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Following a semester of a first-year composition course, the writing process has evolved into something entirely different. I now possess a new eye for recognizing and utilizing rhetorical techniques, as well as interpreting literature in a more efficient way. My appreciation of the hoax has also developed, after learning how multiple authors were able to manipulate many genres of literature in order to compose something of complete deception.

The largest component of this semester course for me was learning to comprehend the writing process as something that requires time and effort. For each one of our large assignments we were required to 'brain storm,' draft, critique, revise, and reflect. For our final research essay, I composed a prospectus, exploratory essay, and outline before even attempting the final draft. Also, once the final copy was handed in, we immediately started to conduct peer critiques as a class, forcing us to analyze some of our recent decisions while also searching for areas that needed additional work as we moved forward towards the final portfolio.

Other times where I found myself revisiting previous work was during reflections and revisions for the rhetorical analysis and podcast. Immediately after submitting my podcast, I recognized that I:

“most likely would have had to taken a new approach entirely with the podcast in order to have the time to fit those extra things in. This is something I will keep in mind as we move forward this semester, as I should be looking at the project as a whole instead of focusing on individual parts too closely. Overall this was a great experience and it was nice to have the opportunity to explore literature in a new way. “

This reflection helped aid me in rethinking some of my decisions with my podcast and thus establishing a report that explained the revisions I would make towards it, given the

chance. This assignment also helped to develop my critical thinking and reading, as I interpreted a piece of literature with a new outlook all together. This new medium allowed us to analyze evidence in a way that could be made into a compelling and entertainment discussion, something that I have yet to do when interpreting a piece of literature.

As one of the first assignments, the rhetorical analysis done this semester immediately had us exploring a hoax with a new appreciation for the techniques that a given author utilized in order to create a convincing piece of writing. Through the analysis of a fairly short article, I was able to explain how Henry L. Mencken had taken advantage of his audience, credibility, and tone in order to convince the general public of a hoax. These three techniques would not be something I would typically take into consideration when analyzing a work, however, this semester has changed my mindset regarding how to appropriately analyze something.

While our first assignment was focused solely on the ability to conduct a rhetorical analysis, our other assignments forced us to continue to utilize these new analysis skills. During my final research essay, I discussed how Burton took advantage of his medium, in this case film, in order to further develop his 'argument.' In this situation, Burton didn't necessarily have an argument, although he strived to portray the emotional aspects of this hoax. In the following exert I crafted a close reading of on of Burton's scenes and how the film medium aided the depiction of the strong emotional effects on Margaret Keane.

"During a scene in the supermarket, Margaret is clearly disturbed when the eyes of the people around her are molded into the eyes that she paints on her portraits. It is evident that Margaret is on the verge of a nervous breakdown, becoming noticeably affected by these large eyes around her, quickly rushing out of the store. Burton utilized his 'artistic license' during this scene, using

visual effects in order to depict the amount of stress that Margaret had to endure, quickly becoming submerged within it.”

This course has granted me with the capabilities to interpret the decisions made by authors with different techniques in mind, helping me fully grasp the reasoning that they use in order to develop an effective work.

Specifically with this course, I was also able to gain a thorough understanding of the hoax. This was incorporated into every assignment that we completed, whether it be a blog post or one of our larger works. I found myself being able to better interpret the aspects of a hoax, as well as what allows it to become so successful, as we moved throughout the semester. In some instances, it was hard to make a finite decision regarding the true intention behind an author of a hoax, or even if a supposed hoax was actually true or pure deception. I found myself questioning the intentions behind Mencken towards the end of my essay and whether he deliberately deceived his audience or if their gullibility had led to the ultimate success of the bathtub hoax. I also found myself exploring this idea within the blog post *Animal Pangaea*, unsure as to why the human race is so quick to cling to certain ideas without extensive exploration.

The blog posts we were required to complete throughout this semester were actually the most effective way in allowing us to reach all four outcomes of this course. Although short, each post had us explore a new technique, whether it be a rhetorical analysis, a proposal for a project, or an interpretation of a hoax that exemplifies our ability to question the arguments of others. While our larger assignments tended to focus on one outcome at a time, the blog posts were able to incorporate multiple different aspects of this course simultaneously.

Overall, this semester has helped to develop my writing abilities with a new way of interpreting literature. I was able to reach this progress through the exploration of many different hoaxes through different mediums of literature.

### An Eight-Year History

In late December of 1917, in the midst of the chaos and sorrow of World War I, Henry L. Mencken published a news article in the *Evening Mail*, titled “A Neglected Anniversary.” It discussed the history of the bathtub and how its anniversary, on December 20<sup>th</sup>, had gone by seemingly unnoticed. Mencken claimed that this article had no reason to be taken seriously, as he had presented it in a satirical way, with the sole purpose of lightening the mood during a time of constant anxiety, as a result of the war. However, Mencken’s phony history soon became noted as fact, despite the general public having no concrete reason to believe anything printed. By targeting a specific, intellectual audience, establishing an academic ‘front’ through the tone of his writing, and portraying himself as a credible source, “A Neglected Anniversary” quickly grew in popularity. With the manipulation of these many rhetorical techniques, Mencken created a convincing article that would continue to deceive for eight years.

Mencken established an article that would pertain to multiple different groups simultaneously, convincing chiropractors, medical men, learned journals, and even the floor of congress. Shortly after the publication of Mencken’s story, his article soon became cited as fact by many different groups, all usually established as having higher intellectual capabilities as opposed to the rest of society. After eight years, the bathtub hoax was still consistently being referenced as fact. Mencken finally succumbed to his guilt and revealed the hoax in an additional article, titled “Melancholy Reflections.” Mencken justified his work by stating that, “This article, I may say at once, was a tissue of absurdities, all of them deliberate and most of them obvious...” simply transferring the blame to his audience as opposed to himself. However, having convinced such an intellectual group of individuals certainly contradicts his claim that his intentions were clear, as even medical men found themselves fooled within the field of

sanitation, something that would have much overlap with their careers. Mencken also stated that the idea behind his article was to “relieve the strain of war days,” hoping to stray from the typical newspaper topic of World War I. Were Mencken’s intentions truthfully innocent? Although Mencken argued that his humorous take on the history of the bathtub was for the purpose of entertainment, geared towards lightening the mood during a time of chaos initiated by World War I, this also meant that his audience would be significantly larger than usual, as people constantly checked the paper for any news of the war. With an increase in daily readers, Mencken’s hoax would establish a platform to flourish. Theoretically, an increase in readers would correlate with the probability of his hoax becoming a success. This audience would also be emotionally vulnerable from high levels of anxiety due to the war, allowing them to become more gullible. Additionally, while Mencken claimed to have targeted an audience that would benefit from a comedic article, the group that most often cited his ‘history’ as fact was not the general public. Instead, Mencken had grasped the attention of many intellectual groups due to the academic genre that his article had adapted.

Mencken immediately established himself as a scholarly writer within “A Neglected Anniversary,” creating a deceptively believable article. Mencken immediately began stating what appeared to be facts in his article, “citing” sources such as the Western Medical Repository in order to support his claim. Mencken also inserted statistics from the American Medical Association and how it “held its annual meeting in Boston in 1849, and a poll of the members in attendance showed that nearly 55 per cent of them now regarded bathing as harmless, and that more than 20 per cent advocated it as beneficial.” Although a citation does not immediately grant credibility, the use of a source that has previously established itself as reliable will allow the audience to ‘trust’ the author more easily. Including supporting evidence also leads to this

article's believability, as Mencken has both a claim and the facts to validate it. As well as utilizing these supposed sources, being published in a newspaper, which is typically a source of factual information, automatically titled Mencken as a reliable source. The medium alone could have potentially aided Mencken in convincing others. Although the writing appears to be quite academic, in "Melancholy Confessions" Mencken justifies his article with the claim that he had taken an obvious comedic tone within "A Neglected Anniversary," filled with "idle jocosities." While his writing is meant to have a satirical tone to it, it quickly transforms into more of an academic writing, easily transforming this hoax into a convincing work of literature..

"Melancholy Reflections" is filled with justifications as an attempt by Mencken to excuse himself from the consequences of his hoax, including the claim that he had made it quite clear that "A Neglected Anniversary" was entirely fake. Declaring that "A Neglected Anniversary" possessed a satirical tone, composed of "a tissue of absurdities, all of them deliberate and most of them obvious," Mencken argued that this joke had been quite obvious. Had Mencken meant to establish an article that was meant for the sole purpose of entertainment, with no real hope of it being perceived as fact, his readers took this bad joke eight years too far. This supposed satirical tone was present at the beginning of "A Neglected Anniversary," when Mencken joked that "Not a plumber fired a salute or hung out a flag. Not a governor proclaimed a day of prayer. Not a newspaper called attention to the day." However, this quickly transitioned when this chipper article began spewing facts, giving the apparently unknown history of the bathtub. The topic itself adapted an academic tone, as a bathtub is not typically seen as a humorous topic. After the initial paragraph, Mencken's article gave no other indication that it was intended for the purpose of humor, immediately going into a timeline of events that led to the acceptance of the bathtub within the United States. Unfortunately, no one appeared to understand the hidden joke, allowing



this to play out for eight years. While Mencken did a notably job at ‘unintentionally’ persuading his audience of the truth, it should be noted that the public truthfully had no reason to believe Mencken in the first place. Mencken’s history was the first to “cite” these occurrences, yet no one seemed to need any additional convincing. Typically, when writing a scholarly article, one would find multiple sources for their topic. Yet over the course of eight years, Mencken’s article was cited as nothing but fact, presented in academic journals by medical men discussing the progress of public hygiene. These citations were never given any second thought and were never solidified as fact through additional research. People took Mencken’s words as true and never questioned the credibility. While newspapers are often deemed as reliable, at this point in time the world had already been fooled by many literary hoaxes, such as The Great Moon Hoax of 1835, published in the *New York Sun*. People truthfully had no reason to believe either one of these literary hoaxes, yet appeared to need no other evidence in order to gain their belief, allowing Mencken’s supposed credibility be evidence enough.

Regardless of whether Mencken’s intentions were as he professed, his effective use of many rhetorical techniques allowed his article to portray an authoritative and thus, believable stance. Yet unlike many other hoaxes revealed within the past century, it was not reported that any one person had questioned the actuality of his article. Had it not been for his eventual confession, the history of the bathtub may have forever been inaccurate. However, were Mencken’s manipulation of tone, audience, and genre truthfully what allowed this hoax to be so successful? Mencken argued, “The truth, indeed, is something that mankind, for some mysterious reason, instinctively dislikes.” Mankind is plagued with the instinct to be drawn towards information that is deceptive and of a false pretense, while avoiding what is truthful. With many hoaxes, despite how ridiculous or outlandish they may seem, society has a tendency

to believe in what they are presented. Whether it be an idea that is ‘larger’ than the human race itself, or something as simple as the history of the bathtub, hoaxes successfully deceive society with the help of society itself.

Once revisiting this essay, I quickly noticed multiple areas that either needed work or could be further developed. I first adapted my thesis into something much more specific, as well as into one that focused more on the rhetorical techniques that we discussed thoroughly during the beginning of the semester. My original thesis, “With the manipulation of many literary techniques, Mencken created a convincing article that would continue to deceive for eight years,” was expanded into something much more specific:

“By targeting a specific, intellectual audience, establishing an academic ‘front’ through the tone of his writing, and portraying himself as a credible source, “A Neglected Anniversary” quickly grew in popularity. With the manipulation of these many rhetorical techniques, Mencken created a convincing article that would continue to deceive for eight years.”

This new thesis incorporates a ‘road map,’ which provides the audience with a much better idea of what to expect in the following paragraphs. The organization of my essay was also something that I spent a large portion of time on, as I found that the change in my thesis required that my topic sentences be edited as well. I changed the order of my paragraphs in order to create a better narrative, now discussing my three arguments in the order of audience, credibility, and then tone, as opposed to the original order of audience, tone, and credibility. With this new order, the essay led into each new paragraph much more easily, and built up to the conclusion and ‘bigger picture’ more fluently. Naturally, with this change of organization, I also had to adapt my transition sentences to lead into the next paragraph appropriately.

With regards to content, I found that this essay didn’t contain enough concrete evidence, and there were times where I was originally quite vague. I addressed this issue by adding additional quotes from the article that I was analyzing, while also giving a more in-depth explanation for some of the claims that I had made throughout the essay. Using track changes, it became evident that I had actually reconstructed my analysis of Mencken’s use of credibility entirely. A screenshot that shows the extent of these changes can be seen on the following page.

In my original essay, I focused on the correlation between people’s inevitable gullibility and the success of Mencken’s hoax. However, during my revision I made the decision to allow this all to come together at the end of the essay, as opposed to trying to incorporate it during the main body paragraphs. I think this also helped with the formation of a ‘big picture’ connection at the end. I spend the majority of the time discussing how Mencken manipulates his audience, yet in my conclusion I question the role that the audience had in the success of his hoax. Overall, this essay has been completely rebuilt, now forming a stronger analysis of the rhetorical techniques that Mencken utilized in order to create a convincing article.

Mencken immediately established himself as a scholarly writer within "A Neglected Anniversary," creating a deceptively believable article. Mencken immediately began stating what appeared to be facts in his article, "citing" sources such as the Western Medical Repository in order to support his claim. Mencken also inserted statistics from the American Medical Association and how it "held its annual meeting in Boston in 1849, and a poll of the members in

his claims.

Rachel Sla..., 11/10/2015 11:08 AM

**Comment [1]:** Maybe zoom out for more of a broader topic sentence, this could be used as a strong sentence within the paragraph as opposed to at the beginning.

Rachel Sla..., 12/14/2015 11:41 PM

**Deleted:** While the general population's inevitable gullibility played a large role in the success of Mencken's hoax, it should be acknowledged that Mencken played his 'part' as scholarly writer quite well, potentially causing the article to be more deceptive than usual.

Slaughaupt3

attendance showed that nearly 55 per cent of them now regarded bathing as harmless, and that more than 20 per cent advocated it as beneficial." Although a citation does not immediately grant credibility, the use of a source that has previously established itself as reliable will allow the audience to 'trust' the author more easily. Including supporting evidence also leads to this article's believability, as Mencken has both a claim and the facts to validate it. As well as utilizing these supposed sources, being published in a newspaper, which is typically a source of factual information, automatically titled Mencken as a reliable source. The medium alone could have potentially aided Mencken in convincing others. Although the writing appears to be quite academic, in "Melancholy Confessions" Mencken justifies his article with the claim that he had taken an obvious comedic tone within "A Neglected Anniversary," filled with "idle jocosities." While his writing is meant to have a satirical tone to it, it quickly transforms into more of an academic writing, easily transforming this hoax into a convincing work of literature.

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Rachel Sla..., 12/15/2015 1:11 AM

### Podcast Revision Report

Although we were not given the assignment to do a thorough revision of our podcasts, we were given the chance during the semester and now in order to reflect upon our work, finding places that may have needed some reconstruction. The main issue that I had with my podcast was our time limit. Even after editing out all of the pauses and some of the sound effects that I had originally used, the podcast was still over the time limit. Given the chance to redo the podcast, I would hope to do so without the limit, as I found it very distracting, taking away from what I envisioned for my podcast.

I think that my podcast would have benefited had I taken advantage of the medium that we were using. We were granted a lot of freedom with this, and I would have liked to go back and add in some sound effects to make it fit more under the genre of a podcast. In my original script, I actually had segments from two songs after making a corny joke about my topic being a 'throw back Thursday.' I had hoped to include Toxic by Britney Spears and Baby by Justin Bieber, two songs that our class surely has heard a multitude of times in their lives.

Although I did have clapping after each interview, I think an interesting addition to the podcast would have been a song that was used when switching between subjects repeatedly. This could act as a theme song to the podcast and be first played during my introduction.

Script wise, I thought that my podcast did an efficient job at portraying my topic in a conversational manner. I also found that conducting actual interviews, as opposed to crafting them myself, was very beneficial. The answers were more natural and it was interesting to incorporate the opinions of someone who actually endured the Y2K hoax. However, if given the chance to revise my podcast I would most likely find someone else to play the role of my grandfather. Tom (my voice actor) seemed quite nervous and spoke very slowly, causing it to

seem a tad unnatural, taking away from the effects of having a legitimate interview in the script.

It would have been extremely interesting to actually record the interviews in person, although being 600 miles away from home did not allow for this.

## Through the Eyes of a Repressed Woman

Within the past one hundred years women have seen substantial improvements with regards to equality and rights. However, repression against women was still significantly noticeable and detrimental in the midst of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, something that a young female pursuing a career in the art industry would withstand. Margaret Ulbrich struggled to sell her paintings for a mere dollar, yet would soon be selling her paintings for hundreds and thousands. Unfortunately for Margaret, the success of her paintings came when her new husband, Walter Keane, took credit as the artist of her beloved paintings. In Tim Burton's *Big Eyes*, he explores this twenty-year art hoax and the emotional struggles that Margaret endured. Through his depiction of the Keane scandal, Burton's *Big Eyes* effectively presents a previously lesser known hoax to the public in a culturally significant manner, accentuating the significance of gender role within the art industry. Burton brought attention to the pressing issue of repression of women indirectly through the story of Margaret Keane and her inner struggle to gain recognition for her success, which was hidden behind the face of a man.

After leaving her abusive husband, Margaret Ulbrich found herself in California with her daughter, Jane. She met Walter Keane shortly afterwards at an art sale, quickly engaging in a romantic relationship with him. After Margaret's former husband filed against her in court with the plan of winning custody of Jane, Walter offered to marry Margaret in order to provide leverage behind Margaret's custody battle. Shortly after being married, Walter began taking credit for Margaret's paintings, leading to great success quite rapidly. Unfortunately for Margaret, this success came with a price, as she was to spend her days concealed in an attic, crafting paintings for Walter yet gaining none of the recognition. Margaret eventually left Walter

after finding a box in the back of the studio that are supposedly Walter's paintings, yet with different signatures. She comes to the realization that Walter is not a painter at all, yet a conman. After ten years of living in silence after leaving him, Margaret reveals the whole hoax on a radio show in Hawaii. Margaret quickly filed a case against Walter in court, which led to a famous 'paint-off' between the two, finally revealing Walter as the fraud that he was. This story unfolds in Tim Burton's film, *Big Eyes*.

In Burton's film he utilizes Walter Keane's dominant characteristics to depict the importance of this in manipulating Margaret, leading to the continuation of this hoax for twenty years. Within the movie *Big Eyes*, the Walter and Margaret's marriage seems quite rushed, something Margaret's friend, DeeAnn, comments on. However, the reason that Walter and Margaret so abruptly decide to marry is due to the fact that Margaret's former husband has threatened to take her to court in order to win custody over their daughter. In a review of the film, Tyler Stallings examines the idea that during the 1950s, a woman was typically presented with few to no options if their marriage dissolved. As a woman at this time in history, Margaret would be able to maintain custody over her daughter if she was able to find the support of another man, representing the true discrimination against women and how stability is determined by whether or not there is a man by their side. However, this was also one of the first instances where Walter Keane was able to use this discrimination to convince Margaret Keane to trust him. In Burton's film, Walter is often seen as excessively controlling, especially during a scene where he attempted to kill both Margaret and Jane when they attempted to flee the house. However, during an interview with John Preston of *The Telegraph*, Margaret verifies this intensity, explaining how she had quickly been manipulated and how:

"It all happened so fast that there didn't seem any way out. The more successful the paintings were, the worse it became. At one time I thought that if I could only teach Walter how to paint the big-eyed children, that might be the answer, but he couldn't do it. I began to feel that I was completely walled-up and in a way I was. Walter was terribly controlling and terrified of anyone finding out the truth."

Burton put extra emphasis on Walter's dominating characteristics in order to show the public how Margaret was able to be stuck under his control for such a long period of time before finally fighting against him. As pointed out by Jessica Gelt, throughout the movie, Walter's excessive control over Margaret can be seen through scenes that reveal Margaret painting the Big Eyes portraits in an isolated attic, terrified of revealing her secret to anyone, lying to even her own daughter, Jane. For Margaret, hiding something this large from her daughter was agony and "went against everything I knew was right. It was just terrible." Through the medium of film, Tim Burton was able to represent how truly repressed Margaret Keane was by her own husband. He forced her to stay trapped in an attic all day and lie to her own daughter, going against one of her core moral values. Burton not only did a good job at depicting the overbearing characteristics of Walter Keane, but also of the hoax as a whole. After seeing the movie, Margaret revealed her reactions, stating, "I was in total shock. It was so real and very emotional. Christoph looks and acts exactly like Walter. Amy portrayed exactly what I was thinking and feeling. They made it so alive." Not only were they both similar in looks to the young couple, Waltz also was able to efficiently represent the manipulative characteristics of Walter Keane. Burton had put efficient thought into whom to cast as the main characters while also taking into consideration almost every aspect of the film, with the hope of accurately representing this fragile part of Margaret's life as well as possible.



Burton's filmmaking decisions helped represent the true emotional damage that this scandal had on Margaret, as well as introducing the underlying topic of gender discrimination within the art industry. Throughout the entirety of the movie, it is very apparent that Margaret's emotions are drastically shifting as Walter's manipulation begins to take quite the toll on her. During a scene in the supermarket, Margaret is clearly disturbed when the eyes of the people around her are molded into the eyes that she paints on her portraits. It is evident that Margaret is on the verge of a nervous breakdown, becoming noticeably affected by these large eyes around her, quickly rushing out of the store. Burton utilized his 'artistic license' during this scene, using visual effects in order to depict the amount of stress that Margaret had to endure, quickly becoming submerged within it. In the movie itself, the sincere misery that Margaret was feeling, especially when lying to her daughter, can be seen on Margaret's face as Walter attempts to convince Jane that he was the true artist, despite what the young girl had supposedly remembered from her early years. Burton ensured that Amy Adams accurately represented the agony of Margaret Keane through facial expressions and body mannerisms. However, while Burton utilizes the film medium to portray the impact that this hoax had on Margaret Keane, he also drew attention towards her strong character. During an interview with Huffington Post, he reveals his feelings about Margaret and how:

“She's one of the most quiet, under-the-radar feminists you've ever met. She doesn't have a big voice. She's not out there on the streets, saying, you know, “Vote for women's rights!” She did it in her own private, personal way, which I found amazing given the type of person she is.”

Like Margaret, Tim Burton is also known for being quiet, often keeping to himself. This may have impacted his decision in putting this hoax out to the public in ways that it had not before.

Margaret was very soft-spoken, essentially standing up for a movement by keeping to herself as opposed to openly shouting her beliefs. This is not quite different from Burton, who took the time to allow the world to see the atrocities of Walter Keane and the strength of a quiet feminist such as Margaret Keane in a very similar manner.

*Big Eyes* brought light to the underlying issue of Margaret Keane's apparent fear of discrimination against woman artists, causing her to believe that her paintings would be less successful when represented by a woman. As early as the 1870s, men began to resist women's attempts at expanding their presence within the art industry. Some men established art schools that were gender-exclusive, preventing women from broadening their art education. During the 1890s, women found that it had become an increasing struggle to gain membership to these elite schools, while also having difficulty with getting their work into galleries (Swinth 308). Going into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women had already begun to feel increased repression when attempting to become successful artists. Burton surely kept this in mind when including the scene where Walter goes to an art exhibit with the hopes of getting some of his, and Margaret's, paintings out. However, when Walter revealed that the paintings were produced by his wife, the owner of the gallery quickly denies them, even marking them as tacky and slightly terrifying. However, once Walter takes over as the artist at an alternative venue, the paintings seem to have no trouble selling. During an interview with Channel 4 News of London, Burton discusses the common expectations for a woman during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and how he:

“grew up in that time and people find it hard to believe that in that era most of the women that I knew, in suburbia anyways, they didn't work. There was a pressure; there was more of a cocoon, a categorization of things. Obviously there were famous woman artists...

But still, at the time, and certainly in America, it was a very much more male dominated, in that sense.”

Burton’s awareness of the social expectations can be connected to his decision to represent an early form of classic discrimination against women. Whether Margaret would truthfully have been less successful on her own or not, the evident beliefs surrounding her helped to yield her decision to allow Walter to take credit for her hard work. However, fifty years after Margaret chose to release herself from the grasps of Walter, she still questions whether her success was truthfully attributed to the fact that her art was represented by a man. During an interview with *The Telegraph*, Margaret still ponders whether her paintings would have been as successful had she stood by them through it all, as:

“you’ve got to remember that back in the Fifties there was a lot of prejudice against women artists. There weren’t that many of them, and on the whole their work didn’t sell. So it’s quite possible that my paintings wouldn’t have got the exposure they did without him. That’s one of the strangest things of all about this.”

In Burton’s film, there can be seen a significant rise in interest between when Margaret was the artist, selling her paintings for a mere few dollars, compared to when Walter took over, reeling in a fortune. This ultimately allows the audience to visualize how much of a difference the gender of the artist had on the success of the paintings.

While the Big Eyes portraits had a significant increase in success once Walter took over, it should be addressed that after the reveal of Margaret Keane as the true artist, the paintings’ value had a slight increase, potentially going against the argument that discrimination of women in the art industry would have been a significant component in convincing Margaret to comply with the wishes of Walter for such an extended period of time. According to Stallings of KCET,

during the 1990s Margaret's work began to regain popularity. She established a gallery in San Francisco, where a new generation of fans were able to experience and enjoy her art. These once famous works of the twentieth century had again made an appearance, establishing themselves as a new genre of art. Although Margaret's art may have had a slight increase in popularity after the hoax was announced, it was not until the 1990s that there was significant increase. However, the reason behind this was due to the rise of a new type of art: pop art. Her Big Eyes paintings fit right under this genre, allowing them to now inspire new artists. In a way, it wasn't until her paintings were 'in style' that people actually took interest in them once again. With Margaret now as the artist, it was speculated that more people were able to connect with the art at an emotional level, now understanding the true pain that were supposedly in the large eyes of the children. Stallings again speculates that young artists and collectors became attracted to the art once again due to the "pain and the kitsch" of these paintings. Again, artists can be seen now connecting with Margaret's paintings at a different level, yet this is due to a completely different reason than why they were popular beforehand. In a way, a new face behind the paintings gave them more emotional value, yet they were also attractive now due to the 'kitsch' of the paintings, something that they were once criticized for. This new opinion was swayed with the rise of popular art culture. However, despite the newly found interest in this rising genre within the art industry, Margaret's original pieces only sold for a mere \$5,000 to \$200,000, according to The Vancouver Sun. While this may seem like quite a large value, this increase in price was truthfully not that significant, especially when compared to other artwork within this new category that arose out of inspiration from the paintings by Margaret Keane. Andy Warhol, who painted in a very similar, unique manner, has typically had his original works sell for close to 20 million dollars. Yet Margaret Keane, the inspiration behind work such as Warhol's, is only

selling her originals for a mere fraction of his price. This significant difference exemplifies the importance behind Burton's decision to draw attention towards the injustices done against Margaret Keane.

Tim Burton's influence within the film industry immediately gave the film *Big Eyes* a strong platform with regards to popularity and success. With this being said, Burton was able to efficiently portray not only a compelling story, but also one that had underlying issues imbedded within its heart. While society has seen a definite decrease in discrimination and repression against women, it is certainly still a consistent issue that has been seen throughout history. The *Big Eyes* hoax was revealed almost fifty years ago, yet Burton just now decided to take on the task of depicting the struggles that Margaret Keane had undergone. However, in an interview with Huffington Post, Burton reveals that he actually 'sugar coated' some of the horrors that Margaret had been exposed to, such as the abuse against her dog by Walter and how he had actually kept her locked in their attic for extended periods of time in order to ensure that she would complete the paintings. Although Burton believed that the public was ready for a film that represented the true problems with cultural expectations for women and the consequences that these yield, he still portrayed it in a way that softened some of the harsh reality of it, indicating that while society has made progress from some of the darker times in the past, it is not quite ready to fully embrace the truth behind the atrocities of repression and discrimination.

Similar to my first essay, I started the revision of my research essay with some clarification regarding my thesis sentence. Although the change was not as significant as the other, it still helped to create a better connection between the thesis and my body paragraphs. My revised thesis now directly draws attention towards gender discrimination within the art industry, a prominent topic throughout the essay. Surprisingly, this small change actually helped the current topic sentences connect more directly to the thesis, so there was no need for adaptation among them.

Originally, the third paragraph of this essay was almost two and a half pages long. Along with the recommendations of my peers and Professor Grubbs, I made the decision to split this paragraph. I now have a paragraph that focuses primarily on how Burton's utilizes Keane's dominant personality traits to depict the importance of this in manipulating Margaret, while the other paragraph focuses on Burton's cinematic decisions with regards to portraying the true emotion damage that Margaret Keane had endured. In this paragraph, I added a close reading of a scene in which Burton uses visual effects to demonstrate the emotional trauma of this scandal. Including evidence directly from the film also helped to show how the medium of film can be used to portray different emotions visually, in order for the audience to understand them more thoroughly.

Of course, I did make a few grammatical changes, although the main changes were those to my thesis and the splitting of my second paragraph. This essay was filled with a lot of ideas, and I find that the clarity in the thesis sentence helped to solidify these ideas, while the formation of a new paragraph helped to expand on them more thoroughly.

I find that this blog post does an excellent job at providing supporting specific, concrete evidence for the claim that the cooperation of the general public is a crucial aspect with regards to the success of a hoax. Direct quotes from articles about Joice Heath help the reader to visualize the hoax I am talking about, as well as help to connect between the hoax itself and the reason behind Barnum's audience gullibility. This post also does an efficient job at creating a 'bigger picture' connection towards the end, with the examples of present-day hoaxes.

### **Inevitability to Believe**

While people are often ridiculed for creating hoaxes and humbugs, the cooperation from the general public, often allowing these hoaxes to become so well known, must not go unnoticed. The human species tends to be a curious one, searching for evidence to prove that there is something "bigger" than us all. Phineas T. Barnum was chastised after the real age of Joice Heth, a supposed 161-year-old nurse of George Washington, was revealed to be only eighty. However, society had no real reason to believe this absurd claim. Joice may have possessed some unattractive qualities, having shrunk to "mere skin and bone" with fingers that "resemble the claws of a bird of prey," yet did not differ much from a typical elderly woman. The true convincing came from the people themselves, desperately grasping on to proof that life could be prolonged for extensive quantities of time. Barnum was able to manipulate others by creating hoaxes that people would genuinely want to believe as true. Even with the Feejee Mermaid, which was simply a monkey sewn on to a fish, there was an inevitable hope inside of mankind for this story to hold true. Today, there are still many who search for evidence behind legends with ghosts, aliens, and even Bigfoot. People clench on to these rumors, essentially convincing themselves of the seemingly impossible, only to resort to anger once proven wrong.

This post, geared towards establishing an intended genre for our podcast, was very efficient in setting me on the right path in order to create what I envisioned for said podcast. The very concrete comparisons, such as that to 'The Talking Dead' and its satirical tone, helped me in crafting my script as the following step. One of the main issues that I continuously had throughout this semester was being very specific within my essays, although this blog post allowed me to have a very precise goal in mind when writing my script for the podcast, as well as creating clarity for Professor Grubbs with regards to what my plan of action was.

### **Y2K Podcast Brand**

I would like to portray most of my podcast in a very talk show like manner. I will be including one or two guests to host a discussion with on my hoax, hopefully creating an engaging and thought-provoking atmosphere. I would like to stray away from presenting the audience with multiple facts, instead conversing with other people on different aspects of the story that some may find interesting. When I picture my podcast in my head, it appears quite similar to 'The Talking Dead', a talk show that takes place after every 'Walking Dead' episode. This show has many satirical moments, yet also goes quite in depth with different aspects of the recent episode, analyzing it a step further than most viewers initially would. While I do not want this to be my primary brand, I would also like to represent my podcast with a few moments that are similar to that of a news broadcast. I am planning on having separately recorded interviews with people who were effected by Y2K, playing them periodically throughout the podcast. After these interviews are presented, I plan on commenting on them much like a news anchor may comment on a story given by another reporter. With the mix of these two different styles, I hope to create a laid-back yet informational podcast.



As one of our first personal reviews, I thought that this blog post was very beneficial in the overall outcome of the class. I was able to accurately reflect on my own work and acknowledge where it acquired the most attention, as well as what my strong points were. Also, like others, this blog post will be useful in the portfolio itself, as we are required to discuss the revisions we would make to our podcast given the chance. Through this post I was able to successfully critique my own work and experience writing as a process, two of the main goals of this class.

### **Podcast Assignment Review**

The podcasts were a nice way to approach hoaxes in a way that we have yet to experience. We were either able to interpret a hoax in a more conversational way, as opposed to the typical essay format. However, there were also a few of us who attempted to create their own hoaxes, and I must say that they all did an excellent job! It was very interesting to see what tactics everyone has picked up on throughout the semester with regards to what makes both hoaxes and rhetorical analyses more effective.

Personally, I would love to get the opportunity to work some more with podcasts and am thoroughly considering going back to workshop mine for the project later on in the semester. After hearing everyone else's podcasts, there are some definitely some changes I would have made. For example, I just can't get over the importance of sound effects and using them at the correct times. During class, it helped to keep me more engaged and it also made the podcast appear as more "legit" in a way. In order to do this I would have to reconstruct my podcast and choose a few things to take out, although I definitely believe it would be worth it.

This was overall a very fun project and I think that can be seen in everyone's podcasts. For mine specifically, it was nice to get actual interviews and to be able to learn about the effects of a hoax first-hand, as opposed to the usual second-hand sources we have encountered thus far. It really brings a new aspect with it, being able to hear about personal experiences instead of just reading about them in articles or essays. It was also nice to see all of the different creative approaches that were used. There really weren't any two podcasts that were alike, and we all brought our own brand to the table.

I hope to revisit my podcast again in the future to workshop it, although I very much enjoyed the time spent working with it and also being able to experience all of the great ideas that my classmates had with their podcasts! It was a terrific assignment and very different than anything I've done in an English course before.

“Peering Through the Windows” is very descriptive and establishes the significance of a single quote throughout a whole movie. As our first attempt at a close reading, I was able to focus on the details of the movie *Big Eyes*, which would eventually become the topic of my research essay. While this is considered to be one of my strongest blog posts, I actually had the chance to revise it during an in-class activity. I revisited the quote taken from *Big Eyes* with a new approach, analyzing the grammatical aspects. Although I consider this to be one of my more solid posts, my revisions do help show that revisions are a crucial part of the writing process, something that we have focused on all semester.

### **Peering Through the Windows**

“The eyes are the windows to the soul.”

Tim Burton’s *Big Eyes* focuses on the deception and fraud built upon a marriage between Margaret and Walter Keane. Eyes are a huge focus in this movie, as Burton explores a ten-year hoax in which Walter Keane took full credit for his wife’s paintings, which depict children with very large, deep eyes.

Margaret is the first to state that “the eyes are the windows to the soul”, only to have her husband state the exact same thing during an interview where he attempts to explain his supposed “inspiration” for these paintings. However, this quote has much more meaning coming from the mouth of Margaret as opposed to Walter.

Similarly, the quote itself can represent the difference between Margaret and Walter, along with their intentions. Describing the eyes as a metaphor of the soul, it can be seen in the paintings the intense emotion and passion inside Margaret’s soul through each one of her *Big Eyes* portraits. In comparison, every supposed painting composed by Walter is simply a stolen work from another artist. This quote means nothing coming from him, just as if you were to peer into his eyes it would most likely be blank and emotionless, feeding off of the intense passion of others.

Although this quote is short, it is certainly effective. It sets the tone for the whole movie, as we, as the readers, must be able to peer through the windows, or eyes, of the characters in order to see their real intentions. Burton does an excellent job at executing the importance of the symbolism of eyes in this great representation of the *Big Eyes* hoax.

Given the chance, I would certainly go back and revise my blog post *Animal Pangaea*. The assignment allowed for us to pick an article from an online site, The Onion, which posts satirical articles that are entirely fake. The goal was to depict how the author of said article kept the literary terms ethos, pathos, and logos in mind while writing and how this could potentially convince a reader of the article's truth. However, I found that my attempt to incorporate these actual words into my writing made it very choppy, causing the blog post to not flow very well from one idea into the other. I found that when reading my peers' take on this assignment, those that chose to address the topics as opposed to worrying about including the actual words 'ethos, pathos, logos' tended to have overall better posts. Another way I could enhance the transitions between topics is by splitting the blog post into smaller paragraphs instead of one large paragraph. This method can be seen in the earlier blog posts in this portfolio, and I find that this can help aid the overall argument or point being made.

### **Animal Pangaea**

Had Pangaea not been discovered some hundred years ago, The Onion's claim that Earth's animals once formed a giant 'super-animal' may have been quite compelling. The article immediately established ethos, or a credible source of information, citing a recent study done by researchers at Penn State University. Known as a large research university, the general public would have no reason to doubt findings presented by Penn State, allowing this hoax to gain efficient credibility within the readers' minds. While this article lacked in the category of pathos, this did not necessarily work against it in any way. Represented as a huge break in the science field, it would have seemed odd if they attempted to persuade the reader by appealing to their emotions. Instead, by presenting factual evidence, the article came off as sophisticated, keeping neutral ground with any related ethical beliefs. In this sense, the lack of pathos actually helped develop a stronger hoax, allowing the article to come off as more believable. Another large component of the article's potential to persuade readers of the truth behind the hoax is the reasoning displayed. The logos used in the article are in fairly simple terms, allowing almost anyone to understand the reasoning behind the evidence. Gary Albright, a supposed lead researcher at Penn State, stated, "if one looks at certain species closely, it's possible to see how, for example, the giraffe's neck fits together with the hippopotamus's underbelly, or the dolphin's tail forms a perfect contour with the stingray's back." It is easy to visualize this, especially when using the graphic of the 'super-animal' at the top of the webpage. Despite the ethos, pathos, and logos used strategically throughout the article, The Onion's claim still appears as far-fetched under the well known historical evidence of Pangaea.