

Application for the Minor in Professional Writing

Candidate: Jessica Leigh Sherwyn
Graduating class of 2013

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I. Personal Information and Academic Preparation

Personal Information

Name: Jessica Leigh Sherwyn

Local Address: 6660 Sabado Tarde Unit B, Goleta CA, 93117

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Academic Preparation

Major: English

Minor: None as of yet

Upper-division writing courses* completed as pre-requisites for the Minor:

Course	Instructor	Grade
Writing 109HU	Katie Baillargeon	A
Writing 109ED	Caren Converse	A
Writing 109F	Liljana Coklin	A

*Please note that a course taken at another college/university needs to be approved as a pre-requisite by the director of the Minor track to which you're applying. Please submit a separate folder with the syllabus, assignments, and writing samples for this transfer course.

Upper-division writing courses in progress as pre-requisites for the Minor:

Course	Instructor
Writing 105G	Roy Vallis
Writing 105R	Jennifer Johnson

Other Writing Program courses planned for winter and spring:

Course	Quarter
Writing 150	Winter
Writing 151 A-B	Spring

Total units you plan to take during winter quarter? 12 **spring quarter?** 4-8

II. Writing History

Briefly describe your history as a writer, including writing you have done in academic courses, on your own, and at work (300 word limit).

I grew up, as many children do, writing stories. Stories about cats and dogs, stories about being bullied and bullying back, about losing someone, losing everyone, and particularly popular among my anxiety-ridden pre-teen and teen pieces, losing yourself. I am odd in that I enjoy writing essays almost as much as I do writing memoir and short fiction—there is just something so thrilling in defending an argument about medieval rape scenarios for five pages and knowing that argument and those quote choices were mine-all-mine. In particular, early-mid 20th century literature strikes my fancy, and it is women like Virginia Woolf, Susanna Kaysen, and Jean Rhys that I saturate my papers with time and time again. I believed from a very young age that if you hate something you should write it down to expel the beast; this is why both my fictional and nonfictional, academic pieces largely involve rape, trauma, gender dichotomy, and psychological disruption. In most of the Writing Department courses I have taken I try to link our projects back to these themes, not because they are the only subjects I am able to write about, but because I spent my first two years at UCSB thinking these topics were too taboo to write about and I would only succeed in putting a bad taste in my teachers' mouths. As a junior and senior I finally felt that I was getting it right. I intend to graduate from UCSB next spring and write for the rest of my life for whichever magazines or publishers will have me. Unfortunately I do not have a great predilection for news-writing, but I feel confident that my hand and pen will land where they're meant to.

III. Statement of Goals for Pursuing the Minor in Professional Writing

Briefly describe your desire to join the Minor, as well as your goals for pursuing the Minor in Professional Writing (300 word limit).

For a long time I thought the only way to be successful as a writer was to graduate with a Minor in Professional Writing. Although I do not think this way anymore, I know that there is still invaluable experience to be gained from studying the pros and cons of grammatical restriction, the process of creating a “complete” piece (if there can ever be such a thing), and the delicate, controversial art of editing. It is my hope to enter the field of either editing or publishing, and I know from the Writing courses I have taken thus far that there is no end to the amount of refinishing and reformatting that goes into anything from academic research to New York Times Bestsellers. Having the privilege to work under instructors and employers who understand the ins and outs of professional writing would be indescribably helpful to me not only as a student, but as a writer. Whereas being rejected from the Minor would not make me stop pursuing a life in editing or publishing, being accepted into it would give me the necessary tools for a lifetime in these fields. I am not so ignorant that I think writers are too special and unique for guidance, not at all. I am a humble undergraduate student, one who would be over the moon to be granted the chance to refine her writing process that much more.

IV. Track Choices & Explanation

Desired Track of the Minor

First Choice: Professional Editing

Second Choice: Multimedia Communication

Third Choice: Business Communication

Explanation of Track Choices

Briefly discuss your choice of tracks in terms of your short- or long-term goals (200 word limit).

As someone dedicated to making written material accessible, the Professional Editing is naturally my first choice. This is not to say, however, that Multimedia Communication does not interest me almost as much. At my current job I am often in charge of going through the company's various websites and pointing out typos and generally unclear statements. I find website design very interesting and at the same time very foreign; if I were to get into the Multimedia track as opposed to Professional Editing I would feel eager to learn more about advertising and blogging, etc. Similarly, I can see myself working for a non-profit down the road and would love to learn more about Business Communication and the bureaucratic skills necessary to succeed in such a position. My core desire to be a writer of novels and short fiction does not at all limit my desire to experience as much as I can about the world of Professional Writing, and any one of these tracks could teach me more than I need to know.

Jessica Sherwyn

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Educational Background

UCSB, 2013

Santa Barbara, CA, USA
 English, tentative minor in Professional Writing

Career Overview

Volunteer and recruiter for Agoura Animal Shelter and Los Angeles Family Housing (no relation).
 Member of floor staff at Mann Theaters, Agoura Hills location.
 Childcare associate.
 Supervisor at Sea Landing, a dive center located within Santa Barbara Harbor.

Core Strengths

- Comfortable speaking and writing Spanish
- Confident beginning and finishing projects without any external motivation
- MS Windows proficient; 71 WPM average
- Rarely satisfied with submitting the bare minimum for any given task
- Level-headed mediator
- Energetic, creative work ethic

Accomplishments

Graduated from Agoura High School with a 4.05 GPA.
 Single-handedly organized fundraisers and recruitment events for Agoura Hills Animal Shelter, 2007-09.
 Volunteer at Los Angeles Family Housing in 2008, kitchen duties.
 Established a long-term relationship with a family for whom I babysit when home.
 Fellow of two honors programs at UCSB, Arnhold Undergraduate Research Fellows Program and English Honors Program, for which I have participated in showcases and events. I am currently in the process of completing my senior thesis for each of these programs, with Professor Maurizia Boscagli as my adviser.
 Recently promoted from clerk to supervisor at local dive center Sea Landing, wherein I assist my manager in creating contracts and promoting the company to high-status clients.

Work Experience

Usher/Concessions/Ticket Sales

July 2008 to December 2008

Mann Theaters – Agoura Hills, CA

I cycled between ushering (cleaning theaters and greeting patrons before and after shows), ticket sales (including answering phone call inquiries regarding show times, prices, etc), and concessions duties.

Supervisor/Trainer

June 2012 to present

Sea Landing and Truth Aquatics – Santa Barbara, CA

I regularly oversee daily tasks at this diving/fishing/whale watching/rental center. Regular tasks include creating contracts, contacting newspapers for advertising, mediating between boat crew and office staff, etc. After four months I received a promotion that usually takes Sea Landing employees one year.

Writing Samples

1. Mirroring Our Idols

In the winter of 2012 I took a College of Creative Studies class on a whim and it was one of the smarter things I've yet done at UCSB. Every week in Prose Writing we were asked to write 1 to 2-page pieces, the theme of which was assigned by the lecturer beforehand. One week Professor O'Connell asked of us all to begin writing a story imitating the style of our favorite writer. Though surprised that a teacher would ask us to write in a voice other than our own, the exercise was hugely beneficial to me in that it allowed me to play with other tones and dialogue styles I would not have regularly thought to include. I wrote this short piece in the style of author Neil Gaiman.

Pandora

They forged me in the image of Beauty, or something. I don't know. Most of the time I think the stories were created just to fuck with me, because the righteous were not humble enough to admit that they may have erred. I am Temptation and for that most people don't like me, because let's be frank, I inspire envy in the eyes of women and delight in the mouths of men, and when these two phenomena occur simultaneously, nobody wins.

The other day as I went out for groceries, some olives or avocados or batteries—it just thrills me how man has finally managed to gather anything he could ever want into one behemoth palace of goods—a man stopped me in the middle of the parking lot. My little red convertible (if they want me to bring excess, material dependence, and sin, then fuck it, that's just what I'll do, and that can only be done with a Little Red Convertible at my side) was just out of sight tucked behind an authoritative Hummer, both cars glistening in the Springtime sun, though one clearly winked at the other and mumbled, “My owner's compensating for something.”

Say what you want about the trauma brought by my origins on this soil, but I can tell you right now that I had nothing to do with the creation of the Hummer. Don't even try to peg that one on me. Hephaestus can take that one.

So there I am, walking to my car, excited for my drive home up the canyon, excited to have the warm winds blow my skirt up just enough for me to smile about it, when this man grabs my arm lightly and, would you believe it, he nearly made me drop and bruise my perfect avocados! Oh, the little pleasures I sacrifice in order to satisfy men's curiosity over my golden skin, my hair of one thousand different tiny, indefinable colors, my tramp stamp that says in charming calligraphy “The Hope Is Inside”.

Beholding my startled face, he ejaculates, “*Oh*, oh I'm so sorry, Miss! I thought you were someone I knew.”

I smiled politely—Christ, sometimes I hate them for filling me with courtesy among my other myriad wiles; after all, this stranger almost *bruised* my *avocados*!—and kissed his hand, offering, “Oh, you do know me. And I'm sorry,” before I am miles away, driving up the canyon, inviting the honey-sweetened wind between my dangerous legs.

2. If Research Does Not Matter

If research does not matter, then I am remiss in believing that I have been at a research university since 2009. This next excerpt is from a Writing course I took in the spring of 2012 with Ljiljana Coklin, Writing for Film. I chose for our 8 to 10-page final project to discuss a film I've before and since done much work with for my senior thesis within the English Department, but this class allowed me to attack *Girl, Interrupted* with a film analysis lens, film studies being a field with which I had previously not had any experience. Dealing with film terminology was utterly foreign to me but Professor Coklin eased us into the process flawlessly, and I believe this paper shows how a writer is not truly a writer until they have been taken out of their comfort zone (mine being the field of literary study).

This paper discusses the ways in which director James Mangold manipulates the viewer to reconsider the characters' limiting role of "mental patient," such that by the end of the film these characters have as much narrative reliability and agency as any other character would. I intend to include much of the research done for this paper into my senior thesis, for I am confident that my argument will now be that much stronger with the knowledge of perspective and style choices gained from Writing for Film.

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Mental Health:

Examining Defection and Autonomy in *Girl, Interrupted*

A strong sense of identity does not come easily for Susanna Kaysen, neither at the beginning nor by the end of the film. She introduces herself in a state of suicidal mania and says her goodbyes in a state of perplexed acceptance of her psychological journey, not once proudly claiming just *who* she is supposed to be in the grand scheme of things. The crisis of identity applies not only to Susanna but to all of her peers at some point during the film, leading one to the hypothesis that maybe it is not merely their psychological disabilities preventing them from claiming themselves. Because the bulk of the film's coherent material takes place within the walls of Claymoore Hospital, one thing the viewer cannot get away from is the interaction between patient and doctor, and furthermore the exchange of power taking place as doctors designate psychiatric labels for their varyingly dangerous clients. For example, after sneaking into the head psychiatrist's office and discovering how Dr. Sonia Wick (Vanessa Redgrave) medically regards each woman, Susanna consequently begins acting very differently from how she had been conducting herself upon first entering the hospital. With a label like "borderline personality disorder" to instruct her insanity, she willingly falls under Lisa Rowe's (Angelina Jolie) wing and becomes enthralled by and infatuated with the hospital's resident sociopath. Yet for all of her psychotic, manipulative, and dishonest faults, Lisa succeeds in breaking down societal fear of insane otherness when she responds, "That's everybody" to hearing the definition of Susanna's alleged disorder (*Girl, Interrupted* 1999). Certain film critics accuse Mangold's portrayal of Susanna Kaysen to be too sane and even "petulant," which lessens the radical, powerful implications of having a truly insane narrator and protagonist (Spencer 47). Contrarily, I find that Susanna's somewhat underwhelming characterization as a mental patient reveals Mangold's desire to illustrate the infamous "mad woman" in a modern context of modern psychological diagnoses. Borderline personality disorder and sociopathy are two drastically different mental disorders that the director uses specifically to show how autonomy can automatically be revoked, and unethically so, as soon as one's mind becomes diagnosed as irregular.

Conducting relationships unhealthily, for example placing relative strangers on pedestals and mimicking their behaviors in idolatry, happens to be one prominent symptom of borderline personality disorder, a behavior we do not see or even hear about coming from Susanna before she sees her diagnosis. A medical description of BPD reads, "Because borderline patients set up such excessive and unrealistic expectations for others, they are inevitably disappointed when their expectations aren't realized" ("Borderline" 142). This wild phenomenon of being disappointed when

one's expectations are not met sounds frightfully similar to the human condition of putting faith in others, which understandably does not always work out as one expects. The highly ambiguous nature of this disorder and the manner in which it manifests in its victims allows for the perfect argument against psychiatric diagnoses and the consequent hospitalization of sometimes sad, sometimes disappointed, young women such as Susanna. Furthermore, the label of BPD incorrectly instructs Susanna in her relationships: the viewer cannot be certain if Susanna worships Lisa because she has BPD, or if she worships Lisa because she now knows what BPD should look like. Having a label to live up to inhibits her from determining her actions organically, her entire thought process now compromised by what she thinks her ever-corrective medical superiors anticipate from her. In this film the image of insanity undergoes so much shift and variation that by the end, it seems that the only ones suffering from insanity are those ambitious enough to label these in-flux women, within this in-flux 1960s American hospital, as insane. With the ambiguous diagnosis of BPD governing impressionable young women like Susanna, one cannot safely deduct if she is a girl suffering from BPD or a girl suffering under the heavy weight of the label BPD. It stands to reason that the mentally unwell of this film function to prove not the illness of their own minds, but the illness of shifting psychological norms and trends, and the attempts to categorize and relieve these questionable mental states.

Demonizing and dehumanizing the mentally unwell in this film, especially at a time of profound cultural and social upheaval in 1960s America, brings to light many issues regarding human rights. As one can observe both in this film and in Foucault's discussion of the Panopticon—a structure allowing one person to invisibly observe any number of people situated circularly around the observer—mental hospitals greatly resemble the oppressive nature of prisons, silencing and disregarding the intellectual capacity of their patients regardless of their particular level of insanity. Punishment of criminals has indubitably shifted away from corporal punishment towards psychological reformation between the classical and modern eras, but this shift unfortunately achieves little in preserving one's humanity:

All the great movements of extension that characterize modern penality—the problematization of the criminal behind his crime, the concern with a punishment that is a correction, a therapy, a normalization, the division of the act of judgement between various authorities that are supposed to measure, assess, diagnose, cure, transform individuals—all this betrays the penetration of the disciplinary examination into the judicial inquisition. (Foucault n.p.)

An authority's panoptic gaze characterizes much of the girls' stay at Claymoore Hospital, forcing them to even take laxatives daily because it will "keep them regular," a phrase loaded with undertones implying the drugged state of the patients' path to normalcy and regulation (*Girl, Interrupted* 1999). However, unlike Foucault's analysis of prisons, in which the criminals' civil rights are revoked as an understandable punishment, Susanna has her rights to privacy and selfhood revoked because she attempts to commit suicide: an act that, however negligent and unfortunate towards the self, is not a crime, and by no means a threat to society. The metaphorical panoptic gaze and physical confinement in mental hospitals instead functions to regulate the behaviors and mannerisms of patients so completely that they lose confidence in any personal action, no matter how trivial and seemingly unrelated to their recovery.

3. Taking Shit and Making It Art

When I was thirteen my family was in the process of once again falling apart, as many of our families tend to do in cyclical patterns. My sister was slowly but surely being diagnosed with both bipolar disorder and anorexia nervosa, and the rest of my family was fully occupied in pretending that was not happening. I wrote about it in poetry at the time, or journal entries at the very least, but it was nearly impossible for me to revisit this period in my life as anything more than an extended blackout—that is, until my CCS class. Professor O’Connell had us read an example of a bizarre and popular method of telling a story only by describing photographs, whether real or fictional it didn’t matter, so long as the story progressed with nothing but these “snapshots” guiding the way. I chose a very real photograph I took when I was thirteen. This style of narrating was odd for me at the start, yet I found it lent so much more structure and authority to the story I was trying to tell; it was not just one person trying to force a story down the reader’s throat, but visual evidence with which the reader could truly engage. I have revisited this style of story-telling since this class and it has become one of my favorite ways to narrate.

Photograph: Rachel stands with one arm around her mother, an arguably breathtaking Alaska sunset behind them. Both women wear huge smiles and cardigans.

That summer had been gentle to no one. Everyone suffered, everyone hurt, everyone ignored it. But the girls' mother had arranged for a famous Princess Cruise to Alaska half a year in advance. A cruise for the girls, no men allowed. Their liberal brother could not decide if his exclusion was beneficial because of what it suggested for female solidarity, or pernicious because of what it suggested for his lack of place in this family. He still has not decided.

Solidarity had very much to do with most of the drama saturating that season, in that, nobody offered or accepted any. Rachel was starving. Rachel was almost African-American from all the sun she had soaked in, in an effort to convince herself and others that what she lacked from eating a meal, she replaced by ingesting the sun. How could it be wrong? She looked so alive. She glowed. No, she did not. Her skin glowed. Her eyes dulled. What once had been green irises, her younger sister and the skilled thirteen year old photographer behind the camera had consistently observed, now shrunk behind a gray veil of hunger.

Next to Rachel, her mother contemplated the possible error of liking her daughter more now that she was thin and beautiful, despite the fact that she was also killing herself and miserable. In later years she will look at this photograph, at her daughter's huge smile, teeth iridescently white on her tan, ethnically-confused skin, and decide that yes, her daughter was happier then, and despite her frequent fainting spells, screaming accusations, and drinking binges, that tan and those teeth and those popped-out collarbones were enough to like her daughter more then.

Her mother could worship a tall, tan goddess. She could not worship just a daughter.

Waiting for the digital camera to find its proper focus, Rachel's younger sister marveled at how much their scenic surroundings made a mockery of their lives that summer. The thirteen year old had lain beneath her first sexual encounter only a week beforehand, unconscious and dreaming of ants crawling all over her at the park near her house, when the reality was a stranger's unwelcome cum dripping down the inside of her thigh. When she awoke, she immediately ran home and showered. Three years later she would finally cry about it, but that day all that was necessary for the healing process was some tap water and Dove® go fresh soap.

But that July evening, as the sun seemed to hang perpetually at the perfect height in the sky to make the Alaskan mountains and trees procure that same gray veil that clung to Rachel's eyes, there was peace in the minds and hearts of these girls or women, children or adults. Family members

who refused to seek or even consider solidarity. But the act of smiling in front of a breathtaking Alaska sunset afforded no one the opportunity of showing discontent. Peace was born and buried in the two seconds it took to take the quintessential vacation picture.

4. What I Learned in School Today

One of the many problems with being a college student who cares about college is that you fall in love with every class you take, and immediately you envision that hour and fifteen minutes becoming a lifelong career. I had no interest in teaching, not even remotely. Those who couldn't do would teach in my mind. This was what I believed until I took a class with Caren Converse, Writing for Education to be precise. Our main project in this class was to come up with a comprehensive lesson plan for a subject of our choosing, and we were to compromise and push and pull with a group of three or more other students in the class until we had a cohesive lesson plan, wherein we would teach it to the rest of the class as if they were kindergarteners, or hyper middle school students, or disinterested high school students. The following document is the lesson plan that my group and I developed and grew to be incredibly proud of as we tried to convince a hypothetical group of high school students the important of health and self esteem.

Instructional Design Project

Context for Learning:

This lesson is designed for 26 high school students taking health as an elective course. It is a class of 16 females and 10 males. There are 3 freshmen, 7 sophomores, 5 juniors, and 11 seniors. The students' English language proficiency level is average to above average. Before taking this course students must have basic knowledge about macro nutrients, the food pyramid, bodily functions, and the importance of staying active. This lesson will be valuable to all students in the classroom because it will address the importance of staying healthy and all the components related to living a healthy life. There are many conditions that might affect the planning and delivery of the lesson. We must consider that we have a pregnant student, an anorexic student, an obese student and a few males taking the course merely for the units, not for interest. This makes it a challenge to make sure that the lesson plan is fun and interactive for all students regardless of age, prior learning, experience and enthusiasm for the course.

Lesson Rationale:

This lesson will be taught to improve the physical and mental well-being of our students. This is an important life-skills course that can be used to improve their lives at any age. To gain knowledge and be able to fully participate, students must have taken the mandatory introduction to health and nutrition in this district's middle school. The subset of topics will go into further detail about issues prefaced in the middle school course.

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to interpret and understand the importance of reading nutrition labels. They will also be able to evaluate their own physical status and create a path to a better more active lifestyle. They will also learn the myths about sex and learn that they must take precautions and learn all the risks involved before getting sexually active. Furthermore, the long-term consequences of high-school rumor-making and such will be discussed in hopes of lessening bullying, and therefore lessening the long-term mental effects of sexual and/or emotional repression.

Materials:

- Cookies
- Handouts
- Nutrition Label Poster
- Computer

Instructional Strategies:

Time (min)	Learning Activities	Purpose
0-2	Introduction and Brainstorming	Introduce ourselves and allow the class to feel more comfortable with us. Also, to find out what health means to the students

Time (min)	Learning Activities	Purpose
2-4	Introduce the main topics: Nutrition, exercise & fitness, Sex Ed, and Mental Health	Inform the class of the four main health topics we will be discussing throughout the course
4-6	Nutrition label literacy	Introduce the importance of nutrition label literacy and explain how to interpret a nutrition label (show poster)
6-8	Serving sizes & % Daily Values	To have students understand these components of the nutrition label and for students to be able to incorporate that knowledge into their daily eating choices
8-9	Pass out cookies and recipe handouts	The oatmeal raisin cookies are an example of a healthy dessert option, which shows students that they don't have to avoid sweets or entire food groups to eat healthfully. (and the handout gives students the recipe and nutrition facts if they want to replicate the recipe in the future)
9-11	Benefits of Exercise: Explain the risks and benefits associated with Exercise Show Images	Students will learn the risks associated with not exercising and the benefits to getting started and incorporate it to their own lives. Images help demonstrate the risks and benefits
11-12	Recommendations for Exercise: Explain the amount of time recommended for exercising weekly Show Images	Students will learn the recommended time for exercising to maintain a healthy life Images serve as a comic reliefs to show that exercise can be fun yet tiring

Time (min)	Learning Activities	Purpose
12-13	Types of Exercise: Explain the variety of exercises that are available Show Images	Students will learn that there are a variety of options to exercising. Learning that it can be more fun than they imagine. Images illustrate the different methods available
13-14	Tips for Exercising: Give tips for exercising. "Do this vs. That" Show Images	Students will learn to choose better paths to live healthier lives by choosing to do they work rather than always taking the easy way out. Images help demonstrate this
14-16	Final Comments on Exercising: Explain to students ways to motivate themselves to exercise! Show Images	Students will learn that they can do it! They will gain some motivation by viewing pictures shown in class. And learn different ways to get motivated to get on the right path towards a healthier life
16-19	Introduction of Sex Ed	To explain basic knowledge and concerns over learning or not learning sexual education
19-21	Pass out and Conduct Survey	Survey is to make students aware of societies stereotypes and mix beliefs over sex
21-22	Go over Answers to Survey	To correct students wrong answers and discuss why some questions had certain answers
22-23	Closing Comments/Questions	Allow for any other questions about sexual education students might have concerns over
23-25	List words on board	Identify how words affect reputations and self-esteem
25-26	Discussion of words and their connotations	Get students thinking about "name-calling" to encourage more honest communication

Time (min)	Learning Activities	Purpose
26-27	Discussion of rumors and long-term effects	Make students aware of how everyone tells rumors, and how every rumor, no matter how small, affects the one being talked about; promote a “what you say and/or think matters” attitude
27-28	Identify the origins of many sexual disorders (repression, abstinence-only sex education, etc.)	Promote discussion of “awkward” sexual topics in youth for the sake of prolonged mental health
29-30	Wrap-up and Pass out Handouts	Sum up everything we have discussed, answer any questions might have making sure that they are fully aware of what health means. The handout provides 31 different ways to motivate yourself!

5. Writing about Non-Books for English Classes

Sophomore year I had the privilege of taking a huge English course with an eccentric Professor Duffy, and for our final project he encouraged us to not only stray from the literary material covered in lecture, but to use materials that were in fact not literary nor mentioned in lecture. He demanded we use one book from the course, one film, one song, and one other material of our choosing in order to construct an argument having to do with the statement “How do we as humans find ways to live life more intensely?” I selected *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, “Fat Slut” by Tori Amos, and film *Girl, Interrupted*; I resolved to discuss the themes of feminine wildness and containment in these works. This project began my work with *Girl, Interrupted*, but more importantly it gave me the chance to write about music, a task that makes me nervous because of my constant nonacademic interaction with it—how could I systematically critique and analyze something with which I held so closely to my heart and so far away from my brain? Alas I accomplished the task and it gave me quite beneficial insight into the inner-workings of sound and soul and interpretation, as well as gave me the opportunity to use a multimedia source in what could have merely been a classic literary analysis. The following is a small excerpt where I discuss the charming song “Fat Slut.”

A Method to Her Madness

The haunting, one-minute song “Fat Slut” by Tori Amos introduces us to a state of imprisoned passion more frequently seen and talked about than hidden attics and mental institutions, indeed this song does not travel far from the typical, Middle-American nuclear family, which of course offers its own suffocations and oppressions entirely separate from Victorian England. First and foremost, the title invokes shock from the listener even before we hear her crazed voice, the words giving a menacing image of excess and unmanageability, of taboos we see every day in the public arena and yet choose to shut away as things that could never touch our composed selves. Then the song begins, and Amos’ tone is erratic, frightened while simultaneously fear-inducing, and crazed. The speaker’s only title and claim to notability is “fat slut,” suggesting the attempt of he/she who called the speaker “fat slut” to shrink the girl’s humanity, as well as her right to accepted descriptions of the self. This insult attempts to cage the feared and untamable when all other modes of reformation fail, and when she says, “Don’t you dare judge me...you go and stick it in somewhere, I’m sick-a hearin’ it,” she lends a lunatic and yet empowered voice that functions to call out and banish objectification, silent female passivity, and the avoidance of emotional honesty by means of rape. Indeed in this song it is the tabooed psychotic state of the hysterical young female that reshapes agency and access to the public forum, as opposed to repressed passion which only further dehumanizes the naturally emotional being.

As a final cause of these figures’ extreme states being seen as socially-threatening insanity, I will explore the failure of language to communicate passion as necessarily leading to their animalistic behaviors. To further the discussion of sexual excess and a medusa-like capability seen in “Fat Slut,” one cannot ignore the lyrics as designating a call for the ends of civil communication. Triggering scenes of altercative molestation or perhaps plain, aggressive, animalesque sexual intercourse, Amos’ repetition of the line “sick-a hearin’ it” suggests an inevitable uselessness of civil words when it comes to the expression of passion of any kind. Conversation instead acts as a circuitous waste of time, with words as tools of escapism, wherein the speaker attempts to escape from passion and from the admittance of a portion of the self that cannot be contained by mapped-out conversations. Functioning in a sphere that rejects the controlled and often dishonest use of language, the “Fat Slut” (as well as each verbally ignored or entrapped figure discussed in this paper) uses her sexuality and her perceived mania to break down oppressive civil codes in order to reshape her own, more cathartic methods of human existence.

6. Believing What Comes out of You Is Enough

My sister, apparently the source of endless inspiration not only in my English research but also in my creative writing projects, is the centerpiece for this next story. It is “fiction” in that the names have all been changed, but it is memoir in almost every other facet. I say this only to emphasize how incredibly difficult it was for me as a writer to create something that was true and correct and also beautiful. The truth is not always attractive, but despite how trying my life has been it is still a gift, and I will not let these memories waste away as mistakes to be veiled. The following story is the result of much editing and re-editing, in part because I wanted to create something perfect for myself and for my sister, and also in part because CCS students are in fact incredibly ruthless when it comes to creative writing and I did not want them to make me cry like the first time they critiqued one of my stories.

And Sigmund Freud Makes Three

Lucille ran her fingers over and over the engraved design of the cheap, mass-produced locket hanging down from her sun-burnt neck. Summer had bitten her this year in a bittersweet way, kicking her down and lifting her up with a frequency that gave her heart whiplash. As she sat on the cushion of a worn-in couch that did not belong to her, she thought about Mr. Sigmund Freud. She thought, *I feel bad for the woman who had to lie beneath him while he imagined fucking Mother*. When the theory of Freud's death drive was first proposed to Lucille in a class about evolutionary psychology months before, she thought perhaps that she had fallen asleep again by accident; her professor had a second PhD in the art of the lullaby. People born with the innate desire to be dead: what a crock.

Earlier that day, Los Angeles was steeping in the breeze of seasonal transition as Lucille's mother drove her to her final destination before leaving the country for four months. She was to stay with her best friend's Christian parents in their Christian seaside home in El Segundo that night, wherein both girls would try to fall asleep early, pregnant with international anticipations, in order to try to wake up early and catch their 6 AM flight to Ireland. Ireland is a largely Catholic country, where one could make the assumption, if one so desired, that on an average day the average Irishman did not contemplate Freud's sexual partners.

"Would you call your sister, Luce? She still hasn't called me back."

"Why would she answer my call if she hasn't answered yours or called you back? Let's think logically here, Mom."

"I just hate when she doesn't call me back. What if something bad happened?"

What if it did?

The theory of Mother's Intuition also perplexed and humored Lucille. Mother: the female counterpart in the process of sexual reproduction, whose role it is to provide 50% of the genetic material and 100% of the upbringing of any given product of divorced parents. Mothers are holy in their own special way, but they are not God, and the hypothesis that they could possibly *feel* when their offspring has been wronged in some profound way, from miles away, from an utter lack of proof, appalled and dismantled Lucille's respect for the intellectual prowess of mankind.

"Good Lord, Mother, if you do not stop this madness about your perfectly well daughter—who by the way has work today, so if she's mad at you in the first place, constantly pestering her with paranoid phone calls is sure to piss her off even more—I will turn this car around!" Lucille exclaimed with a smile while she fiddled with the radio controls in her mother's car. Lucille's mother was driving.

The joke. The joke to disintegrate inane tension given life by a nonissue: a missed phone call.

"All right, all right, Lucille, if you really think so..." And she really did. In all her life, Lucille had never been more certain that a missed phone call was simply that. In that moment, while her mother's Prius glided silently on toward El Segundo like a skilled killer in the night, Lucille musingly contemplated her mother's utter lack of sense, and how fortunate she had been to have inherited her father's logic from his 50% of her genetic material.

"What if I died?" Lucille's sister, Beth, asked as she rubbed sleep from her eyes at 3:00 in the afternoon, her head propped up on a sea-foam green pillow while the inseparable girls watched Celebrity Rehab. The drug cocktail prescribed by her psychiatrist that summer made her sleep upwards of 12-14 hours every day.

"So what if you did?" Lucille tip-toed around the question.

"What if I did it?"

Lucille chanced a glance at her subdued sister, whose eyes were still faithfully glued to her Lord and Savior, Dr. Drew. Good. Lucille wasn't ready for that gaze to be returned.

"Oh please, you aren't going to kill yourself. It's tasteless and weak, and you are neither of those things," she tried. "And of course as I say that, you're flipping through the pages of Vogue. Are you picking out your grave garb? Want to make sure the spirit world knows you have good taste?" And there it was: the smile, the chuckle, the cathartic sigh.

"Thanks, Luce. I love you."

"I'm sorry can this wait until commercial, Dr. Drew is trying to give me some sound advice over here," Lucille teased and Beth laughed and all was well, as words like "relapse" and "indulgence" circled around the room and settled on Beth, like moths drawn to the flame.

The joke to dissuade the tired bipolar patient from falling asleep.

When Lucille and her mother finally arrived at her best friend's household, they were ushered in by a bevy of open arms and cooing voices. Smiles ate up all their faces and vocal chords were voluntarily tightened and pulled in a way that reminded Lucille immediately of medieval rack torture. As the pitch of their voices heightened, Lucille winced in mock pain, thinking to herself with a wry smile, *I'll never tell you what you want to know!*

Her locket bounced on her chest violently as she hugged and kissed every member of the family surrounding her like pack of butler-wolves: How may we service you, and eat you alive with

our excitement in the process? Lucille checked her phone for evidence of her sister's attention to missed calls, numerous missed calls, and found none.

When they were both significantly younger than they were that September day, Lucille and her big (but then smaller) sister, they used to take walks together. Beth taught her tiny, attentive sidekick about sex and love and betrayal and KROQ, establishing who had rightful ownership over Lucille's status of growth. Mother: the female authority figure who imbues her young with life lessons in order to steer him/her towards good decisions.

Back then, it was Beth who made the jokes.

"Do you like any boys at school?"

"Not really, not right now. The teacher changed all the seats around yesterday, so now Billy sits next to Clarissa instead of me, but it's ok because I don't think he likes Linkin Park, and that's bad, right?"

"That's *terrible*. We'll have to give up on that one. What about, erm, what's his face? The kid who scribbled 'fuck' into the table, he used to sit behind you?"

"He doesn't go to my school anymore, Bethy. I told you when he left."

"Ahh damn, that's right. Well, did he have a brother you could start sitting next to? I bet he likes Linkin Park..." she chuckled and nudged Lucille with her boastful teenage hip. Lucille laughed, too, not knowing why, only knowing it was the right thing to do if Beth was doing it. She took her big sister's thumb in her hand and they continued their safe suburban stroll.

The joke to teach a nine year old girl what truly matters in life: dysfunction.

On September 7th Lucille and her best friend sat on each other's suitcases, making jokes about how bad they both were at limiting their wardrobe, while their parents bonded in the kitchen over the symptoms of empty nest syndrome and how one could in fact counteract those symptoms in a productive manner. Lucille's mother did not do scrapbooks and she would not even consider the prospect of getting yet another animal to look after; three cats, one dog, and a nearly comatose bipolar older daughter were enough for her to handle, thank you very much.

At approximately 4:47 PM, Lucille's mother finally received the phone call she had been waiting for all day, but it was not the phone call Lucille had been waiting for. As her mother stepped out of the room, Lucille checked her phone and glared at the fact that Beth had called their mother back before she had called her back—after all, it was always Lucille and Beth versus The World.

Lucille made a joke to her ever-supportive best friend about the mechanics of Jewish mothers, guilt tripping, and power plays, all of which were no doubt occurring outside on the phone between her mother and her big sister.

But on that day, in that seaside home that was not her own, while Lucille and her best friend boiled over with nerves about what their new home would be like, how the people would sound, if they thought Freud was some whack job who invented theories like the death drive and the oedipal complex just to stir the pot, it was Beth who rightfully earned the last laugh. Lucille's mother walked in from the front porch and found her younger daughter, electric with the taste of Ireland in her mouth, rolling on the floor laughing with her best friend over the fact that they could not attempt an Irish accent without sounding Minnesotan to save their lives.

"Well, she did it," her mother spat at no one in particular, crying as she went. "She did it. I knew it, I just fucking *knew* it, I *told* you, Lucille!" and then it suddenly became apparent to Lucille that this day would never be known again as her very last day in America, at least for the next four months. As it turned out, quite contrary to Lucille's juvenile belief that outside on the phone her mother was berating her sister for waiting so long to call her back ("It's so bad on my nerves, Bethy, to worry over you like that; is a returned call *so much* to ask for??? So, how was work?"), Lucille's mother was on the phone with our neighboring city's sheriff. Her daughter had taken a lethal dose of antidepressants, she could be found at Kaiser Permanente Emergency Care in Woodland Hills, in room 2536.

Of course, Lucille's mother left immediately to tend to the daughter that was closer to death; Lucille would see her again in four months, it was okay, *Please go*, of course she should go, Lucille understood. Mother: the female beast that learns to adjust to dire circumstances in the blink of an eye. The day preceded as it was meant to: the Christian family, plus heartbroken Lucille, would go out to dinner, rent a movie, eat ice cream, and go to bed early, one of the girls still imbued with giddy international anticipation, the other now pregnant with a black, miserable, stillborn monster.

Every thirty minutes or so, the smiling mother and father would tighten their vocal chords once again in order to ask Lucille if she was ok, would she like to talk, would she like a glass of Diet Coke, with ice? Lucille had never known kinder, more selfless aliens in all her life, and she had to admit that she was a little bit in love with the calming effect of the ocean air that evening. But whenever they asked, she waved her hand dramatically as if they had implied something too comical and preposterous for words, and she responded to their genuine worry with some joke that made light of the last several hours.

The joke to pretend this life does not belong to you.

Shortly after her mother had left, Lucille received a phone call from her saying that Beth was stable; the doctors had been able to get the pills out of her belly before they did any real damage and she was asleep in the emergency room. Did she want her mother to come back and say a proper good bye? No, of course not, it was fine. It was fine enough, at least. *This is fine enough*, Lucille told herself repeatedly that night while she stroked her cheap locket with Beth's picture inside. It was from years before, when Beth still made jokes and Lucille laughed at them, when their family took vacations, when Beth had an appetite and a tan.

Beth was a therapist, ironically enough. She detested Freud, and frequently voiced her opinions of the sexist maniac she was forced to acknowledge in her chosen profession. As Lucille sat in her best friend's home, fingering a cheap metal piece of her soul mate and pseudo-mother, the sea's assuaging breeze settling on her skin and conjuring goose bumps on her burned summer flesh, she wondered what Beth could be dreaming of in her hospital bed: oedipal complexes; the poor woman who had to lie beneath the master of daddy issues; death drives. No matter, as long as she dreamed.