I always wanted to be a teacher and in charge of students. I’ve always loved the atmosphere. When I was in high school,
I did an after school program with our elementary school. I went there after school every Tuesday. I learned that I did not like the elementary age, so I decided in college to go into the older children. So, middle school it was.

*She is very popular in the Lima, OH area. If someone doesn’t know her, they probably know someone who does. After laying her 7-month-old down for a nap, she spoke lovingly about her job at Temple Christian. “Our students are mostly top-of-the-line. Their parents are paying for them, their education.”*

I teach at a private Christian school, so I had to make a huge sacrifice. There is a huge pay cut when you teach in a private school. So you’re getting like a third of what the public schools pay. I also travel thirty minutes there and back. Because the private school I teach at is also my church, it doesn’t affect a lot at home. I enjoy the atmosphere because I know the kids from going to church with them also. It’s been a positive adjustment.

My relationship with my students is extremely positive. I’m very real and down to earth with my kids. Definitely not a friend, but enough that they could come talk to me if they have a problem with another kid. I’m just that teacher that is – I don’t know – their favorite? I can just tell that they really enjoy me. I try to make learning as fun as possible and they like that.

During class, I go around and make sure I do one on one attention with kids that need it. It shows that I care. Outside of the classroom, I talk to them about everyday stuff. And I’m friends with their parents from church, so that also is a different atmosphere that most teachers don’t have.

They know me outside of school, so they know my personality. They know I’m friendly. When they come into the classroom, they already have a positive attitude towards me.

I have a student that’s a senior and she’s in my freshman Algebra II class because she failed it as a freshman. She needs it to graduate. This puts extra pressure on her and me. She also breaks dress code all the time. One day, I told her that her pants were not okay and that she
couldn’t wear them. She went home and told her mom that I had looked at her pants. I got a really nasty email from her mom that night talking about her grades, how she has depression, and the dress code. I was mad the rest of the night because I put in all this work, I don’t get paid very much, and she was putting fire on me. I couldn’t eat that night because I was so sick. I knew the next day, it was my responsibility to go in and apologize and make things right.

I think most parents respect the decisions our school makes. There are a handful that don’t like our rules and don’t like some of our teachers. They’ll tell you that, but the majority are very respectful. I do like my job and I do like the environment that I work in. I hear stories from my husband about teaching in the public schools, so I know have it easy when it comes to the kids’ attitudes and the atmosphere.

I think a lot of people don’t understand how hard it is. That sometimes it is a seven in the morning to seven at night job. You have to take grading home and prepare for the next day’s lessons. It’s not an eight-to-five job like most people. But, I feel like a lot of people appreciate it because we are investing in their kids. Not only in academics though, are we also investing Christ in them by being an example and teaching them about the Bible.

Most of the time you’re not being recognized. There are few exceptions when parents recognize changes I’m making and praise me for that. I kind of get over it. After you do something for the third time and nothing happens, it’s kind of whatever.

In some cases, I have learned to keep my mouth shut. If something bad happens and you tell somebody, sometimes it doesn’t help because it just gets around. It has taught me a lot of patience because the kids want to push your buttons and see how far you can go. Being honest is important; they respect you more.

I think respect comes first and discipline then comes naturally. The kids respect me and they know what my discipline is so they don’t even go there.

When I was in high school, I try to think about why some of the teachers were my favorite. I would go to my teacher’s house, Mrs. Shateau’s, and hang out with her kids during middle school.
I think because I smile a lot and I’m happy all the time they look at me and wonder, “Why is she like that?” They know I’m a Christian, but I think actually displaying that for them and showing that I care makes they look at me as a positive person. What causes my students to love on my son or to want to go get coffee with me? I think it’s all in your attitude towards them and making sure you’re loving on them. You are not just a person that’s going to help them in the classroom, but with their life.

Nancy Schroeder

I decided to become a teacher because I really enjoy working with children and helping them learn. I hear a lot of people say don’t do it, but I wouldn’t say that. I would tell someone to teach if that’s where their heart leads them. It’s been a rewarding career for me for fifteen years. There are ups, there are downs. There are changes in politics, in curriculum. There are a lot of changes, requirements from the state, paperwork. The heart of the job lays in really having a passion for helping children and for teaching kids. It’s still there and you still have the ability to do so.

She works at a small, private Catholic elementary school with a population of just one hundred and twelve students. “Because we are a Catholic school and we really emphasize the faith component on a daily basis, there is a lot of positivity in our environment.” She has been teaching for fifteen years. Bet ween that and raising four children of her own, she has had lots of experience in education.

Teaching requires a great deal of responsibility and commitment, not that other jobs don’t. But people entrust their children with you and you have a responsibility to cover a great deal of curriculum and material by the end of the school year. These things have to happen for them to move on next year. So, I think for a teacher there is a great deal of responsibility out on you to make sure students learn what they have to learn before they can advance on to the next level.

That sense of responsibility contributes to the effort that I put in to my work as a teacher. The other thing is loving what I do. Loving working
with children, loving teaching them, and loving being with them every day.

Early on in my teaching career, I started out at a different private school and we weren’t given budgets to buy resources for our classroom or anything. I taught first grade and I wanted to do learning centers, so a lot of my time was spent creating file folder games that required a lot of cutting, pasting, gluing, and coloring outside of the school day. You can go buy those things and some places allow you to go buy learning center activities and games, but I had to put hours and hours, and hours into creating my own.

Overall, most of my students have a positive attitude towards school. Some struggle. The ones who have a negative attitude, there are only a handful, tend to be students who have less support from home or struggle with learning in some way. Those students become frustrated so they act out in some way or have a negative attitude because they can’t do it. I’m very lucky to have supportive parents and families. I haven’t had any major problems this year with parents not communicating. They’re paying to send their kids there, so they’re going to communicate and volunteer.

There is less parental involvement overall since I was in school. There are more two working parent households to make ends meet. I can’t complain in my specific school because we have great communication, just in the school system in general. The other thing is kids are involved in so much more, so they’re running their kids around and sometimes its eight o’clock by the time they sit down for dinner. It’s just a mess. I think families’ priorities have changed. When I was in school, homework was the first thing you did when you got off the bus, before you went and did sports or anything else. It’s a societal shift in what people value in education, I think.

For my generation, there was a high value placed on going to college. That’s just what you did. That was the goal; that was the plan. I think that still is what most people want their children to do. I think we’re starting to see that college is valuable, but also trends in vocational training whether that be in high school or through adult education. More short term training, on the job training. Construction equipment, secretarial training, workforce jobs – where people can get to work quicker. Although college is still highly valuable, I think right now there
is another trend going on where we’re seeing other ways to get educated and get into the workforce. Maybe that has something to do with the economy.

You have to be realistic in what the kids’ abilities and skills are. There used to be a time where I would question why someone wasn’t going to college. At this point in my life, I would encourage everyone to get some kind of additional education past high school. It’s very important to look at the whole person, to see what kind of skills they have academically and socially to see what the best fit is. All of those things are going to measure the success they’re going to have at college, in the workforce, in different jobs. I may have a student who is an amazing communicator, a dedicated hard worker, and is motivated, but does poorly academically no matter how hard we work with her. But I’m not going to discourage her from going to college if she wants to or going to vocational training. However, I would encourage her for the one that’s probably going to be the better fit for her abilities. I would probably encourage her to do some shorter term training where she’ll be super at that job she’s going to get. Maybe she’ll be a super hairdresser, or a super culinary arts person, or just super in a field like that. We need those people too. I think career counseling and guidance counseling in schools are really important to help kids make those kinds of decisions and I don’t think it’s done enough.

I think a lot of people have respect for teachers because there are a lot of people who don’t have the patience to do what we do every day. You hear that a lot. People say, “I could never be a teacher! I’m happy you do what you do!” It’s mostly a respected profession. You do put up with comments like, “You get June, July, and August off,” and people that don’t get that you’re really working all summer to plan for the next year.

Personally, I work in a school building where we get recognized for our work. I have worked in school buildings where you get no recognition for your work. When it’s like that, it’s miserable. It makes your work miserable and it makes your days miserable. Not to say that you always have to be recognized. I’m not somebody who needs a pat on the back every day, but once in a while someone to say “good job” for all the hard work you put into your job or “thanks for your help” pumps you up that much more.
When you aren’t recognized, you just have to take some time to reflect on your work. There are days that are exhausting. Maybe you worked a twelve-hour day because you stayed and did plans for the next week, or a big project for the next day. You’re tired and frustrated and you haven’t heard your principal say “good job” lately. I just take some quiet time and reflect on what has happened positively in the classroom or happy things with the children or progress I’ve made with the kids. I take a moment to jot down a few things like “I saw this student show growth here” or “This activity was awesome, the kids were really engaged” to remind myself of good things and pick myself up. Then I move forward because you can’t dwell on something that hasn’t happened.

The job of a teacher is so meaningful. You can measure it in the growth your students make. That’s why we’re there. If I don’t make sure my students are showing growth throughout the year, then I’m not doing what I’m supposed to. The other thing to consider is how fulfilled you are in your work. It’s your career. You spend hours and hours and hours doing your work. You spend sometimes more time engaged in your work than you do in your family life. I know it’s meaningful if I feel fulfilled.
The Work Ahead
Raye Cring

The bathtub is almost full. I’m submerged in lukewarm water. My belly and breasts still bob up when I breathe, a rhythm that’s waning. I’m aiming to relax. I’m aiming for the most peaceful transition I can make. I just want to end the pain and to sever this stream of thoughts. I want everything that I know and have known to cease. I want to know something new or nothing at all. I sink below the water. My throat is dry but the medication has kicked in and I can’t summon the motivation to move at all. I am exhausted and it becomes easy enough to not care about how thirsty I feel. A few little happy feelings bubble begin to well up from somewhere. Being in water has never stopped feeling like home.

My mind begins to compose a narrative. The narrative has nothing to do with the legitimacy of my future career or the presence of another man or woman to yearn for. My fantasy is just me, a seaside cliff, a couple of dogs, and the electric feeling of wind pulling through my hair. I think of inviting night air and blowing out smoke. I think of the stories that emerge when I glance at a person’s face. The happy bubbles fade and tears spring to my eyes. There is something simple to live for maybe. A bitter part of me bites back to remind me that my biology isn’t conducive to happiness. I will only know that kind of short-lived ecstasy that makes me dazzle for a moment before sparking and setting the nearest bystander on fire.

I sink more into the bathtub. My breathing turns shallow. My eyelids flutter shut and the drugs aid me in my goal of not thinking about anything at all. I don’t want to die how I lived. Badgering myself with all the things that were beyond my power to fix but I was being made to endure. If I can’t know joy I’ll know nothing. I’m underwater now. My only shred of focus dedicated to maintaining the seal of my lips. My plan is to fall into the first stage of sleep or so and take a nice deep watery breath. The imagery causes a sharp pain in my mind. My imagination has always been too vivid for its own good. The idea held much more appeal before I could feel the weight of the water flushing in my lungs. I lose my sense of time.
I spit out some water. I vomit and manage to get some of it in the toilet. I spit and cough and vomit. Repeat. My throat feels like fire. I’m too tired to cry and too sedated to feel much of anything. The porcelain is uncomfortable against my ribs but I lack the enthusiasm to move anywhere at all. It’s cold in the house so I wrap my arms around my knees knowing that I should either kill myself or wash my hair properly. I do neither, spreading out the more-than-likely-used towel. I lay on my back listening to all the songs that the radio has pounded in my head.

I don’t think of him. I don’t think of her. I don’t think of anything at all. My head hums for all the things I need and I can’t have. I fall asleep with my faded red hair spread out around me. My looks will suffer tomorrow for my lack of care today. Fatigue always seems to beat out vanity.

I wake up to my brother informing me I’m late for school. I rush to the bathroom, which I jokingly refer to as the ‘kill room,’ in an attempt to desensitize myself from last night’s events. My hair is wiry and doesn’t look clean. I do not look well. I burn the tip of my eyeliner pencil and set to making thick lines around eyes that to me seem grey and lifeless.

I revel in the anonymity of my giant school. I simply can’t see anyone who can really see me today. When I see him the part of me that hates myself screams so loud I see gnats. His very image brings locusts to me; my illness flames at his proximity. I can’t see Amanda, my best friend. She is like me. She knows the only way that you can trust a person is by knowing them as well as you know yourself and she knows me. I fear she’ll cut right through to my fractured soul and there simply aren’t any words to soothe this distress. So when it’s time I don’t go to lunch and talk a security guard into writing me a pass for the library. I find I can’t really focus and everything in me wants a nap, a coma, an easy death.

Being alone and undistracted brings the daily dread all at once. I hate myself. I hate myself for being ugly, for eating too much, for cleaning too little, for constantly loving people incapable of loving me back, for being crazy and broken and for coming from a long line of people destined to cause double their share of collateral damage. I want to punch myself, I want to rip the book up, but I am a weak, reserved girl. So all I do is cry and slink off to the bathroom.
I feel the fraying begin again, all of my thoughts becoming unfinished. My disorder disturbs my sense of time leaving me lost as to what happened yesterday or two weeks ago and all at once the pain from my memories feels very close. I’ve lost the control I usually hold so close in public. I’m trapped in a hostile, cloudy mind.

You should kill yourself. I know. You should kill yourself. I know. You should kill yourself. Like a fucking parrot the need calls to me over and over. Smells of rotting meat and sewer systems fill my nose, inducing the nausea that I can always count on to be nearby. I close my eyes because if I keep them open the shadows of the bathroom stalls will take the shapes of the sinful beasts my grandmother wanted me to see. Anxiety, stress, and a possible ulcer lead me to pull my hair back while I vomit in the toilet. I cry, but for some reason I feel better.

“You’re a fucked up little cookie.” I say to my method of relief as I work to compose my emotional state. I bring terrible porn-ish lyrics to mind. I laugh, sob a little, wipe my eyes, rinse out my mouth, and shake the tension out of my shoulders. I shut my eyes and pull my hands through the front of my hair like my mother used to. I focus on breathing slow till everything is steady again.

The end of the day is a sweet victory. Despite my lethargy I fly towards the nearest door. Most days being a teenager without a cellphone is pretty shitty. Today I welcome my inaccessibility. Every “hello” I had uttered today had fallen on my own ears as a cry for help.

On my walk home I try to find something to live for at least for another day. I have books but I lack the focus for any sort of media that I can access to satisfy this emotional chasm I’ve been digging at. I think of a trip to the frozen lake before remembering that a friend had gone there once to kill herself. I’m shaken up deeply, and nothing and no one feels like home.

I begin to panic and pace in front of a bench I’ve set my bag on. I settle on it, hands settled on knees, searching for a place that might give me the smallest shred of peace. I cannot go home. I can’t face another day of making my mother’s burden heavier and I certainly can’t look in the face of my future. I have nowhere to go. I can see nothing ahead for myself or at least nothing good. My fingernails begin to bear down on the coarser skin of my knees. I refrain from biting my lip too hard.

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have to find a way to shut off this predilection for self-harm before I tear myself apart.

I go home. I ignore my brother pawing through the fridge. I climb into the now-dry bathtub and I cry. This day has been coming for six months, or maybe a year, or maybe when my parents made eye contact for the first time. I’m bipolar, I’m episodic, and no one here can help me survive, let alone grow. I know what I have to do and I feel incapable of doing it. I need stabilization.

My mom comes home. My hands are shaking as I help her with the groceries. My hands always shake when I’m swallowing my words. For the past year or so she has been fatigue personified. I can’t and don’t blame her. The severity of her disorder is surely driving her into an early grave. She’s been hospitalized a dozen times and in my nightmares she disconnects from reality altogether.

I cry before I can speak. I told her I was bipolar a few months ago. She grew upset with me for calling her crazy and accused me of calling her a bad mother. I need to pick my words carefully since I know they will break her heart. Most of my mother’s life is carefully building up her delusions to justify why her life is so painful, and my confession is an attack on the foundation of her delusions. After I told my family initially that I was ill I was given a poorly written book on how to be a medium.

My eyes plead for her to understand. I am blunt and concise. “I need to go to the hospital. I need medicine. I need something to fix me.” Tears free-flow down my face as I speak, my words coming from a place of panic. Admitting that my mind has been corrupted by disease feels like breaking my own heart. I can never again indulge in my emotions the way I used to, or at least never with the guise of naïveté. I can no longer trust myself. I can no longer speak to God without fear that fucked up part of me will whisper the same poisons that my mother has embraced.

My mom’s face is full of dread for just a moment before it hardens like mine does sometimes. “Okay, okay.” Her voice is soothing, her arms settle around my shoulders, her voice in my ear. She strokes my hair as she speaks to me, “Why don’t you go get some clothes and we’ll go.”
The next forty eight hours will mark my rise to wellness, but I know they will hold no comfort for me. I cry and cry at the thought of relief. I cry for the work ahead.
**Color and Angles at Full Volume: Critical Review of Do the Right Thing**

Lorraine T. Sunderland

Raw, hot red colors paint the brownstones that frame Tina (Rosie Perez), as she dances in the opening credits of *Do the Right Thing* (Spike Lee, USA, 1989). Tina’s fierce, angry provocative dance to “Fight the Power” by Public Enemy precedes a complex film of progressively heated emotions that reach a boiling point. Director Spike Lee makes the film *Do the Right Thing* very interesting to watch. Lee’s vibrant diegetic visual style; his use of reds, yellows, and oranges, along with canted, direct, and forceful low angle shots combined with blaring music, magnifies the intensifying anger and heat of one summer Saturday in Brooklyn’s, Bedford-Stuyvesant (Bed-Stuy) neighborhood. There is no simple way to summarize the film *Do the Right Thing*. The story and characters are too complex and each person’s interpretation is individual. The talented ensemble of characters on a 1989 urban stage exposes the audience to a multilayered script. Anger is the dominant emotion and sweltering summer heat is the catalyst (Travers, 2015).

Three men of color sit on a sidewalk; a small umbrella shades them from the blazing sun. The building behind them is painted in a florescent red, highlighting the accuracy of their conversation. Sweet Dick Willie (Robin Harris), ML (Paul Benjamin), and Coconut Sid (Frankie Faison) comment on the people around them; they tell it like it is. Each framing shot of this trio exhibits the increasing heat; the change in posture, expression, the loosening of the clothing, and the perspiration that begins to drip from their foreheads. The sweat droplets reflect the red of the wall.

Opening long shots of the street in front of Sal’s (Danny Aiello) Pizza Shop disclose a community street coming to life in the morning. Lee does a brilliant job conveying the increasing heat as it overtakes the neighborhood. The viewer can almost feel the heat rise as the tensions rise in the neighborhood. The cinematographer, Ernest Dickerson, filmed this movie in a hue of yellow, creating the look of summer heat. As the day proceeds and the temperature is rising, the camera operator
uses a butane lighter under the lens to create the filmy quality of the 
sunbaked street (Edwards, 2014).

Adding to the color, there are the direct, in your face scenes of 
individual actors. Radio Raheem (Bill Nunn) walks the streets carrying 
an enormous radio. His script contains very few words, but his voice is 
heard by the music that shouts from his Boom Box speakers. His voice, 
the song “Fight the Power,” can be interpreted as a preacher’s oration 
on a street corner or a politician’s speech, promoting a cause. The 
introduction of Radio’s brass knuckles, LOVE and HATE, are punched 
fiercely at the camera lens as if in a boxing ring. Buggin’ Out (Giancarlo 
Esposito) in a bright dramatic yellow outfit has a lot to say. His scenes, 
shot from below with direct and canted angles, exemplify the power of 
his words. Buggin’ Out is loaded with verbal abuse. Our point of view 
of Buggin’ Out’s tirades is often that of a bystander forced to listen to 
his shouted manifestos that spew from his mouth. Both characters by 
force compliment the loud and heated environment.

Dynamic composition of the stunned reaction shots after Sal destroys 
Raheem’s radio are incredibly powerful and foreshadow the tragic 
event of Raheem’s death (D’Angelo, 2011). Further darkening colors, 
as the sun descends, frame Raheem’s final moments. The audience is 
fected by the powerful camera angle looking up at Police Officer Gary 
Long (Rick Aiello) as he murders Raheem by choking him with his 
nightstick. The direct shot of Raheem’s dangling feet in white sneakers 
quivering against the black slacks of the officers complete the contrast 
of good and evil.

Camera angles along with a haziness of color overlying the film 
augment the characters’ relevance within the film. The vibrant use of 
color is used to express the environmental conditions as well as 
emotions. Toward the end it feels as if the film itself is shouting 
(D’Angelo, 2011). The impact of images, sound, and color in the film 
complement the seriousness of the story Spike Lee is trying to portray 
in Do the Right Thing. The final transition of color to the blackened 
husk of the storefront symbolizes death, the death of Radio Raheem 
and the death of Sal’s livelihood. The community lives on, fading out 
before the final credits, dressed up women are walking to church, and 
the street is filled with children playing in front of the store’s charred 
remains. The heat is beginning to scorch the day, again.
References


Patricia Hampl’s Out-of-Order Storytelling Incorporates Surprise in The Florist’s Daughter
Lindsay Henderson

Patricia Hampl’s memoir The Florist’s Daughter is an exploration of daughterhood as it pertains to her. She uses her style to create impact throughout her memoir, jumping around the timeline of her life. A close look reveals clues to what will happen later in the story. Hampl uses non-sequential storytelling to incorporate the element of surprise in her writing.

Jumping around the timeline is an effective way to bewilder readers. This is a tactic learned from Hampl’s mother, and she shares that in her book. The two were discussing writing and how to tell a story. Frustrated, Hampl tells her mother, “You have to start at the beginning.” Her mother replies profoundly, “What’s the beginning?” (Hampl, 2007, p. 27). Where is the beginning of this story? Hampl chose to start with her dying mother in a hospital room. Her mother’s death, however, is not a surprise. She does save her mother’s actual death for the end of the book, but this doesn’t come as a surprise to readers. This strategy utilizes her mother’s advice on writing.

Hampl shares one of her mother’s stories about her Aunt Lillian being attacked. In a dark doorway, she is drugged and “almost raped”, but saved by her mother in the nick of time (2007, p. 25). A bombshell is dropped eight chapters later when the author’s brother tells her the true story: that Aunt Lillian was not saved by her mother, and she in fact was raped (p. 198). Hampl wanted to jolt us, but she did provide clues.

The almost-rape story is followed by a description of Aunt Lillian today, obsessive-compulsively checking stove burners, organizing and reorganizing shoes, rarely leaving her house, and never having children (Hampl, 2007, p. 26). “Bill and I tried sex a couple of times, but we decided we didn’t like it. We just hug.” (p. 197). This does not sound like a woman who wasn’t raped and didn’t remember being attacked. This sounds like someone who is struggling. However, if the reader is not paying close attention, they would miss this hint.
The author’s relationship with both of her parents is an obvious theme throughout this memoir. It also provides another example of hints and surprises. On the surface it seems that Hampl relates to her father more than her mother. She says explicitly, “I was on my father’s side—the side of trusting people and pleasing them, the side of flowers and winking party lights” (p. 36). She discusses fishing trips with him, how she is a “lifelong people pleaser” (p. 6) while she tells us that her father helped people all his life as well (p. 22).

At the end of the book Hampl reveals that she is her mother’s child. The two women are discussing which fields her parents wanted to go in. Her father, she wrote, wanted to be a doctor or an architect. Her mother, she thought, wanted to be a librarian. She is corrected and it changes her perspective. Her mother wanted to be a writer all along, and Hampl explains her shocked response. “So there is no escape. Choice is an illusion, rebellion is a mad dash on a long leash. She smiled at me, a funny, wry smile. Showed her hand at last. And I’d thought I was his girl” (Hampl, 2007, p. 201). This statement reminds us that she feels she will never escape the cage of daughterhood. She is trapped on a leash, never to achieve freedom.

Another trick that was hinted at is hidden in stories she tells throughout the memoir. The fishing stories mention quiet and silence constantly: “All conversation fell like a lead sinker” (Hampl, 2007, p. 113). That is the purpose of fishing in this memoir, and a major characteristic of her father. “He was happier outside of language,” she tells us (p. 82). Readers may get the impression that she takes after her father, but clearly not in this capacity, as Hampl makes a living using words. Her mother’s airy nothings and storytelling are huge similarities between her and her daughter. She describes writing as a “vocation approved of by Leo the Lion, wondered over by silent Stan” (p. 115). These recurrent, yet subtle themes are very important, but easily missed.

Their desire to travel is another clue. Hampl traveled to Eastern Europe (Hampl, 2007, p. 85) and her mother flew to Ireland, and Rome (or the Vatican as her mother referred to it) (p. 134). Meanwhile, Hampl asks her father if he’d like to go to Czechoslovakia, where his heritage is, or to Holland to see the tulips. He has no interest in either (p. 134). When talking about her mother, she says, “She, not my father, belonged to the Great World” (p. 138).
The women enjoy their shared interest when they take a trip to Ireland. This offers Hampl another opportunity to surprise us. She opens the book describing her mother’s judgmental tendencies, gossiping and general difficult-ness. She shows how dramatic her mother is with a story about her mother’s sobbing fit on the sidewalk, screaming that she wished she were dead (Hampl, 2007, p. 17). Hampl also shares her mother’s notation of a woman who wasn’t fat, “but definitely thickening.” (2007, p. 27) This shows her mother’s judgmental nature. Her father even reminisces about how “she used to be so sweet” (2007, p. 148). She is no longer as sweet as she once was. These are more examples of clues that Hampl gives us to lead us through her story.

Hampf is not looking forward to going on their trip to Ireland. “[T]wo weeks alone with her were such an eternity to contemplate [. . .] sharing a room as she snored the ripping snore of a great beast [. . .] greedily exultant to have me all to herself every single second of every day for two whole weeks” (Hampl, 2007, p. 136). To her (and the reader’s) surprise, her mother is a fabulous travel companion, the best of her life. She describes her as “easy, thoughtful, absolutely without fuss or fear, a natural with strangers, patient with changes of plan and annoying delays” (p. 137). Hampl obviously didn’t expect to enjoy her time with her mother. This is another hint as to who the author is more similar to between her parents. She is continuing to surprise us.

*The Florist’s Daughter* is rich with subtleties that provide an excellent re-reading experience. Upon reflection, the reader can understand the depth of the nuanced narrative: the eye for detail, the subtle hints toward the eventual truth, and the careful use of circular narrative to present to the reader the image of a woman who, though an adult, is still her parents’ little girl. The out of order style continually surprises readers and keeps them engaged in the story.

**Reference**

Work: Is it a Beautiful Thing?
Alexandra Schoonover

“Work is a Beautiful Thing,” a 2014 commercial\textsuperscript{1} from Walmart, takes a look at the company’s plan to invest in American business and create more American jobs. The commercial features an example of Walmart’s relationship with a small business in Georgia and how the investment will impact workers. Walmart claims two main results in this commercial: the worker coming out on top with more money to spend and the processing of more American products to spend that money on. De Botton (2009), author of The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work, a book which explores the meaning of work through the observation of various jobs, would likely see this a negative and positive for workers. Crawford (2006) would also have conflicting ideas about Walmart’s plan, judging from the ideas he discusses in his article “Shop Class as Soul Craft.” This article looks at mechanized work as a negative thing, but some of his values would be upheld in Walmart’s Americanization of their industry.

Set to bouncy piano music, the commercial opens with a promise that Walmart will always try to find the best value for their customers. It moves into a patriotic statement about how that value can be found right in America with an image of red, white, and blue stripes. Following that is an explanation of the plan to invest money in American businesses such as a towel factory in Griffin, Georgia. This is supported with illustrations of businessmen, cotton farmers, and factory workers who all end up in a pyramid with the factory worker standing at the top, bringing us to the main point of the commercial. The narrator says, “Which means that more people have more money to spend on products that support American jobs at places like, well, Walmart.” Walmart hopes that the demand of those products will drive up the number of available factory jobs and boost economic growth.

A large part of Walmart’s plan is to provide factory jobs for American workers by investing in American businesses. The commercial shows the towel factory worker as a superhero figure wearing a cape made from the towel he just manufactured, however it spends no time on

\textsuperscript{1} The commercial is available here: \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6uDDSH4VylU}. (Ed.)
the actual specifics of the work. Oftentimes, as described by De Botton (2009) during his ventures in logistics and biscuit manufacturing, factory jobs are repetitive, simple, and mindless. They involve long hours and lots of standing time, none of which is extremely desirable to the average person. Since mindless jobs do not appear meaningful, De Botton (2009) is generally against factory work and big business. However, after spending some time with factory workers, he reconsiders his opinion and admits, “[W]e are hence prone to [. . .] contemplating with low-level despair the banality of our labor while at the same time honoring the material fecundity that flows from it – knowing that what may look like a childish game is in fact never far from a struggle for our very survival” (103). Although De Botton (2009) is initially appalled by the simplicity and apparent triviality of factory work, he comes to realize from his time at the biscuit factory that, for most people, survival is enough. While De Botton (2009) may disprove of the type of work being done in the factories, he might also find an increase in factory jobs as a good thing if the end result is more families being provided for.

Crawford (2006) describes jobs in mass production, such as those in the biscuit factory or the ones portrayed in the Walmart commercial, as “parts” in a “process” and also condemns factory jobs for focusing too much on cutting costs and too little on devoting time and effort to the final product. He remarks that, “This process replaces what was previously an integral activity, rooted in craft tradition and expertise, animated by the worker’s own mental image of, and intention toward a finished product.” Unlike De Botton (2009), he does not acknowledge the survival aspect of having a job, but chooses to focus on the negative parts of factory work. Crawford (2006) believes work derives meaning from the amount of intellect and skill it requires and the societal contribution it makes. He would be more likely to advocate for jobs that make one feel “like a man, not a cog in a machine” (Crawford, 2006), like manual work or white collar work. Walmart’s proposal aims to increase factory jobs, and Crawford would prefer a reduction in them.

The Walmart commercial emphasizes that an increase in jobs will boost the economy in other ways as people will be able to buy more American-made products. Ironically, Walmart is very well known for selling products produced by cheap labor in countries like China and Taiwan. In the first part of his article, Crawford (2006) discusses that
one downfall of factory work is that it has “left our shores,” which is mostly due to companies like Walmart because the labor is cheaper. Crawford (2006) writes that one reason mechanized work is so popular is that “[Skilled] workers can be replaced with unskilled workers at a lower rate of pay.” Looking at it from this way, Crawford may be in favor of the portion of Walmart’s plan that focuses on bolstering American economy; however, he would still probably like to see an increase in American goods accomplished through skilled labor rather than unskilled labor and an increased consumer preference in quality over quantity.

As De Botton describes the brilliance of cargo shipping, he writes, “Not that many consumers care to dwell on where their fruit has come from, much less where their shirts have been made or who fashioned the rings which connect their shower hose to the basin” (15). As with Crawford, he is concerned about foreign labor taking over the American market because consumers often have no idea and rarely care where any of their goods have come from. This theme of localizing consumerism plays a role throughout several chapters of his book, including a photo essay about the fishing industry. In this part, de Botton makes a statement about the unseen interconnectedness of the world that one really seems to care about. He writes that “[We] became modern when we gave up on awaiting sporadic gifts from above and sought to render any pleasing sensation immediately and repeatedly available” (42). He would advocate for local products, fewer products, and craftsmanship because in his eyes, consumerism is often wasteful, selfish, and bad for the environment. From this, readers can gather that he would be in favor of increasing production of American products.

Through “Work is a Beautiful Thing,” Walmart delivers promises to American citizens that are outwardly intriguing, patriotic, and helpful. De Botton and Crawford would beg us to look under the surface, to dig just a little bit deeper and consider whether these promises would really be a good thing. Factory work is not an ideal job for most people as it is often dominated by long hours and tough conditions. However, for many people a job does not need to have any more meaning than a paycheck that provides a roof overhead and food on the table. Expecting people to spend their hard-earned money at Walmart and other such companies may be a little presumptuous, but it may be correct that it would possess the potential to stimulate the American
economy. Supporting jobs and businesses in America would not be a bad thing, but Walmart’s plan of action should be questioned and not just blindly followed.

References


Adolescent Deterioration

Lorraine Sunderland

The film *The Virgin Suicides* (Coppola, 1999) begins with a walk down a suburban neighborhood street canopied by enormous elm trees. Narration of the film gives away the ending at the very beginning. “Cecilia was the first to go” (Coppola, 1999). The blood covered holy card of the Virgin Mary drops from Cecilia’s hand as the paramedics carry her away. Symbols play a great part in the mis-en-scene of the film. We can reflect upon the progressive deterioration of adolescent happiness demonstrated through symbols, mis-en-scene, and point of view (POV).

In the film, we are never provided with the Lisbon girls’ point of view. Their thoughts and behavior remain a mystery. We are offered the point of view of teenage boys and their adolescent observations through the film’s narration. After Cecilia’s (Hannah Hall) first suicide attempt, we do not gain any insight to the reason why she tried to kill herself. Instead, we are challenged to interpret Cecilia’s character by her costume and actions. We see Cecilia dressed only in an ill-fitting, old lace wedding gown. She wears this gown in the bathtub during her first suicide attempt, at Dr. Horiker’s (Danny DeVito) office, again during the basement party and ultimately her successful suicide. Is Cecilia clinging to the happiness in her youth, playing dress up, adding bracelets over her gauze wrist wraps, or is the meaning deeper? Like the diseased elm trees that line the neighborhood streets, she suffers from a necrotizing disease of the mind, destroying her blossoming adolescence.

During the opening, the POV from a moving car looks out at the elegant upper-class homes, the street is covered by a canopy of full-leafed tree branches, as if to embrace and shield the inhabitants from the world without. The homes display a sense of security and the American dream. Underneath there is an incurable disease that is rotting the core. The smaller, simpler Lisbon house surrounded by larger homes tempts the boys with its restrictive and suffocating character to investigate the unobtainable. We address the large surrounding trees as symbols of longevity and deep roots. In one scene, the girls briefly surround the elm tree in their yard slated for destruction. As the television crew watches, the workers direct their energy to butchering
the tree, instead of holding their ground, the girls drift away, and their passion to save the tree drifts off as if it never existed.

Songs and images fill many scenes within the film. Sofia Coppola used the music and clothing of the seventies to validate her story (Rogers, 2007). “Magic Man” by Heart is used to introduce Trip (Josh Hartnett), and the lyrics are a description of his character (Scott, 2000). The 1974 introductory album of the band Kiss is forefront in the scene on the steps and in front of the fireplace with Lux (Kirsten Dunst) being told to destroy her possessions by her mother (Kathleen Turner). Painted masks or those that are held in front suggest a hidden life, a face dismissed, useless. Gas masks are used in a later scene with a smoke-filled room as a way to hide the truth of the deterioration of adolescence experienced in the death of the five Lisbon girls.

Symbols of death and illness continue throughout the film. Cryptic messages using Holy Cards invoke personal memories of standing next to a casket at the funeral home. Holy Cards are used as a prayer card with the descendant’s name. The mis-en-scene of Peter (Chris Hale) entering Cecelia’s room, shows on the door a Holy Card and a drawing of the Virgin Mary holding a child next to an angel. The lighted form of the Virgin Mary sits on the nightstand. These symbols display a connection with the Immaculate Conception of Christ, virginity and purity. Cecilia and her sisters are blossoming from innocent children into womanhood. The boys would recognize the messages on the cards are from the Lisbon girls because of the zealous religious dominance by their mother.

The visual trauma of suicide impregnates the adolescent minds of the neighborhood boys in a devastating way. Their dreams and lives have not really moved forward beyond the night that Cecelia died. The teenage brotherhood seeking to understand their own adolescence are unable to progress into the adult world. With their collection of souvenirs, they have become trapped in the visual memory of Cecelia’s suicide and spend their lives asking why.

References


The Shock of Sex and Coming of Age in Audre Lorde’s Zami
Kelli Wanamaker

In her 1982 memoir, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, Audre Lorde uses an explicitly sensual writing style to illustrate her journey into womanhood. The women’s liberation movement during the 1960s through 1980s believed that a woman’s sexual liberation can result in her social, political, and economic equality as well. This movement operated on the belief that if a woman follows her sexual desires she can gain confidence to create a more satisfying role for herself in the household, the workforce, and society.

During this time of increased sensual expression women also began to challenge the racially exclusive and weight exclusive body icons such as the Barbie doll (“Timeline,” n.d.). The first black Barbie was released onto the market in 1980, two years before the black poet Lorde released *Zami*. In 1981 Lorde also had her first mastectomy due to breast cancer. She learned to love her “altered body,” and wrote her candid memoir about maturing into a queer, black, female poet (Kulili, Reuman, and Trapasso, 2015). Lorde further explores the difference between sensuality and sexuality. The Cambridge Dictionary defines sensual as “expressing or suggesting physical pleasure” (“Sensual,” n.d.). Therefore, sensuality encompasses the enjoyment of any touch, smell, sight, taste, or sound. It does not necessarily have to be erotic in nature. Lorde explores where the sexual and sensual spheres separate and overlap – shocking and challenging the reader to explore her own boundaries. Lorde uses sensual imagery and the shock of sexuality to encourage shy young women to embrace their sensuality both physically and psychologically.

As all female coming of age novels do, Lorde’s memoir includes the memory of her first period: “I smelled the delicate breadfruit smell [. . .] my own woman smell, warm, shameful, but secretly utterly delicious” (Lorde, 1982, p. 77). Lorde employs this metaphor comparing her menstrual smell to “breadfruit” to imply the sustenance she finds in her womanhood. “Breadfruit” is food. Thus Lorde employs food imagery to illustrate the spiritual nourishment she finds in this ancient female rite of passage. “Breadfruit” is actually a staple used in West Indian cooking (Cox, n.d.). By comparing her period to an ingredient beloved in her
family’s Caribbean homeland, her bleeding connects her not only to her body, but also her ancestral roots. “Bread” also evokes a feeling of comfort from her young, female audience. The smell of bread brings up images of home and mothers. Thus her “bread” comparison further connects the young Audre to her sense of pride at her body’s transformation into womanhood. Lorde boldly states her pleasure at smelling her “breadfruit” when society considered a woman’s intimate smell unattractive. Lysol ads in the 1930s-1960s bully women into douching with Lysol: warning “the other you could wreck your marriage!” (“The Five,” n.d.). Lorde addresses this body taboo: “my own woman smell, warm, shameful” (Lorde, 1982, p. 77). Her prideful diction of “my own” characterizes her feeling of ownership and power over her body. Furthermore, by combining the adjectives “warm,” and “shameful,” she employs an erotic tone: creating a mood of forbidden sexuality while (surprisingly) describing her period. Thus Lorde explores where sensuality (the experience of having a period) and sexuality unexpectedly overlap.

Lorde explores this sense of forbidden pleasure further when she confesses her adolescent fantasy of her mother “slowly, thoroughly, our touching and caressing each other’s most secret places” (Lorde, 1982, p. 78). Lorde purposefully makes this statement ambiguous. Her day dream appears sensual in nature, but she provides no definitive proof as to whether it is sexual or merely adolescent curiosity at an older woman’s body. By providing no definitive statements, Lorde leaves the reader shocked and grasping for answers. Thus Lorde takes the judgment, the black and white, out of the body discussion. Lorde also chooses a slow, rhythmic word choice: “slowly,” “thoroughly,” “touching,” and “caressing.” This gives the fantasy a dreamlike quality. Her generous use of gerunds make the passage stand out from the rest of the novel, thus evoking the full attention of the reader. By making the passage stand out so, she makes it impossible for the reader to skip over this information or brush it under the rug. Thus Lorde implies that such memories of adolescent fantasies should not be hidden in shame – but called forth and examined. By having the courage to highlight and dig deep into her own inner psych, Lorde encourages other women to do the same.
Lorde uses this shock value, along with controversial language throughout her memoir to pull the reader into deep contemplation regarding her own relationship with her body. As a girl, Lorde recalls “sitting between my mother’s spread legs,” while her mother braids her hair (Lorde, 1982, p. 32). Lorde’s descriptive language, “spread legs” evokes an image of female sexuality. Thus Lorde alludes to sex during a platonic moment of mother-daughter grooming. This shocks readers, again challenging them to explore their own parameters of sensual versus sexual experience. Lorde’s choice to describe her mother’s “spread legs” may simply allude to the closeness of mother and daughter. Mothers birth their children, after all, between their spread legs! Thus “Spread legs” could be sexual, or simply a biological observation, depending on how the reader chooses to interpret this imagery. Lorde gives her reader the space to infer, and again, refuses to add her own judgment into the memory. Lorde’s choice to refrain from commenting on these controversial memories implies that she does not feel the need to justify or explain them: a powerful choice.

Lorde uses sensual imagery further along in this memory as well: “I remember the warm mother smell caught between her legs” (Lorde, 1982, p. 33). Lorde’s short syntax of “the warm mother smell” paints the young Audre as a primal being. Her choice of the word “caught” also evokes animal imagery. Animals are “caught,” while people sit. As a young girl Audre gathers information about her mother by smell, just as an animal in the wild does. These animal instincts help young in the wild to identify their mother, as well as bonding the mother and child. Lorde uses this parallel to compare her mother and herself to a mother and her young in the wild to shock female readers and force them to look at the more primitive side of being mother and daughter.

By continually shocking the reader, Lorde forces young women to re-examine their own sense-memories and inner desires. She explores the relationship between sensuality and sexuality to provoke a dialogue about women’s bodies. As Lorde refuses to categorize her feelings and memories as black or white, other women may feel less pressure to label their own. Thus Lorde frees up the space for women to share their more complicated experiences and desires. Furthermore, Lorde removes the shame associated with women’s bodies and their more primitive instincts. Lorde asserts “imposed silence about any area of our lives is a tool for separation and powerlessness” (Kulii, Reuman, and Trapasso, 2015). She also argues that operating with one’s animal
instincts connects a woman to her innate sense of direction. So hear, hear to Audre Lorde for freeing the sensual being in everyone!
References


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