



**Cotley College
&
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Department
Present**

Write On, Sister

**The Merry Ann DeVaney Sauls
Academic Writing Contest
2023**

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About the Contest

The Merry Ann DeVaney Sauls Academic Writing Contest was developed to enhance the prestige of academic writing in the disciplines at Cottey College. The contest is financed through a generous endowed fund established by Merry Ann DeVaney Sauls, a 1959 Cottey graduate. Ms. Sauls sees writing as fundamentally important to success in any endeavor and sponsors the writing contest as a way of furthering that vision.

All students are invited to submit writing composed in Cottey courses to the contest. Internal judges from Cottey College perform initial assessments of the pieces. Then, finalist external judges, typically professors or professionals in the relevant disciplines at other colleges, universities, and workplaces, rank the best pieces in each category.

The winners are honored at a public ceremony. The full texts of the winning pieces are shared online via this publication.

For more information about the contest and its past winners, visit the [contest website](#).

The co-sponsors of the contest, Dr. Jonathan Green and Dr. Sarah Polo, wish to thank the internal and external judges for their service and commitment to recognizing exemplary student writing.

Contest Judges

External Judges

Caroline Dohack

Dr. Ann Reed

Dr. Julie Perino

Gracie Bain

Internal Judges

Dr. Carmen Bourbon

Dr. Jon Green

Dr. Jorge Diones

Dr. Julie Tietz

Dr. Kathryn Pivak

Dr. Sarah Polo

Dr. Sarah Quick

Dr. Trisha Stubblefield

Professor Laura Chaney

Professor Pete Carver

Dr. Green and Dr. Polo are saddened to learn of the passing of Donna Lenharth earlier this year. Donna had served as an external judge for this contest for several semesters. We are grateful for her support of this contest.

Composition

2nd Place:

Langston Riddle, “‘This I Believe’ Podcast Transcript and Reflection”

[INTRO SONG]

Good evening and welcome to season 3 of *First Year Writing Seminar: The Podcast*, an exploration into college writing and its connection to real-world issues, skills, and experiences. My name is [REDACTED], a freshman and International Relations major at Cottey College, and tonight I'll be taking you through global awareness and what I believe to be its core tenet. What does it mean to be “globally aware”? How can we implement these ideals in our day-to-day lives? And how can we utilize these lessons to confront injustices at home and abroad? These questions and more will be answered through a personal vignette about debate, justice, and landmines. Before we begin today's episode, please be advised that there may be some potentially triggering content, including descriptions of war, serious injury and death, and poverty.

[TRANSITIONARY SONG]

“I believe” that dimension one, cultivating self-awareness and integrity, is the most crucial pillar of global awareness. Being a well-rounded global citizen means first being able to take responsibility for your own actions, beliefs, and words, as well as recognizing how they take place within the broader context of community. None of our beliefs or values exist in a vacuum, so it's important to acknowledge where they come from and how we can deconstruct potentially limiting and harmful views. But how does this look in practice, you may wonder? Well, I did Speech and Debate for an upwards of six years, wherein I engaged in hours upon hours worth of battle - in a metaphorical sense, of course. I was taught how to speak fast, to undermine my opponents' cases, to essentially perform my intelligence for others. I could yell as loud as I wanted about basically anything, and I could even do so in the form of poetry or song. There really were no limits to what I could do as a high school and collegiate debater. But what really struck me - and what was genuinely the most important aspect of debate - was developing the ability to consider different policy positions and how they would affect people, whether that meant economically, socially, or politically, especially on a global scale.

Prior to joining Speech and Debate, I had a very limited understanding of how politics and policy in particular could affect others. I had constructed my identity based on my own experiences within an insular, majority-white town in the middle of Arkansas, and at the ripe age of 13, I had no conception of self-awareness or integrity. But it was debate that spurred a change in me, one that allowed me to take more seriously how my actions and words affect others.

One case in particular took place in the 2016-2017 debate year. I participated in policy debate, perhaps the most rigorous type of them all, and the topic that year was whether the United States should substantially increase its economic and/or diplomatic engagement with the People's Republic of China. The vagueness of this topic allowed for a lot of creative freedom when it came to constructing arguments, so my partner and I went for a more unconventional route. While everyone else talked about Taiwan or North Korea, we decided to discuss landmines.

Again, as a barely-cognizant teen, my knowledge about the ins-and-outs of war were lackluster at best; I was aware of landmines, but I had no idea just how dangerous, brutal, and pervasive they were. According to the United Nations, there are potentially tens of millions of landmines affecting 58 countries and four states, including Afghanistan, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Colombia, Mozambique, and dozens of other communities. And there's a reason these numbers are so obscured: landmines are designed specifically to be untraceable by enemy forces, and natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and sandstorms can move them, making their positions incalculable. Furthermore, new reports surface every year of landmines and other anti personnel weapons still being utilized in countries such as Syria. Everyday, a community discovers new landmines, and their methods are often accidental and tragic.

My research into this subject revealed to me the large and often devastating part the United States military played in deploying these indiscriminate tools. Though the Vietnam war ended nearly half a century ago, there are still millions of landmines in rural communities across Vietnam, Cambodia, and other battlegrounds used during this time period. They continue to kill and horrifically maim innocent civilians, as well as routinely deny them access to water, farming land, schools, and hospitals. Their lives are forever and tragically changed, and it is because we as a nation did not take the time to consider how our policies could potentially affect innocent people.

Researching this greatly changed my perspective on how politics can affect the lives of others; from that point on, I viewed policy, politics, and diplomacy as tools that can forever vastly impact the lives of people around the world. It is something we should all take seriously and invest ourselves in deeply.

But even on an interpersonal level, this taught me the importance of considering the consequences of my actions and words and really thinking about how I could affect others. It taught me that taking responsibility and considering how our actions could impact generations even decades from now are incredibly critical concepts. You cannot foster compassionate, comprehensive global awareness without first having the courage and integrity to step outside of and question your long-held beliefs, just as I did so many years ago.

This is why “I believe” dimension one of global awareness is the most important of them all.

[TRANSITIONARY MUSIC]

Thank you for joining me in diving deep into the depths of self-awareness, integrity, and global awareness. I hope you’re able to consider, just as I did years ago, how your actions and advocacy can impact your community in new and beneficial ways, as well as what you can do to examine your own biases and take responsibility for breaking them down - for the good of everyone, everywhere.

[OUTRO MUSIC]

MUSIC ATTRIBUTION: “Felt Lining” as provided by Anchor.fm

Reflection

The specific dimension of global awareness I elected as the basis of my episode was dimension one, cultivating self-awareness and integrity, as I believe it is a necessary prerequisite to all other dimensions. Without first interrogating our own beliefs, privileges, and backgrounds, we won't have a full understanding of global issues and communities. If we're caught up in our egos and biases, we aren't able to see alternative or ideal ways of tackling issues. In fact, in my own life, I've learned that I can only truly understand the nuances of an issue by viewing it outside the lens of my biases. How am I to tackle issues of water insecurity, for example, if I don't first put myself into the shoes of someone who has experienced it firsthand? Furthermore, being able to accept responsibility for my actions or biases means that I can be a more reliable and trustworthy figure within the global and personal spheres.

Next, while making this podcast, I learned a lot about the "This I Believe" genre as a whole; it is an incredible vessel for using your personal experiences and beliefs as a way of tackling social issues whilst also having more creative liberty over its form. I felt my structure allowed for my story to be more impactful and better felt by listeners: by having an easy-to-follow, chronological structure, my points are more easily understood by a wide range of audiences. Though "This I Believe" stories are based primarily on personal experiences, I still felt it important to include evidence to back up my claims about continuing human rights abuses throughout the world. They become significantly more substantiated this way, but I also wanted my listeners to truly understand the scope of the issue (hence the inclusion of "58 countries and 4 states"). Finally, using an emotional appeal was a particularly successful venture for me because of the subject material I chose to cover; by going for a gut-punch type of story, I felt I was able to more effectively communicate WHY these issues matter.

Podcasts as a medium are generally very effective in communicating tone that is otherwise incommunicable via text. For example, I was able to use sound as a means of setting the mood, as dead space and silence don't make for very interesting listens. I also felt I was better able to put weight into my arguments by using verbal transitions, emphasis, and my own natural tonality. Further, the usage of a podcast creation platform, namely Anchor, was essential to creating a product I was really proud of. I felt like I was easily able to record, edit, and smoothen out my segments, which allowed for a (thankfully!) pain-free assignment completion. After completing the creation of my own podcast episode, I have an increased interest in doing more projects like this in the future. I would love to take what I learned here to apply it to my own future projects.

Finally, I was able to use each of the four rhetorical appeals in effective and persuasive manners. Ethos was built by means of talking about my own personal

experiences. I was able to lend credence to my argument by demonstrating how it affected and will continue to affect me for decades. Next, logos and pathos were some of my strongest appeals; I utilized logos by quoting statistics and research conducted by the United Nations, as well as drawing logical conclusions as to the end result of anti personnel weapons such as landmines. Pathos was another strong appeal because of my draw upon the experiences of landmine victims. Including descriptions of these experiences helped exemplify our brutal reality. I am particularly passionate about this being an issue we do not sugarcoat. Finally, there was kairos, which I felt was demonstrated through the use of strategic pausing and other tonal choices. My end goal for all of these appeals was, ultimately, to help people understand why being critical of our choices, actions, and biases is so essential to being a member of the global community.

Composition

1st Place:

Fiona Burmeister Mccracken, “‘The Very Roots of Our Freedom’: Neoliberal Freedom Rhetoric in Ronald Reagan’s 1986 State of the Union Address”

It is not too great a leap to say that in today’s political atmosphere to critique neoliberalism is to critique America itself. The current neoliberal hegemony is less than 50 years old; how did it become so synonymous with the American dream? President Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) is widely credited as being the president under which the United States took a “neoliberal shift,” much like Margret Thatcher in the United Kingdom ([Harvey 9](#)). Neoliberal tenets are widespread in Reagan’s political ideology, legislation, and public speeches. However, Reagan also used rhetorical means to “sell” neoliberalism to the American people. Drawing on various commentaries on neoliberalism and George Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language” I will show how Reagan successfully uses a rhetoric of freedom in his 1986 State of the Union Address.

State of the Union addresses are the traditional speech a sitting president makes to congress, generally at the beginning of the year. The address is a useful opportunity for a president to highlight his (as there to date have been no female presidents) accomplishments from the year before, emphasize the issues he wishes to address in the upcoming year, and give an extra push to specific legislation. Therefore State of the Union addresses can be a useful microcosm of a presidential administration's ideals, aims, and challenges. Analyzing the rhetoric in a State of the Union address may provide insights into a president’s use of language throughout an administration. Finally, State of the Union addresses are one of the more widely consumed and recorded speeches a president may give (outside of the campaign trail), with addresses disseminated through radio, television, and the internet. For example, Bill Clinton’s 1993 presidential address had over 70 million views (“State of the Union Address - Number of Viewers 2022”). This results in State of the Union addresses being an important way the broader public interacts and adopts presidential ideals.

In his State of the Union, Reagan used the platform to urge Congress, other nations, and the American people to embrace neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is an economic and

cultural ideology with distinct points including privatization, forced free trade, reduced role of government, and exponentially increasing wealth inequality (Harvey 16). While Reagan does not use the term “neoliberalism” anywhere in his 1986 speech, the positions of neoliberalism are explicitly advocated for. He speaks of congress’s “responsibility to redefine government's role: not to control” (Reagan). This theme of pruning back the government's role appears throughout his speeches and is consistent with the neoliberal understanding of a government's only role is to ensure the market’s freedom. Reagan regards his administration’s “actions to counter unfair trading practices and to pry open closed foreign markets,” as a success worthy of laurels. Throughout the 1986 speech, Reagan also advocated for reduced taxes, abolition of tariffs, modifications to the currency exchange system, and reduction of government spending. His policies are explicitly neoliberal and he utilized the State of the Union to advocate for them outright.

However, Reagan also advocated for neoliberal policy through more insidious methods. Throughout his speech, he links freedom to a specific kind of neoliberal ideal of freedom. Reagan is able to do so because freedom is what writer and political critic George Orwell calls a “meaningless word” (Orwell). As he says, “the words democracy, socialism, freedom, patriotic, realistic, justice have each of them several different meanings which cannot be reconciled with one another” (Orwell). The utility of meaningless words means they may be defined in any manner the politician finds most useful. Meaningless words often elicit an instinctual or emotional response due to their positive connotations. Here Orwell specifically lists “freedom” as a meaningless word, one so commonly misused in public and political discourse that he felt it a representative example.

Reagan equates generic freedom with a specific economic freedom. In his 1986 speech, he continually links freedom and economics. Throughout the speech, Reagan repeatedly refers to the economy as “free”. In one example he refers to “an ever-expanding American economy, unfettered and free,” later he discusses the need to “help America's economy break free” (Reagan). The Oxford dictionary defines freedom as “the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint” (Simpson et al.). Reagan, and neoliberalism, makes the argument that the best way to preserve the freedom to “act, speak, or think” is through freedom to buy, sell, and trade. A key neoliberal ideal is that free markets are the best way to ensure individual freedoms (Harvey). By using freedom in this way Reagan is reinforcing and conflating the freedom of individual Americans and the freedom of the market. While views at home may be envisioning and approving of the generic denotation of freedom, they are unaware they are actually approving of specific neoliberal economic policies. Additionally, by equating neoliberal policy with freedom Reagan cripples his opponents, no politician can argue against freedom and stay popular. Reagan shields his specific neoliberal policy agenda under the guise of freedom in a highly successful move still used by politicians today.

Reagan also uses “free” as a generic marker of approval and value. Reagan refers to “free countries” throughout his addresses. In this usage, it functions in the same way as Orwell critiques the use of democracy. “... not only is there no agreed definition, but the attempt to make one is resisted from all sides. It is almost universally felt that when we call a country democratic we are praising it: consequently the defenders of every kind of regime claim that it is a democracy, and fear that they might have to stop using that word if it were tied down to any one meaning” (Orwell). Free, without even the meaning, and thus restrictions, of a word like democracy, functions as a generic value judgment. This value judgment is primarily based on the economic freedoms in a country. Reagan specifically links America’s economy to the spreading of freedom throughout the world. He says “[t]onight freedom is on the march. The United States is the economic miracle” (Reagan). By setting the criteria for a “good” country as one with a specific economic system Reagan ignores other markers of a “good” country such as safety, happiness, quality of life, etc. This allows him to frame America and ally countries as unequivocally positive, without considering repression, censorship, poverty, or other flaws a country may have. Reagan’s use of “free countries” is in purposeful parallel to the third and final use of freedom Reagan uses.

The final context Reagan utilizes the rhetoric of freedom is in discussions of foreign affairs. Reagan addresses countries not yet in the “free family of nations,” saying “America will support with moral and material assistance your right not just to fight and die for freedom but to fight and win freedom” (Reagan). He goes on to advocate for congressional authorization to intervene in various other countries. The second definition of freedom provided by the Oxford Dictionary is “absence of subjection to foreign domination or despotic government” (Simpson et al.). The provided irony is that the countries Reagan specifically names in his address as places the United States must bring freedom to “in Afghanistan, in Angola, in Cambodia, and in Nicaragua,” were all subsequently the victims of foreign control, economic collapse, and/or despotic governments (Reagan). Of note, Afghanistan was only relieved of foreign troops in 2021, and then promptly fell to the despotic Taliban regime. The result of US-backed policies in foreign countries such as Afghanistan could be considered the exact opposite of the dictionary definition of freedom. The rhetoric of “bringing freedom” is widely used throughout political discourse as a palatable euphemism for the horrors of war. Other words like invasion, coup, insurrection, or others all have violence associated with them. “Bringing freedom” or “winning freedom” disguises that there might be resistance and decentralized violence. Another commonly used euphemism, Reagan uses “freedom fighters” is merely a polite term for CIA-backed terrorists. Many historical and economical scholars now say that the only freedom ensured by neoliberalism was “unregulated exploitation” (Harvey 8). By utilizing meaningless words such as “bring freedom,” Reagan convinces Congress and the American people to

approve of military actions that devastated the lives of millions of men, women, and children.

Overall Reagan uses freedom or free over 20 times throughout a relatively short speech, and the majority of those times he implies a homogeneity of generic freedom and specific economic freedoms. Reagan's, and later politicians' rhetoric redefinitions were extremely successful. Noah De Lissovoy, a cultural studies scholar notes that "[i]n spite of the failures and suffering produced by neoliberalism in practice, it retains a moral appeal for many, and not only those who are its principal beneficiaries...[t]his appeal rests on the supposed symbiosis-and even identification-of neoliberalism (and capitalism itself) with freedom." By equating neoliberalism with freedom, these politicians successfully changed the narrative, convincing the American people to accept and defend an economic system inherently flawed. Analyzing Reagan's State of the Union address shows an early example of the intentional use of a freedom rhetoric to sell neoliberal policy to the general public, an essential component to the success of the neoliberal hegemony.

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Academic Writing

2nd Place:

Gideon Hatt, “Blood and Disgust: ‘Down There’ by Sandra Cisneros as Menstrual Activism”

Shark week. Time of the month. Aunt Flo. On the rag. Crimson tide. Period. There are many different euphemisms and names for menstruation, so we might forget what it really is: a natural bodily process that most women go through at some point in their life. Many women (and most men) will hesitate to identify menstruation openly and explicitly as menstruation without some sort of layer of disguise due to some sort of shame or disgust. In Nadya Okamoto’s book, *Period Power: A Manifesto for the Menstrual Movement*, she says, “girls learn to feel shame about openly talking about menstruation, and this prevents future conversations and questions from surfacing” (17). This can actually lead to people not knowing when they should call a doctor or be concerned for their health, as they are not encouraged to gather information and familiarize themselves with what is normal for their own bodies. Emily Erwin Culpepper also pointed out the hypocrisy of taboos in her short film *Period Piece* and later analysis in “Positively Breaking Taboos: Why and How I Made the Film *Period Piece*.” Culpepper recalls as a child, she heard many myths and jokes related to the idea of “periods and sanitary napkins being sexually disgusting” (129). Culpepper’s way of moving through that disgust and encouraging honest portrayals of menstruation was by filming her vaginal self-exam. This intimate and explicit example of real bodily processes was revolutionary when it came out, allowing women to feel connected with each other and connect to the beauty of menstruation over disgust.

Like Culpepper and Okamoto, Sandra Cisneros’s “Down There” rips away that disgust and forces her audience to realize the double standards of grossness unfairly placed upon women and female bodies. Cisneros addresses one major concern that Okamoto brings up: “No one really tells you what your period is going to feel like, much less what the actual blood is going to be like” (21). “Down There” creates that feeling through the imagery, actually intercepting shame and misinformation around menstruation. People who have never experienced menstruation, namely cisgender men, need this visceral image put in their heads in order to fully understand and empathize with menstruators. Cisneros uses intense and graphic imagery combined with a patronizing tone toward her masculine audience to contest the shame and disgust that is popular in the patriarchal canon. She contrasts the descriptions of (cisgender) male and female bodily processes, emphasizing

the potential and beauty of menstruation within evocative textural imagery, connecting to a deeper feminine power by the end of the poem.

Although menstruation is not universal and exclusive *to* or *among* women, women are nonetheless closely associated with the process. Women, therefore, are the ones who talk about menstruation the most, but that is still commonly limited to jokes and complaints about cramps and PMS. While exploring menstrual activism, Chris Bobel poses the question, “Why, exactly, do nearly all women hate their periods more than their other bodily processes?” (7). Although men more commonly are disgusted by menstruation and often have the power to perpetuate false stigmas, women also absorb and internalize those stigmas and that disgust, as Bobel points out. Cisneros may also be posing this question to her audience through “Down There” in order to confound the hypocrisy that both men and women seem to have. Cisneros appears to be speaking directly to a male audience to break their disgust, but she also could be speaking to a female audience to encourage acceptance of this body process that has been so unfairly portrayed. Years after the original publication of “Down There” in her collection, *Loose Women*, Cisneros released another poetry collection titled, *Women Without Shame*. Cisneros said in an interview with USA Today, “I want women not to be ashamed of their bodies” (qtd. in Avila). This sentiment seems consistent with the message of “Down There,” albeit more focused on aging in *Women Without Shame*. Her own goal of preventing and lessening the shame that women feel about their bodies in this later work affirms the likelihood of this reading of “Down There” as menstrual activism against shame and disgust.

Cisneros opens “Down There” by addressing an assumed male lover - specifically John Updike, but the audience can be expanded - as the listener who revels in grossing people out to perform masculinity, blatantly stating what actions are common among so-called “alpha males.” She notes the pride in being “bad” and “weird” in the first and second stanzas, showing how the poem “Waits for the moment / someone’s watching before” picking its nose and eating a booger (lines 13-4). She uses this first section to show how purposeful this grossness is, so much so that it is a premeditated flaunting of the supposed rules for the sole purpose of proving their masculinity and “coolness.” Her diction of these acts also evokes a sharp, disgusted feeling, with phrases like “stank like shit” (33) and “piss pot” (60), both of which use somewhat profane and visceral language that might even make an audience *smell* the poem. The repetition of the s, p, and k sounds emphasizes the solidity and directness of these images, representing a sort of attack on social customs and cleanliness through the effort and effect on the voice when saying these lines. Many of the images she uses are also sticky and wet in nature, evoking a gross texture that is hard to get rid of, such as a “used rubber / sticky on the floor,” (42-3) and “the swirl of spit / with a cream of celery / center” (55-7). Both of these phrases are sexual and sensual in nature, but they capitalize on the aftermath and evoke the more unpleasant physical side of sexuality.

Cisneros refuses to ignore the disgust that comes with natural bodily processes, especially when it is weaponized by men against women.

The patronizing tone most obviously appears in the names Cisneros calls the addressee, making the outside audience realize fully that she is not simply listing gross things men do for no reason (or for the same reason that men might - to gross women out). Line 73, "Oh my little booger," diminutizes the presumably male addressee to something disgusting and mostly inconsequential. Having boogers, like having a period, is a natural bodily process, yet "booger" is able to sound affectionate, whereas calling a person a "period" or "menstruation" would at best be strange. In fact, menstruation and objects associated with menstruation have been historically used as emasculating insults, as *The Curse: A Cultural History of Menstruation* points out. The authors say that athletes especially (and likely other men in "masculine" careers) "have always taunted one another with aspersions on the other's supposed (and dreaded) femininity" (Delaney et al. 122). The mere thought or association of femininity is enough to be an insult to anyone who is not a woman. In contrast, "booger" is not gendered in the same way menstruation is, and so it carries a less stigmatized connotation, albeit still generally gross. By including the "oh my," Cisneros further demasculinizes the addressee, making it sound like the speaker is addressing a child who does not know any better. She puts the speaker in a position of authority and knowledge by (seemingly affectionately) belittling the audience.

The speaker continues to address the man in a parallel of common belittling nicknames that men often give their female lovers, calling him "Baby," in line 78, and "darling" in the same stanza (line 81), as well as in line 114. Men will often address their girlfriend/wife/lover as some affectionate nickname like "baby" or "darling" when she expresses frustration, anger, or other emotions in an attempt to get her to calm down, often by reducing the woman's power in the situation and forcing her to rely on him in some way. John Updike used the word "darling" in his poem "Cunts" in a line that Cisneros recreates: "I pulled a Tampax with my teeth and found it, darling, / not so bloody" (Updike lines 102-3). In this context, it appears that Updike is simultaneously conveying an appreciation for the female body in a sexual sense and minimizing the meaning and actual physical sensations that come with menstruation. The interjection of "darling" is the element that most contributes to this dismissive element as if he expected there to be more blood involved in what could be a painful or important moment of her bodily processes. These nicknames are also common for children, making the addressee seem younger and ignorant, while the speaker is talking about *womanhood*; menstruation is a process that has meaning and maturity behind it, rather than the flippancy of childhood and even manhood. This infantilization is reversed from the patriarchal idea of men needing to take care of women, as well as flipping the pedophilic beauty standards away from women (and girls) onto men and boys. Her tone also mocks the pseudo-proselytizing that men often take in

their morality-conveying poems and works. In “Down There,” men who have not gone through menstruation and who do not have that connection or knowledge of a woman’s body, are the innocent ones; they are perpetual boys in contrast to the women who bleed.

Cisneros veers away from solely confronting and mocking men when she explicitly brings up menstruation on line 90, providing an opposite but no less visceral view of feminine bodily processes. She introduces the topic with a reference to “Cunts,” the poem in *Playboy* magazine mentioned in the paragraph above, and notes that the “Tampax” mentioned was not really bloody, “except for an unfortunate / association of color / that makes you want to swoon” (84-6). The concept of swooning has long been associated with women, especially in relation to “fragility,” but Cisneros forcefully associates it with *male* fragility. She reverses the expectation of women being squeamish and delicate onto men who are utterly unfamiliar with this natural body process. Even the mere suggestion of blood causes men to nearly swoon, but Cisneros points out that it is more “an unfortunate / association of color” than any actual blood. Men’s conception of blood and the color red might revolve around wounds, war, passion, pain, or even communism, which they might conceive of as negative, while menstrual blood is very rarely connected to any of those things, save passion or pain on some occasions for some women. Men have vastly different preconceptions of blood that influence their affront against menstruation, possibly even to the extent that it seems rational to consider menstruation disgusting.

Cisneros appears to be confronting the preconceptions these kinds of men have about bodily functions and grossness. She breaks up the lines in the 17th stanza to emphasize the connection and disconnect between men and periods: “I want to talk at length about Men- / struation” (88-9). Rather than put the whole word “menstruation” in one line, Cisneros splits it into two: “Men-” and “struation”. Even with menstruation being a (mostly) uniquely female experience, somehow the “men-” part of it is emphasized. If you are not habitually reading ahead, you might even think she is just saying “I want to talk at length about men.” Cisneros might be commenting on how men insert themselves into everything, regardless of their expertise or relevance by splitting the line apart and playing with the audiences’ expectations. She explicitly uses the word “menstruation” here after the first 15 stanzas had been about specifically (or stereotypically) masculine presentations of bodily functions. She is bringing up a supposedly taboo topic - especially in relation to men - and forcing the male lover to confront its reality in its beauty, power, and even its somewhat questionable appearance.

Cisneros uses very similar imagery to describe menstruation and the male “gross” behaviors, but she also brings in creation comparisons, not just destruction and disgust. She uses extremely tactile words and images, such as, “Gelatinous” (line 93), “gobs of strawberry jam” (101), and “Saliva in your hand” (103), yet these descriptions are more neutral or even positive than the ones she uses to describe men. They also relate to the

mouth, in that they come from the mouth or could possibly be eaten, making them more appetizing than the “shit” and “piss pot” in the beginning of the poem. The textural aspects are likely still unappetizing and may even be uncomfortable for some audiences, but they are capable of being consumed and enjoyed. She insists on both these interpretations: being uncomfortable is natural, but it is also important to recognize the beauty and functionality of these processes. The speaker even says, “It’s important you feel its slickness, / understand the texture isn’t bloody at all” (104-5), contrasting that perception of menstruation as bloody and disgusting that men so commonly hold. She is compelling the addressee to create a visceral image that they can not only see, but feel in their hands, their mouths, and likely their gut. Cisneros forces an uncomfortable connection with the deepest parts of womanhood, manifesting empathy from her audience to look past the initial disgust.

Cisneros emphasizes the physical and emotional connections of menstruation, but she also connects it to a more ancient, feminine, earthly essence prevalent in women. In lines 108 and 109, she says “it unravels itself like a string / from some deep deep center,” connecting back to Audre Lorde’s idea of a reserve of power inherent in women - especially women of color - from “Poetry Is Not a Luxury.” Expressing anything from that deep well of power might be frowned upon by the white patriarchy, but that is all the more reason to continue living and expressing yourself as a woman. Cisneros uses the same language, “ancient” (Cisneros line 141, Lorde 1) and “deep” (Cisneros line 109, Lorde 1), to describe the beauty and creation and connection and change that comes with menstruation as a symbol of womanhood. Cisneros, like Lorde, is expressing the power and beauty in being a woman, through these supposedly gross things that happen to women’s bodies.

Cisneros is working to destigmatize menstruation, but she also embraces the more distasteful and repugnant aspects that some people tend to ignore in favor of sweeping romanticization. Examining how many lines Cisneros spends on uplifting menstruation and women versus calling out the hypocrisy of men reveals around 50 lines for the former and 80 for the latter. Although Cisneros certainly uplifts and romanticizes menstruation toward the end of her poem, her initial description focuses more on the sensations of menstruating in contrast to the purposely unpleasant bodily actions that men are more subject to at the beginning of “Down There.” Lara Owen published a book in 1997 titled *Her Blood is Gold: Awakening to the Wisdom of Menstruation* with an introduction that begins to veer toward an uplifting romanticization of periods. She says, “I want to really honor and discover the richness of my femininity, and I want to glory in it, revel in it. I want to dance with the mystery of my wondrous alchemical womb” (Owen 1). Cisneros also uses some of the same words to describe the scent (“richer” than a cello, six lines from the end) and the process as somewhat alchemical, referencing “beakers and blooming spirals” in line 112. Menstruation is an almost scientific act of creation, yet with something deeper and more mysterious that

both Cisneros and Owen make note of. This imagery is not only “wonderous” in Cisneros’ case; it is “mad” (111) and it “metamorphosizes” (139). Cisneros leaves room for nuance: menstruation is both disgusting and beautiful and those two attributes are neither mutually exclusive nor a reason to dismiss menstruation as a meaningful bodily process.

Menstruation is a symbol of womanhood, growth, birth, creation, knowledge, and life. Sandra Cisneros’s “Down There” addresses the disgust and embarrassment surrounding menstruation, confronting the audience with the blatant and textural imagery of something many of us are taught to ignore. She shows that there is beauty in the things we might find disgusting; it represents a potential, a power that women can have. She embraces the uncomfortable, not just the pretty surface that so often is pushed onto women. Cisneros positions women in a reflection of the male canon with all of the care that so many men struggle to feel and all of the mockery that they find so effortless. Shame and disgust are not inherent to periods; we have more than that within us. It carries the capacity for so much more than just a clump of blood and tissue; it is that and more. Even something that appears to be a disgusting shedding of the uterine lining, there is always a reason behind it; menstruation is important as both a symbol and as a bodily process to create and nurture life through “the afterbirth without the birth” (Cisneros line 100).

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Academic Writing

1st Place:

“Pulling Agents from the Shadows: Recovering SOE Women Agents in France, 1939-1945”

On an ordinary day in 1942, agent Denise Bloch waited to board the bus. She felt the weight of the bulky suitcase in her hand - inside was a wireless transmitter. As she stood in line, she saw Gestapo walking up and down the line of people, asking for identification papers. Bloch had to think quickly. If the Gestapo were to inspect her papers, they would immediately be able to tell that they had been falsified. She promptly turned to a German soldier in line, a “tall, stupid-looking man,” and made pleasant conversation. Once the two were on good terms, she asked him to hold her suitcase so she could buy a newspaper before they boarded. She went to the stand and bought a newspaper before returning to the line. She laughed, appearing distracted and nonchalant as she showed her documents to a regular inspector, who bought her act. Denise Bloch collected her suitcase from the German soldier, boarded the bus, and soon they sped off across Nazi-occupied France.¹

After Germany invaded France in June 1940, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered the formation of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) to conduct espionage and sabotage in German-occupied territories and aid local resistance movements. The SOE’s French circuit (known as F Section) operated in Provence and central France, where effective circuits were consistently operating from the spring of 1943 to the end of the war in 1945.² Although the exact size of the SOE remains unknown, it is estimated to have employed about 10,000 men and 3,000 women in total.³ F Section, the SOE’s division in France, deployed 480 agents, 39 of whom were women.⁴ Colonel Maurice Buckmaster was hired as the head of the SOE in 1940.

His assistant, Vera Atkins, quickly became a fundamental leader who recruited, trained, and watched over the agents in F Section - she alone managed the women recruits.⁵ It is because of Vera Atkins’ tireless investigation into the fates of the SOE’s missing agents that we know what happened to most of these women. Although not all of Atkins’ missing agents can be covered within the scope of this paper, three will be the focus of my research: Sonia Olschanezky, Noor Inayat Khan, and Denise Bloch. Although primary and secondary sources are scarce, especially regarding Sonia Olschanezky and Denise Bloch, the histories of these women can be pieced together through interviews with SOE officials, remaining SOE documents, and the meticulous research of other historians who

have attempted to assemble information about the 39 female agents and their legacies. Several studies and biographies have been written on agents such as Virginia Hall, Odette Sansom, Violette Szabo, and Nancy Wake. However, many other female agents do not receive as much attention from scholars because of limited or restricted information about them. Others are often misrepresented as either naïve or hapless, as is the case with Noor Inayat Khan. By researching these lesser-known women of the SOE, one can better understand their contributions to the war effort at a time when British women were excluded from combat and less protected in the field than their male counterparts. An investigation of these three women shows that their fieldwork was important to the SOE's mission. Although the SOE's secrecy and desperation left them unprotected during the war, the bravery and determination of these women agents despite the risks made them crucial to the success of British resistance efforts in France.

The foundations of the SOE were rocky from conception. In the first few years, the organization was unsure what part it might play - sometimes its superiors were unsure that its existence was necessary, while at other times they would ask for more than was possible for the organization to do.⁶ Among other intelligence services, such as MI6, there was jealousy and infighting over creating a new secret organization staffed by amateurs, over which they would have no control.⁷ The secrecy of the SOE both ensured their victories in the war and undermined the agents who worked for them, especially the women who were not allowed to engage in active combat in any other situation. After World War II ended, the SOE did not plan to release documentation about their efforts. It was only in the 1950s after "unofficial" publications (especially those written by Jean Overton Fuller and Elizabeth Nicholas) sparked conspiracy theories that the SOE commissioned Michael Richard Daniell Foot to write an official history of the SOE in France.⁸ Foot argued that those in charge of the SOE had to guess at what worked and what did not, were often restrained by the immediate needs of the war, and did the best they could with what little resources or experience they had.⁹ Maurice Buckmaster and Vera Atkins were also concerned that "the lack of information on SOE was allowing Britain's role to be forgotten, and others to take undue credit for resistance activity," especially Communist countries believed abroad to be the primary supporter of resistance movements in European occupied countries.¹⁰ Foot's history grew in popularity, leading to an increasing interest in the men and women of the SOE. Interest skyrocketed when the British government officially declassified the SOE's files in 2003. However, even these files do not show a complete picture.

Some remain closed and restrict public access while others no longer exist. In 1946, a fire at the SOE headquarters on Baker Street destroyed many SOE FANY files.¹¹ In addition, one of Sarah Helm's interviews with a past SOE advisor revealed that "if people died they scrubbed their files because they were of no further interest... [According to the

advisor's predecessor] only thirteen percent of the files remain."¹²In the archives survive only a small sample of the original records, which makes it difficult to reconstruct the activities of SOE agents using only archival documents. In addition to these files, historians have used memoirs of SOE officials, interviews with past SOE advisors, and stories and pictures provided by family members and friends of agents to attempt to piece together the lives of these women.

Brigadier Colin McVean Gubbins lobbied to recruit women as SOE agents because they could easily pass as locals and would be overlooked as undercover operatives.¹³In Britain during World War II, women were otherwise barred from engaging in armed combat, which made the SOE's situation unique. The women recruited had previous experience as trained typists, which made them ideal wireless operators who had to quickly relay information using morse code. In addition, SOE leaders believed that women are "less likely to be bodily searched and their messages can be hidden in their underwear."¹⁴Critics argued against the deployment of women in the field because, although all agents were susceptible to the dangers of war, women agents had less legal protection than their male counterparts. In fact, the "1929 Geneva Convention and the 1907 Hague Convention on Land Warfare, the main legal instruments offering protection to prisoners of war, made no provision at all for protecting women, as women were not envisioned as combatants."¹⁵However, after many debates and the early success of British agents Virginia Hall and Krystyna Starbek, the SOE was convinced to approve the open recruitment and operation of women agents in F Section.¹⁶The hiring of women as SOE agents largely remained a secret until after the end of the war. No names of SOE agents were placed on any missing person lists, confidential or public, primarily because authorities did not want to admit that they had recruited women.¹⁷Yet the SOE offered women the opportunity to fight against Axis forces occupying their home countries and threatened Britain, even if public knowledge of their participation was intended to remain as clandestine as their work in the field.

Most recruits for the SOE were either found through the British armed services or were people whom the original SOE staff knew and trusted completely.¹⁸Until June 1943, author Selwyn Jepson acted as the sole recruiting officer for F Section, where he conducted multiple interviews with prospective agents. Jepson looked for those who could plan several steps ahead and exemplified courage and prudence, avoiding those who seemed impulsive or reckless.¹⁹Inflexibility was also seen as a liability, as agents had to be able to "make his [or her] own appraisal of a situation, obeying where obedience was necessary, acting on his [or her] own authority where he found good cause to vary the judgment of superior officers."²⁰After the third meeting, the prospective agent would then have to decide whether to join the SOE or withdraw.²¹This method of interviewing was replaced later by a new recruiting system where candidates went in front of an assessment board

primarily made up of psychologists who accumulated data over several days on the candidate's character and abilities.²²In general, SOE agents tended to be selected from a variety of social classes. However, many of the women who worked as agents came from affluent upbringings. Several also worked for the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY), known during this period as the Women's Transport Corps.²³ Some FANYs - who were usually teenage girls - manned the wireless stations that SOE circuits depended on to communicate while others encoded and decoded messages with agents in the field.²⁴ Women were integral to the success of the SOE - without them, the fieldwork of the SOE would have been meaningless.

Standard training was intended to take six to nine months.²⁵ The first phase of training assessed agents' physical fitness and sought to "identify unsuitable recruits and reject them as soon as possible."²⁶ The second phase consisted of paramilitary training, followed by parachute training near Manchester, in which most trainees participated.²⁷ The last phase was a pseudo-finishing school at Beaulieu, where recruits prepared to go into axis-occupied territory through a series of training tasks, such as stealing machine guns or placing explosives at a busy train station.²⁸ However, the SOE "devoted little time to understanding German counterintelligence methods," and frequently trained agents based on unrealistic real-world situations.²⁹ In addition, the women were often shortchanged during training. According to Foot, "on her second day [in paramilitary training]... one girl asked another, 'What *are* we being trained for? I answered an advertisement for a bilingual secretary.'"³⁰ When the training courses were first implemented, female recruits were primarily trained as couriers and did not receive the first or second stages of training, instead going straight into the finishing school training course.

When women were later trained as wireless operators, they went through the first stage with male recruits and received basic paramilitary training, but did not take the full paramilitary training course that the men took.³¹ Furthermore, Vera Atkins believed that many of the male training officers did not believe women should serve behind the lines at all.³² Despite limitations placed on the women, their qualifications as agents were integral to the war effort and the SOE soon sent them to circuits across France.³³

Denise Madeleine Bloch (1916-1945) was born in Paris to her Jewish parents, Jacques and Suzanne Bloch, and raised with her three brothers. Very little information is available about her early life until the war began. When the war erupted, her father and two of her brothers joined the French army. Her father and brother were eventually captured, but her other brother managed to escape and join a local resistance group.³⁴ In the summer of 1942, persecution and deportation of Jews living in France escalated. Bloch and her family left Paris just before the Rafle du Vél d'Hiv, or round-up of "foreign and stateless Jews" in the city.³⁵ They fled to Lyon, where Bloch was hired by Citroën, an automobile manufacturing company, as a secretary for Jean Aron.³⁶ Lieutenant Aron

(codenamed “Joseph”) was a Jewish resistance leader.³⁷ Aron was involved with the VENTRILOQUIST network, which facilitated communication between groups from Le Mans to Marseille and was led by Philippe de Vomécourt.³⁸

In August 1942, Aron officially recruited Bloch as a courier to deliver messages across the network.³⁹ Three months later, in late November, several agents were arrested, including Aron and Phillipe de Vomécourt, and the circuit dissolved. Bloch narrowly escaped and fled to a safe house outside of Nice, only leaving once to dye her hair blonde.⁴⁰ Bloch returned to Toulouse and met George Starr, the organizer of the new circuit WHEELWRIGHT, who had just lost his wireless operator and an additional agent.⁴¹ Starr also needed a courier and asked Bloch to join him.⁴² However, without a wireless operating set or financial support, the circuit could not effectively operate. In April 1943, Starr sent Bloch over the Pyrénées mountains to Spain to get financial help from the SOE.⁴³ With the aid of two guides, Bloch survived through the cold, harsh mountains, walking for seventeen hours in the snow “with bare legs and wearing a thin, half-length coat.”⁴⁴ Despite being “both ill-dressed and ill-equipped for the journey,” she arrived safely in a Spanish village, where she was questioned by the local police.⁴⁵ She found the British consul in Barcelona, who invited her to dinner and authorized her travel to Madrid and then to Britain.⁴⁶

In June 1943, Bloch arrived in London where she convinced the F Section to aid Starr and requested to be sent back to France as an agent.⁴⁷ Selwyn Jepson was concerned that Bloch’s cover was blown, and that if she returned she would not only endanger her own life but the lives of everyone in the circuit.⁴⁸ As a Jewish SOE agent, Bloch was especially vulnerable in the field. In addition, around the same time, the State Tribunal at Lyons sentenced Denise Bloch in absentia to ten years of hard labor.⁴⁹ Despite the risks, Bloch was “extremely anxious to return to France” and believed that “it was quite safe for her to work in Lyons” because she had been “living in Agen for the last eight months.”⁵⁰ After a month of convincing, Jepson agreed, and Bloch was enrolled into FANY as Danielle Williams and began her ten-month-long training in July.⁵¹ Her final training remarks stated that Bloch had “complete self-assurance and is capable of handling most situations.” Another said she had “a feeling of physical inferiority which limits her athletic activities.”⁵² Nonetheless, her instructors concluded that she was “keen to get back into the field and under a good male organiser would make a very good W/T operator or courier.”⁵³ On March 3, 1944, Bloch landed by Lysander plane with her new circuit organizer, Robert Benoist, landed outside of Nantes. She and Benoist, along with other agents, lived at his villa where she became friends with several of the leaders’ wives who had already been acting as “unofficial couriers” for their husbands.⁵⁴ In preparation for D-Day on June 6, 1944, Bloch and Benoist sabotaged high pylons at Île Héron and cut communication lines and railroad tracks leading into Nantes.⁵⁵ Their sabotage raids helped to disrupt the

Germans in occupied areas just as the Allied troops arrived in Normandy, contributing to the success of D-Day.⁵⁶

On June 18, 1944, Robert Benoist received word that his mother was ill. After leaving the villa to visit her in Paris, Benoist told Bloch and the other agents to flee if he did not return by lunch the next day.⁵⁷ The agents took it as a joke, perhaps because the triumph of D-Day “made them less security conscious and more lax in their attitudes and actions.”⁵⁸ However, Benoist’s mother had already died when he arrived. When he went to a safe house to spend the night, the Gestapo was waiting for him.⁵⁹ The day after Benoist left, Bloch went to the train station to see if Benoist was there, and after seeing that he was not, she returned to the villa.⁶⁰ About half an hour later, the men sitting on the porch heard a fleet of cars coming up the road, shouted to warn the others, and scattered around the villa.⁶¹ More than forty German soldiers searched the house and found Bloch’s wireless in the process.⁶² An SD officer shouted Bloch’s wireless codename at the group of women inside the villa, and Bloch stepped forward.⁶³ Everyone was arrested, and as they sped off into the night, the villa was set on fire behind them.⁶⁴ Bloch was shipped out of Paris in August 1944 in a crowded train along with other captured SOE agents, including Lilian Rolfe and Violette Szabo. In September, she was seen laboring in a factory in Torgau where she was reported to have been “in good health and high spirits.”⁶⁵ From October until January 1945, Bloch was at Königsberg, where she labored “in the forests and working on an aerodrome.”⁶⁶ As the Reich began to crumble and the Soviets pressed in from the east, the Nazis began to move prisoners to camps inside Germany’s borders. By the time Bloch was transported to Ravensbrück concentration camp, she was “in a pitiable condition and became very ill.”⁶⁷ She was executed soon after.

Vera Atkins and other SOE officials were shocked by the Germans’ treatment and execution of the women of the F Section. Up until the war crimes trials after World War II ended, no one “suspected there was such a thing as a concentration camp for women. Despite the concerns that SOE women would not be covered by the rules of war, it had been tacitly understood that women prisoners - simply because they were women - would receive better treatment than men.”⁶⁸ This oversight meant the deaths of the women in concentration camps were hard to pin down or constantly overlooked. In addition, family members of the SOE women who died on the field often were not told details by SOE officials, only that they had died. Bloch’s father had to write a letter to SOE officials in April 1946 requesting an official Death Certificate to know what happened to his daughter.⁶⁹ The Death Certificate arrived two months later. It only stated that Bloch “was killed in action at Ravensbrück concentration camp, Germany, between the 25th day of January 1945, and the 5th day of February 1945.”⁷⁰ In July 1945, Denise Bloch’s parents visited Captain Hazeldine, who described them as a “very insistent and somewhat aggravating type of people” who have “given up all hope of finding her again, but are still trying to get information about her

past activities.”⁷¹ Captain Hazeldine read Bloch’s parents a paragraph from her file and requested that Colonel Buckmaster produce “a paper which will satisfy them” about Bloch’s activities.⁷² British intelligence erased their female agents from their radar on and off the field.

At the Ravensbrück trials attended by Vera Atkins, a testifying woman who “saw Violette, Lilian, and Denise in the punishment block before they were taken away to be shot described all three as emaciated, dirty, and weak.”⁷³ Bloch had suffered from the cold climate and forced labor at Königsberg, “but continued to show remarkable spirit, courage, and cheerfulness.”⁷⁴ At the end of January 1945, Denise Bloch, Lilian Rolfe, and Violette Szabo were executed at Ravensbrück concentration camp.⁷⁵ In March 1946, Denise Bloch was identified by SS man Johanne Schwarzhuber as one of the three girls, along with Lilian Rolfe and Violette Szabo. They were taken to the crematorium yard and shot in the back of the neck.⁷⁶ One of the camp overseers who saw their execution said that “all three were very brave and I was deeply moved.”⁷⁷ Denise Bloch was posthumously awarded the King’s Commendation for Brave Conduct, the Croix de Guerre Avec Palme, the Légion d’honneur and the Médaille de la résistance. She was only twenty-nine years old.⁷⁸

Noor Inayat Khan (1914-1944) is one of the most well-documented of the three female agents. Khan was born on New Years Day in Moscow, Russia to her parents, Hazrat Inayat Khan and Pirani Ameena Begum (born Ora Ray Baker). Her great-great-great-grandfather was Tipu Sultan, the last Muslim ruler of Mysore.⁷⁹ Her father was a Sufi missionary and professor who believed in nonviolence and standing up for one’s country and loved ones.⁸⁰ Khan was the oldest of four children. She adored her younger brother, Vilayat, who was her closest friend.⁸¹ In 1914, a couple of years before the Russian Revolution, the Khans hoped to return to India, but traveling from Moscow to India would have made them travel through anti-British countries or those recovering from massacres by the Russian Empire.⁸² So, the family moved to Paris for a short period before moving to London, wanting to put distance between them and the impending war in Europe.⁸³ After her father died in 1942, Khan supported her grieving mother, taught Sufism at Fazal Manzil, enrolled in music lessons, and enrolled at Sorbonne University in Paris, where she majored in Child Psychology and published a book of Sufi children’s fables.⁸⁴ Khan met and dated Elie Goldberg, a relationship her family disapproved of because of his status as a lower-class Romanian Jew, even after he became a Sufi and changed his name to Azeem to prove his sincerity.⁸⁵ Her engagement to Azeem and her burgeoning career as a children’s author halted when Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939.

Khan strongly opposed the ideology of the Nazis and their massacres against Jews because the Nazi’s persecution targeted those she loved, like her fiancé, and went against her family’s morals concerning religious harmony. So, she wanted to help the Allies in the war effort.⁸⁶ In 1939, she and her youngest sister signed up for a Nursing and First Aid

course with the French Red Cross.⁸⁷ Fearing German invasion, Noor and her family left Paris and landed in Oxford.⁸⁸ On November 19, 1939, Khan joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), changing her name to the more anglicized Nora Inayat Khan and registering her religion as the Church of England.⁸⁹ There, she received three weeks of basic first aid and fitness training and learned how to operate a wireless telegraph.⁹⁰ Khan never told her colleagues about her ancestry or Sufi faith.⁹¹ After seven weeks at the WAAF, the board interviewed Khan for what she thought was a commission. During the interview, questions about her nationality led to a heated argument between Khan and the British board members about the future independence of India. Despite tensions, the WAAF board recommended the SOE hire Khan for her fluency in French.⁹² Selwyn Jepson only needed one interview to decide that she had the traits of an agent. However, Khan was unconvinced she would pass the training and at one point assumed that Jepson "was referring to London's subway system when he said she would be working underground."⁹³ Despite her concerns and confusion, Khan accepted the position in February 1943. She would later become the first female wireless operator sent to Nazi-occupied France.⁹⁴

Noor Inayat Khan received mixed reviews from her training instructors. One report by Lieutenant Holland said that she had "thrown herself heart and soul into the life of the school... overcoming as far as possible feminine disabilities, very eager to please."⁹⁵ Others were concerned that she "did not have a sense of security and was too emotional" and was "too beautiful and exotic, a person who would attract attention to herself rather than blend in the background."⁹⁶ The head of the finishing school in Beaulieu, Frank Spooner, wrote in her final report that Khan was "not overburdened with brains," had "an unstable and temperamental personality," and that he was "very doubtful whether she is really suited to work in the field," sending the report above Buckmaster to his superior, Major General Gubbins.⁹⁷ On the report, Buckmaster angrily wrote, "we don't want them overburdened with brains," "nonsense," and "makes me cross" in the margins.⁹⁸ He overrode Spooner's report and sent her to be tested on her codework, partly out of anger at the instructors but primarily out of desperation to deploy a wireless operator, of which F Section was always short.⁹⁹ Other training reports did not reflect Khan's later performance in the field, such as those that detailed her poor performance in the mock interrogation.¹⁰⁰ Marcus Binney, author of *The Women Who Lived for Danger: The Women Agents of SOE in the Second World War*, states that "her naivety, her frequent lapses in basic security, her supposed inability to tell a lie, repeatedly caused acute concern... so indeed it proved when she was arrested" and suggests that her weaknesses in training and in the field leading up to her capture were in part due to her "other-worldliness [which] was a matter of both birth and upbringing."¹⁰¹ However, this prejudiced view of her training undermines her bravery in the field despite her weaknesses in training. Instead, one must examine the conditions in which she was stationed and question the SOE's decision to deploy her in the first place.

In June 1943, a Lysander flew Khan into France along with agents Diana Rowden and Cecily Lefort. Within a week of her arrival, her resistance network, PROSPER, was compromised.¹⁰² Buckmaster ordered back several agents whose covers might have been revealed.¹⁰³ Andrée Borrell and Francis Suttill were arrested, along with others close to her network, and Khan went into hiding.¹⁰⁴ Despite repeated warnings from SOE commanders, Khan risked her life to continue to lead operations, hoping to rebuild the PROSPER circuit.¹⁰⁵ As arrests escalated, she for a short time became the only radio operator working in Paris.¹⁰⁶ Alone in the field, Khan broke an SOE rule and asked her past friends and neighbors to help her - none of them betrayed her.¹⁰⁷ She was almost captured twice, once when she lied to two German officers on the Métro that her wireless transmitter suitcase was a movie projector, and another when she was asked to help two Canadian airmen, who she later found out were German agents, and left instead.¹⁰⁸ By September, the Germans were tracing her signal, had received a full description of her appearance, and placed a reward of 100,000 francs on her head.¹⁰⁹ The sister of Khan's organizer turned her in for the reward, and she was captured on October 13, 1943. A message arrived at the SOE headquarters in Baker Street saying an informant named Sonia said that "Madeleine had an accident and in hospital," which clearly meant 'burned,' or infiltrated, if not captured."¹¹⁰ Sonia's reliability was never confirmed and the anxiety sparked by her warning then passed until, in November, somebody drew attention to a report from Paris that said that nobody in the field had set eyes on Nora for nearly two months."¹¹¹ Even though SOE officials had reason to believe that Khan's wireless transmitter might have been taken by the enemy since October, Buckmaster never followed up on the lead, believing the source of the tip to be unreliable.¹¹² However, due to this message and descriptions of her appearance by witnesses, Vera Atkins assumed that Sonia Olchanezky was Khan's alias. This confusion between Noor Inayat Khan and Sonia Olchanezky not only prolonged the enemy's use of Khan's wireless set, leading SOE agents straight into deadly traps set by the Germans, but it led to factual errors and inaccuracies about Khan's death, many of which were said on trial and would be later erased by Atkins herself to "hide her mistake" and "ensure history was rewritten."¹¹³ Because of the SOE's initial desperation that put Khan on the field and Atkins' negligence after she had died, more agents were killed in action and Khan's achievements continue to be questioned by historians. Decisively, Khan was shot in the back of the neck at Natzweiler on the night of July 6, 1944.¹¹⁴ She was thirty years old.

Perhaps out of guilt, Vera Atkins was the one who was determined to have Khan awarded a George Cross, one of the highest awards bestowed by the British government. Atkins' communication with Eileen Lancy from the Honour and Awards Office "showed Vera endlessly battling to prove that this time she had gotten the facts for the citation for [Khan] right."¹¹⁵ When Khan was awarded the George Cross, one of the highest awards given by the British government, she was stated to have "displayed the most conspicuous courage, both moral and physical."¹¹⁶ However, "for reasons never explained," Khan's

family was never told about her death at Natzweiler, and “it was only when the family read Nora’s citation for her George Cross in 1948 that they learned the final official version of what happened.”¹¹⁷ Although she was the reason Khan was given an award, Vera Atkins’ callousness had disastrous effects on Khan’s family and the other SOE agents across France.

Sonia Olschanezky (1923-1944) was one of the few women agents in F Section who had not been trained in Britain.¹¹⁸ The information known about her life and resistance activities primarily comes from Rita Kramer’s interview with Sonia’s brother, Serge, in 1990 and from the letters, photographs, and documents he provided.¹¹⁹ Her mother, Helene, came from an affluent Jewish German family. Her father, Eli Olschanezky, was a Jewish Russian chemical engineer from Odessa. Unable to return to Russia after World War I, they settled in Chemnitz, Germany, where Sonia and her two siblings were born.¹²⁰ Her father had to take a job as a sales representative for women’s stockings and eventually became the general manager of the company.¹²¹ Three years later, they moved to Bucharest, where antisemitism caused her father’s business to be taken advantage of. Increasing hatred pushed the Olschanezkys to move to France, only for her father’s business to be exploited again, and the family became impoverished.¹²² From age ten, Sonia wanted to be a professional dancer and that is what she became before the war. She was described by her brother as “strong, discreet, intelligent and entirely without fear.”¹²³ By the start of World War II, Olschanezky’s family was stateless. Olschanezky worked as an au pair while her brothers joined the French Army to obtain French citizenship.¹²⁴ In June 1942, shortly after her father died, Olschanezky was arrested and sent to Drancy internment camp, where she awaited deportation to death camps in German-occupied Poland.¹²⁵ There, she volunteered to care for the orphaned children.¹²⁶ Her mother’s friends in Germany managed to procure false documents that said Olschanezky had “economically valuable skills” that were necessary for the war effort, and shortly thereafter, at eighteen years old, she was freed.¹²⁷

Olschanezky is not considered an agent by the SOE because she was recruited locally and she did not train in Britain. However, her role in the F Section was significant to its sabotage missions and after she was captured the Germans treated her as a secret agent.¹²⁸ Olschanezky worked as a courier for the JUGGLER network, a sub-circuit of PROSPER. Her Swiss fiancé, Jacques Weil, was a radio operator who was hired by the SOE at the same time.¹²⁹ Jean Worms, the head of the JUGGLER circuit (called ROBIN by the French), appointed Jacques Weil as his second-in-command and Sonia Olschanezky as his primary courier.¹³⁰ Weil organized the transmission of information and the recruitment of local agents through personal contact.¹³¹ Sonia Olschanezky proved to be “intelligent, capable, and resourceful,” and slowly she began to take on more organizational and administrative responsibilities.¹³² In early 1943, JUGGLER started to take on a more active

resistance role alongside PROSPER, stepping up acts of sabotage in the hopes that summer would bring the invasion across the English channel. Among other feats, Olschanezky aided circuit agents in blowing up a munitions train south of Paris on the river Seine.¹³³ Her mother and brothers had also been drawn into circuit operations, and to them she never denied the danger of her actions or the risk of being captured. Her brother Serge said that “‘She was not one of those who reveled in it, she just accepted it.’”¹³⁴

At the end of 1943, the Gestapo arrested the circuit’s leader and Jacques Weil fled France. Weil’s Order of the British Empire award recommendation reveals that he went to Berne, Sweden, where he continued to keep in contact with SOE agents who did not flee.¹³⁵ Olschanezky was one of the agents who refused to escape with Weil and instead remained active in Paris after PROSPER fell, still running messages between different SOE groups even though her activity was compromised.¹³⁶ She eluded the Gestapo, continued to transfer information and managed to survive until the beginning of the next year. Weil told Olschanezky that London was going to send an agent to France and that once she turned everything over to him, she could leave.¹³⁷ Although London had communicated that the agent was to arrive on January 22nd, another message announced that he was going to arrive on February 4th.¹³⁸ Olschanezky was summoned to a restaurant, where she found the fake agent and double agent known as Louis Fuhrer. The fake agent told her that Jacques Weil was in danger, that she must be ready to leave the next day to warn him, and that she would be provided with false documents.¹³⁹ Olschanezky’s mother went to look for her when after an hour she had not returned, it was too late. Olschanezky was arrested that day, on January 22nd, 1944 by the Gestapo.¹⁴⁰ She was sent to Fresnes where she joined six other SOE women.¹⁴¹ Then she was sent to Karlsruhe prison on the same train as Odette Sansom and other female SOE agents and was later sent to Natzweiler concentration camp, from which she never returned.¹⁴²

Much of what is known about Sonia Olschanezky’s death is due to Atkins’ extensive investigation into what happened to Noor Inayat Khan. Because of the SOE’s confusion, the fates of Olschanezky and Khan were “inextricably entwined.”¹⁴³ Sonia’s message to London about Khan’s capture and similar descriptions of the two women led to Atkins’ misconception that Sonia was an alias for Khan. Not only did this lead Atkins to believe that Khan had died at Natzweiler, not Dachau, but because Olschanezky was not hired by London directly, Atkins did not continue to look into her death.¹⁴⁴ Although Olschanezky’s fate would have never been investigated without Atkins’ interrogations of German officers directly after the war, without authors like Elizabeth Nicholas, her story and the stories of the other women agents would remain in obscurity.¹⁴⁵ Nicholas was the one who discovered that Olschanezky was the fourth female agent who died at Natzweiler and gave her credit as an unlisted SOE agent in occupied France.¹⁴⁶ Before Nicholas shared her research with Olschanezky’s fiancé and family, her loved ones had not been informed of her

fate, despite their desperate attempts to locate her.¹⁴⁷ Her mother still held onto the hope that Sonia was in a Soviet-liberated camp and because of her Slavic name had been repatriated to the USSR.¹⁴⁸ During the 1948 trial of Werner Rohde at the British Military Court in Wuppertal, Germany, a former Nazi physician revealed that the four women transported to Natzweiler - Diana Rowden, Andréé Borrell, Vera Leigh, and Sonia Olschanezky - were “injected with a lethal drug” by Nazi doctors who told the women it was a vaccination “against typhus.”¹⁴⁹ The agents were then immediately cremated. Although Olschanezky’s name is not listed on the Valençay SOE Memorial with the other men and women of F Section who were killed in action, the National Memorial Arboretum commemorated her on a plaque along with Vera Atkins and fourteen other female SOE agents on the Vera Atkins Memorial Seat. She was twenty years old.

After the end of World War II in January 1946, the SOE dissolved, and the remaining officers trickled into MI6 and other secret organizations. Of the thirty-nine women in the SOE F Section, about one-third of them died during the war. While a few of these women are spotlighted in scholarship, others, such as Bloch and Olschanezky, are nothing more than footnotes in the complicated history of the SOE. When Bloch is included, she is often only referred to because she died alongside Violette Szabo, who is a more widely studied agent, and Lilian Rolfe, another agent frequently glossed over in history. Bloch’s resistance work and sabotage operations are left unmentioned in all but a few sources. When Olschanezky is incorporated into the narrative of the SOE, she is solely known as the woman whom Vera Atkins mistook for Khan. Her background is stated in passing and her accomplishments in the field are not acknowledged, presumably because the SOE and many historians do not consider her to be part of the SOE.¹⁵⁰ Out of the three, Khan is the agent who has had the most scholarly coverage.

Vera Atkins, author Jean Overton Fuller, and Khan’s brother Vilayat made great efforts to find what happened to Khan, and most of what is known about her comes from their investigations. Yet in other biographies and SOE studies, she is either portrayed as naïve and almost infantilized or her legacy is as an over-romanticized tragic victim of war. In part, these representations are due to the negative remarks of SOE’s officials and instructors and prejudiced misconceptions of Khan’s spiritual upbringing. Although the SOE is not directly to blame for these women’s deaths, their under-preparedness, secrecy, and desperation during the war led to fatal consequences. The organization’s neglect of the women agents and their families after the war pushed these willing agents further into obscurity. Despite the SOE’s weaknesses, Bloch, Khan, and Olschanezky displayed bravery and determination in the face of pure danger. It is vital to celebrate and remember all the women of the SOE as integral to the success of British-led wartime resistance in France.

Notes

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²Rita Kramer, *Flames in the Field: The Story of Four SOE Agents in Occupied France* (US: Penguin Books, 1995), 46.

³M.R.D. Foot, "Was SOE Any Good?," *Journal of Contemporary History* 16, no. 1 (1981): 174, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/260622>.

⁴Kate Vigurs, *Mission France: The True History of the Women of SOE* (London, UK: Yale University Press, 2021), 8.

⁵"Atkins, Vera May (Oral History)," Interview by Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, January 1, 1987, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80009338>.

⁶Maurice Buckmaster, *They Fought Alone: The Story of British Agents in France*. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1958), 52.

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¹²Helm, *A Life in Secrets*, 23.

¹³Elizabeth Gerhardt, "Avoiding Detection: Female Agents of the Special Operations Executive," *The Crimson Historical Review* 3, no. 3 (Summer 2021), 15, https://crimsonhistorical.ua.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Avoiding_Detection_Final.pdf.

¹⁴Gordon Thomas and Greg Lewis, *Shadow Warriors of World War II: the Daring Women of the OSS and SOE* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press Incorporated, 2017), 7.

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- ¹⁷ Helm, *A Life in Secrets*, 84.
- ¹⁸ Foot, *SOE: An Outline History*, 46.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 58, 59.
- ²⁰ Buckmaster, *They Fought Alone*, 127.
- ²¹ Foot, *SOE: An Outline History*, 59.
- ²² Ibid., 60.
- ²³ Foot, *SOE: An Outline History*, 60.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 61.
- ²⁵ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 27.
- ²⁶ Foot, *SOE: An Outline History*, 63; Vigurs, *Mission France*, 27.
- ²⁷ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 27, 34.
- ²⁸ Foot, *SOE: An Outline History*, 66-69.
- ²⁹ Helm, *A Life in Secrets*, 113.
- ³⁰ Foot, *SOE: An Outline History*, 66.
- ³¹ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 27.
- ³² Helm, *A Life in Secrets*, 9.
- ³³ Gerhardt, “Avoiding Detection,” 18.
- ³⁴ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 51.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 52.
- ³⁶ Escott, *The Heroines of SOE*, 143; Vigurs, *Mission France*, 53.
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- ³⁸ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 53.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 56.
- ⁴¹ Escott, *The Heroines of SOE*, 145.

⁴² Vigurs, *Mission France*, 56.

⁴³ Ibid., 65.

⁴⁴ Interrogation of Mlle. Denise Bloch, June 11, 1943, HS 9/165/8, Denise Madeleine BLOCH - born 21.01.1916, The National Archives, Kew, UK, 7.

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⁴⁶ Ibid., 65; Interrogation of Mlle. Denise Bloch, November 6, 1943, HS 9/165/8, Denise Madeleine BLOCH - born 21.01.1916, The National Archives, Kew, UK, 7.

⁴⁷ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 65.

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⁵⁴ Escott, *The Heroines of SOE*, 146.

⁵⁵ Thomas and Lewis, *Shadow Warriors*, 237.

⁵⁶ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 138, 146.

⁵⁷ Thomas and Lewis, *Shadow Warriors*, 237-238.

⁵⁸ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 146; Thomas and Lewis, *Shadow Warriors*, 237-238.

⁵⁹ Thomas and Lewis, *Shadow Warriors*, 238.

⁶⁰ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 146.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Thomas and Lewis, *Shadow Warriors*, 238.

⁶³ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 146.

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⁶⁵ Ensign Denise Bloch: French Section Agent, September 13, 1946, HS 9/165/8, Denise Madeleine BLOCH - born 21.01.1916, The National Archives, Kew, UK.

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⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Helm, *A Life in Secrets*, 107.

⁶⁹ Letter to Madame Bloch (Denise Bloch's Sister-in-Law), April 11, 1946, HS 9/165/8, Denise Madeleine BLOCH - born 21.01.1916, The National Archives, Kew, UK.

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⁷³ Helm, *A Life in Secrets*, 327.

⁷⁴ Ensign Denise Bloch: French Section Agent, September 13, 1946, The National Archives.

⁷⁵ Thomas and Lewis, *Shadow Warriors*, 253.

⁷⁶ Helm, *A Life in Secrets*, 238.

⁷⁷ Thomas and Lewis, *Shadow Warriors*, 253.

⁷⁸ Escott, *The Heroines of SOE*, 148.

⁷⁹ Jean Overton Fuller, *Noor-un-Nisa Inayat Khan (Madeleine)* (Rotterdam, UK: East-West Publications Fonds N.V., 1971), 11.

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⁸¹ Basu, *Spy Princess*, 20.

⁸² Magida, *Code Name Madeleine*, 18-20.

⁸³ Magida, *Code Name Madeleine*, 20-21.

⁸⁴ Escott, *The Heroines of SOE*, 98; Magida, *Code Name Madeleine*, 19-20.

⁸⁵ Magida, *Code Name Madeleine*, 20-23.

⁸⁶ Basu, *Spy Princess*, 61.

- ⁸⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸⁸ Magida, *Code Name Madeleine*, 45.
- ⁸⁹ Escott, *The Heroines of SOE*, 98.
- ⁹⁰ Magida, *Code Name Madeleine*, 49.
- ⁹¹ Shrabani Basu, *Spy Princess: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan*, (New Lebanon, NY: Omega Publications, 2007), 75-76.
- ⁹² Magida, *Code Name Madeleine*, 52.
- ⁹³ Ibid., 64.
- ⁹⁴ Helm, *A Life in Secrets*, 14.
- ⁹⁵ Basu, *Spy Princess*, 128.
- ⁹⁶ Basu, *Spy Princess*, 146-147; Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger: The Women Agents of SOE in the Second World War* (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 2002), 162-163.
- ⁹⁷ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 98; Magida, *Code Name Madeleine*, 84.
- ⁹⁸ Magida, *Code Name Madeleine*, 84.
- ⁹⁹ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 36, 98, 99.
- ¹⁰⁰ Basu, *Spy Princess*, 146-147.
- ¹⁰¹ Binney, *The Women Who Lived*, 156, 157.
- ¹⁰² Thomas and Lewis, *Shadow Warriors*, 192.
- ¹⁰³ Helm, *A Life in Secrets*, 45.
- ¹⁰⁴ Escott, *The Heroines of SOE*, 99.
- ¹⁰⁵ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 104-106.
- ¹⁰⁶ Thomas and Lewis, *Shadow Warriors*, 192.
- ¹⁰⁷ Magida, *Code Name Madeleine*, 89.
- ¹⁰⁸ Thomas and Lewis, *Shadow Warriors*, 192.
- ¹⁰⁹ Escott, *The Heroines of SOE*, 99, 100.
- ¹¹⁰ Helm, *A Life in Secrets*, 51.
- ¹¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹¹² Thomas and Lewis, *Shadow Warriors*, 174.

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- ¹¹⁷ Helm, *A Life in Secrets*, 381.
- ¹¹⁸ Escott, *The Heroines of SOE*, 74.
- ¹¹⁹ Kramer, *Flames in the Field*, 315.
- ¹²⁰ Escott, *The Heroines of SOE*, 74.
- ¹²¹ Kramer, *Flames in the Field*, 188.
- ¹²² Escott, *The Heroines of SOE*, 74.
- ¹²³ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 173.
- ¹²⁴ Escott, *The Heroines of SOE*, 75.
- ¹²⁵ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 173.
- ¹²⁶ Escott, *The Heroines of SOE*, 75.
- ¹²⁷ Kramer, *Flames in the Field*, 197.
- ¹²⁸ Vigurs, *Mission France*, 12.
- ¹²⁹ Helm, *A Life in Secrets*, 309- 310.
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¹³⁸ Escott, *The Heroines of SOE*, 77.

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¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 345.

¹⁴⁵ Kramer, *Flames in the Field*, 244.

¹⁴⁶ Escott, *The Heroines of SOE*, 77.

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Professional Writing

2nd Place:

View Masvosva, Ibtissam Cuny, Grace VanEngen, and Emanuela Cordeiro, “POST: A CO₂ CA-TAP- TROPHE”

POST: A CO₂ CA-TAP-TROPHE




What happens to your social media data? — [icon] [X]

- Every like, comment, post, or message sent through social media is stored by social media companies in physical data plants, or server farms.
- Even after this data is removed on an individuals account, many companies keep data for years unless they personally receive a request to delete it.

How does this affect the environment? — [icon] [X]

- One social media user releases 60.4 kg of CO₂ into the atmosphere every year.
- CO₂ is released when fossil fuels are burned to power server farms.
- The burning of fossil fuels causes the greenhouse effect, in which polluting gasses in Earth's atmosphere trap the sun's heat, leading to global warming.





Source: Greenspector

Which sites produce the most CO₂? — [icon] [X]

- Tik Tok, Reddit, and Pinterest are the top three polluting social media sites because they have a fast newsfeed renewal and algorithm that shows users posts based on how interactive they are with certain content.
- These complex algorithms need more stored social media data to run properly.

How can you help? — [icon] [X]

- Send SMS over social media messages, which produce .286 less grams of CO₂.
- Practice political activism. If 3.5% of US citizens protested, policymakers would be more likely to pass environmentally friendly legislation.
- Set time limits for social media apps and limit your posts and comments.



Please scan the QR code for more information!



Professional Writing

1st Place:

Langston Riddle, “Policy Letter”

1000 W Austin Blvd
Nevada, MO 64772

December 6, 2022

5775 Glenridge Dr.
Building B, Suite 380
Atlanta, GA 30328

Representative Lucy McBath:

Attacks on reproductive rights are at an all-time high following the striking down of *Roe v. Wade* on June 24th, 2022, and millions of women across the nation are suffering. My name is Langston Riddle, and I am a first-year International Relations major at Cottey College. Though I’m neither a resident of Georgia nor an ICE detainee, I have been personally victimized by the lack of reproductive justice within the United States. I know and love countless others who have experienced routine transgressions against their bodily autonomy. Whether it is being denied the right to an abortion or being forced into infertility, there is no denying the epidemic against reproductive justice that faces our country. Most terrifying and heartbreaking are the stories of hundreds of women in ICE detention facilities who have spoken up against the violation of their human and reproductive rights while detained. This is the precise reason I am writing to you: to call for your help in advocating for the immigrant women who spoke out in the September 2020 whistleblower report against ICE’s Irwin County Detention Center in Ocilla, Georgia.

You are the ideal candidate to advocate for the reproductive rights of immigrant women of color: not only does this affect your constituency because it is happening in Georgia, but you are also the Vice Chair for the Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues. And, according to Votesmart.org, you are a current member of the Congressional subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, which makes you an authority on the workings of ICE. Further, your voting record has proven an incredible commitment to protecting reproductive rights: you voted in favor of the Women’s Health Protection Act of 2021 (H.R. 3755) and have also received a 100% rating from Planned Parenthood (Votesmart.org, 2022). You have also spoken out about your own experiences as a mother

and woman; thus, I believe you are the individual who can best advocate with empathy and respect to ICE and Irwin's victims.

Before I begin my analysis of the issue at hand, I want to acknowledge the supposed ending of ICE's contract with Irwin County Detention Center in 2021 following the whistleblower report. However, according to guards, staff members, and detainees held in Irwin, the closures are merely a rumor: detainees are still being transferred into the detention center, and the abuses are continuing (Olivares and Washington, 2021). Furthermore, even if Irwin were to close according to plan, the problem would never be resolved. Female detainees are still experiencing flagrant human rights abuses in other ICE detention centers across Georgia, most notably the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia where reports of sexual abuse have already come out in droves (Mathiowetz, 2021). Thus, it is critical that a more permanent solution is explored to more effectively address violations of reproductive rights in ICE facilities.

As mentioned previously, the specific issue I am writing to address is the forced sterilization and abuse of women detained in ICE detention centers in Georgia. In 2020, a nurse working in the Irwin County Detention Center filed a whistleblower complaint against the center after seeing countless hysterectomies and other medically unnecessary medical procedures performed on women under ICE custody. Women who were detained in Irwin were sent to a gynecologist for unrelated medical reasons and surgeries, only to find out later that they were given a hysterectomy – without their knowledge or consent (Project South et al., 2020). Women were extremely uninformed about the medical procedures they were being subjected to, which some officials blamed on the language barrier. However true it may be that a language barrier could have contributed to these medical discrepancies, Irwin “failed to provide adequate education and obtain informed consent from the women. For example, detainees reported that nurses Googled Spanish to communicate with them rather than using the language line provided for medical staff” (Project South et al., 2020). They were also routinely denied proper treatment for cancer, brain tumors, and breast cysts and were forced into accepting unwanted surgeries under threat of being denied access to future medical treatments (Olivares and Washington, 2021).

Further, a 2021 report from Project South noted several incidences of medical malpractice, neglect, and abuse, as well as blatant disregard for human rights: “failing to oversee the manner in which doctors were obtaining consent and using language translation services; failing to offer adequate access to Spanish-speaking medical staff; failing to abide by ICE's standards for medical care in detention and ICE's policies on vetting medical providers; failing to appropriately address numerous complaints from the Mexican Consulate and advocates about ICE; and failing to provide adequate health care services and living conditions at the facility, and severely mistreating people detained

there” (Project South et al., 2021). This failure to provide freedom to full, informed consent for sterilization procedures is a major violation of human rights, as well as the right to information, the right to be free from inhumane and degrading treatment, and the right to privacy.

Disproportionately affected by this issue are women of color, particularly of Latinx origin: hundreds of women are detained in these centers, and most of them are originally from Mexico and Central American countries, such as and most notably Guatemala, and between the ages of 26 to 35 (Ellmann, 2019). Those affected also includes “both women who had recently arrived to the United States and women who have been in the United States for years and have children and other family members who are U.S. citizens” (Project South et al., 2021). There are also thousands of others who are affected by abuse and neglect in ICE detention facilities; in fact, the United States holds the world’s largest immigration detention system (Hernández, 2019). Similarly, there is a broad range of stakeholders involved, illustrating just how tremendous the scope of this issue is. Private companies such as CoreCivic and GEO Group have a personal stake in keeping these facilities running as is, and many white supremacists, evangelicals, and right-wing political parties oppose any legislation rectifying abuses against reproductive rights. Many conservative politicians have built platforms off the policing of immigrants and people of color, the two primary victims of these policies.

The main cause of this issue is the hateful and racist rhetoric that surrounds the issue of reproductive justice and immigration, often mimicking the violent eugenicist values of the 20th century (Stern, 2005). There is an extensive history of reproductive abuse against Black, Indigenous, and people of color, which often manifested in the form of sterilization abuse. Most notably were the “aggressive population control measures” the federal government subjected Puerto Rican women to: a 1965 survey found that “about one-third of all Puerto Rican mothers aged 20-49 had been sterilized” (Salas, 2020). Racist, eugenicist values continue to inform the American healthcare industry, seen particularly in regards to the lack of anesthesia for gynecological procedures and exams which was based upon experiments on Black women in the 19th century.

In fact, these eugenicist values – which are pervasive and continue to affect cultural norms in the United States – are the primary reason there are no existing policies to address the issue of reproductive abuses in ICE detention facilities. Any existing policies are observed only on the state level, such as in California. Furthermore, any current legislation is insufficient in supplying accountability and transparency within ICE detention facilities. To the point, if private detention facilities continue to exist, victims of reproductive abuse will never receive the justice they deserve (Olivares and Washington, 2021).

This brings me to my proposed solution: the elimination of public-private partnerships with ICE detention facilities on the federal level – otherwise broadening the 2021 executive order by President Joe Biden that only applied to private prisons. President Biden’s executive order only affected private prisons contracted by the Department of Justice, leaving DHS and ICE free to continue contracting with private facilities (Han and Landeta, 2022). ICE was entrusted with the safety, well-being, and humanity of hundreds of thousands of people, but its corroboration with private corporations has led to human rights abuses in the name of protecting bottom lines (Han and Landeta, 2022). Along with this, the private prison ban (and subsequently that of ICE detention facilities) is a popular one amongst voters and human rights groups: 85 human and immigrant rights groups have called for the private prison ban to extend to ICE facilities (The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, 2022); a poll by the ACLU also found that 68% of voters want the government to cease contracts with private corporations (Tashman, 2022). Therefore, not only is this solution politically feasible but it is the only effective way of addressing these reproductive and human rights abuses. If these facilities stay open, there will never be accountability and change – innocent women, children, and families will continue to suffer in the name of profit. Thus, it is imperative that you use your power and influence to advocate for the executive order to apply to detention facilities too.

This is a solution that would be highly effective, as there are states that have already adopted similar policies that have helped their constituencies. The most notable example of this is California, which banned both private prisons and private detention facilities in California Assembly Bill (AB) 22, signed by Governor Newsom on October 11, 2019. This bill started an incredibly important conversation as to the abuses immigrants detained in ICE facilities are facing. The California Attorney General’s report “found common issues among private facilities, including restrictions on liberty, language barriers, issues with access to medical and mental health care, obstacles to contacting family and other support systems, and barriers to adequate legal representation” (Han and Landeta, 2022). Though AB 22 has faced criticism and pushback from private prison companies, California has taken a crucial step towards improving the abuses of noncitizens and has influenced dozens of states to follow suit (Han and Landeta, 2022). The incredible work California has done can be applied just as effectively, if not more, on the federal level.

In conclusion, I strongly request your aid in advocating for the rights of women detained in ICE facilities, who routinely experience abuse, suffering, and shame. We can only imagine the fear and pain they have experienced while imprisoned. Ending contracts with private detention facilities is the only way we could ever properly address the abuses hundreds of thousands of women endured, and your leadership within the House of Representatives is sorely needed to achieve this. It is my hope that the United States will become a beacon of reproductive and immigrant rights, but to do this, we must enact change and soon. We

should follow in the footsteps of California and bring justice to these women by ending contracts with and closing all private ICE detention facilities. You are the strongest individual to do this, given your accomplishments and past policies, and because women in Georgia are suffering. I thank you for your consideration and look forward to your continued advocacy on behalf of women everywhere.

Sincerely,

Langston Riddle

Enclosed: Works Cited

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Creative Writing

2nd Place:

Khloe Kennedy, “that one yellow smiley face shirt”

that one yellow smiley face shirt

my favorite part about being a teenage girl?
the constant trivia games.
It's like,
this random man on the street
middle aged, still living in his early 90s fantasy,
looks down at my Nevermind shirt and just *knows*
I want to play Jeopardy.
You know?

It starts with “nice shirt. can you name 5 songs?”
and of course I'm giddy. only five? are you kidding?
but the game never ends there.
“what about their names?”
“where did they start the band?”
“what album had the highest sales?”
“what band did a member form after the initial band disbanded?”
and before the crosswalk light turns green,
I've run the category.

Next I'll take “Prove Yourself Again” for 2,000 please, Alex.

See, trivia games are literally *so* fun,
but only when you actually get to win.
And I mean *really* win.
See, when a man wants to play trivia games
I want to make him regret the day
he first talked back to his mother.
I want to make him wish that he never challenged
a *pretty little thing* on the street.
I want him to seize in terror
the next time he sees a Trivial Pursuit box.

He thinks he can take my pie piece?
I will swallow him whole and leave nothing but bone.

Because if that man on the street knew
that my older sister did my hair every morning - two pigtails, pink ribbons-
to the Cobain's melodies,
that my first steps were dancing to the Stones in the living room,
that I stress bake to Dark Side of the Moon,
he just wouldn't *get* it.
You know?

And like,
I would love to say I didn't feed into these games,
but there's something so frustrating
about my identity determining validity
in every. aspect. of. my. life.
Prove yourself or be caught out,
out, where you belong.

And still, my interests don't get to be diverse
I love popular music and trends,
and classic rock & alternative, you know?
I even, god forbid, listen to One Direction and Pink Floyd
in the same playlist.
I won't apologize for it.
Why should I shove myself into a box while you objectify me anyways?
It's literally so unfair.

And I know I know all the answers.
And I know I don't owe you anything.
So then just let me wear the damn shirt in peace.
Maybe I just like the smiley face.
You know?

Creative Writing

1st Place:

Fiona Burmeister Mccracken, “Why I Can’t Write Personal Essays: My Experience as an Autistic College Student”

Frustrated, I decide to write the intro after I’ve written the rest, crumpling up yet another sticky note. I’m trying to write the final assignment in my Social Justice and Civic Engagement course. It’s supposed to be a personal essay about my struggles as an Autistic college student. Well, we could choose which minority identity we picked as our topic, but that was my subject. The essay was 12 hours late and I was still staring at a blank page. All my drafts read like an academic manuscript you found on JSTOR. My essay would have been titled something unwieldy and long. ‘Recordings and Analysis of the dialectical in/accessibility on college campuses: an antimaterialist critique,’. I don’t actually know what an antimaterialist critique is, or post-structuralism. Though I think I’m supposed to. But my paper is supposed to be personal...casual. And I don’t think I know how to write like that.

I have the same dilemma with verbal communication. Give me a presentation to present, and I’m golden. Ask me to make small talk and I’m lost. I’m autistic, which means I don’t socialize the same as neurotypicals. Because of this, I had to memorize how to speak, hold my head, smile, eye contact. This is called scripting and is common with autistic people. I’m good when I know the rules. There are a lot of rules when writing an academic paper. There are conventions, terminology, and formatting requirements. I can write a ten-page academic paper on any subject you want, and it will sound like I plagiarized a paper in the European Journal of Women’s Studies or Signs. But apparently, I can’t write without those rules. This was a problem given the aforementioned past-due deadline.

Past-due assignments weren’t new to me after four years of struggling through two different undergrad institutions. I never expected to struggle so much, after all, I love learning and had an aforementioned talent for reading and writing academic lingo. I had fallen in love with academia decades ago at this point. The perfect career, I could read all I want, and sit in a quiet office with many books. I envisioned deep intellectual conversations and absolutely no small talk. This idolized vision was the result of growing up in a family of professors, scientists, and film majors, all with a discernable smattering of autistic traits.

Unfortunately for people like me, with a more generous helping of autism, college was a challenge no matter how much I also enjoyed it. In fact, one study reported that students with autism were more likely to drop out than students with many other disabilities.¹ Like most institutions in America, academia is built only to accommodate a mythical norm, ie a cis straight able-bodied upper class white man. This mythical norm was unattainable for me. Well, actually it's inaccessible for everyone but it was especially unattainable for a disabled neurodivergent lesbian.

Colleges have always been inaccessible, and unfortunately still are. One student, quoted in a study of disabled student's experiences with accommodations said, "We were never conceived of as belonging; we were never meant to be citizens of the university. So it is no wonder that we hit walls and continually encounter the limits of disability offices and "reasonable" accommodations."² Like many marginalized groups disabled people have been historically excluded from academia. The first legislation aimed at ensuring disabled people had a right to education was The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 which was only enacted over ten years after the rights of Black students were legislated. Institutions nowadays market their inclusivity, while remaining structurally and culturally extremely inaccessible. My current college is internally infamous for pestering Black, international, or visibly disabled students for marketing shots. These marginalized identities create value for the institution while individually the students are often penalized by the institution for the same identities.

One semester I was told by the Director of Disability Services that accommodations were only for getting students into the classroom, not helping once they were there. While this is blatantly false even when considering the limited ADA legal definition of an institution's responsibility to provide reasonable accommodations, it highlights a persistent issue with how accommodations and accessibility are viewed. Disability is often viewed as physical inaccess and thus separation. One study notes that, "External separation from physical environments on campus mediated respondents' perception of disability. These environments included campus buildings and classrooms, as well as course materials and pedagogical methods used in classes."³ However, these authors explicitly name academic pedagogy, course materials, and activities as undisputedly part of the overall academic environment. Disabled students are separated from the pedagogy because its structure is inaccessible. This separation creates barriers, trenches to cross before even the simplest of assignments can be completed. This puts disabled students at a constant disadvantage to their peers.

The result of this disadvantage is often shown in student's productivity. However, rather than acknowledging the increased effort disabled students must put forth, institutions and individuals often blame the disabled bodymind. As one disability theorist

wrote, “the culture of academia presumes that the bodyminds best suited for academia are those that demonstrate discipline, restraint, productivity, and autonomy. Too often, disabled, neurodivergent, and chronically ill bodies are framed as unproductive, impaired, dependent, disorderly and, therefore, of little intellectual or productive value”⁴ Academia has become increasingly subject to capitalist productivity mantras as a neoliberal attempt to combat dropping attendance, operational costs, and the equalization of education. This is true for students and faculty, especially as tenured jobs become an elusive carrot for overworked adjuncts.

Students are often advised to choose smaller colleges to avoid the adjuncts but are not warned of the scarcity of resources available at smaller institutions. My current college has one of the highest percentages of neurodivergent students I’ve ever seen, yet struggles to provide support for students such as basic tutoring, much less the extensive network of support neurodivergence often requires. While all colleges are legally required to have a disability services center, this ‘center’ is often a single individual. Many if not all disability service centers at colleges are underfunded, uneducated, unhelpful, and ableist. In the rare case that a worker in these offices is not the above, overwhelming institutional inertia, lack of resources, inflexible rules and restriction of funds stifled any actual assistance that could be provided. Reading a collection of studies and criticisms of the accommodations process at institutes of higher learning I was validated and yet enraged.⁵ Struggling for acceptance and the day to day work of living with disability, seems continually clogged with meetings insisting that ‘yes I do have this’. While limited to twice a semester if all goes according to plan, some semesters it seems weekly, making decentering the moment of disclosure impossible. The necessity for outside validation of experience turns any meeting into a supplication. The extensive documentation requirements exclude multiply marginalized students and prioritize students with disposable cash. This turns the office meant to improve access into yet another barrier for disabled students.

The barriers disabled students face often prevent them from entering fields that require advanced degrees. This affects the type of work being published about disabled bodies. Scientific studies often use stigmatizing language when discussing a disability, or do little to investigate the issues most urgent in the patient’s perspective. Many studies on autistic children repeatedly expose them to negative stimuli, in ways autistic adults describe as torture. The results of these studies are used to validate practices such as those at the Judge Rotenberg Foundation, where children and adults are controlled and have been killed by high-power electric shocks.⁷ This is only the most blatant example of how ableism in research is literally life or death for disabled students.

These many barriers to disabled students succeeding in higher education means that there are few disabled bodyminds reading theory, much less writing it or teaching it.

Only 4% of faculty are recorded as having a disability, while almost 30% of the American population have one.⁸ Even the interdisciplinary field of Disability Studies, which has grown over the last few decades, suffers from this lack. The barriers students face result in even fewer multiply marginalized students entering the field. Therefore, like all academic fields, the majority of acknowledged thinkers and writers on disability matters are white. Overall this results in a deficit of disabled voices in academia. Much traditional, communal wisdom is lost, and much of the theory created is from an inaccessible single perspective. Saying academic knowledge is inaccessible isn't an argument against theory, or rhetoric, or run-on sentences. Instead, it is an acknowledgment of the concerted effort to restrict who has access to that information and whose wisdom is regarded as valid theory. The convoluted and archaic language often used in academia is an access barrier, and while the solution could be just 'writing simply', it can also be increasing literacy, lay summaries, plain language translations, destruction of publisher paywalls, broadband access, audio recordings, or access to screen readers. Making the academy accessible isn't a reduction, it is an expansion. While universal design and specifically universal academic and pedagogical design are useful starting places, the theories seem less suited for the radical cultural shift necessary. I dream of transformational accessibility, knowing that my dream is itself inaccessible to many. Sins Invalid, a Chicago based performing arts collective that is often cited as the originators of the disability justice movement wrote that "Disability Justice is a vision and practice of a yet-to-be, a map that we create with our ancestors and our great-grandchildren onward, in the width and depth of our multiplicities and histories, a movement towards a world in which every body and mind is known as beautiful."⁹ This radical liberatory dreaming is something I am learning from the, often brown and Black dreamers whose work I consume. I dream of accessibility as radical, collective, liberatory, transformative. And I dream that someday our institutes of higher learning are transformed by it.

Notes

¹ The Arizona State Press. "College Students with Autism Have Low Graduation Rate." Accessed December 11, 2021. <https://www.statepress.com/article/2017/11/spcampus-low-retention-of-college-students-with-autism>.

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³ Knight, Amber. "Feminism, disability, and the democratic classroom." *Negotiating Disability: Disclosure and Higher Education* (2017): 57-73.

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⁵ Kerschbaum, Stephanie L., Laura T. Eisenman, and James M. Jones, eds. *Negotiating Disability: Disclosure and Higher Education*. University of Michigan Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9426902>.

⁶ Rose Horowitch "Yale Study on Distress in Autistic Toddlers Draws Ethics Concerns." Yale Daily News, December 19, 2020. <https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2020/12/18/yale-study-on-distress-in-autistic-toddlers-draws-ethics-concerns/>.

⁷ Autistic Self Advocacy Network. "'Prisoners of the Apparatus': The Judge Rotenberg Center." Autistic Self Advocacy Network, August 9, 2014. <https://autisticadvocacy.org/2014/08/prisoners-of-the-apparatus/>.

⁸ Burke, Lilah. "A Difficult Pathway." Inside Higher Ed, May 12, 2021. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/05/12/faculty-disabilities-say-academe-can-present-barriers>.

⁹ Sins Invalid. "Disability Justice - a Working Draft by Patty Berne." Accessed December 11, 2021. <https://www.sinsinvalid.org/blog/disability-justice-a-working-draft-by-patty-berne>.

Writing in Foreign Languages - Spanish

1st Place:

Caché Goracke, “Los Temas de Religión, Caballería y Honor, en la Obra *Tirant Lo Blanc*, por Joanot Martorell”

Famosamente llamada, por escritor prominente Español, Miguel Cervantes, como el mejor libro de todos los tiempos, *Tirant Lo Blanc* se distingue de otras obras antiguas de literatura Española por su representación de sus personajes y su escandalosa honestidad, se trata de temas que la mayoría de escritores aún no han tenido el coraje abordar. Ambientado en España en el siglo XV, el libro por un caballero Español, Joanot Martorell, y luego terminado después de su muerte por su amigo íntimo, Martí Joan de Galba, narra la vida de un caballero heroico llamado Tirant lo Blanc en su búsqueda caballerosa para conquistar reinos extraños, y más importante, el corazón de su interés amoroso, apasionado, la princesa Carmesina. A lo largo de su obra, Martorell logra los dos entreteniendo al lector con historias románticas de caballeros, princesas, y batallas, mientras también revelando las verdades honestidades de manipulación, carnalidad, y naturaleza humana siniestra detrás de los temas importantes y recurrentes de religión, caballería, y honor.

Porque *Tirant Lo Blanc* está ambientado en España medieval, el libro tiene lugar durante el periodo severo de guerra constante entre los Católicos Romanos y las Musulmanas en la zona de la Península Ibérica, conocida como la Reconquista. Los Árabes han estado dominando la península desde alrededor 718 a.C., pero por 1250 a.C., casi toda la península estaba bajo el control Católico y finalmente, la dominación del Catolicismo se convirtió en el establecimiento de España como un estado independiente y Católico (España 22, 29). Luego, en 1481, solamente diez años antes del públicamente del libro, Las monarcas Españolas, reina Isabella y reino Ferdinand, lideraron la inquisición Española, la matanza y el exilio de Judíos y gente Musulmana en España para asegurarse que España siguiera siendo aún más Católica (España 29). La mayoría del libro tiene lugar después de la caída de Constantinopla, una grande ciudad cristiana, que significa que las batallas entre los Cristianos y los Musulmanes fueron aún más severas, y este preparó la escena para todos los conflictos caballerosos, como vemos en el libro. Como la mayoría de Españoles a

la época, Martorell fue un católico dedicado, y aun en las primeras páginas, podemos ver que el libro está dedicado a “el honor, alabanza, y gloria de nuestro Señor Jesucristo y su Madre Santa, nuestra Dama, la Virgen María” (Martorell 27). La religión del autor significa que todos los personajes importantes, héroes, y protagonistas en el libro son de la fe Romana Católica, y decir que Catolicismo es un tema común en la obra sería no darle suficiente importancia. De hecho, Dios, Jesús, la virgen María, los santos y otros elementos de terminología Católica son un parte común del dialecto diario de los personajes y puede ser encontrada casi en todas las páginas. Eso es un reflejo del gran impacto que el Catolicismo tuvo en la cultura Española en ese tiempo.

Si uno no fuera a mirar muy cerca al texto, puede parecer que los personajes son devotamente religiosos y sus acciones están a menudo motivadas por su amor puro por Dios. Pero, después de un análisis más detallado, queda claro que religión es una parte de su cultura tan común que pierde una parte grande de su significado y se convierte en un disfraz mucho más que los personajes pueden usar para justificar sus acciones. De hecho, cada deseo carnal y acción pecaminosa que una persona desea, ya sea lujuria, matar, mentir, o cualquier otra cosa, siempre está justificada por la religión de alguna manera. Para comenzar, por ejemplo, podemos mirar la historia de William de Warwick, quien le dice a su esposa que se siente condenado por su fe de ir en viaje a Jerusalén para ser redimido de sus pecados. Él lamenta que él ha matado mucha gente de acuerdo con sus deberes de caballero y ha tomado muchas vidas en la batalla y la única manera de reconciliar esto a Dios es viajando de España a Jerusalén para recibir la santa comunión y confesar sus pecados a un sacerdote. Su esposa está muy preocupada por esto porque él la ha dejado muchas veces en el pasado para luchar en las batallas y durante estos tiempos ella tenía miedo de su muerte. Él le asegura una y otra vez que es la voluntad de Dios, y finalmente usa religión para hacerla sentir culpable, diciendo, “la esposa que ama el cuerpo [de su esposo] debe amar su alma aún más, y en lugar de lamentarse debe agradecer a Dios por su misericordia” (Martorell 5).

De una perspectiva religiosa, sus intenciones parecen puras, sin embargo, después de llegar a Jerusalén y terminar de pedir perdón por sus pecados, él finge su propia muerte y no regresa a su esposa, sino, finalmente, regresa a la caballería y sigue luchando en batallas para el rey. Mientras William de Warwick reclama que sus acciones están motivadas por religión, su completa indiferencia y desprecio para su esposa e hijo prueba lo contrario. Él deja su esposa después de que ella ruega que no lo haga, envía gente a decirle que él ha muerto, lo que hace que ella se aflige mucho, y luego, él la fuerza a dar su hijo al rey para que se convierta en un caballero, aunque ella está muy triste porque ella piensa que estará sola por siempre porque ahorita los dos su hijo y su esposo van a morir. Él es completamente indiferente a sus muchas lágrimas y súplicas y la considera como una

mujer irracional. Mientras, su falta de empatía por su esposa y sus acciones egoístas están justificados por fe y su deber a Dios.

Muchas otras personas usan a Dios y religión a menudo para justificar sus deseos más carnales. La obra está llena de escenas eróticas y sensuales, generalmente entre la princesa que tiene catorce años, Carmesina, y la protagonista y héroe, Tirant. Un personaje específico, quien en el libro se llama irónicamente y simbólicamente, Placer de la Vida, tiene una presencia muy sexual en el libro. Ella es la doncella de la princesa, y está constantemente tratando hacer Tirant y la princesa a tener relaciones sexuales a pesar de las oposiciones de la princesa. No es claro porque ella tiene tanto interés en esto, pero se parece que es para su propio placer, como ella también está encontrada mirando parejas, tener relaciones sexuales o escuchando a través de las puertas. A lo largo del libro ella es encontrada dando consejos horribles y fomentando un comportamiento inmoral y ella frecuentemente usa la religión para manipular personajes para hacer lo que ella quiera. Por ejemplo, ella le dice a Carmesina que es su deber como una mujer dejar que Tirant haga cualquier cosa que él quiera hacer a ella cuando él regrese de la batalla, y que desde que él ha servido caballeramente la fe, ella debería darle cualquier cosa que él desea, y aún dice es su deber “en honor de la trinidad santa.” (Mira 13). Más tarde, cuando Carmesina implica que Tirant la violó, Placer de la Vida responde citando, completamente fuera de contexto, la parte de la historia de Adán y Eva en que Dios dice “ser fructífera y multiplicar la tierra”. Continúa llenando a la princesa con culpa diciendo que si ella lo niega a Tirant cuando él se acuesta con ella, está desobedeciendo el “mandamiento más santo” de Dios al negarse a tener la oportunidad de procrear con él (Martorell 396). Está claro que esta manipulación religiosa es poderosa, especialmente cuando es usada en una niña joven como Carmesina porque ella responde diciendo que quizás su edad la ha hecho inocente de estas cosas.

Los personajes, siendo la nobleza española, son un reflejo del espíritu de la nación española a esta época. Son manipuladores, arrogantes y usan su religión para justificar cualquiera de sus acciones, continuamente tirando los nombres de Jesús y María para que puedan satisfacer sus propios placeres. España a este tiempo, igualmente, usó constantemente la religión para justificar sus acciones, ya sea la colonización, la matanza de personas de otras religiones o usando la imposición del miedo por la manipulación religiosa para que la gente haga lo que quiera. Por el uso de estos personajes, Martorell da una idea interesante de cómo la religión en España fue frecuentemente retorcida y deliberadamente corrompida y controlada para ser usada para aprovechar, hasta el punto en que fue blasfema.

Por otro lado, sin embargo, la religión de los personajes también sirve otro propósito interesante y menos siniestro que es humanizar los personajes. El libro recibe mucha alabanza por hacer los personajes tan realistas, y mucho de eso es debido a la religión y como los personajes interactúan con esto. En mucha literatura de esta época, los

caballeros y protagonistas están representados como héroes santos de gran virtud que siempre son buenos y nunca se dan por vencidos a las tentaciones. Tirant, sin embargo, aunque el trata ser devoto a su religión y importa mucho de honor, caballería y siendo virtuoso, no es un rival por las tentaciones que él siente cuando está con la princesa. Carmesina, también, es mucho mejor católica que Tirant, pero aún deja que su amor por Tirant supere su deseo de mantenerse fiel a su fe. A menudo le dice a Tirant que no puede perder su virginidad porque sería un pecado, pero al mismo tiempo lo invita a acostarse en la cama con ella y "jugar a los juegos" de los amantes (Martorell 382). Después de perder su virginidad con Tirant, finge estar triste para parecer una buena católica, aunque el libro revela que en realidad ella no está triste por lo que pasó. Luego, cuando Carmesina está en su cama de muerte, sin embargo, es claro que ella se siente muy culpable por sus acciones mientras confiesa sus pecados a Dios en una lamentación que parece ser muy sincera y sentida. La lucha de los personajes para seguir sus convicciones religiosas en luz de sus tentaciones es un elemento de la historia que hace a los personajes tan realistas y distingue la obra de otras obras literarias de la época. Por lo tanto, ya sea que sea utilizada con el propósito de exponer la hipocresía o implementar el realismo, la religión es un tema vital para la obra completa.

Además de las convicciones religiosas, hubo otro conjunto de convicciones estaban igualmente importantes durante este período medieval de dominación española. Estas fueron las convicciones de la caballería y el honor. Estos temas aparecen muchas veces a lo largo del libro debido a la caballería del autor, así como al personaje principal, Tirant, pero para entender su importancia en el libro, es necesario comprender primero los conceptos mismos y su importancia en la época.

Los caballeros no empezaron como las criaturas caballerescas que leemos en historias como Tirant Lo Blanc. Han nacido de la Edad Media, los vikingos y los tiempos de bárbaros ejércitos y guerras que dieron nacimiento a España, muchos caballeros comenzaron como hombres pobres de orígenes humildes que fueron reclutados para luchar en las fuerzas españolas. Sin embargo, dar armas a estos hombres con armaduras y armas violentas y dejarlos ir a la guerra resultó no ser la mejor idea, y los caballeros españoles originales eran más similares a un grupo de hombres bárbaros que saqueaban pueblos, mataban, destruyen y violaban todos y todo en su camino, que la brillante imagen de caballeros gloriosos con brillante armadura que luego se convertiría popular (Gershon 1)(Norris 1).

El concepto de caballería fue creado para arreglar este problema. Era un código de reglas que apelaba al sentido masculino del honor, el orgullo y la masculinidad, y esencialmente enseñaba a los soldados serían más dignos de respeto y honor si prometían seguir reglas básicas. Aunque las reglas específicas en los códigos de caballería variaba de un reino a otro y de un país a otro, los valores básicos de estas reglas eran la dedicación a

religión, la valentía en batalla, el respeto por las mujeres y su 'honor' (que mencionaré más tarde), y lealtad al rey. La implementación de la caballería en el título de caballero se convirtió rápidamente en una inspiración, incluso una obsesión, para que los hombres de toda Europa siguieran los ideales de masculinidad y honor. Los niños de toda Europa a menudo soñaban convertirse en estos caballeros honorables con armadura, sin embargo, a medida que la caballería evolucionó con la compañía de la caballería y el honor, los requisitos para convertirse en uno se volvieron un poco más difíciles. Mientras los caballeros ganaban dinero, tierras y reconocimiento por sus triunfos en la batalla, rápidamente se convirtieron en ciudadanos de la clase alta y, finalmente, miembros de la nobleza, lo que significaba que en el tiempo, uno generalmente tenía que nacer en una familia rica para convertirse en un caballero (Gershon 1).

La idea de un caballero caballeroso se convirtió popular gracias a la escritura. Independientemente de si los caballeros reales actuaban de esta manera genuinamente, muchos escritores y poetas representaban a los caballeros en sus libros como "piadosos, generosos y misericordiosos según ..." de acuerdo con los ideales de la caballería y, esta romanización de los caballeros en la literatura puede deberse al hecho de que los caballeros estaban siendo representados por escritores y poetas, quienes son románticos por naturaleza y no sabían la realidad de ser un caballero (Gershon 1). Sin embargo, así es como la obra de Martorell es diferente, porque Martorell fue los dos un escritor y un caballero (Grilli 7). Él sabía representar correctamente a un caballero, porque él era uno, y de esta experiencia sigue el auténtico realismo y honestidad que distingue a *Tirant Lo Blanc* de otras obras literarias de su época. De hecho, es por esta razón que uno de los más famosos de España alabanza el libro por su representación realista de los caballeros diciendo: "Aquí los caballeros comen y duermen, y mueren en sus lechos, y hacen testamentos antes de morir, y mucho más de lo que hay. No es nada en todos los otros libros" (Sieber 1).

Ninguna otra historia de la obra lo hace tan claro que Martorell sabía de esta gran romanización excesiva de la caballería, como la historia que mencioné anteriormente de William of Warwick y su esposa e hijo. William de Warwick, todavía disfrazado, como le había dicho el rey, lideró sus tropas en la batalla contra el rey árabe Salah. Luego, deliberadamente, le pregunta que todos los jóvenes de la zona sean entrenados como caballeros, sabiendo que su hijo, a quien dejó como un infantil, es de edad.

La madre del hijo va al castillo para suplicarle a Warwick, de quien ella no sabe quién es su esposo, que no lleve su único hijo porque ella ya es una viuda y cree que su hijo también moriría. Warwick luego da un largo discurso sobre cómo el niño es mayor de edad para convertirse en un caballero y no quiere privarlo de lograr su honor, diciendo: "Yo valoro el honor de su hijo como el mío propio ... Es bien sabido que el joven, los hombres deben adquirir práctica en las armas y las maneras suaves de la caballería ... Su hijo tiene la

edad para ver que los grandes caballeros de honor pueden ganar a través de la valentía" (Martorell 24). A lo que la mujer responde con valentía: "¿Quieres que entienda que este arte de la caballería es bendecido? Digo que es maldito, doloroso e inútil. ¿Le gustaría a Su Majestad un ejemplo? Ayer estabas sano y alegre, y ahora te veo triste, cojo y enfermizo, y ¡ay de los que pierden la vida en combate!" (Martorell 25). Esencialmente, la respuesta de la mujer revela su disgusto por la caballería y el honor y cómo los conceptos se han utilizado para dar glamour a la guerra y la muerte. Martorell usa su personaje para plantear la pregunta: "¿Es este concepto de honor construido socialmente mucho más importante que las vidas de nuestros hijos y los muchos otros hombres que mueren en la guerra?" De hecho, esta pregunta también desafía la moralidad de todas las batallas de España. ¿El honor caballeresco realmente justifica el asesinato y la guerra? Y al tener el coraje de hacer estas preguntas, Martorell distingue su obra de otras obras literarias de la época, una vez más.

Dicho esto, Martorell todavía es una escritora y, por lo tanto, una romántica que encuentra placer en la representación optimista y heroica de los caballeros. Y vemos que las escenas más parecidas a los cuentos de hadas involucran al protagonista, Tirant, un caballero simpático, generoso y humilde, y su mayor deseo es conquistar el corazón de la princesa Carmelina. Ahora, si él está motivado completamente por el amor o la lujuria, no sabemos, sin embargo, parece que una parte grande de su amor por ella es genuino y podemos ver ejemplos de esto varias veces a lo largo del libro, especialmente cuando ella acepta alegremente su propuesta de matrimonio. Exclama, "Nunca había sentido una dicha soberana ... Juro no hacer nada en contra de tu voluntad, ya que eres mi deidad a quien adoro como a un Dios" (Martorell 423).

Tirant, además de su heroico amor por la princesa, encarna a un verdadero caballero de la época, expresando su deseo de alcanzar valores caballerescos de humildad, generosidad y honor. Hairy Sieber del New York Times, por otro lado, ofrece la opinión de que "el orgullo de Tirant ... se disfraza de humildad", refiriendo a la idea que Tirant desea ser humilde para ser diferente de otros caballeros y como resultado ganar más honor, lo que significa que su humildad es en realidad solo una forma de orgullo propio (Sieber 1). Tomando en cuenta las dos cosas, así como todos los demás deseos y cualidades en conflicto de Tirant, se convirtió claro por qué la descripción de Martorell de los personajes de Tirant es tan realista y atractiva. Tirant posee todas las intenciones más puras de un caballero ideal, que son alcanzar el honor y la humildad, y al mismo tiempo posee las intenciones más naturales y carnales de un hombre, que son alcanzar y defender su orgullo.

Con un grupo elaborado de personajes quienes sus morales van desde la honestidad hasta la completamente maldad, Martorell cuenta una historia honesta de la naturaleza humana por las vidas de figuras idealistas y muy románticas como caballeros y damiselas.

En haciendo esto, él intencionalmente revela verdades desagradables sobre los temas comúnmente indiscutidos de la religión, la caballería y el honor y su relación con la cultura Española durante el siglo XV.

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Writing in Foreign Languages - Spanish

1st Place:

Caitlin True, “SPA 201 Oral Test Composition Essay”

“Servicial” no es una palabra que usaría para describirme a mí mismo, pero otras personas podrían pensar diferente. A lo largo de los años, muchas de mis acciones han ayudado a otros, a pesar de que no lo veía así en ese momento. Ahora me doy cuenta de que he pasado gran parte de mi tiempo ayudando a otros, desde rescatar a una chica en el patio de recreo hasta dedicar un fin de semana entero a hornear.

Todo comenzó cuando conocí a mi amiga más antigua cuando tenía nueve años. Era una niña nueva. Estábamos afuera para el recreo, y ambos nos subimos a los columpios. Cuando llegó el momento de volver a clase, vi que ella todavía estaba en los columpios. Su cabello quedó atrapado en la cadena del columpio y no pudo sacarlo. Me acerqué a ella, me presenté y le pregunté si necesitaba ayuda. Después de unos minutos, le desenredé su cabello y volvimos a entrar. Hemos sido amigas desde entonces.

Otro ejemplo de mis heroicas en el patio de recreo sucedió cuando yo tenía diez años. Hicimos un viaje escolar al parque. Un chico se acercó a mis amigos y agarró una de sus botellas de agua. Se negó a devolvérsela. Luego dejó caer la botella, la pateó en el barro y se fue. Mi amiga estaba llorando, y yo decidí encontrar justicia para este grave crimen. Me acerqué a él y le exigí que se disculpara por intimidar a mi amiga. Amenacé con decirle a un maestro si no lo hacía. La amenaza debe haberle asustado porque volvió conmigo y se disculpó. Al final del viaje, mi amigo estaba sonriendo.

Me uní a un club escolar en mi último año de escuela secundaria. Hacia el final del año escolar, se les pidió a los miembros que se inscribieran para trabajar en el puesto de concesiones (un puesto de comida) para recaudar dinero. Había dos turnos, uno por la mañana y otro por la tarde. La mayoría de la gente ofreció excusas sobre por qué no podían estar allí, y los pocos que no sólo se ofrecieron ser parte del turno de la tarde. Mi hermana y una maestra eran las únicas en el turno de la mañana, así que puse mi nombre para ambos turnos. Mi hermana y yo estuvimos allí durante casi todo el día, lo que significaba que teníamos un poco de prisa para vestirnos para nuestra fiesta de graduación esa noche. El

largo día valió la pena cuando nuestra maestra nos agradeció por nuestro arduo trabajo antes de irnos.

Durante mi primer año aquí en universidad, tomé español elemental. Mi amiga también estaba tomando la clase, y ella estaba luchando. Ella lo intentó y lo intentó, pero simplemente no lo entendía. Ella me preguntó si podía enseñarla, y acepté. No estaba seguro de si podía ayudarla a aprenderlo. Mi única experiencia previa fue de las clases de español de la escuela secundaria. Sin embargo, dejé mis preocupaciones a un lado, y durante la mayoría del primer semestre, los martes y jueves, pasé una hora o dos tutorizándola. Me sorprendió cuando me dijo que estaba empezando a entenderlo. No pensé que lo estuviera explicando tan bien.

La última cosa que hice que ayudó a alguien fue bastante reciente. Soy parte de una sociedad de honor, y decidimos tener una venta de pasteles para recaudar dinero. Me encanta hornear y quería contribuir. Sin embargo, no me di cuenta de cuánto estaría contribuyendo. Había siete tipos diferentes de postres, e hice seis de ellos. Pasé un fin de semana entero horneando. Fue difícil, pero estaba feliz de que recaudáramos bastante dinero y de que a todos les gustaran mis postres. El aprecio y la gratitud de los otros miembros tampoco dolieron.

Aunque no me considero una persona servicial, me he dado cuenta de que ayudo a la gente a menudo y me gusta ayudarla. Ponerse de pie a un matón, hornear postres, o incluso abrir una puerta para alguien puede parecer como nada a usted, pero a menudo significa mucho a la gente que usted ayuda. Ayudar a otros es un acto de bondad, y creo que todos podríamos usar un poco más de eso en el mundo.