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Devotion, Discord, Deceit

Calliope

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Calliope
Dear Readers:

Welcome to this year’s Calliope. What you have before you is the result of countless hours of work by your peers. Each piece of poetry, prose, and art was created by a member of the Pacific family. Every aspect of Calliope’s layout and editing was managed and completed by a team of dedicated undergraduates. With that said, we are proud to present you with the product of our efforts, Calliope 2007: Devotion, Discord, Deceit.

Contained in these pages are examples of the immense talent that exists all around us every time we set foot on campus. Bear in mind that these examples are far from comprehensive; what you see here is merely the tip of the iceberg. There were two teams of editors that sifted through the many submissions we received, one for poetry prose, and nonfiction, and another for art. Each team evaluated each text or work of art that was submitted, and from that great assortment, we were able to filter the pieces that truly stood out for us. This collaboration has produced Calliope, which features selections from the very best that Pacific has to offer in the fields of literature and art.

Calliope is an annual affair, and each year the quality of the submissions and the design improve. This publication is exemplary of the creativity that resides in every member of this campus. We thank you for your support, and we hope that you enjoy Calliope as much as the editorial staff has enjoyed working on it.

—The Calliope Staff
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Folly Beach Drama

— Diane Farrell

Devotion, Discord, Deceit
I rub hard to
Wipe it away
In a fragmented,
Dull pink
“Used to be.”

It lightens,
Yet remains
Permanently engraved,
Like Braille,

Or polemicist of mind.

Neither can be erased.
Both are a feeling,
Dimpling the pattern of meaning.

My memory has been dimpled.
Transformed.
No longer clean.

I had it wrong.
Erasure won’t do any good.
It’s there.

I am stubborn.
Now scratching at it
Frantically
With the thumbnail of reason.

Warping and
Fragmenting meaning.
Skewing text.
Carving something new:
Intuit.

The memory remains.
No matter how
It’s altered.
Devotion, Discord, Deceit

—Chelsea Davidson
Haste makes waste of a wasted life. Running to keep from standing still. Everything blurs and then you’ll miss her. You’ll waste her. Sooner or later she stops calling and your wrinkled hands will quiver as you try to remember her phone number. Maybe she’ll call you when the kid is on the way. Maybe she’ll just call you when it gets here. Maybe. Maybe at his first birthday or his graduation or the birth of the child of the child of the child you’ll smile your crooked smile that reaches back through the years searching for the straight. Searching for small white teeth and a grin and a pink balloon dancing a yard above an impossibly small wrist. Searching for the path to the here; the path lost in the gray there of then. But you’ll put down the phone and the snick of the receiver is the closing of your coffin. And the room will go quiet again save for the tock and the tick of the yellowing clock on the yellowing wallpaper.
Snake Charmer

— Glynnis Koike
WHEN YOU COME HOME TO ME, I know your whole day as soon as I put my head against your chest. The cologne you wear around your neck like a medallion has the aroma of the life you put your heart and soul into. The musk of the fish you cut: slicing, rolling, serving. Add rice, roll. Fry these, put fish eggs on top. Sauces? White and red. Talk to your customers and wipe your brow. The smell of the redolent sweat from twelve hours of work. Your black chef’s coat buttoned up to just under your neck. You come home exhausted; unbutton one, two, let my hands do the undoing. Remove your shoes, shirt, pants. Slide the day off your back. Now the day is gone.

Of the five, smell is the one most akin to satisfaction. I never wrinkle up my nose, I know your scent, and it is comfortable, safe. You are warm, I close my body around yours, we are rocking on the sea. I bask in your salty ocean as we sway in a rhythm with the waves. We live on a houseboat in the middle of the Pacific, I sing you to sleep each night with the siren’s song in my ear. The scent of the briny blue, dancing waves, jumping, bursting with life, fish, shark, floating and flying birds. Goodnight! we say to them all. The moon is brighter than ever with you. I dream of you wrapping me in salty seaweed, covered with roe jewels, orange and black, pink like flesh. Breathe in deeply. We can stay here forever. I will follow where you steer.

—Heather Lease
Mailboxes, Stockton, CA

—Harrison W. Inefuku
STAN LIVES IN A TRAILER PARK pushed all the way to the edge of town. It’s right up against a field that stretches on for miles and disappears into a blur against the sky. On cold mornings, the fog rolls up to the trailer park, and you can’t tell the ground from the sky. It was like that the first time we went, and we felt like we’d just driven to the edge of the world.

“The guy who lives in lot thirty-nine is a convicted rapist. He was also charged with indecent exposure. If he comes out in a bathrobe, don’t look at him,” Arthur told me in the car.

When we got home, I got on the computer and checked the sex-offenders registry. There were 16 convicted sex offenders in the 65-lot trailer park.

“That’s one in four people in that trailer park. Every fourth trailer houses a convicted sex offender,” I told Arthur.

“I believe it. Where else are they going to go?”

We later moved. Now we have to leave the house at five a.m. to get to Stan’s by eight. “The earlier we get there, the earlier we can leave,” Arthur said while we were packing.

I don’t feel him get up, but it’s still dark outside when he comes back into the room and touches my ankle. I open my eyes to find him stooped over me. His eyes shine like two holes in a wall through which a light flickers. “Time to go.”

I sit up and Arthur leaves the room to get more things while I pull my boots on. It rained last night and the lawn is sure to be thick and soggy with ice. I pull on my sweater while I walk out of the room, and I catch sight of Arthur in the bathroom. He’s holding an empty Q-tip box in both hands and staring at the back. He rips the cardboard label off and studies the pictures for a moment, his mouth hard and his eyebrows are ridged like rocks. One of the pictures is of a baby, another is a picture of a woman’s eye, and the third is a picture of an ear. He folds it into fourths and stuffs it in the hole in the wall where the medicine cabinet used to be.

After he took the medicine cabinet out to retexturize the bathroom
walls, he started using the empty hole as a trash can, dropping in the empty cardboard toilet-paper rolls and used Kleenexes, like he’s done with all the houses before. But it always progresses into something more. He starts dropping in newspaper clippings and magazine cutouts. In our last house, he took out a light-switch panel and stuffed inside a newspaper clipping about a little girl who drowned at a friend’s pool-party, with six adults supervising and nine other kids splashing around her. Yesterday he dropped a picture of his old dog, Hank, into the wall. The hole goes all the way down to the floor, so once he drops something in, it disappears.

I trudge out to the car, which Arthur has left unlocked so that he can load it up for the trip. While I buckle my seatbelt and lay my seat down to go back to sleep, Arthur locks up the house.

I sleep through most of the car ride but wake up now and again. The late November cold has frozen all of the windows and ice has latticed the corners. The chill is seeping into the car and Arthur cranks on the heater to full blast.

The darkness lasts into morning, and then the sky begins to turn a breathless blue. By seven, the flat fields, which go on forever, are still gray in the early morning dimness. We’re the only car on the highway. No trees, no signs. With flat fields ahead of us and flat fields behind us, it’s almost like we aren’t even moving. Just suspended in place, wheels spinning, but never getting anywhere.

I fall back to sleep and wake up when the car rolls to a gravelly stop. The fuzzy morning blue has thinned away and the sun is shining at an 8 a.m. slant. Time to wake up.

Arthur shuts off the engine and almost instantly the cold begins to sink inside. He gets out, and I pull on my boots and follow. Together we trudge through the crunching icy gravel toward the front porch. The field behind the trailer is still hazy with cold, but starting to warm up in the angular sunlight.

The vastness of the field makes me think about when Arthur and I met. I was house-sitting for people I didn’t know that well—some executive couple going on vacation. Friends of a friend. They had a six bedroom house in the hills, perched upon the top of a steep cliff—just a straight drop right outside the back door. I watched TV, made myself some pasta that I’d found in the pantry, and then went to sleep in their bed. At nightfall, I couldn’t
see anything out the windows. Trying to see outside was like trying to stare through a black wall. When I turned off the lights, the house was sealed up in darkness. There were no lights or houses nearby, and no moon in the sky. I lay in the darkness for a long time with my eyes open, not seeing anything, or hearing anything. No one knew I was there, so if I disappeared, it wouldn’t make a ripple in the universe. After a while, I couldn’t tell if I was still awake or not. The darkness surrounded me, sank into me, penetrated me. In my mind, I could see myself disappearing. First my feet and legs, and then my trunk, and then my hands and arms, like sinking into quicksand. Finally my head submerged, and the room was empty.

And then Arthur let himself in the house. He turned on the kitchen light and found a pot of hardened, half-translucent pasta on the stove. He went through the house, turning on lights as he passed through each room, until he came to the closed French doors of the master bedroom—doors that he had hung the day before. He later told me that he had left his phone in the house, but he never could explain why he opened those doors and went inside. I was asleep in bed, but woke up when he put his hand on my chest, just over my heart. For a moment, in the house and bed that belonged to people we didn’t know, and surrounded by pictures of family and friends we didn’t really have, it felt like he’d finally come home to me.

* * *

The porch steps are thin and hollow and covered in wet green felt that is icy in spots. Arthur knocks on the door, which is just as thin and papery as the steps.

The park is orderly. The streets are paved and the trailers are each spaced five to ten feet apart. The trailers are all square and flat, like garages. Storage units. A thin crust of ice clings to the crinkled metal walls.

“Arthur!” A short, round woman in a loose maroon dress with aquamarine trim pushes open the screen and pulls Arthur into a tight hug. She has big bright eyes that search around wildly and a wide smile that seems immune to the cold. Her name is Sylvia and she lives with Stan. She is easily a foot and a half shorter than him, so he has to stoop, making the hug look awkward and uncomfortable. “Geez-Louise, it’s cold out here! Come inside and I’ll fix you both up some hot
“Cocoa,” she says as she steps back inside and holds the door open for us.

We step inside and are both surprised at the warmth that greets us. The walls are so thin that one would think that the cold would surely have penetrated the trailer. But it’s warm and the air is thick with the smell of roasting turkey.

“So how was the trip? Was there traffic?” Sylvia asks. “Traffic gets crazy the week before Thanksgiving.”

“No traffic. The drive was pretty easy. Just had to watch for black ice,” says Arthur.

“Good, good. Stan’s in the back. Stan!” Sylvia calls as she leads Arthur and me down the hall. “Stan, Arthur and Lily are here!”

She pushes open the paper-thin door. We step inside and nearly jerk back with the sudden rank stench that hangs in the room. It’s a sulfuric smell. Rotting eggs, or trash. Stan is watching TV in bed and his right leg is heavily bandaged. It’s the smell of rotting flesh.

Stan sits up in bed with some difficulty and smiles widely. “Arthur! How are you, kiddo?” He and Arthur don’t look anything alike. Stan is short and portly with dark hair and a red face, while Arthur is lean and fairer complexioned.

Neither Stan nor Sylvia seem to notice the smell. Arthur does, but he doesn’t show it. I can see his nostrils twitch, but he doesn’t look away or cough or even scratch his nose.

“I’m good,” he says, his voice sounding a little dry. “How are you, Stan?”

Stan opens his arms as if to display a model physique. “Never better. I feel as strong as a horse. Got the appetite of one, too!” he says, and laughs a deep, throaty laugh as he looks up at Sylvia.

“Yup, we’re having turkey, and cranberry sauce, and mashed potatoes,” says Sylvia, listing the items off on her fingers. “And then for dessert, we’re having pumpkin pie.”

“Now that’s a meal,” says Stan.

“Well it’s nice to have a big family to cook for again. Sometimes it gets so dull when it’s just Stan and me. It’s too easy, you know? I can just whip up a couple of hamburgers or a casserole and there’s just nothing to it. But this time, I’m really putting my back into it. It’s going to be great, and everyone will have big, full stomachs to fall asleep with tonight.” Sylvia laughs and Stan does too.
Stan's laugh is deep and husky while Sylvia's is high pitched and punchy, like boiling water.

“Sylv, help me outta here, will you?” says Stan, struggling to hoist himself towards the edge of the bed.

“Wait, wait, don’t move. You’re going to snag your bandages,” says Sylvia as she bustles around the bed and unfolds Stan’s wheelchair. Stan kicks one leg into it and then hauls the bandaged one in as well, prepared to slump down off the edge of the bed and into the chair. “Wait, Stan!” Sylvia yells. Some gauze has gotten caught on the arm of the chair. Sylvia tries to work it free but Stan yanks his leg.

“God—damn—bandages!” he growls with each yank of his leg.

Arthur and I go out to the kitchen and sit down at the table. We wait in silence for a moment. We can hear Sylvia's and Stan’s muffled voices and the squeaking legs of the rickety cot. Arthur’s face is white as he stares down at the tabletop. The last time we saw Stan, there were a couple of small raw spots on his legs. The beginnings of the sores. At the time there was no telling what they would turn into, but everyone was hopeful that they would heal.

A few moments later, Sylvia wheels Stan out, and the rancid stench from the bedroom rolls into the kitchen. His leg is more visible now, propped upright with spots where black blood is seeping through.

“So how’s life, Arthur? You still working for that construction company?” asks Stan as Sylvia wheels him up to the table. In his wheelchair, he sits five inches lower than Arthur and me so that he’s looking up at us. After Sylvia pushes him up to the table, she goes to the pantry and gets out a box of hot cocoa packets.

“No, they didn’t have anything for me after the move, so I’m with a new company now. I like it better, though. It’s a small, family-owned company.”

“That’s good. So you’re still in that house, then?”

“Yeah, we’re still unpacking.”

“Think you’re going to stick with this one?” asks Stan.

Arthur half-smiles and shrugs. “I guess. I don’t know...”

Sylvia sets three mugs of hot cocoa on the
mind peeling the potatoes?” she asks, looking over her shoulder at me.

“Sure,” I say as I get up and go to the sink where the potatoes have been piled.

The afternoon is spent cooking and preparing. Stan turns the TV on and he and Arthur watch football, talking during commercials and moaning over bad calls. When Arthur talks to Stan, he doesn’t call him “Dad.” He just calls him “Stan.” Arthur was six when Stan left the family, and it was another nineteen years before he heard from him again. They talk to each other like old acquaintances, friends of a friend. They talk like two people who had once shared a house, but had to part ways.

By eleven, the trailer is filled with the smells of Thanksgiving dinner. Every time Sylvia opens the oven, the smell of the roasting turkey unfurls like a thick, hot fog.

“My mom would always start cooking first thing in the morning, as soon as she woke up,” I say as I peel the potatoes and Sylvia opens the oven again to baste the turkey.

Sylvia smiles thoughtfully as she closes the oven door and goes back to preparing the mustard sauce for the green beans. “I used to do that, too.” She’s hesitant. “Six a.m., I had the turkey in the oven and was cutting up the potatoes and carrots. I’d put cinnamon sticks in the coffee maker so that we’d have the smell of cinnamon coffee in the house all day. When I met Stan four years ago, he didn’t even have a coffee maker. Only drank that God awful instant stuff. I said to him, ‘you have gone on long enough without real coffee.’ And that was the first thing I got for him. I got him a coffee maker, but he still didn’t use it. Didn’t use it until I moved in and started making it every morning. Now if you ask him, he’ll tell you that he doesn’t know how he went his whole life without fresh coffee. It’s those little things— little things that make a difference, you know?” She smiles.

Around noon, Sylvia puts on a fresh pot of coffee. Before she starts it, she goes to her spice
cabinet and rummages around for a moment.

“Dang it. I don’t have anymore cinnamon sticks,” she grumbles. “Oh well.”

She turns on the coffee maker, and when it’s done, she takes some to Stan, who takes the dainty white cup in his knotty work-hands. I pour myself a cup, and when Sylvia comes back, she stops in front of the coffee maker and stares at it for a moment. She blinks a couple times, thinking. Remembering, maybe. Finally, she takes the coffee pot and pours the coffee into the sink. A curtain of steam curls up and fogs the window over the sink. “Lily.” She turns to look at me. Her face is uncertain. “We need cinnamon sticks. Will you run down to the store and get some?”

“Sure,” I say, setting down my coffee cup. I grab the car keys and prepare to head out.


Arthur turns his face toward Sylvia without taking his eyes off the TV. “Yep,” he says.

“Will you please go with Lily to the grocery store? We need cinnamon sticks.”

Arthur looks at me and then back at Sylvia. “Lily knows where the grocery store is. She doesn’t need me to go with her.”

“Do you want her to get picked up by some ruffian?”

“Ruffian?”

Sylvia marches into the living room and turns off the TV. Stan and Arthur both let out open-mouthed moans of protest.

“You know what kind of scumbags lurk around here!”

Arthur sighs as he stands up. “All right, all right, I’m going.”

* * *

The grocery store is a flat rectangle with a faded blue tile roof and a water-stained front. The asphalt of the parking lot is crumbling in many parts and most of the lines of the parking spaces have been rubbed away. Nonetheless, the store is buzzing with people rushing around to pick up the Thanksgiving extras they’ve forgotten.

“What do we need to get again?” asks Arthur as we walk inside.

“Cinnamon sticks.”

“For what?”

“The coffee.”
Arthur doesn’t say anything, but he sighs impatiently as he follows me to the spice aisle, where I grab a container of cinnamon sticks.

“Were the cinnamon sticks something we needed?” He’s chosen his words carefully, but I don’t respond.

After we pay, we go back out to the car.

“Hey, what do you know about the family Sylvia had before she met your dad?” I ask as we get in and Arthur starts up the car.

“She was married, I think. Had three grown kids, or something like that.”

“How’d she meet Stan?”

“She worked for the hospital and made house visits. They hit it off, I guess. Kind of weird. Especially since he’s so—different from what he used to be.”

He’s quiet as he drives the car out of the parking lot.

“It seems weird that she’d have her whole life all set up with a family and a house and everything, and she’d just give it all up. She’d change her whole life around to go live in a trailer park.”

“People give up their lives for love.” He shrugs. “Sometimes they give up their lives for something different.”

When we get back to the trailer, we walk back into the warm smell of food. The warmth of the turkey, the tangy sweet of the cranberry sauce, and the spice of the sweet potatoes. But underneath it all is the smell of Stan’s leg.

“Get everything taken care of and done with? That cinnamon nonsense?” says Stan with a big grin as he leans forward on the sofa.

The coffee pot is still empty, rinsed and sitting in the cold coffeemaker. I give Sylvia the cinnamon sticks and she tucks two into the coffee filter and puts on a fresh pot.

We all sit down to dinner at three. A fog has closed in and the windows look like framed photographs of gray. It started shortly after Arthur and I got home, and by three o’clock, the whole outside appears to be swallowed up in the gauzy mist. We can’t see any of the other trailers. We can’t even see across the street.

We hold hands and Stan, sitting five inches lower than everyone else, says grace.

“Lord, thank you for this wonderful food and for all the blessings you’ve bestowed on us. Thank
you for giving us a warm home and each other. Amen,” he says, peeking around with a smile.

We eat in silence. Outside, it looks like the fog has swallowed up the rest of the world, and we’re the last human beings on the planet.

***

After dinner and cleanup, we spend the rest of the evening watching movies. At nine, Sylvia pulls out the fold-out sofa for Arthur and me to sleep on. When she bends over, her rear strains against the dress, outlining soft, wide hips. I picture Stan seeing her for the first time. He traveled the world, but always found himself lingering in Spain and Italy. Maybe it was the richness of their blood that always held him there, but he could always expect a torrent of conflicting passions to arise within him from either of the two countries. He fell into a bittersweet, day-long love at the sight of the Italian women with their thick hair and long necks, and shameful joy at the blood and fury of the Spanish bullfights. Outside a Spanish restaurant, he saw a young waitress wiping her hands on her apron before adjusting her ponytail, and her newness made him wonder about the family that he’d left behind.

He made up titles for himself. Stan, the Duke. Count Stan. He could drop the titles as easily as he’d taken them. None of it made any difference. It was all just make-believe. He played while it amused him, seduced women who lived for the opportunity, and fell asleep each night as someone new.

And then one evening, while dining on the veranda of his hotel, he saw her—Sylvia, the name sounding like a twinkling forest—bathing on the roof of a crumbling apartment building. The red-orange glow of twilight on her pale nakedness woke him from his make-believe, and he knew that she was the beginning of his end.

“That damn bar will dig into your back, but it’s better than the floor,” says Sylvia, clapping the dust from her hands.

“Come on, Sylv,” Stan calls down the hall as he wheels himself into the bedroom.

Sylvia rolls her eyes before turning and following him.

After getting into our pajamas, I get into bed and Arthur switches off the light. The room is sealed up in darkness. The fog outside is so thick that we can’t even see the streetlights out the
window. Arthur makes it back to the bed, and I feel him settle beside me. We both lay still, and I strain hard to see in the dark. It’s raining now, and I can hear the low thrumming, soft, steady, constant. The thrumming grows louder in my ears until I can’t hear anything else. Arthur rolls over, but I don’t hear him. I hear only the rhythmic drumming of the rain. Soon I don’t hear anything. The noise and the total darkness have made me deaf and blind. But I feel Arthur’s hand come to a rest over my heart.
— Justin Blizzard
— John Pinano
“I’m not singing to an imaginary girl/I’m talking to you, my self” —Jim Morrison

Harry and I used to listen to music together in the evenings while my mother went to night school. It was 1975. He was in the Navy and we were stationed in the “Mohavee Dessert,” as I wrote in a letter to my grandmother. Harry is my step-father, but I really had no impression of my real father at the time, so when he came into our lives, it became my first memory of being loved by a man. And he really did love me. He taught me to wash dishes one evening after dinner. We had our hands in the soapy water; I was on a chair so I could reach. My hand left an impression in the bubbles with a gentle touch. “Can I call you daddy?” I asked. He said he would like that. It was around this time he introduced me to music. I would kiss my mom good-bye, and pull her wooden rocking chair in front of my father’s stereo system. The entertainment center was a looming wooden structure covering an entire wall. “The Monster” was painted black and home to a reel to reel, huge speakers, a turn table, all kinds of sound equipment I can’t name and rows and rows of albums in colorful sleeves. Other shelves displayed wooden peace fingers, incense holders, crystal brandy snifters and nautical memorabilia. So, the ritual would begin. After I took a bath, my father dried my long hair, carefully combing out all the knots. He turned the lights down, and with me in my mother’s rocking chair, and him in an old, wooden desk chair we found on a trek through the dried and cracked desert, my father got up and gently laid the needle to vinyl. We didn’t say anything. We just sat in the dusky room, listening to music and enjoying the company. This is the moment I fell in love with the melancholy of Pink Floyd, the wail of Jimi’s guitar, my father and his songs.

* * *

I RUSHED TOWARD THE BUILDING where my history of rock and roll class was being held. The clock in my car informed me I was running late. I had taken this teacher for film and lit and I knew he despised tardiness. He wrote my letter of recommendation to a four-year and I didn’t want
to disappoint him. Having no idea where my class was, I turned down the first corridor I saw. There was a labyrinth of hallways stemming off in many directions, but there at the end of the darkness, I saw a figure. It was a man, but his features were blurred. The fading sun cast light behind his body, giving him a hazy glow. I walked toward the man.

“Hi, Anna.” I squinted to see better, but recognized the voice.

“Hi, Mr. Z.” I held out my hand and he leaned in and gave me a hug. I closed my eyes. His warmth was tangible, something I could sink my fingers into, wrap up and take home with me.

“You look different.”

“I do?”

“It’s your hair, I guess,” he smiled, “welcome to my class.” He held out his arms in a gesture that ushered me past him and into the darkened classroom. As I brushed past, I heard “L.A. Woman” emanate from the speakers as loud as Morrison himself would have performed. I felt the sound waves resonate in my chest. The thick sweetness of incense filled my mind and the flicker of a candle’s flame cast dancing shadows on the walls. I chose my chair amongst the dark figures already in the room and became mesmerized with the light show projection. Swirling colors danced and blended, driving into an eternity that seemed to exist beyond the screen. If driving too fast down a deserted highway at night had a sound, “L.A Woman” was it.

The darkness swaddled me like a blanket. I imagined my classmates had disappeared; I wanted to sit with this man all night, listening to music as tendrils of patchouli-laced smoke escaped the white ashed tip of the incense stick.

My ex-boyfriend had expressed a desire to take this class a couple weeks before. I told him the course was probably full, but there stood Chris the following day in the parking lot, waiting as he said he would. I walked over to him and led the way to class.

“Hey,” I asked in a sarcastic tone, “how does a girl introduce her ex-boyfriend?” I laughed. Chris grabbed my arm to slow me. His smile tried to hide his disease. I knew the look fairly well. It felt dangerous. I looked away.

“Why won’t you introduce me as your boyfriend?” His question was more accusation than query. He clenched my arm a little too hard…

A teacher writes his lesson on the
Calliope

blackboard as students file in for class. He looks alarmed as the sound of a man yelling comes from outside. He walks to the door to check on the commotion. He slams the classroom door open and walks with purpose over to the angry man. “Get your hands off her,” the Teacher insists. Angry Man looks toward the ground and lets the Girl’s arm go; he’s no match for the authority of an older man—The Warrior, The Law, The Father. The Teacher puts his hand on the Girl’s back and leads her to the safety of his classroom, away from the dangerous grasp of Angry Man. He asks the Girl if she will be ok as he slips his reassuring arms around her shoulders. The Teacher looks back to make sure she is safe from her aggressor. Angry Man slowly walks away with his hands in his pockets, head down in shame as the scene begins to fade…

“I did my make-up for him. I wore denim and black boots. I let my hair down in a hippie-chick mess. I versed myself in the language he loved, something from the era of Haight or the Summer of Love. I wanted him to want me. I wanted to know him, as if knowing him would introduce me to myself. It felt like I was being seen for the very first time. I didn’t have outlines before he gazed at me; I was a ghost. An imaginary girl.

Mr. Z wore a t-shirt with a famous album cover on it to class one evening. The shirt caressed his enduring arms. Red print inviting Sticky Fingers straddled his chest. As he walked by, I noticed a silk screened sugar tongue lick the small of his back. I imagined fluttering kisses where those crimson lips left off. My gaze was lost in a sea of black cotton, until a glimmer from his gold band chastised my playful eye. I looked away. The girl sitting next to me gave me an impatient look.

“What?”

“Nothing,” she replied in disgust. She shifted in her seat away from me, smoothed her skirt over her knees and put her neatly typed essay in front of her, readying it for collection. Her name was typed in a fancy Victorian font.
For a whole year after class, I didn’t hear a word from Mr. Z. I wrote him a few emails, always addressing some aspect of his role as my teacher: Could he write me a letter for grad school? Did he have room in his mythology and literature class? I gave him updates on my progress in school. I reread the scarlet notes he scrawled in the margins of my papers: you have a brilliant mind, you comment on the religious element quite eloquently, you are a true heroine who will undoubtedly succeed.

I dreamt I had climbed to the top of an immense glacier and peered over the precipice. Before me was an icy wilderness sprawled to the farthest edges of my dreamscape. I called out for Mr. Z. He didn’t answer.

I finally moved on, stopped the silly emails and forced myself to focus on my studies. Some of my girl friends talked me into online dating. They took pictures that didn’t look a thing like me. Like a geisha under a mask of make-up and with my hair full of super hold Aqua Net, Haley held the camera and barked orders at me: “Stick out your chin…farther! It makes your face look thinner.” “Hold in your stomach, stick out your chest.” “Straddle that chair.” I even held a wine glass to make it seem as if I were the life of some fictitious party.

My efforts landed me the email address of a semi-handsome guitar player. I was always too self conscious to meet in person, so we emailed for a couple months. He quoted sensual lyrics to me. He was educated, played in a band, could have used some facial hair…a goatee maybe, but over all, he was a catch. Or so I thought. We lost interest in each other. All we had were a few contrived pictures, some tired, spell-checked lines and the artificial glow of a computer screen.

Commencement finally arrived. My last interaction with Mr. Z had been a hug and a promise to invite him to my graduation. I felt apprehensive after not hearing from him in so long, but I really wanted him there, so I sent him an invitation via a friend who had his class.

As I walked from the stage with my diploma later that week, I heard his voice. “Anna!” I looked over. He stood with his daughter, waving at me. There was the object of my affection. And he was here for me. As I walked out in the procession with my class, he handed me a balloon and a card. We hugged. The memory of his warmth mixed with a
rousing scent that wasn’t sprayed or lathered on. The card was touching, tied up nicely with a quote from one of our favorite films: “The world is a better place with you in it.”

The summer flew by quickly and Mr. Z and I kept in touch on occasion. I tried to forget about the year we never spoke.

One evening, I opened an email from Mr. Z and read a returned message: BLOCKED ADDRESS. Had he blocked my address? Did I overstep our boundaries? Did his wife ask him to end his contact with me? My eyes started to tear. He really did choose to ignore me in the past. In that moment, the sins of men became Mr. Z’s burden: the time John snapped my bra in front of the class. The time my period stained my white shorts and all the boys laughed. Cruz dumped me after we kissed with our mouths open. Chris slept with that chick from his economics class, the one with a Tinkerbell tattoo on her back. My step-father’s drill sergeant cadence demanded perfection…my real father never knew me…I heard he had two sons after the war…he didn’t need me…why would he need me? He didn’t even look at me on his way out the door. He grabbed his Army-issue duffle bag and never came back.

I hit send and for a brief moment felt vindicated. I laid my grief at Mr. Z’s feet and demanded an explanation. My message raced toward the man who had abandoned me like the rest. I didn’t eat that day, I just cried. I finally saw a return email. I reluctantly opened it.

Anna,

I just got home and read your emails. Are you ok? Past students of mine are always very special and nothing pleases me more than to have them say hi and remember me from a class they took. You have always been more special than the others because of our hallowed relationship as teacher/student, friend/friend and one human being to another in this crazy world of ours. Please accept my deepest apology if anything I’ve said or done caused you pain. I sympathize with your
feelings. Those of us who are astute enough to enter the field of English and study and read and write about some of the most bizarre, innermost regions of the mind, are a bit in tune with the wonders of life itself, and, as a result, are much more sensitive, sometimes to our own detriment. Be assured you are very much loved and respected. There is nothing to forgive you for. Nothing has changed for me. It was good to read such emotion. There were hints of Mary Shelley there. At first I thought you were writing a story and wanted me to see how it sounded. You should capitalize on that!

Take care, Mr. Z.

I found out he was going to a Stones concert in the city in a couple weeks, and we both had tickets, so we wished each other a good time and hoped to cross paths.

After the concert, my friend and I ran to catch the transit train. The next tram stopped and Michelle jumped on when the doors swung open. Bodies covered in black tees and the dank of pot smoke swarmed in front of me and the doors slammed shut, leaving me on the platform alone. I looked at my friend through the window and shrugged my shoulders, resigning to meet her in the parking lot. Staring into the well-lit vehicle, I watched people rush to be seated. A colorful, tie-dyed shirt caught my eye. The man wore pajama bottoms patterned with scarlet, Kali-inspired lips. I looked up and realized I knew the man. It was Mr. Z. I needed to talk to him. I wanted to sit with him. What was his favorite song? I wanted the night to be ours. I banged on the doors. As the train started pulling away, his wife came over and stood next to him. She had an ample smile and golden brown eyes; her long, dark hair spilled over her shoulders. He put his arm around her. She was beautiful. As they took their seats, I watched the train move away from me slowly, and into the night. I glanced up toward the skyline. The city lights seemed brighter, magnified, until they finally blurred into a
brilliant mess.

I turned as a train moving in the other direction pulled up to the platform. I wiped my eyes and hugged myself as the sea breeze chilled my body. The jeans and black sweater I squeezed into earlier felt oppressive and I couldn’t wait to put on my flannel pajamas. I put my purse down and swung my leather jacket on for warmth. My hair was a frizzy mess after contending with the moist evening air. I got on the train and found a place to stand among the crowd. Finally seeing an empty seat, I sat down, leaned my cheek against the window and watched the scenery swim by. A man’s voice pulled me from my reverie.

“Is this seat taken?”

“Uh, no, actually. Have a seat.”

“My name is Sean.” He was a young man with brown eyes, dark wavy hair and a perfectly trimmed goatee.

“How did you like the show?” he asked.

“I loved it.”

“Hey, I was going to listen to some music on the way.” Sean pulled out a black IPOD, pressed a few buttons and handed me one of the ear buds. I put the tiny speaker to my ear and gazed, very briefly, into his eyes.

“One of my favorites.” I smiled. Sean nodded. He continued to gaze at me even after I looked away. We leaned our heads back and listened to the music. The stars were out. The moon was up. The train rolled into the night.

I finally found Michelle waiting by the car. Once on the road, I laid my head against the window and slept. When I opened my eyes again, I stared at my filmy reflection in the window until my focus retrained on a car driving by. It was Mr. Z’s maroon sedan. He stayed on I-5 as we merged right onto the 120 bypass. I felt around in my jacket pocket and was relieved I hadn’t lost it. I pulled the ticket stub out and turned it over in my hand. I read the phone number and name scrawled in red ink: Sean. I ran my fingers over the writing and put it back into my pocket.

“Hey, Michelle?”

“Mm hmm?”

“Let’s put some music on.” Still basking in a post-concert afterglow, we sang out loud and off key. We were almost home.
Devotion, Discord, Deceit

— John Pratt
Wish on a Sunset

— Audrey Puah

Devotion, Discord, Deceit
trace the stars with your fingertips
along the ceiling, repeat
these makeshift words.
like those plastic stars
that glow in the night
and fade with the morning

sing me a song
to keep me asleep
i won’t wake
i won’t wake

there will be no symphony to chase this goodbye
put away your violins
stop what you’re selling
we won’t buy that here.
we’ll be fine
we’ll be fine

sing me a song
to keep me asleep
sing me those words
that were never for me

no, don’t dim the lights
there is no cue
we aren’t performing
there is no stage
no actors here
forget the masquerade
we aren’t pretending

there will be no symphony
to carry us into goodbye
so put away your strings
there will be no sad song
we won’t take that here

for once, just this once
we won’t give the people
what they want.
they can’t pay their way
to happiness anymore.
we won’t be their puppets.
we’ll give them true feeling
no more lies, no more stories
it won’t be pretty,
but at least, for once,
it’s the truth.

you walk one way
i’ll walk the other
we’ll pray for miles between us

this is what you want?
no, this is what we get
this is what we deserve

you go that way
i’ll walk here
we’ll hope for miles, cities,
countries between us.
and maybe one day

a world.
One, two, three, four...

My father and mother sat side by side on the living room couch, looking at my high school yearbook, which I had received the day before. My parents were scanning the student photos with extreme concentration. It was 7:30, so my grandparents were watching Wheel of Fortune on the television.

The game required a certain level of familiarity with the English language, since adeptness at spelling and an adequate vocabulary were favorable traits to possess and surely necessary to win. My grandparents, however, wouldn’t even have known the show was in English if not for the fact that it was an American show, let alone be able to play along in the setting of our suburban home.

Sometimes, when my grandfather was in complete domination of the television remote, my sister or I would stumble across him watching Spanish news or a novella. He didn’t understand a show in English. He didn’t understand a show in Spanish. What did it matter what language the show was in if he wasn’t going to understand it anyway? So there was no need to inform him about the languages of the programs he watched. It could have been in Sanskrit or Polish or even Tongues and my grandfather wouldn’t have known the difference.

It seemed like my grandparents would never learn English. It wasn’t that they didn’t have the resources. My parents purchased instructional video tapes to help them learn the language, but we never determined if the tapes worked or not since my grandparents only watched them once. After that, I’m not sure what happened to them. They weren’t of the best quality, so, in the end, it wasn’t a grave loss.

...twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six...

My parents were flipping through the pages rather quickly, quietly mumbling in Vietnamese and pointing out photos to each other. My grandparents were still watching their favorite show intently. The goal was for
both of them to earn U.S. citizenship and part of that goal required a rudimentary understanding of the English language. On their first attempt at the citizenship test, they both failed the basic English component. They weren’t even allowed to demonstrate their keen ability to regurgitate information they had crammed their skulls with from the past four months. That there were the House of Representatives and the Senate comprising the Legislative Branch or that the current president was Bill Clinton or that there were currently fifty states and thus fifty stars on the American flag.

When asked what color the table was, both my grandparents looked at each other completely dumbstruck. “Brown” was not in their lexicon. Months were spent repeating phrases such as “Constitutional Amendment,” “Electoral College,” and “Supreme Court” and months fell to waste because my grandparents underestimated the tremendous weight and power of knowing the word “Brown.”

...fifty-nine, sixty, sixty-one, sixty-two...

To be fair, it was unreasonable to expect my grandparents to learn English at their old age, since both were in their early seventies. Their brains simply weren’t as flexible as a teenager’s. I sat there in front of the television with my French book, conjugating irregular verbs in the subjunctive mood as easily and as naturally as breathing.

    je puisse, tu puisse, il puisse...

I was halfway through my French exercises when my grandmother spoke to me in Vietnamese; it was the only language she knew. I nodded, unsure of what she said. I didn’t know Vietnamese. I was familiar with words here and there and recognized the language when it was spoken, but comprehension was limited if almost nonexistent. It seemed personal but exceptionally foreign at the same time. I remembered thinking to myself that I could probably understand her if she spoke to me in French. Sometimes, I was able to think in French naturally, like I thought in English. I couldn’t remember a time when I ever thought in Vietnamese. I always thought in English and then worked through the deliberate process of translating what I wanted to say into the butchered Vietnamese that I choked out of my mouth.

    That’s when I realized that I knew more French than Vietnamese.

Oddly, Vietnamese was my first language.
Even though I was born in the U.S., my parents made it a point for me to know our culture’s language. So I was a proficient speaker for the first few years of my life. Once I started school, my parents spoke to me in English at home since that’s what I would come home speaking.

Years later, we all realized that trying to speak Vietnamese to me was an epic labor none of us wanted to perform. Vietnamese was no longer my language; it was my parents’. The only time that I would hear my parents speak Vietnamese to me was when I was in serious criminal trouble, by their definition. Normal negligible trouble resulted in my parents lecturing me in English but I knew I was in for it when they yelled at me in their native tongue. Regardless of whether or not I knew Vietnamese, I knew by their tone that they were oceans away from pleased.

...ninety-three, ninety-four, ninety-five, ninety-six...

It was hard to communicate with my grandparents because they could only speak Vietnamese and the only languages at my disposal were English and limited French.

I never had the opportunity to become close with my grandparents. I never was able to find out their likes, how they grew up, or their thoughts from their own lips. I needed a translator. But it also went the other way. They never were able to find out my interests or anything else for that matter without the aid of my parents or other relatives. Private conversations didn’t exist.

It was a reflex by that point to nod when they spoke to me, like when the doctor strikes a knee cap with a small hammer or when you try to catch something that was suddenly knocked off a table. They asked me something in Vietnamese and I nodded.

So I finished another French exercise and looked around the room. My grandparents were still watching Wheel of Fortune on the television. My parents were still rifling through my yearbook, but now I noticed that they were counting.

...one hundred and eleven, one hundred and twelve, one hundred and thirteen, one hundred and fourteen...

I asked them what they were counting. The response was Vietnamese students. That didn’t surprise me. They always asked if I had Vietnamese friends, how many Vietnamese
students were in my class, and how many Vietnamese students there were at school.

I would reply something to the effect that I didn’t spend my time sitting on the ground with an adding machine accounting for every Vietnamese student that I saw. It didn’t matter to me if I had Vietnamese classmates or not.

But it mattered to them.

I asked them why it was important that I could quantify the Vietnamese population at school. But they didn’t reply. They just continued to point, count, and turn pages.

...one hundred and thirty-two, one hundred and thirty-three, one hundred and thirty-four, one hundred and thirty-five...

...nous sachons, vous sachez, elles sachent

I had finished conjugating verbs when I closed my book to watch some television. The game show was almost over. The contestants were a white woman, a white man, and an Asian woman. My grandfather turned to me and mumbled that he hoped the Asian woman would win.

At least, that’s what I deciphered.

My parents nodded in agreement as they continued to scour my yearbook.

...one hundred and sixty-five, one hundred and sixty-six, one hundred and sixty-seven, one hundred and sixty-eight...

I think it bothered them that my close circle of friends didn’t contain anyone of Vietnamese heritage like myself. I did have Vietnamese friends, but none that I would deem close. My parents did find solace in the fact that my friends were predominantly of Asian decent, which I suppose was good enough for them.

...one hundred and ninety-one, one hundred and ninety-two, one hundred and ninety-three, and one hundred and ninety-four.

There were one hundred and ninety-four Vietnamese students at my school, according to the yearbook anyway. My parents then asked me how many Asians there were at my school.

I mentioned something indifferently about not knowing the precise number off the top of my head. If I didn’t know the Vietnamese population, how would I know the entire Asian population? I figured that other Asian parents did the same. They asked their children how many there were at school as a way to earn peace of mind. It was a comfort to know that they were
not alone in a continent far away, an ocean away, from the home they knew. It was the same way my parents and grandparents were rooting for the Asian woman on Wheel of Fortune, despite the fact that she wasn’t Vietnamese.

But she was Asian, and that was good enough.

I decided not to think about it anymore and returned to my bedroom with my French book and homework.

The show had ended but I didn’t see who won.
—Geneva Smith

Devotion, Discord, Deceit
i am afraid of the committed life.
my friend the Poet was right:
“you’re not the kind to settle down with a wife.”
Mine is the open road and a dark sky
illuminated by heaven’s pearls and neon lights.
the night is young and so am i.

The Will of the Lord (even while sleeping)

i sing myself to sleep.
i dance with Saints and drink with Adam.
the Jordan is not too deep,
His blessings overflow, foam, and increase.

our desert spills into the Sea.
i cross the channel to find exotic love.
Sailors so green with envy—
they drop their anchors, I wander freely.

an old man asks why
The damn water swallowed his wife.
i cannot hope to reply;
i drink and love—i pacify.
no time to display concern;  
my heart is fire, my own body yearns

all in my soft head  
mermaids crawl out saltwater fields  
reserved for the dead.  
it is as our good Father said.

Myth is a Tool of the State

on the river his ship sails east.  
Farewell, dear; perhaps our paths will cross again,  
when all the fighting is over our love can begin  
to ferment and heal crimson wounds.

i fear there is danger in dreaming that our war will abate soon.  
but isn’t it comforting to think that you will hold me while the night dies  
and august colors flood our retinas and melt the morning sky—  
would you not agree that such a design is pulchritude?  
these fairy tales do wonders to alter my baleful mood.
— Jessica Johnson
Frame—
the lovers
standing
holding
fingers laced
hip to hip
burning with desire

Angle—
the camera
lenses
lights
and endure
the roguishly baleful
blaze within

Edit—
the pain in
her heart
mind
and body
which hide behind
her mendacious eyes

Cut—
vacuous shots
this
that
this again
the flow doesn’t
matter if lies burrow within
Memories

—Sean Wong
The peach trees used to sway
to the voice that whispered in an ancient language.
They would quietly listen to the strange twists
and turns
trying to decipher
what was being said.
But the sway of the peach trees
was too stiff, too unyielding.
They never took the time to learn every twist or turn,
nor ventured into the dark corners
from where the voice whispered.

My mother’s voice,
a soft sigh of a foreign tongue
knocked on my door begging to be let in.
But I was like a peach tree
swaying with the music of my mother’s language
without trying to decipher what was being said.
I never took the time to learn
every twist or turn
of my mother’s ancient language.

All I know has come from the sway
of a growing peach tree
that gave my mother shade
and is now protecting me
from the dark corners
where the voices of my sisters,
my mother and those before me
have cried their lives away
beneath the sway of the peach trees.

It accompanies me,
the sway of this peach tree,
as I now try to decipher
to mimic the whisper.
But my voice is coarse
too loud, too stiff,
like a tiny puddle trying to take the place of a river.

My children and those who follow
will never hear the strange whisper,
the soft sigh of my mother’s foreign tongue,
as they sit under the sway of the peach trees.
On September 11, 2001, as terrorist planes crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City, few Americans were likely thinking of the rebuilding process that would inevitably ensue. However, since the site is so deeply invested with both commercial and public interests, the project to redesign the World Trade Center has become one of the most unique and challenging revitalization projects in history. Today, over four years since the attack on the Twin Towers, reconstruction has finally commenced, as crews at ground zero are taking the first steps toward building the new Freedom Tower which will replace the World Trade Center. Although the redesign commission for this construction project was awarded to Daniel Libeskind in 2003, the conflict over what this place should represent and who should define those parameters is anything but over as various political, architectural, and cultural forces continue to battle over whether commercial or public space should be the centerpiece of the new World Trade Center design.

The attack on the World Trade Center, which marks the first attack by a foreign adversary on the American mainland since the War of 1812, has had a significant psychological and emotional impact on Americans across the country.¹ This deep emotional investment by the American public in such a historically significant tragedy can account for the extensive public response to the redesign commission. However, while the political and commercial forces charged with rebuilding the site have outwardly appeared to be heavily concerned with this outpouring of public sentiment, in reality the redesign process has been anything but public. This paper seeks to show that rather than learning from the past, these private institutions heading the revitalization project seem to be repeating the same mistakes made by the designers of the original World Trade Center in their focus on commercial interests and the ensuing rejection of public sentiment. While the architectural redesign project has the potential to create a new American icon

for freedom and independence, as well as position New York City to become the first true twenty-first century city, this decision to disregard the input of the American public has left the meaning of the new Freedom Tower as a response to the terrorist attacks both ambiguous and uncertain.

First, it is beneficial to ascertain exactly what the public has demanded of the parties responsible for the redesign process. The Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York, a group which has brought together multiple civic groups such as the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the Municipal Art Society, has been a strong force in voicing public opinion on the redesign project. In their vision statement, the Civic Alliance calls for the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan as “a regional and global center of culture, and a place with a remarkable number of high quality public parks and spaces.”2 Overwhelmingly, this and other civic groups have called for a public space with a diversity of uses as the focus of the redesign project, whether those uses be in the form of a public memorial, public parks, or other configurations of cultural and residential space.

This desire for a diversity of uses that deemphasizes commercial space mirrors the demands of the public during the construction of the original World Trade Center in the 1960s. Jane Jacobs, one of the most influential writers on urban planning, wrote in 1961 of the need in cities for “a most intricate and close-grained diversity of uses that give each other constant mutual support, both economically and socially.”3 Jacobs’ call for city planners to possess a greater concern for integrating new buildings into cities with respect for the often historic quality of these neighborhoods has been taken up by the civic groups involved in the rebuilding process today, as the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York has criticized the “lack of real planning integration between the site and its surrounding neighborhood.”4 During the time of Jacobs’ writing, the public was highly dissatisfied with the World Trade Center project and its exclusive focus on commercial office-space – ten million square feet of it, to be exact. The Downtown West Businessmen’s Association (DWBA), which represented many of the small retail

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merchants in the area, was one of the most vocal civic groups to speak out against the World Trade Center, and their organization of public protests as well as levying court cases against the parties responsible for the project design is indicative of the dissatisfaction of the general public with the original World Trade Center plan.\(^5\) However, despite this call from civic groups in both the 1960s and today for an emphasis on public over commercial space at the World Trade Center site, the groups behind this development project have been less than receptive to integrating public concern into their final plans for the site.

While the American public was dissatisfied with the design and function of the World Trade Center upon its completion in 1973 – one architectural critic describing it as “boring, so utterly banal as to be unworthy of the headquarters of a bank in Omaha”\(^6\) — the public begrudgingly came to accept the fact that the twin towers had evolved into an iconic part of the New York City skyline. The same critic who initially regarded the towers as “boring” eventually acknowledged that “by now the twin towers are icons…. We have all come to some sort of accommodation with [them].”\(^7\) This view was reflected in pop culture, which embraced and encouraged their iconic value through such representations as the trademark image of the 1976 remake of King Kong which featured King Kong standing on top of the two towers, rather than on the Empire State Building as in the original film (Fig. 1). However much the public had fought against the design and the idea itself for a World Trade Center, the twin towers ultimately became an integral piece of the Manhattan skyline and a symbol of American power and wealth. As a building complex whose function was devoted to furthering the United States’ involvement in world trade and which housed ten million square feet of office-space, the twin towers came to be an enormous symbol of American capitalism.

Because the World Trade Center site had achieved such an immense investment of cultural value for the American public by the year 2001, value which was only heightened in terms of memorial and loss after the terrorist attacks of September 11\(^{th}\), the parties responsible

\(^7\) Ibid, 3.
for reconstructing the site have publicly stated their aim of including the American public in the planning and rebuilding process. However, these political parties, while outwardly appearing to be concerned with public sentiment and concern, have ultimately disregarded the public in favor of their private, commercial constituents. The main governmental agency responsible for building the original World Trade Center was a group called the Port Authority, which still controls the land of the site. However, less than a month before the terrorist attacks, the Twin Towers were leased to a private developer named Larry Silverstein, who still pays ten million dollars a month to the Port Authority under the terms of his lease.\(^8\) The Port Authority and its leaseholder Larry Silverstein represent the powerful commercial interests whose ties to political authorities have complicated the rebuilding process.

Because of his financial investment in the World Trade Center site, Larry Silverstein has been adamant in demanding that the ten million square feet of office space lost in the collapse of the towers be replaced in the new site plan. However, since the construction of the World Trade Center in the late 1960s, Lower Manhattan has evolved from a strictly financial district to a more mixed-use neighborhood, with upwards of 15,000 people taking up residence there at the time of the attacks in 2001.\(^9\) Despite this transformation, New York Governor Pataki, in a private decision made shortly after the September 11\(^{th}\) attacks, agreed to let Silverstein and the Port Authority use the World Trade Center site as a platform for rebuilding the lost office space.\(^10\) Because of the Port Authority’s significant monetary tie to their leaseholder Silverstein, it can be conjectured that Governor Pataki ignored the real needs of Lower Manhattan in terms of urban planning in favor of the decision that would give his commercial constituents the best financial benefit – allowing Silverstein to rebuild his lost office space.

This focus on unnecessary office space in the revitalization process is a mistake that the Port Authority has made once before – during the construction of the original World Trade Center in the 1960s. While today’s Lower Manhattan has

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\(^9\) Ibid, 54.

developed into a neighborhood with a diversity of uses and inhabitants, fifty years ago it was known strictly as the financial center of New York. Because of the concentration of exclusively commercial businesses rather than housing or cultural amenities during this time, Lower Manhattan began to fail economically as businesses left for more diversified areas of New York City. As a shortsighted solution to the problems facing Lower Manhattan, the Port Authority and David Rockefeller, the wealthy businessman who helped push the idea of a World Trade Center into reality, seemed to believe that building more office space would turn around the neighborhood’s economy. Thus, the political constituencies behind the original World Trade Center construction, like those overseeing the reconstruction project today, yielded to the short-term financial incentive offered by commercial space rather than address the need and demand for public, cultural, and residential space in Lower Manhattan.

Although Governor Pataki could have chosen to buy out Silverstein and the Port Authority with the insurance proceeds from the destruction of the twin towers and end the convoluted relationship with these commercial interests, he decided instead to concede to the Port Authority, perhaps conjecturing that it would be the fastest track to rebuilding the World Trade Center site and please his political constituents. In an effort to appear concerned with public opinion, Pataki created yet another governmental agency to oversee the reconstruction process – the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) – less than two months after September 11th. Although the LMDC mission statement asserts that the group is “committed to a ... planning process in which the public has a central role,” there are no citizen representatives on the board, which is composed entirely of Republican members.

While in structure the LMDC is clearly disregarding the public, the design competition initiated by the group in the fall of 2002 was an attempt to appear open to public opinion. For this competition, the agency released a call to architects both in the United States and around the world to submit plans for a new design of the World Trade Center.

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12 Goldberger, “A New Beginning,” 54.
Center site.\textsuperscript{14} The design parameters, which were dictated by the Port Authority, outlined exactly what these agencies expected from the participants. While the parameters include a lengthy discussion of the memorial, cultural, residential, and transportation requirements of the design competition, there is one guideline listed which ultimately came to dominate all of the proposals submitted: the requirement of including 6.5 – 10.0 million square feet of office space.\textsuperscript{15} However much emphasis the program guidelines devote to the real demands of the public, namely, public space including memorial and cultural elements, the condition of including such an enormous amount of office space necessitates that this commercial space be the focus of the design proposals. Thus, despite the appearance of a democratic competition where participants are freely able to express the desires of the public in terms of design, the commercial parameters imposed by the Port Authority signify once again that the revitalization process has been anything but public.

Interestingly, this exclusion of public sentiment in terms of design mirrors the design process of the original World Trade Center. In August, 1962, the Port Authority selected Minoru Yamasaki as the architect for its project, despite concern from architectural critics and New York City residents alike.\textsuperscript{16} Not only were they skeptical of the particulars of his design, but also of the decision to build such massive skyscrapers altogether, evidenced by critics such as Ada Louise Huxtable, who wrote in a 1962 article in the \textit{New York Times}: “The Issue is whether Yamasaki is the best, or the worst, thing to hit the profession since the skyscraper.”\textsuperscript{17} Weary of the destruction of historic neighborhoods that colossal building projects such as this one had instigated – as in the demolition of the old Penn Station in 1963 to make way for the Madison Square Garden sports complex – citizens such as Huxtable objected to the gigantism of the World Trade Center skyscrapers during their original construction. Despite an outpouring of protest from everyday citizens and architectural critics alike, the Port Authority saw their extremely unpopular World Trade Center plan into completion with Yamasaki as their leading architect, choosing not to include the public whatsoever in their design selection.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 4.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 14.
\textsuperscript{16} Glanz and Lipton, 38.
Although the design process for the new site has excluded the public in a less overt way than the original World Trade Center venture, both projects have used design to focus on private, commercial interests rather than incorporate public concern.

As expected by the LMDC competition guidelines, the six proposals selected as finalists all centered on the idea of building skyscrapers to replace Silverstein’s lost office space. As one architectural critic noted in an analysis of these proposals, “[t]he public components of a memorial and various cultural buildings occupy a clear secondary position.” The two final proposals selected by the LMDC were submitted by Daniel Libeskind and Rafael Viñoly, and they differed most markedly in their attribution of prominence to either commercial or cultural space. While the Libeskind design had a 1,776-foot-tall spire housing principally office space, which would later come to be known as the Freedom Tower, as its centerpiece (Fig. 2), Viñoly and his team proposed a pair of latticework towers housing cultural facilities as its focus, relegating the commercial office space to less substantial buildings on the sidelines of the space (Fig. 3). While the joint committee of the LMDC and the Port Authority charged with making the final decision in the design competition made clear their backing of Viñoly and his emphasis on public over private space, Governor George Pataki had a different agenda. On February 25, 2003, one day after the site committee voted in favor of Viñoly’s design, Governor Pataki reversed the decision and chose Libeskind as the winning architect.

Not only did Pataki undermine the ‘democracy’ of the competition by overruling the site committee’s decision, but he also affirmed his devotion to the private, commercial interests invested in the site by selecting the design that gave the most substantial focus to commercial space – that of Daniel Libeskind.

Like the public reception of the World Trade Center in the 1960s, Libeskind’s winning proposal in 2003 promoted a negative public response for its creation of a commercial skyscraper as its focal point. Architectural critic Robert Campbell asked: “Do we really wish to choose, for our country’s new national symbol, a box of leasable office space?”

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19 Goldberger, _Up From Zero_, 166.

20 Robert Campbell, “Freedom Tower redux: sending all
Still others questioned the rationality of using height to reassert the site as an icon for America, as Libeskind’s 1,776-foot-tall Freedom Tower was and still is being billed as the tallest tower in the world. As one critic asked, “Why build the tallest? Why not build the safest tower in the world? The strongest tower? The most sustainable?”

Civic groups also expressed their dissatisfaction with Libeskind’s plan, as the Regional Plan Association, a partner group to the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York, published in a recent report their discontent that “an office space program of ten million feet continues to shape the World Trade Center master plan, despite lack of funding, unsupportive market conditions and a united civic community calling for a different approach.”

Even though Pataki dubbed the monumental skyscraper designed by Libeskind as the “Freedom Tower,” perhaps in yet another move to appeal to the sentimental concerns of a traumatized public, this signifier does not coincide with the signified. While perhaps in Pataki’s mind democracy and freedom are epitomized by the unchecked private ownership and economic growth reflected in the commercial space of the Freedom Tower, this is not the opinion of the majority of the population, as evidenced by the outpouring of negative responses to Libeskind’s plan and the Freedom Tower in particular.

Today, nearly three years after the selection of Daniel Libeskind’s master plan for the rebuilding program, construction on the Freedom Tower has finally begun. However, this is not the Freedom Tower that Libeskind envisioned in his original plan. Larry Silverstein, the leaseholder on the site, appointed his architect David Childs from the firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill to redesign the Freedom Tower. After all, Libeskind’s proposal was only a ‘guideline:’ the LMDC was free to redesign it however it saw fit. Thus, the design competition – the pinnacle of the revitalization process and the ploy which political powers have used to appear open to public input – has actually been the least democratic aspect of the entire process. Although the public has been deeply concerned with the future of the World Trade Center site,
the commercial and political forces behind the rebuilding process have excluded public sentiment along every step of this project. These political parties have gone through great pains to make it appear as though they are focused on the wants and needs of the American public; however, in a striking similarity to the construction of the original World Trade Center nearly fifty years ago, these groups have shown throughout the redesign process that their loyalty to commercial interests far outweighs any form of public sentiment or concern.

Figure 1
John Berkey for Paramount Pictures,
King Kong, 1976
Figure 2

Studio Libeskind
Plan for Freedom Tower, 2003

Figure 3

Rafael Viñoly and THINK team,
Plan for World Cultural Center, 2003
Bibliography for Mistakes Rebuilt


