eloquentia perfecta:
a magazine of great freshman writing
Photograph courtesy of the Fordham University Archives.
To the Class of 2019,

Welcome to Fordham College at Lincoln Center and the world of college writing! This year’s issue of EP collects eight essays, each written by a Fordham student last year in Composition and Rhetoric I, II, or Texts and Contexts. Their work represents some of the finest Fordham has to offer, and we hope that it impresses, instructs, and inspires you to excel in your own writing. We congratulate the class of 2018 on the excellent writing represented here. We hope that in reading these essays, you will be moved to find your own voice, to ask your own questions of what you read and of the world around you, and to engage your mind with the rich and moving ideas and texts that college allows you to explore.

What is EP? EP is short for *eloquentia perfecta*, a Latin phrase meaning the right use of reason combined with eloquent expression. This idea of *eloquentia perfecta* has long been central to Jesuit education, and, we hope, EP draws on the best of that tradition while bringing it into the 21st century. You will find perfect eloquence here in this expository prose, and you will also find extended play: essays that take an idea and break it apart, look at it from a new angle, and remix it, showing it to us anew.

Central to the exemplary nature and theme of EP 11.0, this issue also presents its own formal remixes. EP 11.0 marks the first year that the journal appears in both printed and electronic forms, enabling even more readers to access, read, and enjoy this exceptional collection of essays. Beyond ushering EP into the digital age, we instituted our first blind peer review. Modeled upon the process used at our sister publication at Rose Hill, *Rhētorikós*, EP 11.0 relied upon two reading periods to winnow a large and impressive batch of essays.

Each submission received anonymous consideration from two members of our peer review board, comprised of ten graduate students in the Department of English traversing Fordham’s Rose Hill and Lincoln Center campuses. On about half a dozen occasions, we arrived at split decisions, requiring
the intervention of a third reader. Essays selected through the blind peer review were returned with two detailed reader reports (typically about 500 words) with which authors revised and resubmitted essays. Finally, the editors coordinated with authors to copy-edit final essays. With an acceptance rate of just 23 percent, EP 11.0 may be our most rigorous issue to date and truly illustrates the best of first-year writing at Fordham’s Lincoln Center campus.

We are proud of the essays in this collection, and we believe that they are even stronger when placed in conversation with one another. To this end, our chosen cover image, a model plan for the Lincoln Center campus, encourages relational reading. In place of the Brutalist concrete architecture to which we have grown accustomed, the Leon Lowenstein Center represented here is a possibility, a bright white rectangle imagined inside of the geographical and historical landscape of late-1960s midtown New York.

This collection might be conceptualized as its own kind of landscape. The first three essays, written by Emily Allen, Matt Scheffler, and Aaron Lascano, dilate from the individual to the urban landscape, using objects and places to locate historical identities. Allen traces the Yiddish lineage of the iconic New York bagel, Scheffler finds a morsel of literary culture at the Westsider Books, and Lascano excavates Ukrainian immigration history from the streets of the East Village. Meanwhile, Max Prybyla and Katie Moran place identity, particularly sexual identity, in historical contexts. Prybyla reflects upon the shifting usage and meanings of the word “gay” in and amongst youths in American education, and Moran places the historical practice of McCarthyism in a frame of heteronormative bias. Where Moran telescopes methods of sexual demagogy, Brooke Cantwell pans out to consider the nature and role of evil in Goethe’s Faust and Sarah Nelson explores collective psychologies in Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Finally, in a study of contemporary art, George Miscamble asks us to re-examine the project of academic writing and to critically re-evaluate notions of
authorship and authenticity.

Before closing our welcome to you, we want to reiterate our thanks to Dean Robert Grimes, S.J. for his continued and generous support, both financial and intellectual, of this endeavor. Simply put, without it, there would be no EP. Thanks also to Professor Lenny Cassuto, Interim Director of Writing/Composition at Lincoln Center, who was instrumental to the design and implantation of our peer review process. Professor Glenn Hendler, Chair of the English Department, and Professor Sarah Zimmerman, Associate Chair of English for Lincoln Center, continue to enthusiastically support our work on this journal.

Our wonderful professors and instructors—Andrew Albin, Julia Barclay-Morton, Elisabeth Frost, Boyda Johnstone, and Christy Pottroff—taught the courses from which this great work emerged. We thank these instructors, and all of our instructors, for helping our students reach their potential. We hope to see your work here next year. Enjoy! And enjoy writing

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*With a special thanks to our peer reviewers:*

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“I’ll take one plain and one everything bagel, toasted with cream cheese” – a simple phrase recognizable to most any New Yorker. New Yorkers grab bagels on their way to work, school, and shopping from street carts or coffee shops. While New Yorkers chomp away at the bagels they hold so dear, they rarely consider the historical and cultural gravity their breakfast carries. This small bakery product seems so mainstream that its historical importance is often under-celebrated. Within this circular bread exists a saga of Eastern European Jewish immigrants who, living in terrible conditions, sold their traditional food as a means of survival. The bagel’s tale is entwined with early-20th century immigration and economics. Its story has not ended, as the bagel prevails today as a popular product not only in Jewish culture, but also in non-Jewish, New York, and American culture. Though it may seem unassuming, the bagel symbolizes New York City’s history of Jewish immigration.

The bagel, an archetypal Jewish food, is produced by a unique process as distinctive as its history. The name itself
comes from the Yiddish term “beygel” meaning a ring or bracelet, as the bagel is a round pastry with a central hole (Deustch and Saks 20). The dough, denser than that of most other bread, is shaped into rings by hand or machine. The circular dough is rinsed and then placed into boiling water for less than a minute before being placed in an oven to bake. The rinsing and boiling combination provides the chewy texture of the bagel. The shiny exterior is due to the last step in the bagel-making process, in which the outer crust is brushed with eggs or sugar. Toppings and flavorings can be added to the finished product or baked into the dough itself (Davidson 53).

Although there is much folklore surrounding the creation of the bagel, no single anecdote explains its emergence. The first written records of bagels occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During this time, Poland cultivated grain in its fertile land and supplied it to the rest of Eastern Europe. Due to Eastern’s Europe high demand for a cheap source of grain, Poland’s economy flourished and marked a period of great success for Polish Jews. The commodity of grain, especially rye, oats, and wheat, elevated Poland to the center of all things bread-related in Europe (Balinska). The bagel was brought to Manhattan, and America, with Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe.

The first wave of Eastern European Jewish immigration began in the late 1880s, when a series of pogroms in the Russian Empire forced Jews to seek religious asylum. These pogroms targeted Jews and further separated them from the European social sphere. Following the pogroms, mobs destroyed Jewish property in Ukraine, which caused the Jewish community to fear for their safety. Finally, the Easter Day pogrom in Kishniev in April of 1903 convinced those who had not yet been convinced that leaving was the only option. Thousands of Jews abandoned their lives and homes in Poland, the Ukraine, and the Russian Empire to seek refuge in America. However, their aspirations for the American Dream were fraught (Feigunbaum).
The dire socioeconomic conditions in New York City caused the development of the bagel industry. Upon their arrival, Jewish families could not afford anything but tenements, often housing several families without running water or electricity. Jewish immigrants flocked to the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The close proximity of people in the Jewish ghetto, often called the 10th ward, was extreme, but held a practical purpose. The conglomeration of Jews in the same neighborhood allowed for an assurance of religious community and kosher practices. However, the high population confined to a meager amount of space meant that every resource required competition. There were not nearly enough jobs available, so immigrants were forced to take any employment they could find. This employment often entailed unsafe conditions, low wages, and child labor, adding to the plight of immigrant life. Even those who had previously been scholars were reduced to sweatshop labor (Balinska). At this time, welfare and other social programs had not yet been established, so the responsibility of everyone’s survival fell on the shoulders of members of the Jewish community. In their desperation for work and nostalgia for the old country, Jewish immigrants created opportunity. They supplied a traditional comfort food to a downtrodden population desiring any tangible link to their home. Cheap to produce and easy to transport, the bagel provided provided a simple and easy business plan. Due to the lack of water and space needed to cook in tenements, the traditionally private practice of bagel baking moved out of the home and into a commercialized market (Feigunbaum).

The bagel created not only an informal economy essential to the survival of many immigrant families, but one that fostered unionization that gave immigrants a voice and a viable role in their new country. The bagel economy exploded with the influx of Jewish immigrants, with 70 bagel bakeries opening in the Lower East Side by 1900 (Balinska).
The competition caused by this high number of bakeries led to a rise in an informal economy, which was constituted by underemployed people such as street hawkers, peddlers, and petty traders. These jobs, while undesirable at best, presented a method for survival. As the population and competition for sales grew, so did the sector of those turning to the informal economy to support themselves. Those who could work in the formal economy, that is, bagel bakers with formal training and payment, did not have a much better lot. The conditions of the bakeries became so deplorable that a union movement arose to address them. Most bakeries were underground shops with boiling ovens and no ventilation. Workers were forced to work half-naked due to the heat and 98-hour workweeks to fulfill the never-ending demand for bagels. Cockroaches, rats, and diseases ran rampant.

Although most immigrating Jews did not want to start a revolution, the poor conditions and struggle for a meager living sparked a union movement that led to a thriving industry. Soon, several unions, including the United Hebrew Trades and a New York sector of the Journeymen Bakers’ and Confectioners’ International, began with a call for social justice. The union members united as helpless immigrants in a foreign land, and they needed to transform their economy into one that benefitted them and integrated them into New York’s larger economy. Their efforts were not in vain: Conditions improved greatly and the bagel industry flourished. By 1986, bagel sales reached $500 million, solidifying bagels as an integral part of the American food economy and culture. In its rise, the bagel symbolizes the Jewish immigrant population’s struggle for prosperity and identity in New York City’s economy (Balinkska).

The bagel has transformed from a symbol of Jewish immigrant culture to an iconic New York City food. The bagel is considered a secular food because it is not integral in any religious traditions. However, it does have a close
connection with Yom Kippur, which is the holiest holiday of the Jewish calendar. During the services of Yom Kippur, the bagel is served with cream cheese and lox (smoked salmon slices), which is the traditional way to serve and eat bagels. Interestingly, even nonobservant and non-practicing Jews partake in the breakfast staple of bagels and lox as faithfully as strictly traditional Jews (Deutsch and Saks 20). By 1987, bagel consumption reached more than six million a day, which poses the question of why the bagel gained so much popularity in its short time in America. Perhaps, the communal aspect of eating is a language in itself. Integrating new cultures into the melting pot of America is accomplished more easily by eating a culture’s traditions rather than by speaking about them. As a New York Times article claimed, Americans eat bagels to establish an ethnic rapport, as demonstrated in the creation of green bagels for St. Patrick’s day. Using a distinctly Jewish food for an Irish holiday illustrates that America are happy to blend ethnic foods (Starr A38). New York holds a diverse range of ethnic foods, furthering its position as one of the world’s great cultural crossroads. Today, the bagel is an iconic New York food, enjoyed by New Yorkers and tourists, the Jewish and non-Jewish alike (Deutsch and Saks 20).

The bagel’s history has been a long and involved saga of trial and triumph, including the bagel integration and symbolism in New York City’s everyday life. The bagel is an ethnic fusion of traditional Jewish and American culture, a shared language between the two minority and majority groups. Precisely what caused the bagel to achieve its symbolic status is not entirely certain. Perhaps the bagel’s resilience in migration, economy, and tradition is a reflection of its makers’ resilience in their fight for freedom and prosperity. Perhaps, just as America represents freedom and prosperity, the bagel represents the freedom to succeed and the method to achieve that prosperity.
Works Cited


*Hailing from Erie, Pennsylvania, Emily Allen is currently an intended international studies major at Fordham University Lincoln Center. She originally composed this paper for a “forgotten symbol of New York City” assignment in her English Composition class. Her chosen topic, the bagel, was inspired by an exhibit at the New York Historical Society Museum, entitled “A Brief History of New York: Selections from A History of New York in 101 Objects.”*
Located at 2246 Broadway, Westsider Books is lodged between a ten-story apartment building and a Starbucks coffee shop. The Upper West Side is lined with chic boutiques, trendy cafés, and luxurious glass high-rise apartments, but this small, cubic building is saturated with the cultural history of a grittier New York. Built in 1902, Westsider’s interior is dimly lit, almost closet-like. Books overflow from shelves that line the narrow walls from floor to ceiling. Sections range from “photography” to “Kabuki Theater.” The atmosphere is earthy, archaic, and idiosyncratic. On my first visit, I could not help but breathe in the sentimental musk of yellowing pages and mahogany. I walked out with a dated volume on method acting and an anthology of Woody Allen screenplays. Despite its musty ambience, Westsider Books is imbued with an iconic identity of the surrounding area. It isn’t just what’s inside the store that makes it important, it’s what the store embodies: built in the style of neo-classical architecture, the structure preserves and celebrates a forgotten culture and local heritage.

The Upper West Side did not see its rise to prominence until the late nineteenth century. According to historian
Sarah Waxman, the advent of the apartment building was the catalyst for the Upper West Side’s growth. Moving New York City’s wealthy denizens from West End townhouses into high-rise apartments created a new real estate market and a residential milieu. By the turn of the century, the Upper West Side soared with high-rise apartment buildings (Waxman). In 1902, developer William C. Dewey commissioned well-known architect John H. Duncan, known for his use of the Beaux Arts style, to design a ten-story flat on the corner of Broadway and 80th street. The establishment of the building was not the first partnership between Dewey and Duncan; they also collaborated on Hotel Wolcott earlier that year (“NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission”). Yet it was this burgeoning appeal for high altitude luxury that lured property tycoon Dewey and architect Duncan to the Upper West Side.

Little is known about William C. Dewey’s career in New York City, except that he was the owner of “considerable property” (“In the Real Estate Field”). According to a report by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, William C. Dewey lived in Springfield, Massachusetts before he moved to New York City in 1891. Originally a real estate broker, Dewey became a developer at the turn of the century and purchased property all over the city, including the plot of land on the corner of Broadway and 80th street (“NYC Landmarks”). However, Dewey’s career as a developer was short-lived. By 1905, a lawsuit brought the Hotel Wolcott to foreclosure and, in 1908, the ten-story flat was foreclosed (“In the Real Estate Field”).

John Hemmingway Duncan enjoyed a career as a popular architect between the end of the nineteenth century to the dawn of the twentieth, studying architecture both in Binghamton, New York and abroad (Pearson, Marjorie, and Urbanelli). Known for his design of historic monuments in New York City, Duncan’s rise to prominence in the
architectural community came in the early 1880s, when he and his contemporaries founded the Architectural League of New York in 1881 (“New York City”). By 1886, Duncan had established his own design firm and designed both the 1886 Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Memorial Arch at Grand Army Plaza (dedicated to Union soldiers in the Civil War) and the General Grant National Memorial in 1890. After completing these high-profile projects, Duncan moved to the forefront of the city’s architectural scene, which led to more commissions for commercial and residential buildings, such as the Knox Hat Company and Dewey’s Upper West Side flat (Gray).

At the time of the ten-story flat’s construction, America was undergoing what historians Donna and Jonathan Fricker call a “cultural inferiority complex,” stemming from an obsession with Europe (Fricker and Fricker). This sentiment was exemplified at the 1893 Columbian Exhibition, also known as the Chicago World’s Fair, where Greco-Romanesque architecture, in all of its grandeur and regality, seduced American architects. The Beaux Arts movement in the United States grew out of L’École des Beaux Arts, an institution of fine arts in France. Indeed, many American architects, perhaps even Duncan, studied at the Paris school and brought what they learned back to the States. That same year, with funding from industry titans like Andrew Carnegie and J.P. Morgan, the Society of Beaux Arts was founded as the American cousin of the French École. The wave of influence from the Columbian Exhibition and the growing intellectual push towards Beaux Arts established this style of architecture in America’s cities. Characteristic features included white edifices, arches, domes, vaulted ceilings, and columns. Symmetry was prized, along with aesthetic embellishments such as molding and sculptures (Fricker and Fricker).

These elements adorn Duncan’s building on Broadway
and 80th Street. The building is formal, regal, and lavish. The roofline is ornately ribbed and there are small crest-like medallions on some of the windows. Dewey and Duncan’s structure, like the Upper West Side in general, is representative of a culture that reveled in regal pedigree. Synthesizing pre-existing European flavor with American taste for high-rises, this neighborhood is stately, grand, and illustrious. Duncan’s Neo-Classical Beaux-Arts aesthetic appealed to wealthy property owners (Pearson, Marjorie, and Urbanelli).

Not only does Westsider Books evoke older eras in its architectural, it also recollects them through literature. In 2002, owners Dorian Thornley and Brian Gonzalez purchased the shop, originally established in the 1980s under the name Gryphon Books, and endowed it with its current name, Westsider Books (Fantozzi). At one time, the books on the store’s wooden shelves may have been readily available, but most of them are out of print today. The books inside Westsider are no longer books, but artifacts, small fragments of an older culture. Everything in Westsider Books is old. There are vinyl records caked with dust, rickety reading stools, and a decrepit bookshelf ladder that appears to be rotting away. However, within the small store, books are ordered with care. One can tell by perusing their shelves that Westsider Books celebrates the old and the historic.

That Westsider Books exists as an independent bookstore acknowledges a dying culture in New York City. Joanna Fantozzi writes that Westsider Books holds “the unofficial title of the last used bookstore on the Upper West Side” (Fantozzi). Unlike in Manhattan, there are no more independent bookstores in the Bronx, and the only bookseller that remains in that borough is a Barnes and Noble (Beekman). With the emergence of large retailers like Barnes and Noble and the availability of Kindles and iPads, the market share for independent book sellers is shrinking quickly. Physical books are less available, and the rare books
at Westsider are relics of that reading culture. Independent bookstores, according to NPR, bind communities and foster the education and enlightenment their residents (Neary). Without Westsider Books or other independent bookstores, New York’s urban may be at risk.

Westsider Books is a landmark worth preserving because it is of historical, architectural, and intellectual significance. Whether through its structural aesthetic, where its architecture alludes to the splendor and might of an archaic age, or its hidden gems stashed on sagging shelves, Westsider Books embodies the city’s urban and reading history.

Works Cited


Pearson, Marjorie, and Elisa Urbanelli, eds. “Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District Designation Report Volume I: Essays/Architects’ Appendix.” New York City Landmarks Preservation...
Matthew Scheffler is from Asbury Park, New Jersey, a sandy beach town once widely celebrated as an attractive vacation spot at the turn of the century and immortalized by the songs of Bruce Springsteen. He intends to double-major in communications and the visual arts, concentrating in journalism and photography. He writes that exploring the Upper West Side firsthand made learning about history a tangible and engaging experience.
Often hailed as an international melting pot, New York City has long been considered a gateway for immigrants entering into the United States. Perhaps the most iconic symbol associated with immigration in New York is the Statue of Liberty, as suggested by the poem engraved within a lower level of the statue’s pedestal. Written by Emma Lazarus in 1883, the sonnet “The New Colossus” humanizes the statue, referring to it as the “Mother of Exiles” (6). This stalwart figure is portrayed as welcoming all those who seek refuge, and Lazarus bestows speech upon the statue, proclaiming, “Give me your tired, your poor / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore” (10-12). These few words, meant to inspire a certain romance and idealism of the immigrant experience, naturally cannot contain the abundance of stories that have been lived in New York City. These stories are often lost, ignored, or whitewashed with sweeping generalities. In a city so rife with social, cultural, and financial changes, the populations of immigrants ebb and flow in reaction to the currents of world affairs. One population in particular, the Ukrainian-American population in New York City,
has weathered many of these changes. Their experiences provide insight into how immigration, and how an ethnic populations grow and fade in response to their surroundings.

The East Village of today sometimes seems divorced from a particular culture or identity. In the time that I spent walking through the area, I did not find it distinguishable from the rest of the Village. The East Village is littered with Starbucks, frozen yogurt places, clothing stores, and generic sushi restaurants that spring up across Manhattan. To me, its appearance and composition is interchangeable with other neighborhoods of the city, lacking a defining atmosphere or style. This generic quality is reflected in Jennifer Egan’s *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, where the East Village served as just another hangout location for NYU students experimenting with ecstasy. They walk past it and through the surrounding area as one would walk past a Pret a Manger in Midtown or a Barnes and Noble on the Upper East Side. That the East Village has few defining features surprises me, given its fabled past of punk-rock anti-conformism. If I had not known that I was in the East Village when I walked through it, I would never have considered that it was the same place.

What I did not know, and certainly could not immediately guess, was that it was one a largely Ukrainian neighborhood. I found a sign of this when I came across St. George’s Ukrainian Catholic Church on East 7th Street and Taras Shevchenko Place. Designed for Ukrainian Catholics, the façade of the church was marked with Byzantine architectural flourishes and Cyrillic writing. With no other indicators of a Ukrainian population in the surrounding area, I grew interested in learning the history of the place.

The East Village once housed an ethnic Ukrainian neighborhood, and the story of this population reveals how their neighborhood changed. The first wave of Ukrainian immigration to America, occurring in the late 19th century, illustrates the long-standing and strongly negative
relationship between immigration, social prejudice, and economics. This group of Ukrainian immigrants consisted of over 350,000 individuals, and started moving to the United States in larger numbers by 1877 (Fedunkiw). At the time, the United States had already begun to industrialize and urbanize. Advancements in technology gave rise to sprawling industries of steel production, oil exploration, and railroad construction; America’s businessmen did not hesitate to capitalize upon these advancements. Because these industries were dominated by so few businessmen, nicknamed “the robber barons” for their monopolies, they set wages extremely low. This prompted a strike movement across American industrial areas, such as in Pennsylvania, where coal miners protested against low wages. In response, businesses sought to gain the upper hand by bringing in immigrant workers. Agents of Pennsylvania anthracite mining companies undercut the demands of strikers by recruiting workers from what is now Ukraine, promising potential immigrants “earnings ten to 20 times greater than they could hope for in the Ukraine” (Procko 1). In the process, Ukrainian immigrants were exploited and vilified by the communities to which they had immigrated.

When looking at the conditions which Ukrainian immigrants faced in the late 19th century, there are some similarities to the present. Wage manipulation created through the hiring of immigrant workers remains a practice today, as exemplified in a New York Times article written by Steven Camarota. A director of research at the Center for Immigration Studies, Camarota writes specifically about the declining wages in the meat-packing industry. According to the article, “real wages for meat packers were 45 percent lower in 2007 than in 1980,” caused by employers’ “bringing in immigrants and moving to smaller communities” (Camarota). These predatory practices continue to harm the economic mobility of new immigrants.
In addition to such financial difficulties, Ukrainian immigrants were met with prejudice by those already living within the United States. Established English, Irish, and Welsh communities saw Ukrainians as “contaminating once civilized towns in Pennsylvania by forcing out those who had given stability to the area” because they were among the first non-English-speaking immigrants (Fedunkiw). These populations went so far as to pass a discriminatory ordinance that taxed non-naturalized miners and laborers in the state, specifically targeting Ukrainian immigrant workers (Fedunkiw). As time went on, the Ukrainian populations in other areas grew in spite of these obstacles. In particular, the Ukrainian community within New York City’s East Village developed rapidly.

The Ukrainian population in New York centered on religious unity and leadership, with St. George’s Ukrainian Catholic Church serving as a hub for devout immigrants. This population was fundamental to establishing the Ruthenian Catholic Church of America, an Eastern Catholic Church that utilizes the Byzantine rite while maintaining communion with Rome. Near the end of the 19th century, the Ukrainian population in the Northeast began to desire the establishment of their own churches to tend to their spiritual needs. As populations grew, immigrants began to send letters and petitions to Eastern Europe, beseeching old parishes for spiritual leadership (Procko 3). Priests answered this call, but as they immigrated to the United States, they found themselves in conflict with the established Latin Churches. The Latin Church ruled that Ruthenian priests would be subordinate to Latin dioceses, and that they would be expected to follow Latin traditions, including the tradition of celibacy (Procko 12). Ruthenian priests refused to heed these directives, leading to a significant split in the leadership and organization of Ruthenian religious communities. This rift began to close in 1907,
when the Roman Catholic Church partially recognized the autonomy of the Ruthenian Church by appointing its first American bishop, Right Rev. Monsignor Soter Ortynsky, O.S.B.M. (Procko 18). St. George’s Church became a center of organization as a result of this appointment. Bishop Ortynsky’s first Pontifical Mass, the first Ruthenian Pontifical Mass in the United States, was held in 1907 at St. George’s first location at 332-340 East 20th Street and First Avenue (Procko 20). In September of that year, St. George’s Church hosted a convening of 76 Ruthenian priests as they centralized their American leadership (Procko 23). Through all of this, St. George’s became established as the religious hub of Ukrainian Catholics in the New York area. That status helped draw immigrants seeking familiar customs to the East Village in larger numbers.

A second wave of immigration occurred between the two World Wars, though it would not be as large as the first wave. Consisting of only 15,000 individuals, this wave primarily settled in areas where the first wave had already established itself (Fedunkiw). Though there may not be a single, direct cause of the drop off in immigration, examining the state of Ukraine at this time may help explain the change. At that time, Stalin had come to power in the Soviet Union, of which Ukraine was a part. In the early 1930’s, Stalin rolled out his plan to socialize and collectivize the farmlands of the Soviet Union, but much of this plan consisted of a thinly-concealed attempt to commit genocide against ethnic Ukrainians. This genocide is now known as the Holodomor, translated as the “death by starvation.” To begin the process of collectivization, Stalin deported millions of kulaks (wealthy farmers) to prison camps in Siberia, as they were seen as counterrevolutionary enemies of socialism under his ideology (Kort 173). The journeys alone killed thousands of people, but the labor camps killed the survivors by the hundreds of thousands. Then, as crops died due to the poor weather of the 1931 and 1932
growing seasons, the Soviet government continued to oppress Ukrainian farmers (Kort 174). The government took grain from the countryside to feed cities, and did its best to prevent the starving Ukrainians from recovering the food which it had been taken from them (Kort 174). Between 1932 and 1933, five million Ukrainians died from forced starvation (Kort 174). The genocide continued in other ways, including the “destruction of Ukraine’s political leadership, the resettlement of Ukraine’s depopulated areas with other ethnic groups, the prosecution of those who dared to speak of the famine publicly, and the consistent blatant denial of famine by the Soviet regime” (“Holodomor Facts and History”). The ebbing of the Ukrainian community in New York City may have partially resulted from the Holodomor, helping to explain how a once-vibrant neighborhood began to fade.

Though the flow of Ukrainian immigration was stunted by the actions of the Soviet government, it resumed at the end of World War II despite Stalin’s repeated attempts to subjugate the population. Yet, the changing nature of Stalin’s policies encouraged a different segment of Ukrainians to immigrate to the United States. Following the war, Stalin “demanded a rapid economic recovery,” setting such impossible targets that his policies depressed the standard of living in the Soviet Union (Kort 192). This was closely followed by a systematic purge designed to destroy foreign culture within the Soviet Union, including deportations of hundreds of thousands of people to the Gulag. Ukrainians were included in this massive purge, as they were seen as “socially dangerous” (Kort 192). In 1946, however, this purge began to target intellectuals, nicknamed the Zhdanovshchina, after Stalin’s apparent successor. Given that many of the Ukrainian immigrants following the war were of a higher socio-economic background than previous immigrants, it follows that this purge might have changed immigration. The new group of immigrants consisted of
those with the economic means to flee the Soviet Union. These refugees included 2,000 university students, 1,200 teachers and scholars, 400 engineers, 350 lawyers, and 300 physicians (Fedunkiw). Many decided to relocate to the United States (Fedunkiw). Once again, they tended to settle in established neighborhoods.

Despite the overall decline in immigration, an influx of wealthier Ukrainians changed the Ukrainian neighborhood in the East Village. The new population seems to have spurred important developments in St. George’s history. In 1958, a three-million-dollar school building was constructed to serve as both an elementary and high school for the parish ("History of St. George Ukrainian Catholic Church"). Demand for the building was likely fostered by the new immigrants, who would have wanted their children to attend a school that connected them to Ukrainian traditions. Parents wanted this connection even though they assumed their stay in New York would be temporary (Fedunkiw). The continued use of the building as a school indicates a sort of perseverance of the community. In 1978, St. George’s current church building was constructed, built in the Ukrainian-Byzantine architectural style. The construction of the new church was even completed without St. George’s parish incurring any debt, as parishioners’ donations covered the entirety of the project ("History of St. George Ukrainian Catholic Church"). While both events may not have happened solely because of the newest wave of immigrants, their wealth likely enabled these developments. Even as the Ukrainian neighborhood in the East Village declined in population, the community established lasting edifices which would connect their troubled past to the rapidly-changing present.

Today, the East Village has lost many of its ethnic markers. Once, Ukrainian immigrants gathered in this neighborhood, proving the vitality of their community through the establishment of an autonomous church. While
immigrants were drawn to the East Village as a refuge from the oppression of starvation and torture, they have been gradually displaced because of rising real estate prices.

Even though the reality of gentrification cannot be denied, I do not think that all is lost. On Friday mornings in the East Village, a “small volunteer army of elderly women” fill the street in front of St. George’s, crowding themselves into a nameless restaurant across the street from it (Ellick). Once there, they prepare *varenyky*, small potato dumplings buttered with an onion sauce. The volunteers prepare over 2,000 *varenyky* to sell throughout the weekend, along with *borscht*, *holubsti*, and apple cake, the sales of which earn them over $80,000 per year (Ellick). All that money is given to St. George’s for the maintenance of the church and its adjoining school. Though the “once-vibrant Slavic enclave...has since yielded to hipsters” (Ellick), and the surrounding area no longer houses Ukrainians as it once did, Ukrainian-Americans scattered through New York City flock to the luncheonette, demonstrating the community’s lasting loyalty. Cultural ties, though facilitated by proximity, do not end when a community is dispersed. Though the Ukrainian immigrant population may no longer call the East Village its home, that does not mean their culture or identity has been weakened by the neighborhood’s commercialization. In spite of the challenges their people have endured over the past century, Ukrainians preserve the pieces of their home with quiet determination.

**Works Cited**

Aaron Lascano wrote this paper for his Composition II class. Lascano grew interested in writing about the Ukrainian immigrant population of New York after stumbling upon St. George’s Ukrainian Catholic Church during a walk through the East Village. As a second-generation Hispanic-American born and raised in New York City, this history interested him because he was curious about the experiences of a people and culture distinct from his own. The greatest challenge of this assignment was locating sources which provided the details he sought, but once he found them, his paper benefited all the more for it.
In 2005, Deutsche Postbank advertised its financial services through “Funny Money,” a commercial produced by BBDO Proximity. The commercial opens to a furnished men’s dressing room, presumably that of a country club, where a man is buttoning the cuffs of his crisp white dress shirt. A phone beside him begins to chime. He takes a quick glance behind him before picking up. In his opening remarks, he greets the woman on the other end and confirms that he is at a club. As the man proceeds to adjust his red tie, fasten his lustrous watch, and slip into his tailored jacket, he conducts a critical financial conversation. He gives his consent to the woman to spend $1,000 on a luxury leather jacket, $500,000 on a new Mercedes Benz, and $1.4 million on a house. After concluding the exchange with mutual, satisfied “I love yous,” the man hangs up and turns to his peers to ask: “Um, does anybody know whose phone this is?”

Since the 1960’s, the term “gay” has been synonymous with “homosexual” and, when used derogatorily, has carried the prejudices of previous generations. Due to a lack of education about homosexuality, children use “gay” and other related slang to degrade and bully one another regardless of sexual orientation. Despite sexual slurs being
used by young people irrespective of their sexual orientation, children perceived to be non-heterosexual are bullied more than others, leading to increased likelihood of self-harm and suicide. Throughout my childhood, my teachers tried to protect students from sexuality-targeted bullying by punishing those who use the word “gay” negatively. Due to this action, use of the word “gay” was silenced. I have since learned that silencing those who use the word negatively can do as much harm as being bullied with the word. Instead, as social acceptance of homosexuality increases, the derogatory use of the word “gay” by children and teens could be stopped by educating children on the meaning and appropriate uses of the word, encouraging appropriate use, and discouraging inappropriate use.

As I’ve grown up, my understanding of the word “gay” has changed – as has the context within which it is used. In elementary and middle school, “gay” was an insult. When one student got into a fight with a friend, his or her trump card would be to call them “gay.” For most of my younger schooling, my fellow students and I had no concept of what “gay” meant; we simply knew that it was bad. The meaning was not important to us; instead, its ability to hurt someone else made it powerful and useful. We reserved it as the final shot with which to destroy someone else. My adolescent experiences and observations were not unique. According to a study conducted by Jane Riese, a social worker and prevention educator at Clemson University, 93% of teenagers nationwide hear derogatory words associated with sexual orientation every day, and 12% are specifically targeted by these derogatory hate words (Riese). Despite the common perception that teenagers are targeted based on their sexuality, Riese’s study found that 75% of hate-related words are used irrespective of the target’s sexual orientation (Riese). Sexually derogatory words are simply used to hurt, and because of this usage, no one in my school wanted to be
called “gay” or to identify as gay.

By the end of middle school, my friends and I had looked up the definition of “gay” online and found that it meant something along the lines of “a boy who likes another boy.” After scrolling down the page we found a second definition, “light-hearted, care free…cheerful, merry” (OED). We reverted to the old meaning of the word to keep the insults from hurting. If someone called you “gay,” the comeback became, “Yeah, I’m so happy!” It helped a little, but the word still hurt because of the hateful intensity with which it was often uttered.

To keep us from fighting, our teachers restrained us from using the word “gay” by giving out lunch detentions to anyone that used it within earshot. They tried to make the word taboo in the hopes that it would de-stigmatize it. Like putting a Band-Aid on a bullet wound, however, this did not help and, in the long run, made things worse. Teachers in classrooms nationwide have started banning the use of the word “gay.” In fact, Tennessee’s House of Representatives has been actively pursuing a bill since 2012 that will forbid the use of the word “gay” (and any other homosexual-related words) within schools altogether (Wong). This legislation, supposedly meant to protect children from harm, is in fact harming them by denying those kids who are homosexual the language with which to discuss themselves. What began as an effort to help students now hurts them. If Tennessee’s bill passes, they will institutionally propagate this suppression of homosexuality by silencing all conversation on sexuality. By not providing countermeasures, such as teaching students to accept and treat non-heterosexual students equally, they are perpetuating the notion that homosexuality is taboo.

In high school, “gay” took on a different usage. The high school I attended was an all-boys boarding school. In boarding school environments, living with others can create incredibly close friendships. At my high school, “brotherhood” was a
core value. There was little bullying based on alternative sexualities, because there was a school rule that any hazing or hate crimes would result in expulsion. Still, no one in our school openly identified as non-heterosexual. Similar to the way teachers addressed “gay” in middle school, calling someone else “gay” was considered bullying. Therefore, the term was commonly used to slander nearly everything else. Under these circumstances, “gay” became the slang for things boys thought were annoying, uncool, or weird. Assemblies, homework assignments, and viral YouTube videos were commonly described as “gay.” According to the Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang, “gay” in contemporary usage has become synonymous with stupid, foolish, and lame (ODMS). The source of this usage is derived from “gay adjective [for] homosexual” (ODMS). The connotation from my childhood hadn’t changed.

Through diffusion, the negative connotation of “gay” still hurt others and forced homosexual students into strict heterosexual stereotypes to avoid being viewed as gay. Guys were so concerned with their sexualities that they followed up their actions with a habitual utterance: “no homo,” meaning “not meant in a homosexually romantic way.” Giving another guy a hug, showing any affection towards one another, or complimenting each other was followed by this phrase so that no one would get the wrong impression. Boys used this phrase needlessly, often after actions that were clearly not homosexual in nature, without realizing the negative implications of their word choice. In response to a public interview of athlete Roy Hibbert, during which he used the phrase “no homo,” Nic Subtirelu, a PhD student at Georgia State University studying sociological linguistics, reported, “The use of ‘no homo’ in this context and in others propagates an ideology that positions homosexuality and gay men as inferior to heterosexuality or heterosexual men. Specifically, it represents homosexuality as socially
undesirable” (Subtirelu). My schoolmates were not alone in using this phrase inappropriately. During the week of December 3rd to December 9th, 2014, 36,651 people tweeted the phrase “no homo.” Another 40,010 tweeted the phrase “[that’s] so gay” (NoHomoPhobes). As recently as last week, thousands of people used homosexual-related terms derogatorily on social media.

This use is beginning to decline. While my high school was advertised as accepting due to its strict policies, it was essentially an anti-gay community because it silently condoned the usage of the word “gay” to mean “undesirable” and “uncool.” However, during my junior year of school, the faculty and administration rethought their treatment of sexuality and bullying. Sparked by the growing national awareness for bullied Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Questioning (LGBTQ) students, the faculty brought in speakers to address our school as a whole on topics of sexuality and acceptance. Teachers showed videos at assemblies from the “It Gets Better” campaign, which aims to provide comfort to teens of the LGBTQ community and provide support to those that don’t have openly gay mentors or role models in their lives. Their slogan, “It Gets Better,” is found in their mission statement: “The It Gets Better Project wants to remind teenagers in the LGBT community that they are not alone — and it WILL get better” (It Gets Better). That same year, students were encouraged to participate in the “National Day of Silence,” a campaign that aims to increase understanding by having “students across the country vow to take a form of silence to call attention to the silencing effect of anti-LGBT bullying and harassment in schools” (National Day of Silence). This campaign also raises sympathy by having non-LGBTQ members experience what it’s like to live a day without being able to speak and thereby better understand what silenced LGBTQ members go through every day by not being able to express their sexuality.
One video that particularly relates to my high school experience is Ignite Cardiff's recording of Dean Lloyd's talk “Things I've Heard Called ‘Gay’ That Really Aren’t.” A mix of comedic lines and photographs, as well as stark commentary and statistics, his speech addresses homophobia. He specifically draws attention to the inaccurate use of “gay” to refer to things that are not homosexual. To contextualize his point, Lloyd projects a pair of furry, pink shoes that have wings and teddy bear heads attached to them onto the screen and describes them: “This pair of trainers. So they’re outrageous, they’re over the top, they’re overpriced, they’re definitely pink, but they’re really not gay” (EbbwMedia).

Highlighting a rampant problem in my high school, Lloyd also discusses the need to reintroduce the use of the word “gay” in schools as a term of empowerment, not degradation. Just as my school took action to reframe the discussion about the term, teachers need to be trained, or given a proper method for addressing gay bullying, rather than acting as passive bystanders or silencing the term outright.

These campaigns and others work to end nationwide problems and stigmas affecting LGBTQ youth, including youth suicide caused by bullying and homelessness, which stems from a lack of parental support for kids who know or even think they might fall into the LGBTQ category. LGBTQ youth are two to four times more likely than other children to commit suicide, think about harming themselves, or think of committing suicide, and they comprise roughly 30% of the victims of youth suicides (Cody, Riese). Roughly 40% of homeless children are LGBTQ (“Homeless LGBT Youth”). It is believed that these high statistics are due to a lack of parental support for LGBTQ children. Younger people are generally accepting of homosexuality, but older generations are statistically less tolerant. According to research conducted by Pew Research Center, 74% of people under the age of 30 believe in equal rights for homosexuals
(Growing Support for Gay Marriage: Changed Minds and Changing Demographics). This percentage drops steadily as age increases. Currently, only 46% of adults between the ages of 49 and 67 believe in equal rights for homosexuals; that’s the age range of most parents (“Growing Support”). Negative parental attitudes about homosexuality contribute to the many LGBTQ children living on the streets and to the word “gay” being used negatively by young children.

Over my junior and senior years in high school, people’s mentalities changed. “No homo” and other negative uses of “gay” and associated slang gradually stopped being incorporated incorrectly into students’ vocabularies once they learned the negative effects that their words could inadvertently have on their friends. Presentations and active conversations promoted by the Gay-Straight Alliance raised awareness on these issues, and conversations about the appropriate use of the word “gay” were encouraged. This activism challenged anti-gay mentalities. By the end of my senior year, numerous friends whom I had always assumed were straight made public their true sexualities. My high school had the standard percentages of LGBT populations: roughly 5 to 9 percent (Riese). All it took for my friends to be comfortable with themselves was to hear that being gay, or any other sexuality, was not wrong, but natural and healthy.

Due to my personal experiences and the documented experiences of youth nationwide, I believe that the taboo should be lifted off of the word “gay.” Instead of teaching kids that the word is bad, its appropriate usage should be taught to children and teens. Teachers should take an active role in building homosexually tolerant environments by promoting LGBTQ awareness events, showing clips of or inviting guest speakers on the subject, and educating students on the detrimental effects of using “gay” in a negative context. As seen by LGBTQ movements aimed at providing support and increasing understanding, the word
“gay” should be used to describe a particular demographic – homosexual males – rather than as a slur. “Gay” should be used to show the gay community that they have as much right to be heard, acknowledged, and loved as anybody else.

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For an essay assignment on taboos, Maxym Prybyla chose to write about the word “gay” because of how his personal definition of the word had changed in his life. He explored his relationship with the word and connected his experiences to those of American adolescents nationwide.
In the early 1950s, Senator Joseph McCarthy fueled a climate of fear about communism by claiming that those labeled as subversives and communists had infiltrated America. He centralized his efforts by attacking communists and gays. The discrimination gays felt under McCarthy’s era is emphasized by Audre Lorde’s literary work. By looking at Audre Lorde’s *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, I will discuss heteronormativity’s effect on homosexual identity during the McCarthy era. This era was characterized by paranoia, fear, and secrecy as homosexuals were labeled as subversives and deviates. Lorde’s retelling of this time in her biomythography allows for readers to understand first-hand the challenges and obstacles gays had to face during the Lavender and Red Scares. Lorde coins the term biomythography as she opens up a new literary genre, which uses her mother’s stories of African mythology as an inspiration to empower her own narrative from a feministic perspective. Lorde’s embrace of femininity synthesized with her rejection of gender conformity turns over the heteronormative ideal projected to Americans in the early 1950s by the media and the McCarthy committee. With
the projection of this heteronormative ideal, the threat of identifying as homosexual was just as dangerous as being a communist during the McCarthy era. McCarthyism encouraged heteronormativity and prejudiced against all who did not fit into the heteronormative category.

McCarthy utilized isolation techniques to stigmatize homosexuality under a veil of subversion, which fractured the development of individual identity for those whom McCarthyism wrongly marginalized. McCarthy also attacked his political enemies, demanding that Secretary of State, Acheson, be impeached due to his influence on Truman and his alleged coddling of communists. Senator McCarthy tried to demonstrate “a communist penetration” of the State Department (White) by making “wild accusations” which ultimately proved to be “nothing more than the figment of McCarthy’s vivid imagination” (McMahon 114). The McCarthy committee made “special inquiry into whether homosexuals were employed by the Executive Branch of the Government” (White). Within the McCarthy committee, there was further corruption, such as “the abuses of the loyalty programs and other security measures” (Brinkley 40). These abuses were controversial, frequent, and dismantled the power of the corrupt system in the long-term.

McCarthy and his advisor, Roy Cohn, took John G. Adams, Army Counselor, to court over speculation that homosexuals were serving as personnel in United States Defense. Adams denied that he had ever “tried to divert the McCarthy committee from its Army investigations by holding out the ‘bait’ of providing them with evidence of alleged homosexuals in the Air Force or the Navy” (Lawrence). Homosexuals were considered to be “loyalty risks” by McCarthy, and were therefore misguidedlly labeled as “sexual deviates, persons with mental or character weaknesses—moral risks” (Mandelbaum 135). McCarthy considered these “moral risks” the fourth degree of communists, as it was
believed that they were vulnerable to blackmail and were stigmatized as subversives. Cohn said that Adams “offered up bigger bait from time to time, to wit, subversives, homosexuals, in the Air Force and in the Navy” (Lawrence). Mr. Adams attempted to “put to rest any allegations that this homosexual ring did exist,” but that was not a simple task as Cohn was responsible for “investigating the report of homosexual activity” in the Navy and Air Force (Lawrence).

During the McCarthy era, homosexuality was “a reason for suspicion and shunning” (Lorde 149). The suspicion this era bred and endorsed did not promote an open forum for discourse on matters of race, gender, and sexuality. Lorde opens this discourse by publishing her biomythography in the 1980s during the rise of the AIDS epidemic and after the Stonewall Riots in New York City. The 1980’s became pivotal in the modern formation of pride identity within the LGBTQ community by sparking a redefining of the social construct of gender and the fostering of a more inclusive atmosphere for homonormative categories to develop. By setting her biomythography during the 1950s, she encapsulates the struggle identity formation became for those individuals who did not fit into the dominant heteronormative culture of the time.

Lorde’s isolation due to the red stigma associated with homosexuality during the McCarthy era allowed for her identity to become fragmented. She felt threatened even when she went to gay bars in the village, saying, “you never could tell who was really who” as the “paranoia of the McCarthy years was still everywhere outside of the mainstream of blessed-out suburban Middle America” (Lorde 187). The subculture of fear, which escalated during the McCarthy years, did not allow for proper identity formation, at least not public identity formation for homosexuals. Public recognition of individual identity is essential in establishing a sense of community; this is shown when Lorde feels more
comfortable returning to the United States after hearing the *Brown v Board of Education* verdict. While the verdict provided her with a racially defined type of social acceptance, Lorde still felt rejected on the grounds of her sexuality.

Although a subculture of fear existed during and still lingered after the McCarthy era, a more inclusive atmosphere surfaced in 1954 with the U.S. Supreme Court ruling of segregation as unconstitutional in *Brown v Board of Education*. Lorde was listening to the McCarthy censures on the radio around the same time she heard of desegregation in the United States school system. Lorde found herself hopeful after hearing the Supreme Court decision on desegregation in the education system, allowing for her to feel more comfortable coming back to the United States to rekindle her American identity. The formation of her American identity seemed to be compromised by her age, race, gender, and sexuality. Lorde recalls “how being young and Black and gay and lonely felt” (Lorde 177). Before her relationship with Muriel (Lorde’s girlfriend) and before Rhea (Lorde’s roommate) realized Lorde was a lesbian, Lorde identified as both gay and lonely. The intersection of sexuality and loneliness was stressed for homosexuals by McCarthy’s isolation tactics through fear of stigmatization. The role of individual identity becomes vital in the process of community building and social bonding, which is exemplified by the strain in Lorde and Rhea’s relationship after Rhea discovered that Lorde was a lesbian. Lorde believed that Rhea’s move to Chicago was out of fear that Rhea’s coworkers may find out that she was living with a lesbian, furthering Lorde’s isolation. Sexuality is merely a facet of an individual’s identity, but the persecution of homosexuals committed in the early 1950s stifled identity formation for that minority. Although Lorde describes her singular experience, she is part of a collective whole whose identity formation became hindered under McCarthyism.

Lorde takes readers along with her on her journey of
self-discovery, inviting them to sympathize with her as she formulates her own identity in a time of institutional prejudice. The country’s political ideology was constructed under the fear of red enemies, which condemned particular individuals who in turn became limited by certain facets of their own humanity (race, gender, sexuality). The accusations made by the McCarthy committee were coupled with their own hypocrisy while, surprisingly enough, Roy Cohn was outed as a homosexual when he was diagnosed with AIDS in the 1980s. Cohn’s presence in the McCarthy era not only points out the hypocrisy within the committee, but also highlights the socially forced fragmentation of the individual identity of homosexuals at the time. Identity formation during the McCarthy era evoked paranoia as a suspicious government accused its citizens instead of protecting and serving all of them.

Works Cited


Katie Moran grew up in New Jersey before attending Fordham University. Her academic studies have focused on race, gender, sexuality, culture, performance, and religion. Looking at Audre Lorde’s Zami: A New Spelling of My Name, this essay scopes identity formation and fragmentation during the early 1950s through the lenses of sexuality, race, and gender.
The character of Mephistopheles, the self-proclaimed “spirit of negation” in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s Faust: Part One, presents the reader with a personification of the demonic that had not previously been seen in literature. Mephistopheles utilizes his own brand of skepticism, which frequently borders on nihilism, to challenge previously held beliefs about humanity’s relationship to Hell. In his troubled yet symbiotic relationship with Faust, he further demonstrates the ways in which human nature is inextricably related to the darkness and evil he claims to represent. Ultimately, Mephistopheles’ close relationship with Faust and the way he functions as a protagonist offers compelling evidence that the evil and darkness Mephistopheles represents are an inevitable and necessary part of human nature.

The reader is introduced to Mephistopheles when he makes a wager with God that he will be able to steer Faust’s soul into sin. Mephistopheles identifies his personal motivations for trying to draw Faust into darkness:

THE LORD
Man errs, til he has ceased to strive.
MEPHISTOPHELES

I thank your Grace; for dead men never tempt
Me greatly, I confess. In this connection
I like to see a full and fresh complexion;
A corpse is an unwelcome visitor.
The cat-and-mouse game is what I prefer.

(316-322)

In these lines, Mephistopheles says that he gets enjoyment out of manipulating souls while they are still alive. His rhymes, including “connection” and “complexion,” evoke his playful sense, underlining the enjoyment that he gets from manipulating souls. God’s statement, “Man errs, til he has ceased to strive,” gives the reader a clue about why having a living soul to tempt is so important to Mephistopheles: it is because these souls are continuously making the sort of errors that would lead them to be tempted by him in the first place. By saying he prefers the “cat-and-mouse game,” Mephistopheles gives away an important clue about his personality. He considers his attempts to cause human souls to sin to be entertaining. Essentially, Mephistopheles is saying that in order to get satisfaction out of the evil he commits, he needs the challenge of a human soul. He only engages in his attempts to distract humans from God while they are alive because he relies on their ability to act and make errors.

During this interaction, God’s opinion of Mephistopheles becomes clear:

THE LORD

Man is too apt to sink into mere satisfaction,
A total standstill is his constant wish:
Therefore your company, busily devilish,
Serves well to stimulate him into action.

(336-343)
These lines introduce the reader to the text’s notion of sin and deepen our understanding of Mephistopheles’ character. In these lines, God identifies what he sees as the epitome of human error, “mere satisfaction,” and identifies characteristics in Mephistopheles that he sees as useful: activity. God uses words such as “mere” and “standstill” to characterize humanity and “busily” and “stimulate” to describe Mephistopheles. Through the Lord’s lines, the text underscores a way that Mephistopheles will become instrumental in Faust through the chaos and movement that he causes.

It is important to notice the way that the text highlights attributes of motion and productivity during the reader’s first introduction to Mephistopheles. In his article, “Between Satan and Mephistopheles: Byron and the Devil,” Fred Parker engages with the concept of motion. Reacting to the Lord’s description of Mephistopheles as “busily devilish,” Parker writes, “That phrase, muss als Teufel schaffen, also carries the implication, ‘must, as a devil, be productive’, or in [the translator’s] rendering, ‘must create forever.’ What is suggested here is an extraordinary reassimilation of the Devil into the larger, productive functioning of the whole” (Parker 19). Parker points out the connection between the devilish and the creative, but he frames it in the context of a larger divine plan. Looking at Mephistopheles’ character from this perspective, it seems that he is not simply a chaotic force that has forced himself upon the world, but that he has a specific function that God intends: productivity. The motion that Mephistopheles creates in the world, although it is sometimes destructive, serves a purpose. The concept of motion that recurs throughout this scene indicates that the darkness Mephistopheles represents gives humanity something to act against—the presence of evil—and the need for humanity to combat that evil has inherent meaning.

Later in Faust, Mephistopheles makes open declarations...
about his own character and his purpose, but these passages frequently offer more than meets the eye.

FAUST
   Well then, who are you?
MEPHISTOPHELES
   Part of that Power which would
   Do evil constantly, and constantly does good.
FAUST
   This riddle has, no doubt, some explanation.
MEPHISTOPHELES
   I am the spirit of perpetual negation;
   And rightly so, for all things that exist
   Deserve to perish, and would not be missed
(1335-1341)

The text’s use of the paradoxical language of constantly performing evil while simultaneously doing good draws our attention to Mephistopheles identifying himself as “the spirit of perpetual negation” – a possible answer to what Faust calls “this riddle.” However, Mephistopheles’ explanation is cryptic. One possible way to make sense of his assertion is to examine his curious choice of words, by which he refers to himself as the spirit of “perpetual negation” and as part of a greater power Mephistopheles’ identification as a “part” along with the contrast he draws between himself and the larger “power” sets up a dichotomy: good versus evil, creation versus destruction. He admits that he is subject to a greater power that is both good and generative. His role, by contrast, is constantly to destroy or “negate” them.

Parker recognizes Mephistopheles’ importance as part of a larger and more powerful supernatural force, explaining that Goethe’s “Prologue” draws heavily from the book of Job, an important context for the connection between Satan and God’s larger plan. This biblical book tells of a man named
Job whom God refers to as “my servant,” saying “that there is none like him in earth, a perfect and an upright man” (Job 1:8). Satan tells God that Job is such a devoted servant because God has given him everything he desires. However, after God gives Satan the power to take away everything he granted, Satan sees that Job still praises God. Of Job’s Satan, Park writes that he “is not yet what he will become: the Devil who is the great Enemy of God and man. It seems clear that he is part of the court of Heaven… Yet it is also clear that he is something of a loose cannon, a semi-freelance, one of the sons of God but also distinguished from them” (Parker 18-19). In Goethe’s Faust, Mephistopheles does not identify a target to destroy; instead his aim is destruction in itself. He says shortly after the above-quoted passage that “Destruction, sin, evil in short, is all / My sphere, the element I most prefer” (1343-1344). Mephistopheles, then, declares that he exists not to fulfill a certain goal, but to offer a depiction of sin and evil that is essentially related to human nature. By exposing the subtleties in Mephistopheles’ speech, it becomes apparent that Mephistopheles is not merely instrumental in Faust: just as he destroys, he also represents an essential part of a larger plan.

However, while this dialogue reveals the significance of Mephistopheles’ darkness, it also indicates that his darkness is futile. Faust goes on to suggest that Mephistopheles abandon his goal of cosmic chaos and attempt it “on a smaller scale” (1361), which leads Faust and Mephistopheles to have the following conversation:

Mephistopheles

The Something, this coarse world, this mess
Stands in the way of Nothingness,
And despite all I’ve undertaken,
This solid lump cannot be shaken.

[...]
Mephistopheles’ problem is that he derives all of his life’s energy from destruction, a course of action he has already described as futile. However, when the reader remembers that Mephistopheles offered the grounds for Faust’s realization in lines 1335-41, it becomes apparent Mephistopheles’ words need to be scrutinized closely, given that deception is an integral part of the game he plays with Faust’s soul. Faust realizes that the entirety of Mephistopheles’ life is centered on a goal that he cannot reach—a Nothingness still impeded by a Something “despite all I’ve undertaken”—but after musing on this riddle, Mephistopheles tells Faust that “On such a point there’s much to say,” implying that Faust has not yet reached the full answer (1385). Mephistopheles uses this riddle to suggest to Faust what he perceives to be the human condition: a life characterized by futility, fighting against the darkness he senses within himself. In this case, Mephistopheles has become a means of depicting evil and darkness to give Faust insight about himself. The text thus suggests that evil is an inevitable part of human nature. While Faust has noticed something relevant about Mephistopheles, he has also unknowingly come to a realization about himself. This is not the only time that Mephistopheles utilizes cryptic hints to convey important information to Faust. While it may be against Mephistopheles’ nature directly to tell Faust the danger of allowing hatred or futile desires to control his life, he is able to guide Faust into reaching this revelation of his own accord. Ironically, Mephistopheles almost functions as a guide, utilizing and promoting a skepticism that challenges what Faust had previously thought about himself to lead him to greater self-awareness. As Faust eventually realizes, Mephistopheles’ words cannot be taken at face value. While
Mephistopheles is skeptical of Faust and his motives, he also encourages Faust to be skeptical of himself.

Although Mephistopheles can be surprisingly subtle in the way he communicates with Faust, as the Goethe’s play nears its end, he reveals himself more directly:

Mephistopheles
Well, here we are again at the end of our wit’s tether, the point where your poor human brains always snap! Why do you make common cause with us, if you can’t stand the pace? Why try to fly if you’ve no head for heights? Did we force ourselves on you, or you on us? (Goethe 140-1)

At evidenced by the citation above, the text has transitioned from verse to prose. The rhyme scheme disappears, allowing for more free-flowing dialogue as Mephistopheles and Faust fight. Mephistopheles’ efforts to draw a distinction between “you” and “us” is significant because until this point Mephistopheles has offered a representation of evil where he and humanity were closely intertwined. Here, Mephistopheles derisively contrasts his and Faust’s abilities with statements like, “Why try to fly if you’ve no head for heights?” He repeats the word “us” while simultaneously referring to Faust as a “poor human,” highlighting the differences between them. While humanity and evil may appear indistinguishable earlier in Faust, the devil emerges as an absolute, whereas the evil in humanity (and in Faust himself) is limited. From this, the reader can infer that while human nature needs evil to exist, it is not the same all-consuming evil present in characters like Mephistopheles. There is always a point where “human brains… snap.” While Mephistopheles sees this as a shortcoming, the text does not invite us to abhor this moment of “weakness” in
Faust. Faust’s ultimate failure to follow Mephistopheles in his evil pursuits shows that while he may be uncomfortably susceptible to evil, he is unable to fulfill Mephistopheles’ role of perpetual negation.

Following these lines Faust makes a statement that shows the impact that Mephistopheles’ games have had on his life:

**FAUST**

Stop barring your greedy fangs at me, it makes me sick! - Oh you great splendid Spirit, who deigned to appear to me, who know my heart and my soul, why did you chain me to this vile companion, who gorges his appetite on ruin and drinks refreshment from destruction? (Goethe 141)

The cosmic powers at work throughout *Faust* have reappeared. Faust contrasts his feelings about God, the “great splendid Spirit... who know[s] my heart and my soul,” with Mephistopheles, “this vile companion” bent on ruin and destruction. Interestingly, Faust recognizes that God has “chained” his soul to Mephistopheles, yet he still praises the Lord. In the end, God was correct about Mephistopheles’ role; he leads Faust towards action and better recognition of himself. Faust says that God knows “[his] heart and [his] soul.” His question as to why God chained him to Mephistopheles indicates Faust’s acknowledgment that God willed their interaction, and that there was ultimately a reason for all of the events that occurred between them. Faust seems to understand this as well, for even after the pain Mephistopheles causes him, he still praises God as a “great splendid spirit.” He also blames Mephistopheles for “gorge[ing] his appetite on ruin and drink[ing] refreshment from destruction” when it is clear through their being “chained” together that Faust has
participated in the same actions. Ironically, in acknowledging his involvement with Mephistopheles and referring to their relationship as being “chained” to one another, Faust comes close to admitting to the darkness within himself. It is only by virtue of Mephistopheles, however, that Faust gains a greater knowledge of himself.

Mephistopheles acts as an embodiment of darkness and evil to highlight certain characteristics in Faust. Unexpectedly, his demonic behavior turns Mephistopheles into a protagonist, in that he motivates action in Faust and leads him to greater understanding. Mephistopheles openly claims to represent negation, the dark side of cosmic nature, and through their interactions Mephistopheles forces Faust to come to terms with the evil within himself. By observing subtleties in Mephistopheles’ speeches and in his description by others in Faust: Part One, we gain a clearer picture of why evil is represented as inevitable, what function it serves, and what it implies about Faust and human nature.

Works Cited


Brooke Cantwell is a rising sophomore from Greenwich, Connecticut who is currently planning on studying Neuroscience. She chose this topic because she felt that it was an element of the book that she hadn’t seen analyzed yet and that this essay presented an opportunity to explore it. The hardest part of this essay was wrapping her head around all of the contradictions present in the character she decided to work with.
William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* contains two separate worlds: courtly society and a forest realm. In the play, four lovers run to the forest amidst a complicated romantic situation. As these lovers, Hermia, Demetrius, Lysander and Helena, become entangled in shared emotions, their identities often become indistinguishable. In the forest, the characters are subject to the magical forces of the wood and its effects on their feelings for each other. While the Athenian courtly society in which they live is defined by rules and social roles, the forest has its own laws, to which the humans become subject. The forest in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* represents the landscape of the human collective subconscious. Each character is a discreet part of this collective whole, in which their innermost desires and identities are often indistinguishable. The forest also seems to act as a dream world, which allows the subconscious to flow unrestricted. These psychological influences are fascinating as Shakespeare lived hundreds of years before the advent of psychology. I align myself with Martin Bergmann’s exploration of a collective imagination shared by the characters as well as Marjorie Garber’s theory
of a forest “dream experience.” I bring elements of these ideas together by examining the possibility of a collective subconscious amongst the characters as well as the forest’s role as a device in releasing repressed ambitions and feelings.

The play opens with the characters in a structured, courtly society from which they are desperate to escape. This includes strict rules and social roles. One of the lovers, Hermia, is required by her father, Egeus, to marry Demetrius despite her love for Lysander. When Hermia appeals to the authority figure, Theseus, he says:

For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
To fit your fancies to your father’s will
Or else the law of Athens yields you up…
To death, or to a vow of single life” (1.1.117-121).

He is reluctant to give Hermia the ultimatum of either obedience to her father’s wishes, death, or life in a convent, but he admits he is bound by the law to do so. In this world, the characters must follow the law and expectations associated with the gender roles presented by a patriarchal society.

Demetrius and Lysander are also placed into stereotypical roles, cast as jealous and competitive young men. Both men’s love for a woman is amplified when they realize they have competition. Demetrius seems more interested in his superiority to Lysander than his desire to have Hermia as his own. Even Lysander, who claims to be motivated only by his love for Hermia participates in this competition. Demetrius says, “Lysander, yield Thy crazéd title to my certain right” (1.1.91-2). This is the only time Demetrius speaks during Lysander’s argument with Hermia’s father over her hand in marriage. Demetrius’ few words portray his superior rights over Lysander. The two men battle over both love and status, demonstrating the constraints courtly society places upon them.
However, when Hermia and the other lovers escape to the forest, they are freed of these constraints. The forest is a fluid realm, where Athenian courtly rules are not upheld and humans are subject to fairy order. Here there is magic, and time and reality are easily manipulated. The forest’s ruler King Oberon asks his puck, Robin, to find a magical juice to induce love in those under its influence. Robin responds by saying, “I’ll put a girdle round bout the Earth in forty minutes” (2.1.175). He references his ability to bend time, as his magical abilities allow him to travel beyond the rules of physical abilities. In the forest, humans are easily manipulated by magic. The lovers’ feelings and desires change often and their relationships change quickly.

Similar to the effects of human desire, the forest is unpredictable, an environment of complicated emotions and urges. Released from societal standards, the characters express unbridled emotions. They experience love that is fickle and intense, bouncing between lovers. After Lysander is subjected to the love juice, he wakes up in love with Helena, declaring, “Content with Hermia? No. I do repent/ The tedious moments I with her have spent./ Not Hermia but Helena I love (2.2.117-9).” Before he had fallen asleep, Lysander was madly in love with Hermia. By the next morning he scorns her in favor of a new love. This is reminiscent of the conflicting desires of a human subconscious. For the characters of Midsummer, a tangled romantic history logically leads to indecisiveness. The “magic” used on the characters is representative of their own desires working out various feelings for one another. For example, Demetrius was engaged in a relationship with Helena before he devoted his time to Hermia. In society, he realizes he must choose one woman and decides on Hermia. However, in the forest his underlying feelings for Helena are revealed, and he realizes she is his true love. In this way the forest approximates a more accurate representation of human
desire as people can have multiple conflicting passions. It is the rules of society that force people to choose only one person to love as a life partner.

The idea of a collective subconscious is also strongly represented in the way the characters share desires and traits, often becoming indistinguishable. Throughout the play, Hermia and Helena seem almost interchangeable; Helena even laments:

We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,
Had been incorporate (3.2.204-9).

Helena and Hermia have grown up together, never leaving one another’s sides. They have become almost identical, participating in the same activities and even forging one mind. Helena’s suggestion that their minds “had been incorporate” alludes to the idea of a collective mentality. Additionally, the use of similes such as “our needles created both one flower” alludes to the two girls joining hearts and minds. In this way, they both have their own distinct styles and characteristics but ultimately contribute to one being. They are both motivated by their love for a man, share insecurities about their beauty, and act as objects of affection for both Lysander and Demetrius. Even their names begin with the same letter, underscoring their similarities. This allows for a connection to be created between Hermia and Helena before they are known to be close friends. The two women represent the complexities of the subconscious, diverging into different conflicting wants and needs while sharing a collective mentality.

The forest could be a dream world, acting as a stage for
the human subconscious. This stage allows the characters’ repressed emotions and ambitions to mingle unrestrained. It works as a metaphorical landscape in which the inhabitants are liberated and even encouraged to explore the depths of their desires. According to this reading, the lovers fall asleep in the forest and, under the effects of the forest’s magic, have a joint dream in which they are subject to a “love juice.” In this dream, they fall in and out of love. Uninhibited by their conscious minds, their unconscious selves could work out their troubles. In this sense, the events in the forest occur within a shared dream.

Shakespeare’s use of the forest to release the characters’ emotions parallels psychologist Sigmund Freud’s theory that dreams reveal repressed desires. In his work, On Dreams, Freud says, “I am led to regard the dream as a sort of substitute for the thought-processes, full of meaning and emotion” (Freud 147). Freud believed that dreams had meaning and were an important part of the subconscious brain’s processes. He subscribed to a practice called psychoanalysis, which entails using a person’s dreams and stream of consciousness to uncover their true desires and problems. Three hundred years before Freud, Shakespeare stages a similar scene of complex desires and underlying emotions released by a fantasy world. However, in Shakespeare’s time, dreams were thought to be caused by supernatural elements, making his fairy forest realm an ideal location for working out matters of the subconscious.

Another strong clue to a subconscious collective dream world are the characters of Oberon and Titania and Theseus and Hippolyta. The former couple rules the forest while the latter holds power in society. They display many similarities and Oberon and Titania explicitly express an infatuation with the other couple. After Titania criticizes Oberon for his obsession with Hippolyta, he responds, “How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,/ Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,/
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?” (2.1.74-6). Titania and Oberon’s love for each other’s courtly counterpart suggests that they may be alternate versions of Theseus and Hippolyta. Additionally, Titania and Hippolyta never appear at the same time in the play, and the same applies to Oberon and Theseus. In Athenian society, Theseus is restricted by duty to force Hermia into following her father’s requirements for her marriage. He expresses a reluctance to force her into a loveless marriage, but he explains that “the law of Athens” binds him (1.1.119). Meanwhile, his forest counterpart Oberon is concerned with the lover’s fates and wants to help them work out their desires and wishes. This similar perspective could represent Theseus’ subconscious desire to help the lovers, something he could not do under societal constraints. Although this correlation exists, the workings of the forest are more complicated than direct correlations of one action to one person or connections between society and the woods. The forest mimics the complicated nature of the subconscious. It is hard to attribute the world to one person, suggesting the presence of a collective subconscious. This collective facilitates the expression of inner thoughts. By allowing characters’ desires to interact, Shakespeare shows how a single mind can have complicated emotions towards others. Many people experience love with multiple people at one time, and they must choose between a socially condoned relationship and their conflicting desires. Although Shakespeare’s play is a dramatized version of this natural process, it exposes the indecisiveness of the human mind.

In *Unconscious in Shakespeare*, Martin Bergmann discusses the role of the unconscious in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. He cites a soliloquy from the play in which Theseus describes madmen, lovers, and poets as having similar “seething brains” (5.1.4). Bergmann says this line emphasizes “the unconscious that they have in common” (42). Theseus goes on to say that these characters “are of imagination all
compact” (5.1.8). Bergmann interprets this to mean that the characters have excessive imaginations, more so than a sane person. He also says that during the time of Shakespeare’s writing, lunacy and dreaming were often associated. This is important to the play, as the dreaming lovers are often depicted as frantic and indecisive, qualities of the classic image of a ‘lunatic.’ Bergmann supports my theory that the play involves a shared unconscious of many of the characters and that Shakespeare emphasizes the similarities between characters, portraying them as a single mind. However, I focus more on the forest’s role in the unconscious. While Bergmann brings up Theseus’ words, I have focused on Oberon as a portrayal of Theseus’ subconscious. The forest is a representation of the workings of the human subconscious.

Marjorie Garber describes her own theories on the role of dreaming in Midsummer in Dream in Shakespeare: from Metaphor to Metamorphosis. Her proposals are convincing, as she describes “the great dream of the forest experience and the smaller dreams within it” (56). Garber speaks of the subtlety of the division between dream and reality. Often the reader or audience wonders whether a certain part, or perhaps the whole piece is a dream. This intermingling of dream and reality mirrors the intricacies of the subconscious and conscious. The mind is a complicated place, and often one must question whether they are dreaming. Shakespeare’s play stages this confusion.

The events of the forest and manipulation of its inhabitants closely mimic the intricacies of the human mind. Throughout my paper, I have proposed a theory that the forest in the play A Midsummer Night’s Dream represents a manifestation of the subconscious of the characters portrayed. The arguments included by Bergmann and Garber support my reading of a collective mind and show the importance of subconscious in Shakespeare’s work. Shakespeare’s incorporation of these advanced concepts of the human mind are significant because
he lived hundreds of years before psychology gained respect as a science. His analysis of the subconscious was advanced for his time. Investigating the idea of the forest as a device which unlocks the human subconscious is central to understanding the methods and motives of Shakespeare’s work.

Works Cited


Sarah Nelson is a rising sophomore from Atlanta, Georgia. She wrote this paper for her Texts & Contexts class. The focus of the class was on dreaming in literature. Her professor encouraged her to take an off-handed comment she made in class about the role of dreaming in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and to shape her final paper around it. As a Psychology major, she ended up focusing on the role of the human subconscious.
In the contemporary-art world, the claim of originality in appropriated works of art has long been a controversial issue. The postmodernist movement saw a preponderance of creative appropriation, sometimes even an exact reproduced copy of a source image re-exhibited as authentic new art work. In the ‘70s and ‘80s, the notion of an individual creative genius was challenged as artists embraced an open culture of sampling existing ideas, images, and even works. Photography was one of the first mediums to embrace this newfound attitude towards creative expression, likely due to reproducibility and dispersion. Artists such as Sherrie Levine were groundbreaking and controversial in their bold acts of photographic appropriation. Levine’s work in particular challenged conservative academic notions of authorship, originality, and copyright. In doing so, she prompted important questions about the role of the artist and the aura surrounding art as an object of commercial and cultural value.

As much of the conversation surrounding contemporary art takes place within an academic discourse, we should first examine academia’s stance on originality and plagiarism. In order to encourage a genuine intellectual process, all
universities create *Standards of Academic Integrity*. According to Fordham University: “A University, by its nature, strives to foster and recognize originality of thought, which can be recognized only when people produce work that is theirs alone and properly acknowledge information and ideas obtained from the work of others.” (Fordham University). At the core of this statement is the belief that it is the role of higher education is to foster a thought process simultaneously grounded in originality and the work of others. Finding a harmony in this union requires the acknowledgement of existing work and ideas through the use of citations. These citations act as a scaffolding for borrowed ideas. They protect authorship, ensuring the legitimacy of the research process. The failure to adhere to this system of authorship results in what academic institutions consider plagiarism. According to Fordham University:

Plagiarism occurs when individuals attempt to present as their own what has come from another source… failing to use proper citation for information obtained from print sources or the internet, according to citation criteria specified by the instructor or in cases where instructor guidance is not given, by standard manuals of style. (Fordham University)

This definition suggests that students will accumulate, assemble, repurpose, and recast ideas from sources, such as print and the internet, and present them as their own work. However, by declaring the failure to correctly cite as an act of plagiarism, academic institutions have set parameters in which the legitimacy of the work and the originality of the author are at stake. While the academic world provides clear definitions concerning originality, the art world has embraced a
post-modernist attitude towards the notion. In the 1970’s, many artists departed from modernism and traditional art theory. For the first time in history, artists created works that challenged the very idea of what constituted a work of art. This movement – now known as post-modernism – saw an explosion of creative works that adopted new techniques and practices. One of these practices was appropriation, the process of taking an existing work or object and presenting it as one’s own. This act rests on the idea of ‘re-purposing,’ or ‘reframing,’ as opposed to plagiarizing. Appropriation and its virtues was brilliantly executed and discussed in American writer, essayist, and bestselling author Jonathan Lethem’s 2007 Harpers Magazine article, “The Ecstasy of Influence.” In the style of a collage essay, Letham paints a picture in which the production of all art and literature rests not solely on the individual, but on a dynamic continuum of appropriation and exchange. Letham states that “most artists are brought to their vocation when their own nascent gifts are awakened by a master…finding one’s voice isn’t just an emptying and purifying oneself of the words of others but an adopting and embracing affiliations, communities and discourses.” According to Letham, it has always been commonplace for artists to find inspiration for their own work from that of existing works. To demonstrate this, Letham presents his readers with a legacy of works in which originality and appropriation co-exist. Letham refers to such works as having a “complex genealogy.” His examples include the lyrics of Bob Dylan, the artwork of Jeff Koons and the poetry of T.S. Elliot. For Letham, however, the harmony of appropriation and originality is broken when we attempt to reconcile this “complex genealogy” with our current laws and thinking pertaining to copyright. Letham believes that our aggressive copyright laws deny the appropriation reality of the creative process and serve only the interests of corporation and government. Letham encourages individuals
to move beyond this mostly legal discourse and to embrace a post-modernist attitude of “building freely upon the ideas and information conveyed by a work.” The post-modernist movement and attitude described by Letham – ecstasy versus anxiety, appropriation versus plagiarism – created the environment in which much of the art of the previous four decades was created.

Perhaps no other artistic medium was better suited to exploring this new post-modernist spirit than photography. To coincide with the post-modernist movement, the 1970s also saw the release of influential theory on photography. Originally published in 1977, *On Photography* is writer Susan Sontag’s examination of the historical and contemporary role of photography. In the text, Sontag makes a direct connection between the act of photography and appropriation, stating that “to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and, therefore, like power. According to Sontag, the act of photographing is an act of appropriation, and an act of appropriation is a statement about the world. If we consider photographs not only as images but also as statements that communicate ideas, then photographers naturally hold positions of power. Photographs are powerful tools for communicating big ideas. Composition, lighting, and editing constitute a language and the arrival of post-modernism added “appropriation” to its vocabulary. Art critic, New York Times reporter, and George Washington University professor Andy Grunberg commented on the prevalence of appropriation in his 1982 piece “In Today’s Photography Imitation Isn’t Always Flattery.” Grunberg states:

Historically, photography’s mission has been to claim the world, to select and order those parts of life that can signify our experience of it.
In the present-day condition we have come to call postmodernism, however, photography is increasingly concerned with recycling its own imagery. Many younger photographers now on the scene - especially those who grew up under the spell of conceptual art - seem to feel that the entire world already has been devoured by the camera. The only recourse they perceive is to borrow or steal images that already exist. (Grunberg)

According to Grunberg, it was the sheer excess of photography in the world, combined with a fashion for conceptual art, that created an interest amongst photographers to explore acts of appropriation in their work. In 1977 – the same year that Sontag’s *On Photography* was published – an important exhibition titled *Pictures* was held at Artists Space in New York. The exhibition included photographic works that rested entirely on acts of appropriation. Examples from the show include Cindy Sherman’s and Laurie Simmons’ appropriation of objects from their own lives, Richard Prince’s repurposed images from advertising campaigns, and Sherrie Levine’s re-shooting of historical photographs. In the context of art appropriation, the show was groundbreaking. It was also controversial. In defense of the exhibition, Douglas Crimp, the show’s curator, famously stated that “underneath each picture there is always another picture” (Kantor 26). The show prompted the public to look closer, to question notions of authorship and even the legitimacy of photography as an art form itself. The *Pictures* show ultimately laid the foundation for much of the experimental and appropriated photography that continues to this day. The participating artists – at first criticized, later celebrated – were to collectively named *The Pictures Generation*.

In 1981, three years after participating in the *Pictures* show, Levine opened a solo show at Metro Pictures Gallery
New York titled *After Walker Evans*. Walker Evans was an American photographer and central figure in the social realism movement of the 1930s. Evans was best known for his work commissioned by the Farm Security Administration between 1935 and 1938. His images documented American life in the South during the Great Depression. In time, Evans’ images would be recognized not only as works of art but also as iconic imagery that served as historical evidence. His images ingrained themselves in the national conscience and, over time, formed an authoritative narrative of the depression years. In her show, Levine presented twenty-two of Evans’ images as her own. Without any manipulation, the images appeared to be identical. They were, in fact, not appropriated from Evans’ negatives, but photographed directly from catalogue reproductions. Levine’s images were reproductions of reproductions, yet presented as new and original works. The show was hugely controversial, and while some critics celebrated Levine for a bold act of appropriation, others accused her of stealing historical works of national importance. Evans’ estate, which held the copyright on the original images, saw Levine’s show as an act of copyright infringement and acquired all works to prohibit their sale.

If we accept *After Walker Evans* as a work of “complex genealogy” instead of copyright infringement, we must ask the question: What are the virtues of the work? What is Levine attempting to communicate in her act of appropriation? In his 1994 book *Beyond Recognition: Representation Power and Culture*, art critic and journalist Craig Owens talks of Levine assuming multiple roles in the *After Walker Evans* show. Owens states that “Levine had assumed the functions of the dealer, the curator, the critic – everything but the creative artist” (115). In this sense, Levine is acting outside the realm of the traditional artist. Her act of appropriation is intertwined with curatorial, critical, and even economic statements about Evan’s original work. To the naked eye, there is no difference
to be found between Evan’s and Levine’s images – with the exception of a grammatical inclusion. By inserting the word “after,” Levine forces her audience to consider both works within the context of the other. Most importantly, there cannot be any “after” until the arrival of Levine. Art critic and Hunter College professor Howard Singerman touches upon this in his October journal article *Sherrie Levine’s Art History*. Singerman stated that “the original work appears as an original, as a before, only when it has been called on to defend itself form its double – only after Levine’s work has come after it … there is a space between them that constitutes difference” (98, 101). By appropriating Evan’s images in such a literal manner, Levine encourages her audience to consider this invisible “space” in which the difference between the two works can be found. This is a “space” of conflict. Ideas such as male artist and female artist, originality and plagiarism, artistry and evidence, and positive and negative occupy meet each other in opposition in this space. Levine herself discusses these differences in a seminar at the Getty Institute. In her seminar, she states that she is “interested in that infra thin difference between what was decided on but does not make its way into the work, and what makes its way into the work but what not decided on” (Levine). In this sense, it can be argued that Levine is examining the very theory of photography itself. Is a photograph an authentic documentation of reality? Or are they rather documentations of decisions made by the photographer, an appropriator who decides what is worthy of inclusion and exclusion, later to be presented as fact? What is the artistic and economic value in a work that can be endlessly reproduced and reprinted? Postmodernist art critic Craig Owens discusses these questions:

In representing these canonical images of the rural poor – the expropriated – Levine was calling attention to the original act of appropriation
whereby Evans first took these photographs [FSA project], as if to illustrate Walter Benjamin’s observation, in ‘The Author as Producer,’ on the economic function of photography: ‘[Photography] has succeeded in making even abject poverty, by recording it in a fashionable perfected manner, into an object of enjoyment, i.e., a commodity. (114)

According to Owens, Levine is challenging Evan’s right to authorship of the original work and its content. She is forcing her audience to examine the conditions in which the original work was created and to consider the inherent objectification and commoditization of its subject matter. In this sense, After Walker Evans is a powerful and important work of analysis. Levine takes her audience on an intellectual journey in which they grapple with questions at the core of the human experience. The work functions as an exposé of history, inequality, artistic license, and photography.

By analyzing the process and role of appropriation artists like Sherrie Levine, I have been suggesting that appropriation art is in fact grounded in an academic tradition and not an artistic one. Remarkably similar to the academic process, appropriation art critiques, analyzes, and reframes existing works in order to communicate new ideas. The role of a student to amass and adapt existing ideas is uncannily similar to that of the appropriation artist. While they may seem contradictory in their notions of authorship, the academic world and postmodernist art world are in fact remarkably similar. At heart, both institutions value creative dialogue over originality. They attempt to investigate and reconcile important questions about the world through the process of appropriation and critical thinking.
Works Cited


George Miscamble manages a creative agency that represents photographers and artists for commercial commissions. This paper was the culmination of a semester of English Comp II. He enjoyed having the opportunity to fuse many of these different ideas into one paper under the guise of conceptual 1980’s photography, and most specifically, through the examination of Sherrie Levine’s After Walker Evans. It was an enlightening process for him to re-approach some of his existing ideas and beliefs about photography and art in a college paper.