

# Intertext

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## Intertext 2009 – Complete Issue

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Intertext 2009

# Intertext 2009

## mission

Composed by the minds, fingers, and mouths of students in the Syracuse University Writing Program, *Intertext* is a publication designed to inspire. As innovations and technologies continue to revolutionize the process of communication, so too do we hope to propel the art of writing beyond simple words on paper. The messages within this magazine carry insight for the contemporary problems and successes within us as individuals, and together as a society. Through this publication, it is our goal to represent the breadth of Writing courses and the talent within them at Syracuse University.

Read it. Devour it. Grow from it. Become Intertextual.

**in·ter·tex·tu·al·i·ty** *n.* Intertextuality refers to the meaning(s) inherent to and created by the ways texts exist in relation to one another, their readers, and the world that contextualizes them.

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## acknowledgements

The *Intertext* staff would like to extend a special thank-you to the Writing Program community for their support of *Intertext*, and to all the instructors who encouraged their students to submit their work.

We would also like to thank the judges for all of their time. We appreciate your support.

And finally, we are thankful to the i-Learn grant, the Innovative Learning Program in the College of Arts and Sciences, for funding this publication.

## awards

The Louise Wetherbee Phelps Award recognizes excellence in writing in the Writing Program's courses. All *Intertext* authors are considered for the award. Submissions are evaluated on depth, complexity, technical control, emotional and intellectual appeal, and how well they reflect the goals of the Writing Program.

The judges for this year are:

**Faith Plvan**, Assistant Director of the Writing Program  
**Iswari Panday**, Assistant Professor of Writing and Rhetoric  
**Jeff Simmons**, Professional Writing Instructor  
**Marcia Hough**, Editorial Assistant, Syracuse University Press

The 2009 winners of the Louise Wetherbee Phelps Award are:

**Megan Kimber**, *A Matter of Want*  
**Stephanie Belk**, *I Believe*



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### Stephanie Belk

Stephanie Belk was born on January 8, 1987 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where she resided until enrolling in Syracuse University. She will be graduating as a Writing and Rhetoric major in August 2009. She likes to spend her free time binging on movies and music. Also, she's pretty sure she wouldn't be able to survive without coffee, her friends, and lots of quality time with her ferret, Harvey.



### Jaclyn Bissell

Born and raised in Dallas, Texas, Jaclyn Bissell is attending Syracuse as a Communication and Rhetorical Studies major, with the recent addition of a Writing major. With a passion for both writing and politics, she hopes to achieve the status of columnist after college and freely wield her opinion on the unsuspecting public. Until then, she'll continue to be a sports junkie and defend those opinions against her friends.



### Megan Kimber

Megan Kimber is a junior Fashion Design major in the College of Visual and Performing Arts. Along with her artwork, Megan has always had a very intimate connection with writing. Mainly through songwriting and poetry, she has always used writing as an emotional outlet, and a constant means of expression and therapy over the years. Drawing from life experience and an empathetic personality, Megan enjoys making her readers experience and examine uncomfortable and suppressed emotional and mental situations.



### Joanna Myers

Joanna is in her fourth year at Syracuse University. She is majoring in Architecture and minoring in Writing. She enjoys painting, drawing, playing volleyball, and generally being creative—whether it's in the architecture studio or in writing class. Her godmother once told her that to create is to have a say in the world around you. Joanna has a lot to say.



### Sable Nerette

Sable Nerette is a junior with majors in Writing and Communication and Rhetorical Studies. When she's not studying, she likes to watch Spongebob, perform spoken word, and sing gospel.





### Jessica Parkhurst

Jessica Parkhurst is a freshman Childhood and Family Studies major from Westport, Connecticut. She enjoys Harry Potter, Jane Austen, Fruit Loops, reality TV, Scrabble, prank phone calls and, above all, a good tabloid. She wrote "Dick Cheney is a Mermaid!" in her WRT 105 class this fall and would like to extend a special thanks to Jeff Simmons for helping her evolve as a writer and for his immense guidance.



### Benjamin Harry Rosen

Benjamin Rosen will never stop writing. He's a Television, Radio, and Film major with minors in Writing and Psychology, so the possibilities are endless. He's written feature and short films, songs, poems, and short stories, and he expects to win or be nominated for at least one Oscar by age 30; he's also very humble. He thanks the *Intertext* staff for accepting a piece of writing that takes such risks.



### Justin Simon

Justin Simon is a junior Writing major from Huntington, New York. An avid sports fan, Justin has written for three different newspapers and has worked with some of the upper echelon of sports writers from the New England area during his days at Springfield College in Springfield, MA. Justin aspires to be a sports columnist.



### Margaret Spinosa

Margaret Spinosa is a freshman dual-majoring in Biochemistry and Writing. She hopes to combine both these subject areas in her future career. Margaret is involved with research in the chemistry department and aspires to have her results published one day. In addition to science, Margaret also enjoys art, music, and literature. Some of her favorite authors include Shakespeare, Kate Chopin, and Virginia Woolf. During her spare time, Margaret plays the piano and the violin, and volunteers at local hospitals. She plans to continue writing throughout her academic studies at Syracuse and beyond.



### Kimberly Wolfe

Kim Wolfe was born with the mind of a writer. From being trapped in a phone booth at age two to living in London for several months, Kim has tons of experiences to inspire her writing. Writing became a full-time identity when she received her first journal at age five. Since then, no experience has gone undocumented.

# the writing on the (bathroom) wall




Course:  
WRT 255, Advanced Argumentative Writing

Instructor:  
Dr. Lois Agnew

**Author's Note:**  
Daily, people see interactions like the one on this bathroom sticker, but rarely stop to think about them. By examining such simple communications, you can discover an element of truth. Although the topic is both serious and comical, the truth is undeniable. People express what they feel when compelled to; sometimes that opportunity appears in the most mundane of places.

**Editors' Note:**  
Jaclyn's clever, wry essay shows us that rhetoric can exist in some surprising situations; it's a fresh approach to the idea of rhetorical analysis.

# ja clyn bisse



In nearly every women's bathroom stall across the Syracuse University campus hangs a sticker. Although there are a variety of stickers, all containing tips for safety and information about the Department of Public Safety (DPS), in one particular stall, one of these stickers spurred an argument. Armed with pens, apparently far more mighty than swords, an open dialogue began on the bathroom wall. I am afraid I cannot speak to every bathroom stall on our campus; however this is the only such interaction that I have stumbled upon. The initial claim as stated by the sticker was meant to provoke thought and awareness. According to the DPS and the student R.A.P.E. center, "90% of all college women who are victims of sexual assault know their assailant," with emphasis on the words "college women," "victims," and "sexual assault" denoted by larger or type to separate them from the plainer, less important words. Now, let's it is safe to assume that the intended audience of the campaign is v Likewise, from herein, I will go out on a limb and assert that all of the dis

and contributors are also women, who enter bathroom stalls with pens.

It is possible to begin to piece together the progression of the discourse based on which comment refers to another, although there are a few comments that are not apparent, where there is instead carefully thought out speculation. The first of these comments, written by a woman who felt the need to publically rebut the claim presented by the sticker, becomes vital to the comprehension of the rest of the dialogue. There are many reasons plausible to determine the exigency, or compulsion to respond rhetorically, in this situation. Examining this usage of rhetoric in everyday life, we may finally be able to solve that age-old question of graffiti on the bathroom wall by turning to whom else but Aristotle. Although most actions are made subconsciously, the proofs of Logos (logic), and Pathos (emotion), and Ethos (ethics/credibility) guide our hand in daily life. Each action is made with a purpose and in decoding these messages, taking a page from ancient Greece can only provide a time-tested framework from which to judge the practice of writing on a bathroom stall door.

She writes, "90% of all college women don't want to be reminded of sexual assault every time the[y] walk into a bathroom stall" in response, mimicking the initial claim. This was added deliberately and directly under the main point of the sticker. This woman could have an intention of nearly anything depending on her experience prior to this particular trip to the bathroom. She could be the victim of sexual assault, friend of a victim, a conscientious citizen, or a very careful party girl. Although annoyed enough to share her feelings so prominently, she was emotionally invested enough not to double check what she had written. "The" instead of "they" is a common error in our language; yet if she were trying to make

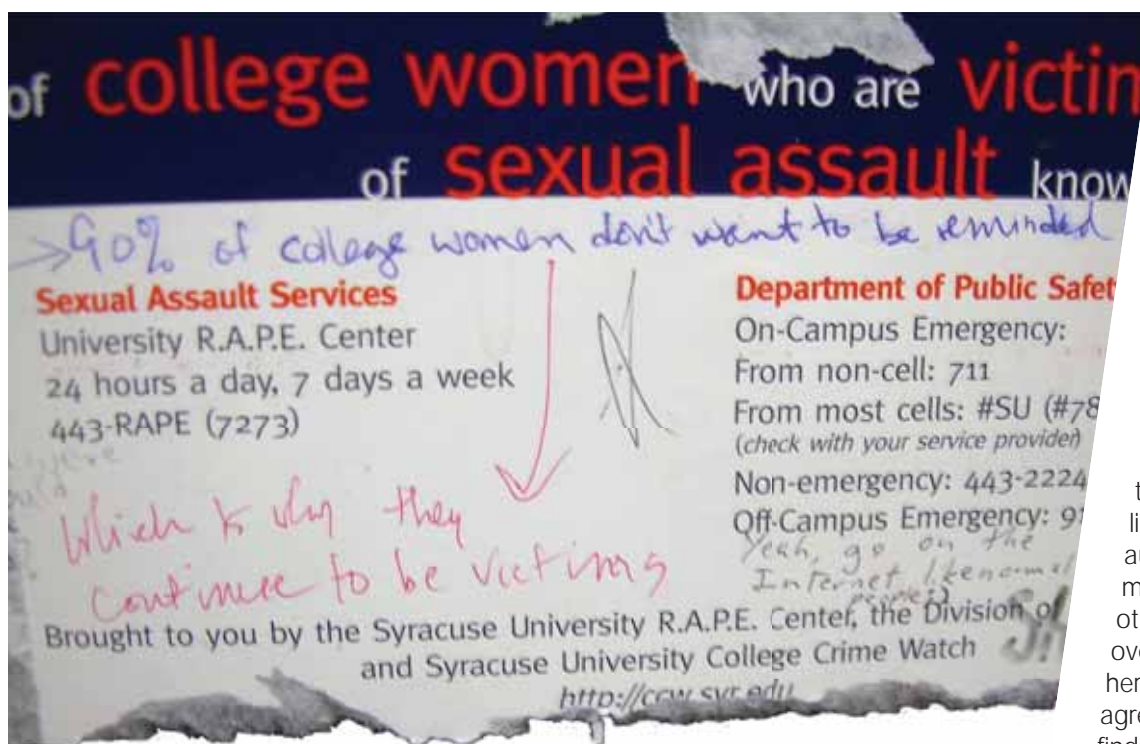
a clear and clever point, would it not be in her best interest to ensure that her retort error free? Taking into account this mistake, as well as the handwriting since it is merely scribble, suggests that the culprit wrote it quickly. (I might also mention that the sticker is in such a place on the door that one must stand and intentionally add to the debate on the door.) The underlined word stresses that she has also seen several other stickers, assuming that she does not only select this particular stall during her days on campus. She establishes no credible reason to agree with her, but seeks to play to the pathos of her fellow women, latching onto their potential shared exasperation at such displays in their 'private sanctuary.' With little eloquence behind her words, this person takes a jab at the idea which has jaded her so, but offers up no insight as to why she feels this way. Nevertheless, her purely emotional appeal serves her purpose based on the outbursts following her declaration, which I will venture to say are unparalleled by any bathroom on this campus.

I believe that the next two statements written in this exchange fall chronologically second because of their location to the original response on the sticker (close enough to the original statement and without crowded letters), as well as the fact these two agree with each other. One woman characterizes the addition as "naive!" – without the proper diacritic mark over the "i" – while the second takes a cruder approach and jots down, "Close your eyes + crap then." Both sources make their own point, effectively denouncing the first woman's statement. The first attacks the character of the dissenter, proposing that the first woman is unaware; however, also does not give any credible evidence of her own. She might also be a victim or may have a relationship with a victim as well. People often form opposite opinions, even from the same experi-

*The second woman takes a cruder approach and jots down, "Close your eyes + crap then."*



ences (as is apparent with the varied responses all from the same fourteen word phrase). The second response here takes a different approach as its author suggests that the first person, who only has something negative to say, should have ignored the sticker and taken care of her own "business." Certain that the label on the door did not beg for another person's opinion in the first place, the woman in favor of closing your eyes conveys that there are better things to spend your time doing. Then, to drive the point home, she explains this course of action vividly and with language reserved for more intimate company. It is unknown how many women made use of this stall during the course of this conversation via sticker. Therefore, it is unknown how many women remained silent, not deeming the exchange worth their time. (Or just did not think to grab a pen before they entered the bathroom.) But neither of these women strive to employ any of Aristotle's proofs solidly. Instead, they assert why the first failed but do not delve into much more detail, even for a comment on a stall door.



The next remark to follow could have actually originated with the second group. This person employs logos to enhance the quarrel. Her addition: "Which is why they continue to be victims" examines the flaw in the initial response to the warning about sexual assault. This, what I am deeming the fourth comment, is drawn with an arrow into a large blank space, allowing the reader a chance to follow the progression. Setting herself apart, with both space and a rational thought, her statement brings the argument full circle, reexamining the claim made by the campaign. The intent of the DPS caveat was to inform young women of the risk associated with trust. Perpetuating the inability or outright refusal to understand this

point, the initial dissent is attacked at the core by this accusation of ignorance. Before the fourth comment there was no acknowledgement of the real problem. Instead, naivety is cited as the dilemma and looking the other way is the solution proposed. Use of the word "victim" evokes a certain emotion, attempts to sway attitudes, and allows the fourth pen to make an effective argument that seeks to wrench the hearts and minds of its audience. Deducing that the only eyes would remain women (until I broke the cycle by addressing it in this paper), she also plays to the fears women hold onto, whether rational or far-fetched.

Next to jump into the ring is a woman trying to point out the faults in the discourse thus far. In much larger letters and scrawled over some of the information originally printed on the sticker, she writes "quit fighting via bathroom stall..." and draws attention to the seemingly ridiculous squabble dancing in front of her eyes. Although her attempt is noble, the second her utensil touches the paper, she is also

in the midst of the mess. Perhaps a frequenter of this bathroom, she is tired of reading the progression of the bickering. She, alas, gives no reason for the women who travel in and out of the bathroom to stop. There is no logic applied, there is no compelling reason to cease the conversation offered, and still there is no ethos established. Why should the audience listen to this marker over all of the other chatter? Her plea is overlooked, even though her public assertion of agreement for a cease-fire finds good company with the next comment.

With jovial intent, the next to addition to the door is someone who without a doubt finds the whole exchange amusing. I believe this woman is often in the building and visits the bathroom more often than the other contributors. The lighthearted nature of her response hints that she has been watching the drama unfold and can no longer resist inserting herself in the scene. Perhaps a student because of her content, it is clear she is definitely someone who possesses a sense of humor that no one else who places their thought on the board appreciates. "Yeah," she mocks, "go on the internet like normal people ;)" scratched into the little space there is left next to the order to stop the treatise. This is more of an afterthought

than the other words that litter the door. She adds it because she cannot resist. Poking fun at everyone else, without asserting a position, this woman feels above the rest of them. Her addition speaks to a different audience than the rest, addressing those observers who may believe this exchange as ridiculous as she does and choose to stay out of the debate. (Or again, have failed to remember their pens!) Nonetheless, I suppose she is grateful for the entertaining reading material before her in the bathroom. Including herself among the kooks on the door, she also delves into the abyss that is the absence of Aristotle's proofs. Although her two cents are not terribly serious, she fails to offer any proof that the bathroom door is indeed not the perfect situation for such a debate. Neither of the women speaking for an end to the preposterous discussion before them presents any grounds for their position, whether logical or otherwise.

I will admit, I have had the pleasure of watching most of this unfold. This is how I know that the two newest comments are very recent. Both of the following were added during the Spring 2008 semester. The first introduces outside information in order to prove her point. The conundrum here is that she does not truly assert the claim that she is backing, because she only demands the audience "Read Camille Paglia!" An interesting character, Camille Paglia is a feminist writer with five books published, as well as a professor and a columnist. She has written about sexuality throughout the years and has now progressed to analyzing poetry. The person who advocated her literature must have thought that people who argue on bathroom stall doors would get a kick out of real argumentation from a feminist.

The other recent addition to the door rests in the little bit of space that is actually big enough to contribute something legible. "What if you were rapped would u like to be reminded?" This proclamation almost speaks for itself. Agitated at the broadcasts before hers, she portrays someone deeply hurt by the language she faces in this stall. Frustrated enough to scribble a message in shorthand and with a glaring error (especially since "rape" is printed on the sticker), this is the first person to agree with the original addendum since six other people have vocalized their own opinions. Joining the conversation so late, this woman may only be joking like the "internet" comment but there is no way to be sure. Albeit the final statement, almost like a postscript, it poses a rhetorical question that is difficult to argue with, her contention fails like those before her. She does not state why her opinion matters. She does use emotional and logical tactics by constructing the inquiry; however, among all these other anonymous judgments why is this woman any different? The last woman to add does effectively argue in favor of the first to dissent, if you are of the faction in my audience to grant these women the benefit of the doubt.

Several of these women could have encountered something to jade them. There is no way to distinguish who is legitimately scarred and who is just jumping on the band-

wagon and writing on the bathroom wall. An individual's argument became a battlefield for literary critics and jovial emoticons. Throughout the interchange between these women, many others read it and for whatever reason chose to remain observers. The common thread these women failed to grasp dwells with the ethos absent from their discourse. Who are these women? Should their argument be accepted on the mere fact that the audience and the speakers are all women? Which women are they addressing: those who have already spoken or those who will read?

Unfortunately, these questions are not answered in the discussion on the stall door sticker. Although some of the arguments could prove effective, out of context (and sometimes inside the context) they are utterly absurd. The failures presented by these arguments are the type that would madden an educated audience. Seeking attention or not, this spat via bathroom door has constraints that normal arguments do not. To participate one must be a woman, in Syracuse, on the Syracuse University Campus, enter the Shaffer Art building, reach the bathroom, and choose the first stall on the right. Because of our daily or weekly routines it can also be assumed only a small subgroup of the women who fit the criteria will ever enter this particular stall more than once. Specifically, the number of students on this campus who will never participate in this debate is a rather large. Influential in its own right, this display of communication in an obscure venue teaches that rhetoric is present in everyday life, even if the application is sloppy. Why have more stickers remained untarnished? All it takes is one person to start a dialogue before someone else begins to dissent or agree. Note that more bathroom doors might carry this same compulsion once someone breaks the silence. In nearly every women's bathroom stall there hangs a sticker. This sticker presented the opportunity for women to exchange ideas openly and with anonymity; yet, this sticker limits the presentation of the debate. Perhaps if the arguments were solid they would not have to come out in such a situation. Perhaps a dialogue like this one cannot thrive in an open society. Or, perhaps the initiator as an audience was all it took to spark the fire.

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Pictures of the bathroom stall in Shaffer Art Building (first floor), Syracuse University Campus, taken February 1, 2008



# A MATTER OF WANT

By Megan  
Kimber

*Course:* WRT 308, Style

*Instructor:* Jeffrey Simmons

*Author's Note:* When I wrote this piece, I was flustered because I tend to prefer writing in the first person, but I enjoyed the challenge of something new. I was able to create this uncomfortable disconnect through third person that I believe enhances the state of mind of the characters and the situation they are dealing with.

*Editors' Note:* A piece that will speak to a multitude of young women, Megan Kimber's narrative sends readers on a tumultuous ride through the mind of a girl grappling with the universal struggle for self-love, social acceptance, and life purpose.

Two months, three days, and four hours she'd been trapped in that Hellhole. It was only 28 days since the last time she was released, but a quick decision to slit her wrists an hour after the paperwork was signed ended her up right back where she had started 28 days earlier. She lifted up her shirt to assess the damage. There were no mirrors in that place. How's a girl to live?

"What are you doing?" It was her Mom. Always yelling. "Don't tell me I'm going to have to get rid of all the mirrors again."

"Stop. I'm just looking." Every bone was visible, every muscle, but it still didn't look quite right. "There are no rules against looking."

Marissa let go of her shirt, letting it flow over her delicate frame, glared at her mother, and proceeded up the polished wood stairs. What was wrong with that woman? Always judging. Never praising. To think of all the things Marissa had done for Her.

She began rummaging through the bathroom, her bathroom. Home at last. What an amazing feeling. Where could it have gone? Marissa dug deeper. Ripping at towels, frantically tearing at cabinet doors. Where is it?

"It's not here." It was Her again.

"What do you mean?" Marissa's eyes were now intense with fury.

"That is in the rules." Her mother thumbed through the paperwork from the clinic, grinning. "Oh, here it is, 'No scales, or weighing devices of any sort. The patient will be weighed once a week for eight weeks at out-patient care services during the patients' weekly therapy session.'" She rolled the thick stack of papers in her long fingers, "It's not here."

The joy Marissa had been feeling about being back home quickly faded. She remembered why she hated it now. Why she'd tried to off herself. Too bad she'd failed. The woman was relentless. She didn't really care about Marissa, She only sent her away because people were starting to ask questions. She hated people questioning Her judgment. She was never wrong.

Marissa dragged her massive bag across the hardwood floor, dropping it in the doorway of her bedroom. "Cloe," Marissa approached the small grey cat at the foot of her bed. It scurried off before she could reach it. "Even my cat hates me," she grumbled, a bit defeated. She attempted to reach for the door to close it, to get a little peace. It was gone. She spun around eyeing the doorframe. It was gone. Just gone.

Then She appeared, "After what happened last time I figured we shouldn't take any chances." Then She was gone.

What was that supposed to mean? How was Marissa going to live? No scale. No door. No privacy. She sat in the middle of her empty room and contemplated her options. Then she noticed something on her mattress wrapped in shiny pink paper. She was happy for a moment. A gift for her from her Aunt Stacy. Pink paper was flying everywhere. Then stillness. A tin of homemade cookies. "Way to use your brain," Marissa mumbled, "What a great gift for a recovering anorexic."

Soon evening came, and the empty house was full again. Sulking by herself in the half-lit living room, Marissa was greeted by the ghosts of a past life.

*She only sent her away because people were starting to ask questions. She hated people questioning Her judgment. Because She was never wrong.*

"It's so great to have you back home, Sweetie," Her Dad's voice was laced with sincerity.

"You look better." Her sister looked Marissa up and down, a tinge of jealousy filling her eyes.

"No. Just fatter," Marissa blurted out, staring blankly at the television in the shadows of the living room floor, "Or is that what you meant?"

Her sister sighed, rolled her eyes, and exited the room. Marissa knew she was just jealous. Her fat ass could never pull off a pair

off skinny jeans or a designer dress. She just wanted Marissa to get fat like her so she wouldn't look so bad. But that wasn't going to happen anytime soon. Marissa had tried to help, tried to teach her the ways of an anorexic. Nora just couldn't keep her mouth shut. Couldn't kick the addiction, is how Marissa saw it. That's all food was to Marissa. An addiction. Unnecessary fat taking over her body.

"There you are." A deep voice boomed through the French doors and Marissa jumped up in excitement. It was him. Justin. The one person who never judged her. Her boyfriend of two years. He had flowers. Daisies. She loved daisies. She hugged him so tight he couldn't breathe. "I've missed you so much. You look amazing." He brought her into the light.

"Fat." Marissa stated, burying her face in the flowers.

He didn't respond. It wasn't worth it. He knew this game. He did the only thing he could, hugged her again. Marissa breathed deep. She loves that smell. His smell. It's safe, comfortable. They spent the rest of the evening wrapped in each other's arms watching TV.

Dinner was horrendous. Marissa couldn't move or breathe without someone asking, "Are you okay?" It was like she was some sort of freak show. Everyone stared at her as she fumbled with her fork, shuffling chunks of meat around her plate. She hated that. It made it worse. It made it harder.

"Please stop staring. I'm fine. Stop watching."

Everyone stared at their plates, except Her. She just kept on watching. Kept on waiting for Marissa to hide her food in a napkin, or feed it to the dog like before. Waiting.

"I said stop staring."

"What? Ignore you like before? Pretend not to see you shove your dinner into a napkin?" It was that condescending tone again. "Is that what you want?"

Marissa didn't bother answering, she knew it would get her nowhere. She set down her fork, and while staring directly into her Mother's eyes, placed her plate on the floor for the dog to lick, finally removing herself from the dining room. Nora and her Father were speechless. Justin sprung up from his chair and chased Marissa into the foyer.

"Com'on baby. Don't be like this. I'll make you another plate and we'll eat in your room. Just the two of us." He was brushing her hair from her face.

"I can't right now. I need to be alone."

"Baby..."

"I love you, but please go home. I can't deal with this right now. I'll see you tomorrow." Marissa kissed Justin lightly on the lips. She had missed those lips. She opened the front door for him to mope his way through.

Back in her doorless room Marissa thought of what her friends in the clinic were probably doing right now. 8:00 pm. They were probably watching a movie. They loved to watch movies. Marissa had seen more movies in the last two months than she had in her entire life. Gracey could recite entire movie scripts. Gracey Kay Lawrence. Marissa remembered how adorable she thought that name was the first time she heard it. It made her smile. She closed her eyes and tried to imagine herself back there, sitting in between the five foot, 60 pound Gracey, and the six foot beauty queen, Kristy. She missed them. She never

thought she would, but they got her. They understood her better than any of her friends in the "real world." She tried to get to sleep but the light from the hallway was glaring in her face without her door there to dim it. Eventually Marissa grew tired enough. The light no longer bothered her, and she was out.

Marissa awoke to the sound of Nora's awful alarm. That horrible buzzing. "Shut it off." She screamed, holding a pillow over her head. How could Nora sleep through such a terrible sound? Marissa dragged herself from bed, opened her sisters door across the hall, shuffled across the room, and slammed the alarm clock into the wall. "Wake the fuck up," Marissa yelled in Nora's face as she emerged from her slumber in a confused 6:00 am haze. Marissa walked to the bathroom and jumped in the shower.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" Nora pounded on the door.

"I'll be out in half an hour. Get over it." Marissa hated that girl. How were they even related?

"You come back from Psychoville and think you're Queen of the Goddamn house. Get out. I need to get ready."

"So do I. Shut the fuck up." Marissa liked that word.



Fuck. It never failed her. It could be used in almost any sentence to replace almost any word. She thought that was pretty impressive.

Nora shouted back, "Fuck you," then retreated to her room to wait. Marissa was back and she didn't like it. The Princess. Popular, pretty, and perfect. Nora wanted her back in the loony bin.

"Let's go. Hurry it up, Fat Ass." An hour had passed and Marissa was pleased to have her make-up on her face and her car keys in hand. They weren't allowed make-up there either. Marissa went through withdrawal. Not even lip gloss. Her lips had never been so dry. "We're going to be late." Nora hustled down the steps, out of breath from all the running.

Pulling up to the school Marissa smiled, checking herself out one last time in the rear view mirror before hopping out of her blue Beatle, "Home sweet home." Nora felt ill at the thought of Marissa's return.

There were twenty minutes before class and everyone had congregated in the cafeteria as usual. Marissa sped in the opposite direction from her sister. Everyone stared. But she didn't mind their stares. They weren't judgmental. They were jealous. At least that's what they used to be. Marissa caught sight of her friends. She trotted over excitedly only to realize everyone was ignoring her. They all looked at her in disgust and whispered. She thought it was because she was now too fat. She wasn't pretty enough anymore. Marissa didn't want to be a loser like Nora.

"Hey, Baby." A pleasant face. Marissa jumped into Justin's arms.

"What's going on with everyone?" She thought she might cry. Why were they ignoring her? They were her friends.

"Babe, you've been gone for a while. Give them a little time. They'll come around."

The bell rang and class was back in session. It had been so long. Marissa wondered if she even remembered how to learn. As the day continued no one said anything to her. Just dirty looks. It was so depressing. So draining. By the end of the day she was even happy to see Nora's chubby red cheeks. At least Nora didn't pretend to be a friend and then abandon her the second something went wrong. Aren't friends supposed to support you? Help you?

Sitting at her desk in her door-less dimly lit room, Marissa contemplated, re-configured. What had gone wrong?

"Dinner." The woman's voice echoed up the stairwell. "I'm not hungry. Please let me be. I had an apple." Marissa's voice trailed in the distance. So faint. So silent. It was a lie. It was only a bite of an apple.

"I can't let you do that." Now She was standing in the door-less doorway. "You need to eat." She actually sounded human. Almost concerned.

"I promise I will tomorrow. I'm just really worn out right now." That was a lie too, because with any luck there wouldn't be a tomorrow.

"You've run me dry, Marissa Elaine Duque." Marissa thought of how heinous that name sounded all together, and wrinkled her nose. "I can't push anymore. Do what you want. I'm done trying." She walked away. No argument. No condescending tone. Just walked away.

Marissa stared into the empty space in bewilderment. Did that really just happen? The night was moving slowly. Dragging. Marissa listened to the laughter of her family without interrupting their good time. That's all she was. An interruption. An annoying voice grating on the minds of those around her. Her room grew dark. She didn't turn on the light, she let blackness swallow her. Curled up in a ball on her bed, she shook compulsively. She couldn't stop. A handful of Welbutrin might stop it. Her depression pills. She had done it before. It never hurt her, just knocked her out for a while.

"Call 911," Nora ran to Marissa, who had seized herself onto the floor, convulsing uncontrollably. She could feel the drugs taking over. It had never done this before. What was happening? Then her world went black.

*A handful of Welbutrin might stop it. Her depression pills. She had done it before. It never hurt her, just knocked her out for a while.*

Sunlight burned through her eyelids. Slowly she blinked until dark shadows before her became recognizable figures. Mom, Dad, Nora, Justin. Marissa recognized this place. A place she had been far too many times before. The pale wallpaper, stark white blinds, and uncomfortably starched sheets screamed "hospital", and she wasn't about to get herself stuck here again. She began to work herself into an upright position with her weak arms and wanted nothing more than to race for the door as she became even more aware of her surroundings. The figures in front of her noticed her discomfort and confusion as Marissa's breathing grew frantic and her eyes darted

from one to the next to next and back again.

"Don't try to speak, you have a tube in your throat. They had to pump your stomach." Her Mom's eyes were red and puffy. She had been crying. She had cried over Marissa?

Marissa nodded in compliance, "Don't you ever..." Justin's voice trailed off as he buried his face in the hospital sheets on her shoulder.

Marissa didn't know what to think. She didn't want this again. She didn't want the clinic. No mirrors. No scales. No make-up. She didn't want that. What went wrong? She'd taken that many pills before and never ended up on her death bed. Why now?

"I guess we both got our wish. You're going back to the clinic." Even Nora looked upset.

No, no this wasn't what she had wished. Justin crying on her shoulder. Mom, Dad, Nora red-eyed and judging, again. Not what she wanted. The clinic. But what did she want?

# Middl ed B e t w e e n

Kimberl y Wol fe

**Course:** WRT 422, Creative Nonfiction

**Instructor:** Troy Gordon

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** I was assigned this piece while studying in London. The assignment was to sum up four months living there. I titled my piece "Middled Between" to demonstrate the process of liminality for me abroad. So this is me, disjointed, taking it all in, in London.

**Editors' Note:** A deep look into a poetic kaleidoscope aimed at London.

photos by Erin Buksbaum

I think about what should  
be taken as keen  
my gaze draws the land  
seeking desires

I look down to see up  
in puddled reflections  
clouds catch the  
sun's sky

rain lands in my hand  
touched to my cheek  
becomes a tear  
puddles in my eye

I wish I could be  
too honest like thunder  
bellowing out frustrations  
above cold ground  
under deep sky

middled between  
mixing horizons  
never still  
never moving

but as feet carry  
sharp beams keep  
squinting  
eyes from opening

can't I feel the joy of light  
hitting a tree  
throwing down like roots  
shadows long on the  
ground

flocking wings  
whispering to rivers  
secrets told to the wind

Long shadows on the green garden grass remind everyone of the hour. How the time passes so quickly still seems a mystery. It was the perfect day. The dog ran about in her spring glory, catching the ball as it was thrown to her. The trampoline was officially open for spring, now that the protective netting was up. Trampoline ball (a game invented specifically for this trampoline) commenced, followed by laughter. Big fluffy clouds hung in the middle of the blue sky, but never seemed to cover the sun. It was as if they realized it had been so long since England had seen blue overhead that they decided to cut everyone a break. Little blossoms spotted the cherry tree giving it a fresh spirit in the new season. The shadow crept closer and closer, consuming the day as it moved. The colors of the garden were vibrant and bright, even once in the shadow of the white stucco house.

Two days later, the same garden that was bright and colorful was now white, blanketed by a layer of freshly fallen snow. What a treat to see snow in April. The red tulips popped against the white. The ground had been untouched by human, feline, or canine feet, making it picture perfect. Snow balanced perfectly on the branches. Any sudden movement and it would fall. The sky was back to its normal gray, but the snow made it light out. The light filled the room as if it were the sun. A boy sat with his back to the kitchen window, turning around every few minutes to see the sun, only to realize it was just the snow.

The smell of hotdogs and onions lingers around the corner of the British Museum. The smell produced by the street vender penetrates the nose...lingers there for a moment or two, being fully absorbed and appreciated by the nasal passages. It moves like a misty vapor from the nose, through the throat, down the esophagus, into the stomach. The mighty Gremlin of the Stomach awakes and starts roaring and rumbling, making its needs known. What else is there to do but provide for the Stomach the satisfaction it seeks. The hand reaches into the pocket pulling out pound coins peppered with lint and crumbs from yesterday's afternoon snack. 'Wait!' Just before the money is handed over, the Brain puts a halt to the entire operation, saying 'Don't even think of putting that in me!' The chain reaction then begins. Nose convinces Stomach to convince Brain everything will be all right. The mighty Gremlin of the Stomach overpowers Logic of the Brain, Hands hand over the £2.50. The deal is done. The Gremlins of the Stomach calms down, Logic of the Brain regrets this moment, and the Nose finds comfort in knowing how to satisfy his sometimes lover, sometimes enemy, the Stomach.

Pub grub: bangers and mash, nip and tatties, fish and chips...hardy root vegetables with warm meat...all seemingly named in sexual innuendoes.





Picking up the pieces of my clothes strewn all over the heavily trafficked laundry floor, no longer clean—frustrated. Spilled milk in the fridge—no time! We are already late by two hours and have an hour journey still ahead. Life today has felt like a journey. Tomato sauce splattered on my brand new, top of the line, Top Shop shirt. Scalding hot shower suddenly changed to stingingly cold—no happy medium. Today was proof that bad days happen in London. Life here has strangely comforting normalities of home; it makes me wonder if home is really 'home'.

How do you go home  
when home is in two places?

# This I

# Believe

Justin Simon



I believe in making people laugh—making people laugh to the point where they can't stop laughing. Laughter to me is happiness. Laughter is therapeutic. It helps take our minds off the things we don't want to think about, like schoolwork, gas prices, and the economy. I believe in laughter, because I feel when we aren't laughing we are sad, and I know that many people (including me) don't like the way they feel when they are sad. I believe in laughter because I believe it is contagious. When we see one person laugh, we all want to laugh. It makes us feel good inside, like we belong.

When I make someone laugh, I feel like I belong. I feel confident, strong, and, in a nutshell, funny. Laughter is seeing people fall in public, listening to a joke, hearing someone do a funny voice. Laughter is ditzes, klutzes, and, let's be honest, dumb blondes. Laughter is thinking about the positive things in your life and forgetting about the negatives. Laughter is realizing that life is too short to worry about the stupid things that so many of us do worry about.

Laughter is chicken noodle soup. Laughter is a remedy to so many problems. Laughter is the best medicine. It's making you feel happy inside as well as making others around you happy. Laughter is making an idiot out of yourself. Laughter is not caring what other people think. It's making your cheeks burn from smiling for so long and having tears stream down your face.

It's improv comedy, stand-up comedy, and, lately, political comedy. Chris Farley, Adam Sandler, Will Ferrell—that is laughter. Laughter is over 64 million people watching a baby laugh on YouTube, and every time they watch it, it just makes them feel good inside. It's what gets us through the day. It's how we socialize, how we express ourselves. It's what makes us who we are. It's what we turn to when we need a friend, and sometimes it's our only friend.

It's being able to look at the 70% on a test and just smile. It's doing something dumb, something you regret. It's being able to make a mistake and shake it off.

It's not about money, gender, or the color of your skin. It's not about where you live, what college you go to, or what kind of job you have. Everyone all around us has access to laughter. It's the cheapest stress reliever out there.

Laughter is the way to true happiness.



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Course: WRT 255, Advanced Argumentative Writing

Instructor: Dr. Stephen Parks

**Author's Note:** When asked to write this paper, many things came to mind. With a prompt like "This I believe," there were a lot of different directions I could have gone. From sports to my family, I tried everything, until I was just watching some stand-up comedy and it hit me—I believe in laughter.

**Editors' Note:** You can't help but smile when you read this piece.

# THE SPECTRUM OF MY IDENTITY

SABLE NERETTE

**COURSE:** WRT 422, Creative Non-fiction

**INSTRUCTOR:** Minnie Bruce Pratt

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** We had to write small pieces and then towards the end of the semester we had to find a way to combine those pieces into one huge piece.

**EDITORS' NOTE:** Sable uses a little bit of humor and a lot of attitude to connect with her readers.

**I WAS DRESSED LIKE A DEVIL,**

a pretty devil. I loved that costume. I had on a red dress, devil horns, heels, and red lipstick. The part I liked the most about the costume was the fact that my mother allowed me to wear makeup. When I was younger, I would always play with my mother's makeup. After putting it on,

I looked so different, so not Sable, and I was pleased with that outcome. I could never wear makeup outside; the fact that my mother allowed me to wear it outside made me anxious for Halloween. I thought

I was the cutest trick-or-treater walking. I guess some part of me felt more feminine. No one questioned my gender or glanced at me with a funny look on his or her face when my deep voice bounced out of my mouth. Having the experience of acceptance was priceless.

You aren't truly accepted as something unless you abide by all the rules of a certain category. Like girls should wear pink and boys should wear blue, but what did it mean if I wanted to wear blue? I had to learn that at an early age. When I had on my little devil costume, my attitude somewhat changed; I wasn't used to wearing heels and makeup, so I felt sexy, attractive, and most of all, feminine. So the one chance I had to enhance my femininity, I took it.

As I became older, it was hard for me to be feminine because I didn't feel like a girl. I have a condition and it causes me to grow excess hair where it is not supposed to be. I was teased a lot in school for not looking like or sounding like the typical girl.

My voice is deep and I'm very hairy; there was nothing feminine about me. So I used to try harder to become girly. When I didn't feel feminine I would stay in the mirror for hours and contemplate what was wrong with my appearance and try to fix it. I started from my head and went to my feet. A big part of me just wished I could become someone else or better yet, feminine. I looked in the mirror on that Halloween day and I saw a girl who looked liked a girl. I saw a girl who felt like a girl. I saw a girl who was a girl, and it was all

because of the makeup and clothing I had on. I wanted to have this feeling without wearing a costume. I was convinced by the judgment of my peers that I would never become feminine. That costume allowed me to escape the reality that I endured five days a week at school. My personality was a contradiction of the character of my costume. That's when I liked myself the most, even if I wasn't myself. I wasn't this pretty little devil.

I wished Halloween were every night. I didn't want to go back to reality. I didn't want to go back to my peers' perceptions of Sable. Girl please! That ain't your hair, colorful nails wearing, and OH you so ghetto fabulous. I don't think you ready for this jelly Beyonce wanna-be. Having babies at 15. Uneducated black thang, miss independent ummm, I think not Ne-yo listening. You don't even know you father, Yeah, I said it. Project living, your shoes cost more than your rent. Spell college!!! Product of your environment. You damn video hoe. Big lips, big ass, small brain, small chance of ever being successful. Conscious, unconscious of self-inspiration blackness. You are inferior to tasteless living. You marginalized dog, less than human, 40 acres and a ham hawk. You illiterate jive turkey. Ebonics talking. You don't belong here, YOU DON'T BELONG HERE. This is Amerikkka; this is A.M.E.R.I.K.K.K.A, the land of the privileged, the land of the people who really deserve it.

I thought about the stereotypes that I was placed in. I questioned the truth of my existence, coming to the conclusion that I am not this, that, or any of those. But I'm a strong creative black woman who identifies with being fly. I'm like no other. My personality bounces off the walls of magazines, the stories of fantasies, the culture of blackness, my conversations with my peers, and the labels society has given me. For the most part, I'm happy with that. I have a flavorful, bold, and tasteful style with an intellectual soul, which thirsts for knowledge. I love the way I sound now, embracing my uniqueness and individuality. No longer ashamed of what God has given me. The nappy roots, brown skin, deep voice, and flat ass. What I be, how I be, why I be, and what I want to be is accepted. Thanks to family, friends, and most of all, God, I can now accept myself, difference and all. No longer will I be the un-tuned piano, busted out drums, the string missing from the guitar. I will not be the penny you threw away because you said it was less than money or the food you wouldn't eat. I want to be the blunt you smoke to get high, the shining star, and the word in the dictionary you couldn't spell or pronounce. Most of all, I just want to be me, truly me! See, I don't fit into a category.

LOCAL GIRL ADDICTED TO TABLOIDS:

"WE HAD NO IDEA," SAY NEIGHBORS

# DICK CHENEY IS A MERMAID!

## JESSICA PARKHURST TELLS ALL

**Course:**

WRT 105, Practices of Academic Writing

**Instructor:**

Jeffrey Simmons

**Author's Note:**

The prompt was to pick a word or phrase and explore its various meanings, analyzing how the word has evolved, our own relationship to it, the various values it reflects, etc. The analysis and observations should lead to a significant claim about the word that reveals a deeper meaning.

**Editors' Note:**

Jessica Parkhurst's piece explores the fascinating culture of tabloids with a heavy emphasis on their addicting nature. She does an effective job of clearly defining the many different roles and aspects of a tabloid, giving us valuable insight into their addicting ways.



**I am a "tabloid-aholic."** When I'm in the grocery line picking up milk for my mother before I go home, I get instantly excited as I pass the devilish row of tabloids. "Oprah gave birth to Tom Cruise's love child!" "Elvis and Tupac found on island, still alive!" "Britney Spears's ex-husband flies plane into Michael Jackson's Neverland!" These outlandish and outrageous stories are clearly false; however, that has never stopped me from paying the \$3.99 to devour these stories. I've never gambled, I don't spend hours glued to my TV, I'm not obsessed with World of Warcraft, I've never illegally downloaded a song,



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Illustration by Colin Fanning

love a good tabloid. I could go a week without Facebook, but a week without everyone's favorite gossip, Perez Hilton, and his daily blog would be disastrous. Perhaps having tabloids as my biggest vice should be something I count as a blessing; however, this exploration of the word "tabloid" has made me think differently.

The original meaning of tabloid was "pill," as it was a manufactured painkiller. Abuse of pills, especially painkillers, is a widespread addiction that has plagued many people's lives. Tabloid gossip magazines, like painkilling pills, have an addictive quality that can also be seen as an opiate. They take our minds off things that are bothering us and disguise our reality by distraction. It is no mistake that every doctor's office is fully stocked with the latest issues of *People* and *Entertainment Weekly* for patients to read before becoming pin cushions to the needle-happy nurses. Tabloids in their pill form act as a healer to those in pain, much like tabloids in their news form distract people with bizarre stories. Tabloids aren't about focusing on the negative aspects of people's personal lives or about numbing the pain through medication; rather, tabloids are about a taking a break from reality and finding enjoyment despite the routine aspects of everyday life.

"Tabloid," in association with journalism, connotes a negative type of media, one that invades privacy of famous individuals, spreads lies, and publishes stories just short of fantasy. What most people don't realize is that the actual word "tabloid" has a rich and long history dating back to the Bible's usage of "tablet." While stories

of Lindsay Lohan's mafia ties and the latest on Anna Nicole coming back from the dead may not be the most believable or important subjects in the news, they are what the public has interest in. In an age where reading the news is quickly becoming less popular, tabloids are still thriving as one of the most wildly successful types of media. Pop culture author Matthew Ehrlich notes that tabloid writers set out to create "a show for one's amusement" and to make "outrageousness merely for the sake of outrageousness" (Ehrlich 17). Though tabloids may not be the most prestigious or scholastic type of news out there, their growing popularity throughout American culture is hard to ignore.

Tabloid, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, means "compressed; concentrated, esp. in order to be easily assimilated; sensationalistic" (OED 1). Tabloid was first meant to connote compression in relation to medication in a pill, yet in the early twentieth century the meaning of tabloid was still applied to the idea of compression. However, it was later applied to a new industry, the media (1). The name "tabloid" began to be used to describe short, compressed newspaper stories that were intended

to be simple and easy to read, thus there was the birth of a widely popular trend, "tabloid journalism"(1).

Today, "tabloid" is often used as a way to describe gossip magazines. In my generation, the term tabloid is most commonly used to describe magazines filled with paparazzi photos and outrageous claims: magazines like *Star*, *In Touch*, and *The New York Post*. Such media calls attention to the embarrassing acts of celebrities, socialites, politicians and professional athletes, and exposes their personal lives to the public. These types of magazines, such as *Star*, are strategically stacked near checkout lines at grocery stores and gas stations with eye catching headlines like "DYING SENATOR TED KENNEDY'S DARKEST SECRETS REVEALED!" and "NO JAIL FOR FISHY PHELPS". Though these titles gave fictitious elements, they are there for entertainment, something to pick up and browse through as the cashier checks your groceries.

One of the most interesting aspects of tabloid journalism is its continued popularity. Gossip magazines/news-papers/online blogs, or "tabloids" as they've become known, give the public insight into famous people's deepest, darkest secrets and most humiliating circumstances. Exposing DUIs, drug addiction, celebrity divorces, and drunken mistakes of celebrities is news that will sell. In a sense, tabloids have such widespread appeal due to their unique "mixture of sex, gossip and human interest stories" (Ehrlich 17). The intent to expose people's lives has fueled this market's popularity and every year more and more tabloids hit the newsstands with that intent in mind. While tabloid magazines/newspapers still compress news to make it shorter, a "tabloid" also carries the subtext of embarrassing exposure and scandal. This form of journalism is easy to read and entertaining, which is why the typical target for tabloid sales audience is "aimed at a mass, less educated audience" (Bessie). The "tabloid" industry has grown vastly over the decades, and as it grows, the word "tabloid" takes on entirely new meanings.

Tabloid can be translated into different functions; for instance, tabloid can be used as an adjective, depending on the context in which it's used. Used as an adjective, the word "tabloid" has given birth to new ideas about how people look at the idea of compression to appeal to the tabloid-loving public. In a *TIME* review written in 1925 about a revival of the famous "Verdi's Aida" ballet, the idea of a tabloid comes into play (Tabloid Opera 1). The ballet in its original version was 180 minutes; however the revival lasted only 30 minutes in accordance with the writers intent to appeal to "U.S. citizens who read tabloid newspapers, [and] chew tabloid gum" (1). The unknown reviewer of this ballet titled his review the "tabloid opera" suggesting that the word tabloid and its idea of compression could be converted to other walks of life, like in this instance, ballet.

A recent art trend known as "tabloid art", consisting of bizarre and shocking art exhibits, has created an uncom

I could go a week without Facebook, but a week without Perez Hilton would be disastrous.

fortable stir among art enthusiasts (Samuels 1). A recent Yale senior art project consists of a young woman named Aliza Shvarts “inseminating herself and taking abortifacient drugs, filming her miscarriages, and then smearing the blood on a big plastic cube,” causing uproar in the art community about the legitimacy of this artist and her artwork (1). Speculators seem to agree that Shvarts did this to bring shock and to get her 15 minutes of fame. Her work is considered “tabloid” art because its subject matter is so disgusting and outrageous that it seems she did it for the shock value in a tabloid-loving society. Shvarts is not alone in her quest to shock the public with her tabloid art. A Nicaraguan artist named Guillermo Habacuc Vargas starved a stray dog as an exhibit, which caused uproar for animal rights activists and animal lovers everywhere (1). These artists created controversial pieces that sparked media attention due to their vulgar nature. A red cube and a thin dog are not necessarily shocking sights; however, the story and coverage behind these specific pieces of art created a sensationalistic quality in the artwork consistent with tabloidism. Tabloidism once again has proven that the word tabloid can be interpreted to fit the needs of people in multiple industries and can be given a new meaning based on that interpretation. In this case, tabloid art is meant to shock, stun, and surprise the public.

**Like any other addiction, tabloids consume time that could be spent doing more productive activities.**

Though “tabloid” can be used and transformed in many different genres, the word is not always used in a positive light. Generally, when people use the word “tabloid,” they refer to this particular type of journalism that is invasive to people’s privacy and not considered academic, making the word become negative. As an industry, tabloid journalism’s “primary objective is to tell a good story, not to search for the truth,” thus the content of a tabloid is often more novel than realistic. In a poll taken in Great Britain in 2003, 68% of adults aged 16+ said that tabloid newspapers do not generally behave responsibly (Tabloid Newspapers 1). Though this statistic is just the opinion of the few thousand that were polled, it does give a glimpse into the relationship between public and their idea of “tabloid.” When the average person hears the word “tabloid,” they often don’t realize the rich history of the word and its evolution to mean “compression” or “shortening,” and instead relate the word to mean “invasive”. This negative connotation of the word creates tension in its usage. Whether tabloid is being used as a noun or adjective, its negative connotation is derived from the eye of the beholder. The word isn’t necessarily an important word in the grand scheme of things; however, tabloid does have a complex meaning. It cannot be used in a derogatory sense or be considered vulgar, but tabloid has its eccentricities that make it more unique than other offensive words like “fuck” or “cracker”.

In context to tabloid’s meaning as a pill, the idea of addic-

tion is clear. The addictive quality of tabloids becomes a more realistically feared addiction when put in the context of pill, yet in any form of tabloid the fear of addiction exists to those who find tabloids, either pill or journalism, to be a consuming commodity in their own lives. For instance, in 2007 an Angelo State student named Dora published a piece in her school’s newspaper about being a self-proclaimed “tabloid-aholic” (Huffman 1). Dora explains how her addiction to this “journalistic junk food” has become a compulsion she simply cannot quit. Like any other addiction, it consumes her time that could be spent doing more productive activities. To be a tabloid-aholic, Dora suggests, is to be obsessed with celebrity gossip, and therefore, uneducated or unconcerned with actual news events like elections or war updates. To associate tabloids with addiction brings new light to the word’s usage and meaning. While to one person reading today’s version of a tabloid might be considered a harmless hobby, Dora characterizes the liking for tabloid news to be a full-fledged addiction (2). Making a connotation between tabloid and addiction is a very interesting connection.

Tabloids as pills create a physical addiction whereas tabloids as gossip-filled magazines create a thematic addiction. Depending on the severity of the addiction, both forms can be just as consuming and life-altering. The current culture of tabloids, in relation to the masses, carries a strong thematic addition. In my experience, being addicted to tabloids can be a very realistic thematic addiction. I check PerezHilton.com more than five times a day, and hearing that Chris Brown beat the living daylights out of Rihanna was far more upsetting to me than a bad test grade. I’ll be the first to admit that this sad confession may appear a little bit pathetic, but tabloids offer me the unique chance for distraction from my own startling meritocracy.

Tabloid medication and magazines helps individuals numb their lives. Tabloids make life interesting, as they distract us from our own lives. Tabloid magazines provide an escape from our own lives by giving us the ability to have a preoccupation with other people’s alleged lives that are filled with scandal, sex, sin, and shocking fashion choices. Tabloid artwork is aimed to alarm people and make them take notice of appalling topics that might not otherwise grasp their attention willingly. Tabloid pills are meant to desensitize the pain or ailment of an individual. In a broader sense, tabloids, in their various forms, are an opiate to the masses. They can expose the greater evils and creepiness of the world in order to opiate individuals from realities they are not yet ready or willing to face.

Every time I read a tabloid, I could be reading something of more substance; yet I willingly and knowingly choose to dwell on fictional stories about people who don’t have any relevance in my life. I’ve never truly explored why it is that I do this—after all, I consider myself to be a smart



young woman—but there is something unique about tabloid magazines that keeps me loyal. This summer I worked as a tennis clerk, where I had lots of down time after checking people in to use the tennis courts. At first, I spent this time catching up on reading novels I couldn't read during the year. First, there was *The Red Tent*, followed by *Midwives*, followed by a half-dozen Jodi Picoult books, followed by books borrowed from my 14-year-old sister, until finally, by the end of the summer, I was only reading tabloids. The evolution of my reading choices had started with renowned books, slipped into teenage best sellers, and finally they reached the bottom of the literary barrel to my treasured issues of *People* and *In Touch*. As I read them behind my clerk desk, I often got tennis players who were checking in attempting to make conversation with me. John, a 77 year-old retiree from Wall Street, stunned me on a quiet Saturday afternoon when he came up to check in as I was reading a tabloid. His first words were something along the lines of "Oh, that Spears family is really messed up, the younger one is even worse than Britney!" A man nearly 60 years older than me was attempting to relate to me using the Spears family drama. When I asked him how he even knew the difference between the Spears sisters, he rolled his eyes and said, "You'll learn soon enough that gossip and scandal are the best way to take your mind off of life." Then, I just thought he was a crazy old man for saying that, but now I've come to a conclusion: tabloids aren't about focusing on the negative aspects of people's personal lives or about numbing the pain through medication; tabloids are about becoming uninhibited and taking a breather from mundane, everyday life. Tabloids aren't just characterized and remembered for their absurd claims, but rather they're about forgetting worldly problems for an instant because, after all, there is no way Dick Cheney could be a mermaid. He's obviously a robot.

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# I BELIEVE

BY STEPHANIE BELK

ARTWORK BY PETER GOLLANDS  
(KIDPARAGON.COM)

Being pretty much the palest Puerto Rican in existence, I've always resided somewhere between the middle of the white/minority paradigm. Even my name resonates European lineage, given by a great-great-grandfather of how-ever back of an Anglo-Saxon heritage. But being Puerto Rican means having a composite reality, a multiplicity in your identity. It's about more than meets the eye: a mixture of languages, cultures, and races. I wouldn't change it for the world.

We are, by definition, the product of a three-part fusion, where even within some immediate families no one knows which features of our Taíno, Spanish, and African-American descent will assert themselves between siblings. But even with Puerto Ricans, I find myself having to defend my 'authenticity', my 'jinchera' or paleness just an affirmation or evidence for the conclusion they reached, more because of my lack of a thick accent and 'Americanized' tastes than my skin. There have been countless times when I have done something that, in my culture, is completely accepted, even expected, and because I don't look like I belong to that group, people think I am mimicking or caricaturing "stereotypical Latina" behavior. Because of my outward appearance, it comes across like I'm satirizing Puerto Ricans instead of simply being Puerto Rican.

I think my place in the social sphere can best be summed up by a conversation I stumbled into one day with my very politically incorrect friend Glenn. In a theoretical 'race war' (if all the races teamed up and fought against each other), as he so delicately put it, I could be the secret spy, "moving between the Latinos and the Whites 'cause no one will be able to tell which side you'd be on."

My transition from one 'side' to the other is far from seamless. Switching language, culture, and customs sometimes ends up creating awkward social faux pas. In Puerto Rico, we kiss on the cheek to say hello, regardless of who it is or if you're just being introduced, denying this can be as rude as

refusing someone's handshake. This, however, does not carry over so well in the US, as it inevitably happens after being back home for extended periods of time, much to the confusion of strangers and friends—and jealous girlfriends—alike. Then I can come off as the flirtatious Latina, when in fact I have noticed that we tend to be more physically expressive and affectionate than other cultures, but here is another point where my appearance becomes a 2-headed sword either way. Another challenge presents itself with some words and concepts that are simply not exchangeable between the two languages. For example, there isn't a difference between "watch" and "clock" in Spanish, it is simply "reloj"; nor is there a word in English for "empalagao", when you are overwhelmed by a taste (like when you eat chocolate cake that is too rich). This also happens when I make a literal translation from Spanish to English, such as when I urged my friend David to "eat the light" instead of "run the red light", only to be received with a confused and inquisitive look.

Sometimes I do feel like a permanent outsider, not "Boricua" enough for the Puerto Ricans because of internal factors and a lack of notable accent; and too exotic for my American friends because of my mannerisms, tastes, and slip-ups in language and translation.

I have never been ashamed of who I am or where I'm from. On the contrary, I've worn it with complete pride; but for me, my race/culture/heritage is something that I have to declare, not something explicit. Because I can, as Glenn so insightfully put it, be the "spy", I can work from the inside to change negative perceptions about us. Maybe that is why it means so much to me, because I have to own it. I have to celebrate it, not just live with it, and toast to it with some Coquito.

**COURSE:** WRT 255,  
Advanced Argumentative  
Writing

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Stephen Parks

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** I wanted to write about my family and the different, seemingly contradictory or competing things that make up who I am and how I ended up where I am today.

**EDITORS' NOTE:** Stephanie uses humorous examples to show her double identity. Much of her audience can relate to her social faux pas and

# *The* **Perception** *of* **AIDS**

*Margaret Spinoso*



**Course:** WRT 109, Practices of Writing (Honors)

**Instructor:** Amber Luce

**Author's Note:** This essay argues how rhetorical modes of healthcare, particularly the visual, are applicable to AIDS today.

**Editors' Note:** Margaret does a great job at connecting her own ideas to the facts from her research.

Published by SURFACE, 2009

Photos by Colin Fanning

It is widely acknowledged that the rapid diffusion of the AIDS virus has made a devastating impact upon the global community over the last few decades. The Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS, an alliance of ten UN agencies concentrating their combined efforts on the eradication of AIDS, even made the assertion that this international epidemic has evolved into, “the single greatest reversal in human development” (UNAIDS 1). With the number of reported infections and subsequent deaths incessantly increasing, worldwide inaction delivers an undeniable death sentence to those affected most by the virulent illness. Thus, the prevention of AIDS should be directed towards the groups at highest risk of contracting and spreading the disease. As society is persistently modified and transformed, the target groups associated with AIDS have made a dramatic shift in recent years. Previously associated with sexual orientation and immoral behavior, the AIDS disease transcends past population genres. Instead, the overlapping commonality between AIDS victims correlates to a disadvantaged economic status.

The proliferation of AIDS transmission is largely attributable to unprotected sexual relations and the usage of infected needles. In order for the prevention of the virus to be successful, the frequency of precarious behavior in low-income constituencies must be drastically reduced. Therefore, the greatest challenge to confronting the AIDS epidemic is the inadequate funding for preventative protection. AVERT, an international charity stationed in the United Kingdom, is a private organization struggling to tackle the obstacles associated with the AIDS outbreak. As the world’s most popular AIDS website, AVERT focuses its attention on disseminating critical information to the greatest number of willing viewers. Statistics from AVERT’s website shows that HIV prevention on a global scale needs immense improvement. The data sampled from low-income countries in 2005 demonstrates the inefficiency of HIV prevention services for economically disadvantaged populations. In this case, preventative assistance reached less than 50% of sex-workers and only 20% of injecting drug users (Noble 1). Political and cultural attitudes also play a significant role as some governing bodies are against the promotion of condoms as well as other forms of sexual protection. In addition, organizations, both government and private, often refuse monetary support for sterile needles and similar programs since drug abuse and sexual promiscuity are considered a moral problem resulting as a consequence of immoral behavior. Thus, governmental disapproval and residual social stigmas, promote unsafe conduct in populations where individuals cannot afford to protect or educate themselves.

Though more funding is necessary to curb the disparity between AIDS victims segregated by the widening gap of the socioeconomic ladder, substantial services have been brought to those in low-income and lower-middle

income countries where 95% of AIDS victims reside. The numbers of people who are receiving anti-retroviral treatments have increased by fivefold between 2003 and 2006 (UNAIDS 1). Additionally, some countries have reported decreases in AIDS-related deaths, especially in regions where strong preventative actions have been implemented. Though these facts demonstrate a step in the right direction, they do

***Society can no longer categorize the AIDS virus as a “gay cancer”***

not hold enough significance on a wider, global scale where the effects of AIDS become progressively more devastating.

Mamello, a 20-year-old South African, shares

his perspective on Avert.org as a means of encouragement for AIDS victims across the globe. Though he has tested negative for the disease, he has witnessed numerous intimates succumb to the epidemic steadily ravaging his country. “So many of the people I grew up with are becoming sick and dying. In South Africa, funerals used to be held on Saturdays only. These days, it’s a Monday to Monday affair... and what’s even sadder is that so much time and money is being spent on education and prevention, and it’s hard to see the positive effects.” Mamello concludes by saying, “AFRICA IS DYING SLOWLY” (AVERT 1). He is one of many plagued by doubt and disbelief that AIDS will be conquered in the near future. However, funding has grown exponentially in recent years and Dr. Peter Piot, the UNAIDS executive director, addresses the global community claiming that, “We are at a critical stage in the AIDS response where ‘making the money work’ for countries is vital if we are going to get ahead of the epidemic” (UNAIDS 13). The distribution of monetary assets towards preventative measures aimed at assisting the underprivileged in the poorest populations is the key to quelling the AIDS epidemic. Society can no longer categorize the AIDS virus as a “gay cancer,” one which affects a “subversive” element of the populace regarded as immoral miscreants. The state of the AIDS epidemic demands immediate global attention as the situation has escalated into an international crisis pursuing the economically disadvantaged.

The evolution of AIDS visuals highlights the dynamic population shifts targeted by the AIDS disease over the past decades. Characterizing posters from the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, the San Francisco AIDS Foundation launched a revolutionary campaign directed towards gay males who frequented queer clubs, bars, and restaurants. Similar to bathroom stall ads, the “How Do You Know What You Know?” campaign aimed their message at young gay men engaging in unprotected sex. Using explicit and raw images, early AIDS ads employed unambiguous tactics to emphasize the risk of gay males

acquiring AIDS without the proper and consistent use of protection. However, AIDS ads in the 21st century have evolved with the subsequent shifts in the target populations. Many cartoons and illustrated editorials highlight the political satire accenting the irony of AIDS and poverty. In addition, graphic images, especially explicit photography from AIDS-stricken countries have become powerful tools in representing the present populations affected by the disease. It is evident through the sequential analysis of AIDS visuals that the face of the virus has changed momentarily in a short amount of time. The disease rises above sexual preference; instead, AIDS afflicts the financially impoverished who are unaware of or cannot afford preventative measures let alone exorbitantly expensive treatments when the disease is diagnosed.

Many popular visuals familiar in today's consumerist market often employ celebrities as focal points in ads meant to represent the desperately poor AIDS victims in low-income countries, especially Africa. The irony of comparing such strikingly different populations seems as if it would be counter effective to the cause. However, Marka Hansen, the director of Gap North America, gives evidence to prove the positive effects of Gap's AIDS campaign. "Since launching last year, (Product) Red has contributed more than \$45 million to the Global Fund to finance programs that help women and children affected by HIV/AIDS in Africa." The AIDS epidemic is directly intertwined with poverty; however, the modes of AIDS ads which are currently popular disregard this critical aspect of the epidemic. Instead of demonstrating the neediness of AIDS victims, creators of AIDS visuals opt for illustrating luxury and social wealth. This paradox allows viewers a false sense of security, and blinds audiences to the socioeconomic AIDS crisis. The contrast of wealth and poverty seen throughout these contemporary ads should highlight the economic disparity between AIDS victims and the naive generation which is presently blinded by egocentric concerns.

Prevention is the most effective means by which to surpass the economic inequalities of AIDS treatment and preventative services on a global scale. Without these critical services, the AIDS epidemic will continue to escalate and the situation may become irreparable. However, there are many skeptics who question increased global spending on HIV/AIDS. The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has stirred doubt in the minds of some health care experts. Jeremy Shiffman of Syracuse University, who studies health care expenditures says, "AIDS is a terrible humanitarian tragedy, but it's just one of many terrible humanitarian tragedies" (Cheng 2). Featured in an article titled "Why Some Claim the AIDS Crisis is Overblown," Shiffman is one of several persons highlighted who oppose increased monetary spending on AIDS services. The overarching complaint seems to be that AIDS

treatments could hog funding and may damage other health programs (Cheng 2). The scholar goes into greater detail as he defends his thesis concerning health policies in the Oxford Journals. In his paper, "Has donor prioritization of HIV/AIDS displaced aid for other health issues?" Shiffman indicates that pertinent trends displaying the displacement effect of HIV/AIDS' rapidly growing share of total health aid is a concern for global health agencies (Shiffman 1). Providing universal preventative services to low-income countries will require immense monetary resources which could be used for other important health-related issues; thus, it is understandable that some may question whether this goal is both necessary and productive (UNAIDS 5). With resonating force, the economics of the AIDS epidemic is possibly the most substantial problem of the modern era and must be treated accordingly. If additional resources are not allocated for prevention now, the cost will certainly be too great to afford in the future. The high levels of funding that will be required to move towards universal access in the

***Many cartoons and illustrated editorials highlight the irony of AIDS and poverty.***

approaching years expose the global failure to respond to AIDS before it evolved into an international crisis. Had the world community executed sensible investments two decades ago, especially in prevention and in strengthening preventative services in low-income countries, more manageable amount of money would be needed today. Moreover, this exact ideology remains true and the world cannot afford the cost of inaction and blindness. According to statistics presented in a UNAIDS presentation, a comprehensive prevention response would prevent more than half of all new infections that will occur in the next ten years. Though AIDS treatment legislation like President Bush's PEPFAR are necessary, it is even more critical to spend money on preventative programs. The cost of AIDS funding will continue to accrue without preventative action and the gap between funding available and funding required will increase each year as seen in the figure below (UNAIDS 6).

The financial resources spent on prevention programs will be the solution to helping economically disadvantaged populations protect themselves and their communities against the AIDS epidemic in years to come.

AIDS is not a livable disease because it is undeniable death for the majority of those who are infected by it. The treatment of AIDS merely constructs a prison for the victims of the disease. Governments who choose not to appropriately apportion financial resources to the prevention of AIDS are building an uninhabitable penitentiary where individuals are tortured through the prolonging of their life. Michele Foucault, author of *Right of Death and Power Over Life*, addresses governmental exploitation of a vulnerable population through the idea of biopower. The AIDS disease complies with Foucault's cautions con-

cerning biopower because victims are tortured through life, not death, through the administration of drugs, and through the extension of an anguished existence. The prevention of AIDS should be addressed with greater stamina by the government head in order to prevent further infections. AIDS is a disease which impinges upon the rights of the economically disadvantaged. Though it is important for charities and private organizations to protest the dispersion of AIDS, governments need to lift the burden by making a greater case for AIDS prevention and awareness in the global community.

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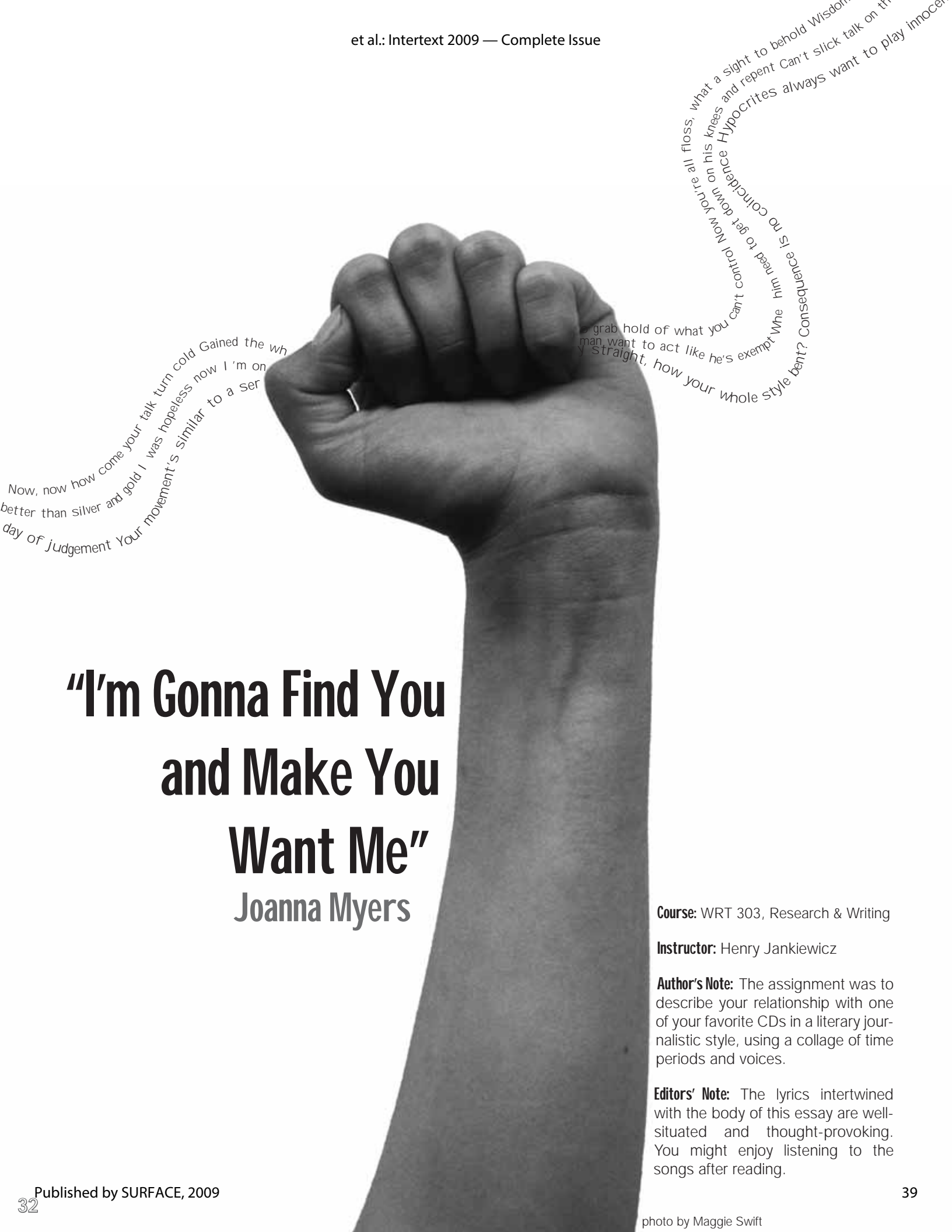
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Now, now how come your talk turn cold Gained the wh  
better than silver and gold I was hopeless now I'm on  
day of judgement Your movement's similar to a ser

grab hold of what you  
man want to act like he's exempt  
straight, how your whole style bent?  
I'll floss, what a sight to behold Wisdom  
and repent Can't slick talk on th  
Hypocrites always want to play innocen  
I can't control Now you're all  
him need to get down on his knees  
Consequence is no coincidence

# "I'm Gonna Find You and Make You Want Me" Joanna Myers

**Course:** WRT 303, Research & Writing

**Instructor:** Henry Jankiewicz

**Author's Note:** The assignment was to describe your relationship with one of your favorite CDs in a literary journalistic style, using a collage of time periods and voices.

**Editors' Note:** The lyrics intertwined with the body of this essay are well-situated and thought-provoking. You might enjoy listening to the songs after reading.



**F**orgive them father for they know not what they do/  
It took me a little while to discover/Wolves in sheep  
coats who pretend to be lovers/Men who lack con-  
science will even lie to themselves, to themselves/A friend  
once said, and I found to be true/That everyday people,  
they lie to God too/So what makes you think, that they  
won't lie to you....<sup>1</sup>

I sat in my living room one hot night last August. Lauryn Hill's comeback concert. No one had seen or heard anything of Hill for eight years. But now, two children and a broken marriage to Ziggy Marley later—she was back. After watching stage crews set up and mics tested, it was two hours after the concert was supposed to start. A shoe commercial cuts out and the face of the president of the Brooklyn Borough, Marty Markowitz, appears on screen, announcing to thousands of raucous fans crowded in New York's Wingate field "Lauryn Hill is here. That's the important thing. Lauryn Hill is here."<sup>2</sup>

Almost ten years ago, Hill's raucous concerts were all over MTV, VH1, and even news media stations. Clips of her strutting across the stage in crazy dresses and bright makeup showed how she dominated the stage with a wild animosity—the cockiness of a seven foot black man, in six-inch heels. All that had been present of her in recent years were questions: Would she be reuniting with the Fugees—when two of their members were claiming that she was the reason a reunion hadn't happened yet? Was she still performing after having children? Was she still speaking to ex-husband, son of the legendary Bob Marley?<sup>2</sup>

Ripping through the restless noise of the crowd like the crack of thunder, Hill answered our questions:

"READY OR NOT HERE I COME...I'M GONNA FIIIIIND YOU AND MAKE YOU WANT ME," the a cappella echo of Lauryn's voice cried out. The crowd paralyzed in its own amazement and then...uproar filled the air.<sup>2</sup>

Former songstress/rapper of the group Fugees, Lauryn Hill started performing with rappers Wyclef Jean and Pras Michel in the mid 1990s. Combining hard hip-hop beats with Caribbean reggae sounds and classic R&B music, such as Roberta Fleck's "Killing Me Softly," the group topped the Billboard charts.<sup>3</sup>

Identity became a big issue for the group, in terms of race, gender, and sexuality. For instance, one of their songs from the album "The Score," entitled "Zealots," starts with a Doo-Wop melody circa 1950. After five rounds of barbershop doo-wops, Pras Michel comes on with the eerie proclamation "Another MC loses life tonight..." (MC being a name for a rapper or hip-hop performer).<sup>1</sup> The uncomfortable tension between the pristine music that has come to define white culture of the 1950s

is almost violated by the proclamation that violence and death have similarly come to define the black community. The Fugees performed in a time when artists like Tupac Shakur and Notorious BIG were being shot, their fame and celebrity not exempting them from the violence of East and West Coast gang rivalries. Rap and hip-hop were being dismissed as an overtly violent-shock-value means of entertainment.

It was in this age that American popular culture began its journey to categorize the Fugees and, later, Lauryn Hill herself. Just as music media would create a definition and place for them, they tore it apart. Rolling Stone, on their September 1996 cover, claimed that the Fugees could be the future of rock and roll.<sup>4</sup> With the onset of white rap groups like the Beastie Boys, white culture was beginning to adopt the raucous beats and in your face lyrics of this new hip hop for its own.

All members of the Fugees are second generation Haitian Americans. Their name, Fugees, is short for "refugees," which speaks to the idea of identity and place in American society. They sing about black Americans feeling like refugees in their own country, and how one characteristic, such as guns, violence, and/or drugs, defines their lifestyle and the way they are perceived by others.

This is Lauryn Hill's departure point. The perspective from which she forms poetic realizations about life and love is always linked back to the disillusionment and frustration of inequality and racial disparities.

This is the point from which I began to know her, having felt alienated by the Fugees' strong racial beliefs that had no place for me as a young, middle-class, white girl. As Hill was laying out the framework for her identity in a white-dominated society and singing and rapping it to the world, I realized that the modern tensions between black and white that I saw everyday were a viewpoint from which to understand complex and frustrating situations and relationships. I was coming to realize that many of life's situations had no clearly defined borders between good and evil, truth and deception, black and white.

In her album "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill," Hill combines the in-your-face style of the Fugees with her own poetry and sincerity. She says what she means and she says it with unapologetic devotion. She gives in to it, doesn't step back when the answer is too harsh.

When I was in junior high, "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" was the CD to get. I grew up in an urban community with a large immigrant and black population. Girls my age were collecting Lauryn Hill, Monica, Brandy, Tatiana Ali CDs as badges of honor—the more lyrics you knew, the cooler you were. But Lauryn Hill stood out amongst a bland crowd of lyrics like Brandy and Monica's, "The Boy

**Many of life's situations had no clearly-defined borders between good and evil, truth and deception, black and white.**

Is Mine" and "Have you ever loved somebody so much it makes you cry?" Hill's "The Final Hour" and "To Zion" are songs that combined her deep spiritual connection to God and her musings on her complex relationships with people that have constructed the life views that she professes in her songs. While Ice Cube rapped, "You can do it put your a#@ into it," Hill spoke of her trials with deciding to have a baby at a young age in "To Zion" and the prevalence of sex and gender roles in what she calls "the ghetto community" in "Doo Wop (That Thing)."

But who is Lauryn Hill—to me? Do I, as a middle class white girl have any right to even listen to the lyrics of an artist who openly believes that my family's financial and social status are directly linked to the fact that we are white? She is not talking to me...right?

I asked myself these questions growing up in a world where we were told that black and white made no difference, and yet, we knew they were wrong. Ever since kindergarten, me and my friends all knew that more black kids than white kids lived in Southfield Gardens, the public housing project down the street from where I went to school. We knew that more white people lived on the West side, where the houses are bigger and nicer than the other parts of town. At school, they told us that black and white were equal, that it did not matter...but how could they say that when it had a direct effect on so many aspects of our daily lives?

"Produce words so profuse /It's abuse how I juice up this beat /Like I'm deuce /Two people both visible relationship with where one came from and how one lived."

I attach to Lauryn Hill because she knows this too. She speaks of God, honesty, and being a good person in a way that is "un-Oprah-esque". She is not a preacher, but rather she is humanly part of the problems she speaks of. She sinned with Jezebel, in "Doo Wop (That Thing)," and she looks to find fulfillment in her wealth and success with other performers in "Superstar."

I think that a lot of the speculation surrounding Hill is a result of the inability of society to define her. Mother, rapper, black woman, racial radical, poet...She speaks about God, truth, and justice, yet she uses the word "Nigger" in many of her lyrics. She warns girls not to use sex as a way to feel accepted, and yet she has a baby as a young, single woman.

"I begat this Flippin' in the ghetto on a dirty mattress/You can't match this rapper /actress/More powerful than two Cleopatras/Bomb graffiti on the tomb of Nefertiti/MCs ain't ready to take it to the Serengeti/My rhymes is heavy like the mind of Sister Betty/...Adjacent to the king, fear no human being/Roll with cherubims to Nassau Coliseum/Now hear this mixture/Where hip hop meets scripture/Develop a negative into a positive picture"<sup>1</sup>

Hill's career can be seen as an attempt to find identity. As

Hill relays in an interview with BET after her free concert in Brooklyn, her search for this identity is inextricably linked to the color of her skin.

"I think a lot of black men and women struggle with the identity crisis that takes place with black people in America, black people in the Western world. Not just who am I, but how to be who I am in that particular western paradigm and still remain true to myself. I think that they need courage and protection to do what I think they would instinctively do if they felt safe enough."<sup>5</sup>

Her CD, "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill," is collaged with audio scenes of a teacher talking with his class. A school bell rings. Talking...footsteps. A man's deep voice comes on, presumably a teacher taking roll call... "Please respond when I call your name. Kevin Charles, Jarris Wigmans, Alicia Simmons, Phillip Valdez, Gabrielle Salado, Latoya Bradbury, Antoin Mitchell, Shaquon Sutton, Corey Thomas, Taran Lucas, Tamia Caldwell, Tamika Marshall, Lauryn Hill...Lauryn Hill...Lauryn Hill...?"

The male teacher leads discussions about love and sex with the students, and they offer refreshing opinions whole-heartedly. I can, with almost certainty, say that the students are black and the teacher is black and that they go to an urban school, maybe in the Bronx, Brooklyn, somewhere in Hill's native New Jersey perhaps. Now I ask myself... how do I know this? The way they talk, their names, the words they use...I know without a doubt that they are black and it is frightening to think of all the assumptions that the audience has about this group of kids and that I have about this group of kids. Their financial status, their home lives, the state of the school they are in—I know none of this, but I know all of it—too well, too easily.

The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill is a story of a girl, a messiah, from Brooklyn, who is in constant search for truth, awareness, and consistency. She is consistently at odds, and puts her audience at odds, with knowing and not knowing. In a search for truth beyond stereotypes, beyond what is expected, Hill sets you up and lets you down. I will let her finish this:

"I treat this like my thesis /Well written topic /Broken down into pieces/ I introduce then equal /Like I'm Gemini/ Rather simeon/ If I Jimmy on this lock I could pop it /You can't stop it /Drop it/ Your whole crew's microscopic/ Like particles while I make international articles/ And on the cover /Don't discuss the baby mother business /I been in this third LP you can't tell me, I witness/ First handed I'm candid /You can't stand it /Respect demanded /And get flown around the planet/ Rock Hard like granite or steel / People feel/ Lauryn Hill from New-Ark to Israel/ And this is real /So I keep makin' the street's ballads/ While you lookin' for dressin' to go with your tossed salad/ You could get the money/ You could get the power /But keep your eyes on the final hour..."

Notes

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consequence is no coincidence Hypocrites always want to play innocent Always want to make it seem like good intent Never want to face it when it's time for punishment I know  
 I know that you don't wanna hear my opinion But there come many paths and you must choose one And if you don't change then the rain soon come you lost one And if your rhymes sound like mine, I'm taking a percent  
 25 in Aquarius Running red lights with my 10,000 chariots Just as Christ was a superstar, you stupid star They'll hail you then they'll nail you, no matter who you are They'll make you now then take you down And make you face it, if you

# to FUCK UP

Benjamin Harry Rosen



Artwork by Nicole Weiler

# No. 1 Speak without thinking.

## No. 2

Tell your friends' secrets.

## No. 3

Curse just because you can, because it makes you look cool and laid-back.

## No. 4

Protest the use of marijuana, alcohol, and other illicit substances, even though you've never tried them. Wait until you get to college. Change your mind.

## No. 5

Forget to delete flirtatious text messages between you and another girl before you see your girlfriend. Leave your phone on the desk when you go to the bathroom.

## No. 6

Tell your girlfriend you're staying in to do work. As you're walking back to your room, let yourself be abducted by your two friends – two very attractive girls. Later that night, send your girlfriend an instant message from one of the girl's screen names.

## No. 7

Meet the cute girl who sits next to you in class. Find her on Facebook, then add her screen name without asking her for it. Send her an instant message shortly after she signs on . . . every time she signs on.

## No. 8

First, meet a girl at a frat party. Don't drink, but get her a beer. Let her keep drinking, and ignore the fact that you have a girlfriend. Talk to this girl for a little while about how you two are in the same class. Leave earlier than you want to because your girlfriend had a bad night at the frat party she was at, hanging out with guys who wish she were single, because you're too nice a guy not to come at her beck and call.

Break up with your girlfriend for mutual reasons unrelated to the girl at the party. Learn the next day that your ex, who you just broke up with the day before, fucked someone else that night. Gulp down water because you're about to cry in the middle of a dining hall. Alone.

Make dinner plans with the girl from the frat. Ignore your ex's calls while you two are eating. Talk to her about her ex, and then make your way to her room.

COURSE: Wrt 114, Writing Culture

INSTRUCTOR: Izy Kleinbart

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The assignment was to write a lyric essay, a type of essay which can take pretty much any form—the kind of essay to use when I can't think of how to access the material or write the story in any other way.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This piece is striking because of the ability it has to convey an emotionally trying situation in a bold, unique, and, at times, hilarious way.

Call her that night because you feel horrible.

Don't call her again.

### No. 9

Meet your new female neighbors. Immediately arrange with your roommates which one you like the most. Flirt with her that night at your party while you dodge bullets from your two crazy exes who have discovered each other and keep talking about you, making you look like a complete asshole in front of your friends. Talk to this girl sporadically throughout the night until she gets so drunk that she leaves and calls her boyfriend, who lives upstairs, to come take care of her.

Take her out a few times over the next week or so with your roommate and her roommate. Put your arm around her and talk to her. Bring her back to your apartment and watch a movie with a few other people. Invite her to sit on your lap. Hold her hand and caress it gently with your index finger. Let her leave when she says she's going to leave.

Go for a walk the next morning and decide together that you'll stop whatever it is that's going on so she can continue to be happy with her boyfriend.

Let three weeks go by. Make out with her.

Avoid having your face broken by her boyfriend.

Avoid her.

### No. 10

Invite a close girl friend to get coffee, and get to really know her. Talk about all the important stuff: G-d, family, love, life goals. Her favorite things including ketchup, Beyonce, and her Bichon Frise. Finish your drink and leave quickly because the creepy, possibly mentally challenged guy at the table next to you wants to teach you his quick methods of mathematical computation, or as he calls it, "math-uhh-matics."

Find a quiet spot at a park bench and continue to talk. Watch squirrels with foolish wonderment. When she excuses herself to go to the bathroom, feel the shivers run up your spine. It's not cold out.

Meet her at a party that night and bring her and her friends back to your apartment because your drunk ex is trying to tell you about the latest thing she's done to try to get you to like her again.

Put on music and play beer pong with her. Win seven games in a row. When you lose, take her to see your room.

Kiss her neck. Kiss her cheek. Kiss her lips. Shut the door. Lock the door. Take her to your bed. Take off your shirt but say it's just because it's warm in the room. Continue to kiss.

Take off almost everything, but don't be too eager to have sex. That will ruin it.

Stop by her room in the middle of the day just to see her, just to be with her for even a few minutes of your day. Show her what you've been writing, and let her rest her head on your shoulder; the distinct smell she wears is the same one she left on your sheets. Leave because you have to, not because you want to, even though she begs you to stay, and every time you get five more feet away, run back and give her one more kiss.

Take her out for sushi and bubble tea, and remember to pick up the check. Lose yourself in her wide brown eyes like ancient pennies, and when she calls you out on it, shake your head, give her a smile, and play with your chopsticks. Let her wear your track jacket because it's cold out, and even though you're only wearing an undershirt and a t-shirt, you'd rather freeze than see her uncomfortable.

Lend her a towel and shampoo the next morning. Watch her do her hair and smile. Share your music with her. Play guitar for her. Tell her she's beautiful. Mean it. Even in pajamas and a long sleeve shirt from the bookstore.

The next time she sleeps over, ask for a kiss goodbye before she gets on the bus. Don't think twice when instead of just doing it, she says, "Fine," then kisses you and leaves.

Meet her for coffee again after a few days because she says, "We need to talk" – she feels like it's becoming "a thing" and doesn't want it to. Say you understand, even though you don't.

Do not tell her you're in love with her.

Do not tell her you'd do anything for her.

And don't tell her that's why you'll let her go.

Let her go.

Don't be too eager to have sex. That will ruin it.



"All shined up and no place to go"  
Terez Iacovino

# staff bios

## Ryan Lilly **editor emeritus**

Ryan is sad to tip his hat to the world of *Intertext* after two long years. He'd like to thank the entire Writing Program for helping him discover (finally) what he wants to do in life, and this year's staff for being the most hilarious and creative group anyone could have asked to be in—you guys have really been like "best friends". Lastly, he can never thank Nancy Wright enough; she is the driving force of this publication and has taught him so much about publishing, editing, writing, and life. He'll miss those awkward and unintentional library avoidances.



## Caitlin Heikkila **marketing editor**

Caitlin Heikkila is a senior Writing and Communication and Rhetorical Studies dual major. She enjoys tennis, hot caffeinated beverages, spending copious amounts of time in bookstores, and a good bowl of cereal. She hopes to have a job in a city warmer than Syracuse when she graduates.



## Colin Fanning **design editor**

The first thing you should know about Colin is that he's a *total nerd*. A constantly-reading, tree-hugging, Irish-dancing, Star-Trek-loving nerd. It's best if you just recognize that up front. Otherwise: he's a senior Interior Design major, has minors in Writing and English, and serves as president of the Honors Student Association. In his copious amounts of spare time, he enjoys snarky feminist writing, pretentious discussions about art and design, waxing nostalgic about his semester in London, and bacon cheeseburgers. Also, bagpipes.



## Erin Buksbaum **design editor**

Erin Buksbaum is a senior Advertising major, but has finally given in to the writing world and allowed it to consume her whole. She plans on making a career out of her ability to turn anything into a sentence (...no, really, *anything*) and has the lifelong aspiration of getting paid to laugh in different countries. No, don't worry, not *at* you, *with* you. Well, maybe *at* you a little too. She believes in never-ending new beginnings, odd middle names, and dancing in the kitchen.



## Maggie Swift **photo editor**

Maggie Swift is a junior Writing major who clicks really well with most cameras. (Heh, see what she did there?) She hails from the pleasant pastures of Syracuse, New Yawk, loves her some Mexican food, and doesn't like any of her pets. She'd like to give a special shout out to Closey The Door—it was great running into you last week! In other news, ow.



## Tracy Twombly **copy editor**

Tracy Twombly is a senior English and Textual Studies major. Her perfect world would revolve around bound versions of the written word, comfortable silences, abundant supplies of coffee-related beverages, and cereal accepted as a primary food source. She has warm feelings for the ocean, is ambivalent about sand, and finds creating an outfit as satisfying as Child's Pose. She aspires to be a book editor and implores you all to keep writing so that she can get a job.







Katie Strunk **copy editor**

Hailing from Cedarhurst on Long Island, we got Katie Strunk. She may be a nerd, but she ain't no punk. She's a dual major in Psychology and Writing, so she can make magazines and research exciting. She hopes you find this issue of *Intertext* to be incredible, cause it would taste so good, if only it were edible. But back to Katie: she's a rapper on the side and she can play the flute on a no-handed bike ride. In clinical psychology she wishes to obtain her PhD, and she'd like to end by sending love to her friends and family!



Dylan Vazzano **marketing**

Dylan Vazzano is a junior Writing major from Los Angeles, CA. He thoroughly enjoys baseball, Chinese food, flannel shirt patterns, and the delicate intricacies and subtle nuances of a good Adam Sandler movie. In his spare time you can often find him daydreaming about the beautiful California sunshine, especially while enduring the callous unforgiving ice-land that is wintertime in Syracuse. He aspires to become shortstop for the New York Yankees, but, if for some incredibly unlikely reason it doesn't work out, he would settle for becoming a lawyer.



Christopher Mogollon **marketing**

This savvy senior brought his wisdom and confidence to the *Intertext* staff. He enjoyed every minute working on this publication with such a great bunch of people. Chris enjoys relaxing, napping and watching VH1 reality TV programs. His pet peeves are complaining, country music, and Tom Cruise. His two idols are Patrick Ewing and his Mother. Chris wants to, one day, settle down and work in the city.



Evan Smith **marketing**

Move over pork-fried beans, the newest three-part household name is Evan Mychal Smith. Struggling and surviving through an upper-middle class upbringing, Evan braved the horrors of a New York public school education and managed to escape to Syracuse University. Influenced by Langston Hughes, Boyz II Men, and Homer Simpson, his writing efforts vary in style and content but unite in their collective ability to blow your mind. Although he desires to win both an Oscar and a Pulitzer Prize, his one true dream is to be your favorite author.



Audrey Patricia Burns **design**

Audrey is a feisty one-woman show who specializes in writing, multimedia collages, refurbishing antique and ill-begotten furniture, and mothering four eccentric plants. After graduation, she hopes to move to a city in the "triad" (Portland, Seattle, San Francisco) and freelance. She owes her inspiration to empty streets in fall, her wonderful family in Rochester, and the musical greats.



Kimberly Clarke **design**

Kimberly was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. She is a junior who majors in Information Management and Technology and minors in Writing. Enthusiastic, ambitious, and motivated are just a couple of adjectives that describe her. Already planning for the future, while still enjoying the present, Kimberly hopes to, one day, become apart of a fabulous project management team for a public relations firm and make so much money that Oprah will have to call *her* asking for money.