

2015

An Ideal Role, Twenty Years Too Soon: A Young Actor's Journey Through the Role of Leonard in "Seminar"

Nicholas Ryan

Follow this and additional works at: <https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/etd>

Recommended Citation

Ryan, Nicholas, "An Ideal Role, Twenty Years Too Soon: A Young Actor's Journey Through the Role of Leonard in "Seminar"" (2015). *Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Problem Reports*. 6546.
<https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/etd/6546>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by the The Research Repository @ WVU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you must obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in WVU Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Problem Reports collection by an authorized administrator of The Research Repository @ WVU. For more information, please contact researchrepository@mail.wvu.edu.

An Ideal Role, Twenty Years Too Soon:
A Young Actor's Journey Through the Role of Leonard in *Seminar*

By Nicholas Ryan

Thesis submitted to the
College of Creative Arts
In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Theater with an Acting Emphasis

Committee Members:
Jessica Morgan Bishop (Chair), Associate Professor of Stage Movement
Steven Neuenschwander, Clinical Assistant Professor of Technical Direction
Bryce Britton, Assistant Professor of Musical Theater

School of Theater & Dance
Morgantown, WV 2015

Keywords: Theater, Performance, Acting

Abstract

An Ideal Role, Twenty Years Too Soon: A Young Actor's Journey Through the Role of Leonard in Seminar

Nicholas Ryan

Through our production of *Seminar*, unique challenges were uncovered for an actor performing the role of Leonard. My goal is to examine some of the most difficult and interesting challenges that arose from an unrealistic casting of a realistic play. Issues discussed will be the age gap between Leonard and the students, and what contextually needs to be researched from the script. This examination also addresses the balance of comedy versus drama in regards to Leonard's character relationships with the students, and Leonard's place as a stock character in contemporary theater.

Table of Contents

Title Page	i
Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction	1
Plot Summary	4
Text Analysis	6
Research	14
Process	23
Performance and Evaluation	28
Conclusion	31
Works Cited	33

Acknowledgments

I'd like to begin by thanking my family, Robert, Susan and Andy, in their continued love and support of me and my journey in becoming an artist. Without their inspiration, this entire journey would have never been possible. I would also like to thank my wonderful girlfriend, Kati Coleman, for her unwavering support of both myself and this play. I'm sure no one else was equipped to tell me to stop freaking out during casting because I was acting like an idiot. I am blessed every day to be able to share my life with such a wonderful person. Every day I am happier having you in my life.

I would like to thank my Professors for their invaluable experience and guidance during my time at West Virginia. To Jerry McGonigle, who brought me back to the basic foundations of acting, Laura Hitt, who strove to make my vocal instrument as powerful as my body had the potential to be, Jessica Morgan Bishop, who constantly fought to remind me that I do have legs, and can move beautifully, I cannot express enough gratitude. These have been three of the greatest years of my life. I could never replicate them, and I would never want to replace them.

To Lee Blair, who was both my first director at West Virginia University as well as my director for this show, I salute you for your dedication to the product of a production, for striving to find the balance between art and entertainment, and for never simply saying that something was 'good enough.' Your commitment to making this project the best it could be drove me forward to succeed.

Finally, but certainly not least, I want to thank the cast of *Seminar*. To Brianne Taylor, Kyle Walter, Bryan Staggers and Aneesa Neibauer, you are all tremendous talents, and any actor would be extremely lucky to work with one of you, let alone all of you. My success in this production is based in no small part in what we achieved together. I am indebted to you all for your time and talent. Thanks for making me look good, guys.

Introduction

For the longest time, I was a theater kid cop-out story. People would ask for my favorite playwright, and I would invariably reply with something mundane and common, first Arthur Miller, and then William Shakespeare. The kind of answers a music theater major gives when he's sitting in a serious crowd of theater practitioners, not wanting to look frivolous in front of his fellow artists. If anything, I can thank my experience with *Seminar* for giving me a legitimate answer to my favorite scribe.

Initially, the idea to produce *Seminar* came from my suggestion to the faculty during one of their play selection committee meetings. There is a lot of stress that goes into the play selection process, and I remember that with Professor McGonigle on sabbatical, there were a lot of titles being thrown around, none of which seemed to fit. I first encountered *Seminar* when I was in New York in the early summer of 2012. While researching productions to see on my first trip to New York, I was smitten by the star power involved in the show. The play had relatively famous names, actors who were well known and respected, intended to draw an audience unfamiliar with the newer names of the stage. The play, unfortunately, closed a few weeks before I arrived. I had to content myself with a copy of the script, very recently published, that I purchased from the Drama Book Shop. I immediately fell in love with the script.

I could claim that my initial infatuation with the script stemmed from a clean dramatic throughline, or tight story arcs, or the fact that all of the characters are well balanced. In actuality, my love for *Seminar* centers around its wizened man, the mysterious figure destined to guide the hero of the story to his metamorphosis, to use the terms laid out by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. In classic dramatic form, a man or woman undertaking a hero's journey encounters a mentor, the mode of experience that is there to guide them towards an ultimate decision to take up his

or her destiny, or to turn away from the burden. Leonard was instantly recognizable and familiar to me as this oracle, a singular character that was himself a real life analogue for any number of mentors and teachers I had met throughout my theater career. With a desire to see these characters brought to life, I suggested the play to our faculty, quietly and insistently. I knew that there was a strong script here, and one that a college audience could connect to due to the strong voice contained within the dialogue written by Theresa Rebeck.

In my opinion, Rebeck's greatest strength as a playwright and dramatist is her startling ability to speak the absolute truth through her characters, at any given time, with no reserve for feelings or sensibilities. This is what attracted me to the role of Leonard, not necessarily in his world view, or his lack of empathy for the students he abuses throughout the course of the play, but rather his stark ability to wield the truth as a scalpel, using it only to cut out what is absolutely necessary and leaving the rest of a person intact. One of the things that I discovered about that kind of truth-telling, both throughout the performance of this role and my own life, is that neither party emerges from the exchange unscathed. One might look at Leonard on the page and see a gleefully rampaging monster, tossing egos and work aside, diving into the heart of his target and nestling there like a cancerous ember, poisoning and burning out their soul. Everyone loves to hate a villain, and played with a Snidely Whiplash curl to his moustache, Leonard could be bent to that role. With a bit more digging, however, the brilliance of Rebeck's characterization comes to life, as you see a man who was wounded by the world, and has found his own particular way of keeping life from claiming any further victims.

Leonard strongly fits the archetype of Joseph Campbell's mystic, culling the weaker candidates from his herd, and accompanying the strongest of them on their literary hero's journey. This helps strengthen the theme that time is cyclical in nature. With this theme in mind, we see two different men on two different hero's journeys. While we watch Martin, the show's protagonist, take up the call of his destiny Leonard is at the same time completing the arc of his journey, succeeding completely in finding

a protege to mentor in the place of his own aborted career. In this way, Rebeck has created a compelling play through the creation of the modern day myth, using themes that we recognize from our every day lives couched in the concept of creation itself. Part of the satisfaction of the conclusion of the play comes from seeing not just the resolution of one step of one journey, but of two journeys in parallel.

Plot Summary of *Seminar*

Four aspiring writers have hired a notorious mentor for a ten week seminar in the art of writing. The play opens with the four students getting to know each other and their respective work. Douglas quickly solidifies himself as the pretentious intellectual of the group, talking about visits to Yaddo and Macdowell and his success in Tin House. Kate is the classically trained formal author, with her expensive education from a private Vermont college. Martin identifies as the classic underdog, scoffing at Martin's phony notions of art and success, craving intellectual fulfillment in writing. Izzy lets her actions speak for her rather than her words, rounding out the group as the sly social climber willing to do anything to obtain success.

They soon meet Leonard, who promptly destroys Kate's work of the last six years and leaves. Martin is left with Kate to pick up the pieces, and eventually reveals that he is penniless and needs a place to live. He moves in with Kate. We next see the group reading Izzy's story, which is suggestive and racy, leading Leonard to see Izzy in a new light. Leonard, Izzy and Douglas all go out, with Izzy and Leonard leaving together. Later that night, as Kate and Martin argue about Kate's future and Martin's unrequited love for Izzy, Douglas returns to inform them that Leonard has taken Izzy home and is sleeping with her. Martin wrestles with this revelation as he fights with Douglas, and Kate mocks them both from the sidelines.

The next seminar meeting is for Douglas' soon to be published work, which Leonard calls “capable, but whorish”. He questions Douglas' desire to write actual fiction, and counsels him towards Hollywood. Leonard then leaves for Somalia, mandating a two week break before the next meeting of the group. Douglas rushes out, with Kate close behind to comfort him. In the meantime, Izzy seduces Martin after he confesses his attraction to her, sparking an explosive romance that Kate has to endure in her own home. Leonard returns from his two week trip to receive an announcement from Kate; she is

quitting the group and letting her friend Luis purchase her remaining sessions. Kate submits a sample of Luis' writing to Leonard as proof of his talent, which Leonard eagerly devours. Shortly after Leonard leaves, however, Kate reveals that she had written the piece herself under a pen name, in an effort to trick Leonard into seeing her work with a fresh eye. The group debates the merits of this approach, with Douglas declaring it a great success. Douglas then further reveals that through his uncle, he found out that an accusation of plagiarism forced Leonard out of writing and into copy editing. Izzy leaves Martin with the rejoinder that he obviously has some work to do to prove himself to Leonard.

At the next meeting of the group, Martin finally submits some of his work to Leonard. Upon reading it, Leonard immediately asks for everything else Martin has written, declaring that Martin has real talent. This sends Martin into a tirade, in which he reveals that the group has discovered that he was accused of plagiarism. Leonard has a meltdown, and declares the seminar concluded.

The final scene of the play takes place in Leonard's apartment. Martin enters, demanding a partial refund of his tuition for the seminar, only to find Kate in Leonard's apartment. Leonard leaves, and Martin and Kate have a final argument about the nature of their relationship and what Martin really wants. She leaves the apartment, and Martin discovers Leonard's manuscript he's been developing. Leonard discovers him reading the manuscript, and forcefully tries to throw him out of the apartment. Martin realizes that Leonard isn't a plagiarist, and asks why Leonard no longer writes. Leonard admits that the pressures of the business of writing keep him from creating. Leonard tries to give Martin his refund to get him out of his apartment, but Martin refuses, instead trying to steal Leonard's manuscript. Instead, Leonard gives Martin the copy edited version of his own story, submitted to Leonard as proof of talent to join the class. Martin and Leonard connect on a deeper level over the work, and realize they could work together. Leonard proposes a partnership between the two as the lights fade to black.

Text Analysis

The purpose of this section is to investigate the text of the play for information, both about Leonard and the world he inhabits. An understanding of the world of the play is vital for construction of a role, and Rebeck leaves a tremendous amount of technical detail in this rich world to inform the characters and their opinions. As part of building individuals within this play with their own voices, a lot of work is put into creating unique sounds and styles of speech through dialogue, which is one of Rebeck's specialties. These details are integral in forming a full, well-rounded group of individuals existing and interacting in the world built for them. Through this mining of the text, I hope to support the idea that Leonard needs to be a misunderstood genius rather than a petty bully, giving him a fuller dramatic arc and a practical dramatic relationship with Martin, his literary and dramatic echo.

Scene 1

The opening of the play is the first time that the four students meet. There's a lot of "New York Feeling" exposition that happens here, as Lee put it. A significant amount of effort is put into the fact that you're aware of the setting of the play, because it at times plays such an integral part of who these people are, and what their lives are like. The exchange about Kate's apartment is a perfect example of this phenomenon. To a guy from West Virginia, eight hundred dollars for an apartment sounds a little exorbitant. However, once you take into account the location of the upper west side, an affluent mecca of culture and taste, and the size of the apartment, it becomes a shocking statistic. Without the knowledge of the area in play, the point of the whole exchange could easily be missed. Douglas' far flung adventures in New Hampshire and Kate's Vermont residency appear to be very rural when taken through that urban lens, and further adds to the prestige of the writer colonies mentioned.

A lot of time is also devoted in this scene to set up the premise that the characters talk the same way they write in real life. Douglas employs a lot of florid, empty prose that is impressive sounding to

the untrained ear. Kate makes safe forays and polite conversation, sticking to conventional societal norms and becoming offended when they're challenged. Izzy is obsessed with sex and the relationships between men and women that lead to sex. Martin seems to be the closest to Rebeck's typical literary voice, sharp and incisive and not willing to tolerate crap. There are many similarities between Martin and Rebeck's other protagonists, both male and female. Often there is a refusal to accept success or destiny, the idea that one should always look into the mouth of a gifted horse. If a boon is unearned, it is naturally suspect, and this trait is on full display in Martin.

There's a lot of effort exerted to let the audience into the world of writing through connections, the idea that once you know someone and they know you and your work, you have a connection that will get you published. This sets up some of the dramatic tension down the road when Izzy and Leonard's relationship evolves.

Scene 2

Scene two is an incredibly smart introduction to Leonard, even though he has relatively little stage time to make his impression. After his long, rambling monologue introducing his stream-of-consciousness speech and writing style, he challenges Kate and her conceptions of her overworked story through the use of her sardonic tone towards Jane Austen and what she represents. What makes this scene so smart from a text standpoint is that Leonard uses that same smarmy, mocking attitude back to Kate as he picks apart her story, demonstrating actual sardonic speech and behavior as he rips apart her story for having no life, teeth, or guts. So rather than creating a monster who is mean for the sake of crushing egos, Rebeck has created a terrifying intellectual monstrosity, able to tear apart someone's life work in one sentence, complete with a smile on his face. This sets him apart from a typical bully and lends the impression that, cruel or not, Leonard is the genius that he was advertised to be.

After Leonard departs, the realization sets in that a brilliant mentor can turn out to be a hellish situation if he ends up a bully. It speaks a lot of Kate's idyllic sensibilities that she brings into the beginning of the play that she was imagining this perfect hero, a mentor that would guide her to new creative heights on her guilty pleasure life's work, rather than a teacher willing to destroy her passion.

Scene 3

The notable sections of this scene revolve around Kate and Leonard's argument regarding feminist viewpoints and the inherent biases against them. As mentioned in the last scene analysis section, Kate's interest in tearing down Jane Austen seems a little misguided in light of Austen's takedown of the conceptions of a woman's place at the time of writing. This leads further to a debate between Kate and Leonard in which Kate takes exception to Leonard's phrase, "If you're going to write something, be a fucking man about it." This is a difficult point to deconstruct, especially due to the inherent gender references in the phrase. Eventually, Leonard's argument boils down to you should write like yourself. An author should own his or her own writing, not be tethered to the voices of the past. Kate's work was tied to Austen's through mockery. Kate was missing the message while taking offense at the messenger. In a way, Leonard's view supersedes gender politics, leaving the ultimate responsibility for the exploration of the author's art to the author.

Scene 4

Not a lot is said about Leonard in scene four, though it does still work as a convenient way to show off Martin's malleability of thought and opinion, and serves a very necessary purpose towards the redistricting of loyalty lines amongst the players. Watching the ideological shift from Martin versus Douglas for Izzy's affection, to Martin and Douglas both decrying Leonard's disgraceful behavior, is one of the best comedic turns in the play. This scene also does a lot for Martin's ability to attempt to shut out reality for as long as he possibly can, setting up a stubborn streak that will rear its head later in

the play. Also of note is the very end of the scene, watching Kate and new found friend Douglas go at each other over Izzy's behavior. Having already aligned himself with Kate earlier through sucking up about the story and complimenting her looks in comparison to Izzy, Martin feels almost lost as he has to justify, in his mind, their differing viewpoints, ultimately failing to take a side and instead shutting down the entire conversation. It's this fear of confrontation that Martin eventually overcomes through his character development towards the end of the play, that allows him to finally take advantage of the opportunity proffered to him by Leonard to hone his work.

Scene 5

Throughout the entire play, Douglas has been constructing for himself a persona based around the technical minutia of writing, the jargon that can seem totally inaccessible to an outsider and acts as a shield against the less intelligent. It also happens to be a convenient mask that he can hide behind to cover his total lack of passion for the physical act of writing. Rebeck is at her most brilliant and precise in this scene as Leonard tears the cover away from Douglas and exposes his work as not a work of passion or art, but of commerce.

At one point in the scene, Leonard describes Douglas' writing style as whorish. Rather than being just a brutal deconstruction of Douglas' psyche, Leonard constructs a critique of his motivations, his drive to write rather than what he has written. The reason that Leonard has pronounced it hollow is because there's no love or passion behind the work. It's a show piece designed to garner interest in the person who wrote it, not the work itself.

This is also the first time that we see Martin and Leonard really cross paths in terms of a battle of wills. Up until this point, Martin had been happy to stay neutral in the proceedings, but the act of seeing his innermost opinions voiced out loud for him seems to sway him out of his disgust for Douglas and into a vendetta against Leonard. It almost seems as if Martin is content to despise the biggest

threat in the room, the person most likely to be an intellectual challenge for him. There's no question that during this scene, Leonard establishes himself as the top dog from both a literary and a life standpoint, and it very quickly gets under Martin's skin. This may explain why Martin has such a sudden personality shift once Leonard has left, leading him quickly towards Izzy. Izzy certainly acknowledges by the end of the scene that she is no longer sleeping with Leonard (which is true, he's gone to Somalia) and that she needs a replacement. It's also worth noting that when Leonard is praising Douglas' work at the top of the scene, the quote that he reads is directly pulled from one of Rebeck's earlier plays, *The Butterfly Collection*. I remain undecided on if this is a bitter or proud referencing of her own work.

Scene 6

Up to this point, Leonard has been cool and composed in dealing with the students, even if he is being unnecessarily harsh with them as he judges their work. However, in this scene, we see Kate say that she is quitting because she claims that she has lost her interest in becoming a writer, and that it no longer holds any appeal to her. She wants to sell the other half of her class to a friend, Luis, and get part of her money back. Leonard then loses his cool and absolutely blows up on her, mocking her for seeking pity about her disappointment in discovering that she may not want to obtain the brass ring of becoming a writer after all. Leonard seems to know no creed other than “Harsh, but fair.” For one of his students to tell him that the work has become too hard and stressful, and that they no longer care about success seems to be more than he can bear.

I had always attributed his reaction to the stress of travel, from having lived in a war zone for the past few weeks, but there's a strong possibility that he explodes the way he does because he knows there's potential there for Kate, but she has never really tried something real, something that wasn't her precious, well-censored story about Jane Austen. I think this lends more power to his realization in

scene eight that Kate is actually the author of the Luis piece, and heightens his respect for her.

Certainly, it makes more sense that in his own way, Leonard cares for these students and wants them to be prepared as best as they can to succeed, even if it isn't in ways they originally envisioned.

Scene 7

Textually, I think this may be the biggest support for the idea that Martin is a spiritual echo of Leonard as a younger man, before he encountered his trouble with the plagiarism accusations. Without Leonard there as a governor on the group, Martin is brash and outspoken, unafraid to voice his opinions. Now that he's returned, the group quickly realigns themselves with Leonard's opinion back against Martin, to the point where he is the outcast of the group at the start of the scene. Everyone is derisive of him, clearly disinterested in what he has to say about the story or his need for further information about it. Martin senses another intellect that could potentially rival his own, and it makes him nervous.

What becomes unclear is Martin's reason for the objection to Kate's continuance in developing the story after she reveals that she is the author. Martin claims objections about the veracity of the account, and how people have been shamed in our media culture over publishing a memoir that was a work of fiction, but underneath it all it seems more disturbed by Kate's loss of sincerity. Martin remains the only member of the group who is interested in the art for the art's sake, after Douglas' defection to Hollywood and the lure of money, Izzy's thinly veiled seduction techniques, and Kate's delight in deceiving Leonard by writing in something that isn't her own voice. The text does a tremendous job of allowing Kate's sudden explosion of self-confidence to leap off of the page, finally allowing her to berate Martin for his treatment of her throughout this process. It's this transformation of Kate that pushes the play into its dramatic climax.

Scene 8

Similarities between Leonard and Martin are further outlined here, with their matching rambling monologues during this scene. Without the headings of the characters speaking the words, the two monologues could easily be envisioned to be written in the same voice and spoken by the same character. This strengthens the idea that Leonard is not a soulless monster, looking to destroy the hopes and dreams of the creative youth to come after him, but rather a redemptive figure who sees a young man so similar to himself that he can't bring himself to any other action but lashing out as Martin dives towards the same mistakes that Leonard himself made. We've seen Leonard be sardonic and detached, we've seen him be precise and technical, but the tone here is full of passion and care, a man who cares so desperately about the outcome of this conversation that he can't help but lose himself in telling his story. You can actually see the effect that age and experience has had on Leonard as you look at his speech in conjunction with Martin's. It is in this moment that we finally see a true meeting of the minds. Leonard recognizes the talent in the room, the one thing that he has been looking for, only to have the opportunity to shape and mold it snatched away from him.

Scene 9

The ending of *Seminar* is, at first glance, unsatisfying. It is the beginning of Martin's journey as the hero, the starting point of an artist's arc that will eventually lead him to what we imagine to be success and fame. In a way, *Seminar* is an origin story for Martin, letting us see the artist before he takes shape. The location change to Leonard's apartment at this late date is a nice breath of fresh air, because it gives us an opportunity to see Leonard finally unguarded, in a place where he feels comfortable and is home. If the conversation between Leonard and Martin took place anywhere else, I'm not sure that it would have reached the conclusion of openness and honesty that we so satisfyingly

achieve as an audience. The convergence of their voices, separated by time and joined by intellect and shared passion, resonates with the audience at the closing moments, so that even though we're actually seeing the beginning of a journey, we're left with the feeling that something momentous has just come to its conclusion.

There are some remarks made by Leonard here that seem to be at the heart of “Leonard is a misogynist who hates women” mindset. While Leonard is certainly true to his nature in remaining as crass as ever, I'm not sure that I'm convinced that his remarks are based on a hatred of women, or a viewpoint of them being a lesser class of people than men. Given the level of sophistication of Rebeck's writing throughout the rest of the play, for Leonard to waste a few lines running down women for the sake of shaming and embarrassing them seems vulgar, at best.

Research

In this section, I will be exploring literary terminology and pop culture references that are vital to the understanding of the world of the play. While not all of these terms and phrases are spoken by Leonard, as the instructor and mentor of the class it would be assumed that he would know about each of these references, and therefore would be part of his world view. I will be giving a brief description of each term, how it applies to the play in general, and then any further importance to Leonard in particular.

Scene 1

Inigo Jones

Inigo Jones was a British architect, a sometimes collaborator of Ben Jonson, who is best known theatrically as the progenitor of the proscenium arch. Many of his scenic pieces drew heavily from Italian influences, and he argued that scenery was a vital component of theatrical performance. His architectural works include the remodeling of St. Paul's. This first reference is an apt marriage of several schools of thought in the opening paragraph, tying together writing and the creative space, architecture, and the history of theatrical traditions.

Yaddo

An artist community in Sarasota Springs, New York. Douglas mentions having gone there multiple times, further emphasizing his connections to important people. Currently a historical landmark, Yaddo has hosted over 6,000 different artists, including Leonard Bernstein, Truman Capote, and Sylvia Plath.

MacDowell

An artist collective in Peterborough, New Hampshire. Like Yaddo, it has the honor of being a national landmark. Home to somewhere between twenty to thirty artists at a time, each visitor is given their own studio, available to them twenty four hours a day, and a cabin to live on the estate. Famous

residents have included Thornton Wilder, DuBose Heyward, and Aaron Copeland.

The New Yorker

High circulation magazine that has a focus on contemporary fiction as part of its circulation. Inclusion in the magazine would assure that a large number of influential people would read your work and possibly help you become discovered. Considered to be an intellectually highbrow publication.

Jack Kerouac and *On The Road*

Kerouac, along with Allen Ginsburg, is honored as one of the fathers of the Beat Generation. *On The Road* is arguably his most famous work. Famous for his stream-of-consciousness style prose, he was considered a father of the hippie movement that followed his death at the age of forty seven. The original text for *On The Road* was typed out onto a single, continuous sheet of paper that was culled from a series of notebooks about his travels with Ginsburg and William S. Burroughs, who are all represented in the book.

Tin House

A quarterly magazine that focuses primarily on fiction. During its short publishing history, it has had several published pieces up for major awards. They have since expanded into a book division and run a summer only writer's workshop. They are based out of New York and Portland, Oregon.

Upper West Side

A reference to the neighborhood where Kate's apartment is located in New York. Also included in the upper west side are Columbia University and the Lincoln Center. Generally considered the intellectual and cultural hub of Manhattan. Also gives the distinct impression of old New York ties, with her rent controlled apartment, and cultural sophistication.

The Weathermen

Radical left-wing political group that undertook bombing campaigns during the 60's and 70's. They strongly protested the Vietnam war, and stated that their overarching goal was the overthrow of the

government of the United States. They were defunct by 1977, which may lead to some of the confusion as to how Douglas' uncle is seen in retrospect, either as a terrorist who participated in radical politics, or by his achievements afterward. A quick jab at the idea that the evil that men do live after them, the good is oft interred with their bones. This idea becomes foreshadowing for the dramatic action involving Leonard and his accusations of plagiarism later in the play.

Drug menace books

Essentially the erotic fiction of over half the 20th century, with the over-arching haze of drug use to justify it. The books were intended to be seductive and lurid, often with very suggestive covers to entice readers to pick them up. A 2015 equivalent would be success as one of Amazon's self published adult fiction writers.

Scene 2

Moldova

One of the countries that broke off of the former Soviet Union in the early 90's. It borders Romania and the Ukraine. Like Italy, it is shaped like a boot. Moldova currently has the ignominious honor of being the poorest country in Europe, despite multiple grants from the the IMF for improvements. They are currently seeking entrance into the EU. The Chechnyan psychopath that Leonard mentions in his monologue may well be a reference to an incident in 2012 in which a civilian death raised tensions with Russia.

Dubai

Second largest city in the UAE (United Arab Emirates), and one of the two veto powers. After Leonard's talking about one of the poorest areas of Europe, he then goes on to talk about one of the richest centers of the world, demonstrating the depth of his cultural exchange. Dubai's national religion is Islam, and it carries a large percentage of Shia population at about fifteen percent. Dubai has been

prosperous due to its location and proximity to the sea, acting as a trade hub even before the discovery of oil in its borders. Higher costs of oil have caused them to shift their focus towards tourism.

Sunni and Shia Islam

The two factions of Islam, as practiced today. The split is based on the belief of who was the final prophet to be produced in the Islamic religion. Sunnis believe that Mohammad was the final prophet of Islam, and treat him as such. Shia Muslims, however, believe that Mohammad's son-in-law, Ali, was actually the new leader of the Islamic faith. History says that Ali met with an untimely end, and his sons were then deprived of their birthright. Until the rise of secular Islam in recent history, the two sects lived in proximity to one another with little animosity. The Shia have always perceived themselves as discriminated against, which was exacerbated by the 1979 Iranian revolution, partially funded by Western interests. This strife has aggravated the religious differences between the two sects.

Rwanda and the Genocide of 1994

The country is most famous for the Rwandan genocide of 1994, perpetrated by the Hutus on the rebellious Tutsis, who were comprising a rebel minority. About twenty percent of the population was killed during the slaughter. Part of the large spike in HIV in the country came about as a consequence of war rape, which was a practice at the time of the slaughter. Many children were born having already been infected by HIV. Throughout Leonard's story about the genocide survivor of Rwanda, his time frame seems to be wrong. Perhaps it's an indication of his living in the past, but he still considers UN forces to be prevalent throughout Rwanda when they had been pulled out in 1996, long before he would have been in the country. While the rest of the stories may ring true that Leonard tells in that opening monologue, this one has a distinctly tall tale feel to it.

Jane Austen

Author who experienced a large wave of her success after her death due to the publishing of *A Memoir of Jane Austen*. Ironically, her books all gently chide the notion that a woman is dependent on marriage

for stability and success, making her an odd choice of target for feminist Kate's mockery. Her plots largely revolved around the landed gentry and their relationship struggles, with a comedic undertone. Her mentioned novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, continues to remain popular due to the likability of the characters and the themes that run underneath the novel, mainly coming of age and marriage.

Frank Conroy

Famous author who followed a similar career path to Jack Kerouac in literary subject matter, in the sense that he spent some of his time meeting with the culture figures of his generation and writing books about his interactions with them. His most famous work is *Stop-Time*. He's also famous for his collaborations with Charles Mingus.

Bennington College

Liberal arts college in Bennington, Vermont, notable for having abolished the idea of tenure in their faculty. This led to a lawsuit by the dismissed educators, and an eventual out of court settlement by the university. The attendance numbers for students suffered as a result of the firings, and only recently recovered to a break-even point.

Tobias Wolff

American author famous for his work in short stories and memoirs. He was the professor in residence for Syracuse University, and then Stanford following that appointment. He is the most famous for *The Boy's Life*.

Scene 3

Robert Penn Warren

Famous author mentioned by Leonard as one of his teachers at Yale when he was coming through school. He credits him with his dedication to the sound of a story, rather than the characters, plot or intellect. This is an interesting stance in relation to Warren, as his early roots of poetry with the

southern group The Fugitives wrote on the benefits of racial segregation. However, his views were considered so progressive that the piece was almost left out of the published works. This heralded his shift towards becoming a fierce champion of civil rights. This also mirrors the work that he did with *All The King's Men*, his most famous novel. While many of the central figures are political, and it follows the meteoric rise of a politician who realizes the dreams of his lesser constituents around him, the book was never intended to be political in nature. Instead, it explored the idea that no man is without sin, and one man's nihilistic leanings towards life. Rather than hold a traditional narrative structure, the story itself is non-linear, referring back to Leonard's contention that traditional form and function is not so nearly as important as the idea one is trying to convey with the work.

Scene 4

There are no notable terms or references in this chapter that appear outside of colloquial knowledge.

Scene 5

Equanimity

Mental or emotional stability or composure, especially under tension or strain. It's interesting that Leonard uses this particular word to describe Douglas' serene composure as his work is perused, like a family pet that has no idea the house is burning down around him. Blissful ignorance personified and placed on display.

New York Public Library

One of the largest collections of materials in the world, second in the United States only to the Library of Congress. A popular location in film, stage and screen. The panels that Leonard mentions are events and activities where authors discuss their work for the general public.

Somalia

Currently home to multiple groups of pirates and warlord-led factions fighting for control of the country. The country, until very recently, was undergoing a civil war between factions of Islamic fundamentalists and democratic forces trying to secure the region.

Scene 6

There are no notable terms or references in this chapter that appear outside of colloquial knowledge.

Scene 7

Pilloried

In this case, “attacked or ridiculed publicly”. With *Seminar* in mind, Rebeck is referring to authors who have published fake memoirs in the past, and been vilified for it. The most recent case of a famous fake memoir is probably James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces*, which purportedly told his true story of drug addiction and how he overcame it. It picked up fame and notoriety through Oprah's Book Club, to the point where several news outlets were unable to find record of any of the events he claimed were true.

Copy Editing

The act of formatting and proofreading works of literature. This includes the placement of the text on the page, where line breaks are, etc. This becomes an interesting back up profession for Leonard, especially in light of his plagiarism accusations. A copy editor is required to understand the voice of the author he is working with exceptionally well. This gives Leonard a chameleon like aspect that allows him to get into the head of his fellow author, lending his keen eye to the work without muting an individual's message. This plays both for and against Leonard in reference to the accusations against him.

Scene 8

Emily Dickenson

A notoriously reclusive poet, who only had around a dozen of her eighteen hundred poems published while she was alive. Her posthumous work differs from the poems that were published while she was alive mainly due to editor interference as the works went to print, altering them to make them fit writing styles of the times.

The Nine Circles of Hell

The Nine Circles of Hell is actually a construct of Dante's *Inferno*, a description of the author's descent into Hell. The level that Leonard mentions is the deepest circle of Hell, used to punish those who have engaged in treachery. Among other purported residents are Cain, mankind's first murderer, and Judas Iscariot.

Scene 9

The Weinsteins

Famous family of Hollywood producers who own a prestigious production company. Typically the movies they make are regarded as classy and artistic by supporters, and pretentious and superficial by detractors. More importantly, the family is seriously connected throughout Hollywood, and the first stop if someone is wanting to network their way through the industry.

Salman Rushdie

As noted in the play, a famous author who also has something of a checkered romantic past. Most notably, Rushdie had a fatwa issued against him by Ayatollah Khomeini in response to one of his books, *The Satanic Verses*. His preferred milieu is magical realism, a style that Douglas hopes to imitate at the beginning of the play.

Random House

The largest general interest trade-book publisher in the world. Based out of New York, it publishes fiction, non-fiction and children's books. Although owned by a German company, Random House was founded in the United States, and currently has arms in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Africa, and Korea.

SpongeBob Squarepants

A creation of Nickelodeon for their daytime television line up, Spongebob Squarepants is a cartoon sponge who lives under the sea and is known for his relentless optimism. Originally conceived as a children's program, SpongeBob found a large adult following both through new viewers and kids who had grown up with the program, culminating in a movie deal.

Mephistopheles

Currently a synonym with the devil, Mephistopheles' origins are based in the Faust legends, as the devil that Faust made the deal with for his soul. Mephistopheles has always signaled that great power comes with a great price.

Process

From my first read through of the script after casting was completed in May of 2014, I knew that for Leonard to be successfully portrayed on stage, he had to be a sympathetic character. There are strong ties to Richard III in Leonard's character make up, a charismatic scoundrel wronged by life, his personality warped to cruel and cynical intentions as a result. An analysis of the play would make you believe that Martin is the protagonist of the play, with Leonard opposing him. However, in my readings of the play before rehearsal began, I determined that Leonard is actually a supporting force for Martin, a secondary protagonist. This leaves Martin as his own antagonist, his own will being the force keeping him from succeeding. With that in mind, it becomes doubly important that Leonard isn't portrayed as a petty tyrant. Otherwise, Martin is trying to surmount what becomes an unrealistic amount of forces to achieve his goals at the end of the play. Additionally, there's a powerful redemptive storyline that runs parallel to Martin's journey. Leonard's closure is actually the closure of the play, rather than Martin's, who is beginning a journey of his own. Thus, the audience still gets the tidy ending they would hope to see with this play while leaving Martin's arc untouched for him to proceed forward.

In the sense of more practical matters, there was an age issue straight out of the gate in regards to Leonard versus the students of the show. Leonard, as determined from the text, is at least sixty years old during the action of the play, and a lot of the objections to this show being mounted in a collegiate setting stemmed from the need to have an older actor in the Leonard role. There's not a lot of room for obfuscating the facts in the text, due to the very real nature of the story and relationships. Initially, I didn't observe this as a huge problem to playing the role, but through the different objections I heard as we made our way to rehearsal, the mole hill became a mountain in my mind. The show was initially discarded from discussion for the season due to the age gap, and then rumors came down the pipe of an

outside professional being hired in order to achieve the necessary age gap, or even having one of the professors take the role on instead of a student. This transformed the issue of the age gap in my mind from not that big of a deal to a pretty serious issue. I've been asked to play age before, with varying success. There are always the options of make up and costuming, which we utilized, but a large part of the characterization of Leonard had to stem from what I was doing with him from an acting perspective. As this is primarily a physical attribute and would be an 'outside' character quality, I eventually decided to address this issue physically and vocally.

Part of my training in both our camera acting class, as well as our recent production of *Henry IV* Parts One and Two was the concept of high status for a character through physical stillness. My normal physicality bobs a lot, subservient head nods and smiles that are made in an effort to try and connect with a listener. My physical presence, whether I have liked it or not, has always read as intimidating due to my size as a six foot tall male. Therefore, a lot of my actions are designed to diffuse that tension as best as possible. While an acceptable life choice to try and make myself more relateable to people, it doesn't always serve the best of purposes on stage. One of the main things that Professor Roger Smart and I worked on before he left our production of *Henry IV* was a sense of stillness, commanding physical presence and respect by disabling my survival behaviors of relatability. Not only did this stillness produce and demand more physical respect from the other characters on stage, it served the key point of slowing both my thoughts and my actions, taking away some of the normal hyperactive behavior that marks my daily life and letting me adopt a slower physical tempo. This produced a stronger gravitas for the character, which helped convey the surety of the world that comes with age.

Along with this physical change, I sought to alter the timbre and tone of my voice. An ongoing part of our training at West Virginia University has been concerned heavily with the idea of relieving ourselves of the bodily tension that we hold as part of our daily routine, as both performers and people. Another of the defensive options that I had developed for myself is a raise in my vocal tone and normal

speaking voice, that comes from physical tension that I hold around my diaphragm. This higher speaking voice is more disarming, less intimidating for people who are meeting me for the first time. It is, however, not only poor vocal health, but not useful for this powerful character that I was seeking to embody. Using training that I had received from both Professor Laura Hitt and Professor Jessica Bishop, I worked to release tension that been building in my stomach, using Fitzmorris tremoring techniques. This brought my tone further down into my chest, giving me a vocal power and projection that better fit the character I was seeking to portray. Furthermore, to help aid in the projection of my voice using this lower but potentially more difficult to hear tone, I used some of the Suzuki technique that we had practiced with Professor Bishop, using my connection to the lower half of my body as support. One of my main projects that I had worked on since I had arrived here was a greater connection to the lower half of my body, due to an injury in my back that often leaves me “floating” from my hips up. The successful application of this technique, joining my entire body together again through rhythmic stomping, gave Leonard a strong, grounded presence, making him appear more solid and substantial, while also giving me ample energy to project my speech out over the audience without intensifying my effort in that area.

The result of this combination of changes was dramatic and effective. It produced not only a change in age for the character, leaving a believable gap between myself and the younger actors on stage, but it also furnished a strength that had been unknown to me as a performer. One of the experiences in my career that stuck with me to this day was a run of the show *Seussical!* one summer for Parkway Playhouse, in Burnsville, North Carolina. A fantastic production with a great cast and crew, I always felt that what I was doing for the production was lacking somehow. I lacked the confidence in myself to carry a show. I feel that *Seminar* has been transformative in that sense, as I no longer have any doubt in my mind that I am a strong enough performer to hold a lead role in a show.

A majority of the rehearsal process was very easy and low stress. Throughout the entire time

spent with the script on its feet, the only two pieces that eluded me during the work we did on the show. The monologue at the end of scene eight is the capstone piece for Leonard. Covering thirty years of history of Leonard's life, it's a monster of a piece, almost two pages long and a roller coaster ride of nuance and emotion. From a technical standpoint, there's a lot of unkind things done towards the actor in the writing. The monologue itself demands that the actor build to an emotional breakdown, a climax towards the tail end of the speech that is marked with a break in the text and a drastic change of thought. The pacing of the speech made it extremely difficult to build the monologue towards that extreme while still being able to take a full emotional journey through the moment. This is compounded by the fact that the monologue itself, much like the preceding material with the other authors can't just be angry for anger's sake. The monologue actually contains a good deal of exposition and revealing material about Leonard that has to be emphasized and made clear to the audience while building towards this emotional breakdown, making it an extreme technical challenge. Lee Blair, our director, and I struggled back and forth over the level of anger involved in the piece. Leonard's coverage of his betrayal by his students, his own destroyed writing career, Martin's refusal to accept Leonard's assistance are all offenses to Leonard's pride, making anger a very easy acting choice. Even now, looking back on the performance of it, the piece is so complex that with another three months of rehearsal, I'm not sure that I would gain a handle on it. The fact that the heart of this monologue continues to elude me, even now, is frustrating.

On a similar note, Leonard's confession to Martin in scene nine is equally complicated. The theory that goes into this particular section is if we get to see each of the other authors through their work as judged by Leonard, we're now seeing Leonard's writing voice, as critiqued by himself. Advice I consistently give to my Intro to Theater students is that acting nothing is never a strong choice. That's part of what makes Leonard's admission so difficult to wrap my head around. It sounds as if he's given up, as if he's finally confessing to someone that he can't continue to drag around his own self-loathing

and regret, but the act of giving up isn't necessarily an interesting one to watch on stage. It's not a positive motivation, which leaves you with the act of not playing an action into space or to someone that can be reacted to.

It bears a lot of similarities to another Shakespearean trope, the soliloquy. In Shakespearean performance, I always preferred to address the audience during a soliloquy, using the same conventions that were present during the original performance conventions. However, with this being a realistic play, the conventions limit you from speaking to the audience. Our staging made it less than ideal for me to talk to Martin, so I was left with myself as audience. At times, it left the monologue feeling very unmotivated, even though the content of it felt right. I always hated that I was unable to get that part of the story to where it needed to be, with a thrust behind it that affected someone on stage besides myself. Though, perhaps, maybe the whole point of the piece was just to see Leonard alone and at his least confident, which is certainly what it felt like.

On the other side of that coin, one of the greatest breakthroughs I made during the rehearsal process involved scene six. Leonard returns from Somalia, directly off of the plane and then back to the writing seminar, all in the space of a few hours. He walks through the door, jet-lagged but deeply moved by what he's seen in his travels, and tries to make amends to Douglas after criticizing him so harshly. For a long time, I struggled with what motivated this fight that Leonard and Kate have. They had run ins in the past, and didn't care for one another, but for them to have a fight where Kate threatens to quit the group and Leonard genuinely loses it in front of her felt out of character. I think the realization that Leonard cares deeply about all of his students succeeding, combined with the mental and physical stress of the travel leads to the breakdown, which feeds back into this idea that if Kate is going to quit writing, then he has failed his student in the most critical way. Part of that failure ends up being on Kate, but it stems from his treatment of her, and I think it's one cross too many to bear at that moment for Leonard.

Performance and Evaluation

Considering the run of the entire show, I feel justified in saying that *Seminar* itself was an unmitigated success. Since the conclusion of our run in September, I've had multiple groups of people stop me and congratulate me on the production, from all majors across the university. This was a story and cast that transcended some of the natural cultural divides that have separated us at the university, and united various viewpoints under the banner of artistic success in all of its forms. The characters were relatable to struggles that students currently face from their mentors and professors, as well as being indicative of their relationships with their fellow students. The themes themselves were universal enough that even if you were not a creative writing student, you recognized elements of the play in your every day life. To me, that is the truest goal of theater, to make an audience consider its day to day existence, and how the adversity and themes of these stories affect and relate to them. In this sense, we were massively successful.

It was extremely gratifying to hear that there was consideration given to mounting a touring production of *Seminar* for the university to take on the road as a show piece. I know that part of this decision was due to the limited set and small cast size, but I also believe that the strength of the production and the quality of the work on display were worthy of this honor. Touring is a part of my life that I miss in some respects, and being able to take this wonderful and eye-opening story to different parts of the state, places with little to no access to this kind of entertainment, appealed to me deeply. Although the decision was eventually made that the burdens of the tour would be too onerous on both the school and the actors, the idea that this is even a possibility for the future is an exciting one. In a way, our production served as a trailblazer, a feasibility study to bring our hard work and dedication to the rest of the state to showcase our talents and dedication. I sincerely hope that in the future, West Virginia University will tour a production around the state to show how vital theater is to

the community at large.

By the end of the run of the production, I was very pleased with my portrayal of the role of Leonard. By and large I felt that I embodied the most important moments of this man's journey, dragging him from a place of cynical ennui towards his students and the work they produce. While I still believe I could obtain a more thorough understanding of some moments of the play, especially the large monologue at the end of scene eight, I feel confident that I could step into another production of *Seminar* and have the characterization down. In the end, the redemptive character that I sought to bring to life was a reality, a man who was so much more than his nastiness, more than his own failures. We succeeded in creating a flawed mentor, neither heinous or saintly, but simply real. I relish the opportunity, in the future, to bring this complex and brilliant guide back to life, weaving a story of tough love and frustrated genius with a group of supremely talented actors.

However, will this play continue to be relevant, in the future? A large part of the themes that run through the work are gender related, from Leonard's dismissal of Kate's work to the politics of sex in regards to people in position of authority, and the inherent privileges in being white and a man. As we move towards what we consider to be a more inclusive, equalitive society, will actions like Izzy's seduction of Leonard remain as provocative as they are, and were when the play was first written? I choose to believe that this play will endure because it is more than an analysis of the social issues of its day. Those who seek to find a shortcut to success will never disappear. They simply alter the methods of their ascension to the most efficient tactics they can find. Discrimination will sadly always exist. Even if we do manage to create a utopian society where all genders are viewed as equal, this play can stand as important historical depiction, painting misogyny and gender politics in a very real light based on the social mores of the early twenty first century. Even with all of those disclaimers, the idea of a man searching for redemption, to avenge himself against the wrongs that have been visited upon him by life is a story that becomes timeless, regardless of its trappings. Martin's search for, denial of, and

eventual reluctant acceptance of an exacting mentor, and therefore his search for himself amidst a sea of self-doubt and disillusionment reads as a classic coming of age story, complete with love interests and rebellion. While this story does concern itself with the gender politics of the time, this story has the universal themes necessary to become a significant work of art for the future, worthy of revivals and retrospectives. It is indicative of Rebeck's work as a whole that she deals with people and their lives, their aspirations and failings that makes this play resonate on a basic and primal level.

Conclusion

At this point, I've collectively decided that both the production and my role in it was a success. We sold out a majority of our houses, received acclaim and recognition across campus, and brought people who were never necessarily interested in theater to a brand new experience, full of excitement and joy. What does this success mean for me, personally, in the future? Already the effects of this role have made themselves known through my work. For the first time at a cattle call audition, I stepped on to a stage in front of fifty casting companies, and felt that I had the confidence to succeed with all of them. This new found confidence, that I am enough as a performer to fulfill and sustain a play, as well as a leading role in that production, is a new power that I had never known in my performance career. For as long as I continue to be an actor, I shall be indebted to Professor Lee Blair for this opportunity and the guidance towards tapping this wellspring of ability within myself. Aside from the benefits I feel have already manifested themselves in my work, I firmly believe that the parallels between Leonard and other famous redemptive roles will provide opportunities later in my career. One of my dream roles of the stage is to play Ebenezer Scrooge in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, and I believe there are many similarities to draw between the two roles. A fine line has to be walked with Leonard, creating neither a hero or a villain, and this sort of restraint and nuance is vital to the role of Scrooge, as well as many of the film anti-heroes that have had a rise to prominence over the last ten years. Leonard could just as easily be a Walter White of *Breaking Bad* fame, driven by his own moral compass down a dark path. This is the kind of role that popular media is trending towards, a flawed hero who can still do good with his talents and abilities, which fits the archetype of Leonard down to the letter. My sincere belief is that twenty years from now, the lessons and skills that I learned from *Seminar* will be among the most important of my career. I will be forever grateful, knowing that the building blocks of roles to come have already been laid down and ingrained in my persona. Now, I just need to make

good on the latent promise therein. It's a challenge that I look forward to.

Works Cited

"9 Circles of Hell (Dante's Inferno)." History Lists. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

Asher, Levi. "Jack Kerouac - Bio and Links." Beatmuseum.org. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"BBC - History - Historic Figures: Inigo Jones (1573 - 1652)." BBC - Homepage. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"Bennington College." Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc, n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"Dubai Travel Guide - Wikitravel." Wikitravel - The Free Travel Guide. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"Emily Dickinson : The Poetry Foundation." Poetry Foundation. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"Everything You Need to Know About the Upper West Side in Manhattan, New York City / Nycgo.com." Nycgo.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"Faust » Mephistopheles." Faust. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"Genocide in Rwanda." United Human Rights Council. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

Gertz, Stephen J. "Dope Menace: The Sensational World of Drug Paperbacks 1900–1975 by Stephen J.

Gertz - Jackson - 2010 - The Journal of American Culture." Wiley Online Library. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

Gertz, Stephen J. "Feral House." Feral House. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

Greenberg, David. "Explaining the Weather Underground." Slate Magazine. N.p., 6 June 2003. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"Home | Tin House." Home | Tin House. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"How Dubai Became Dubai – Next City." Next City – Inspiring Better Cities. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"Jane Austen." Bio. A&E Television Networks, 2015. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

McGrath, Charles. "The New York Times > Books > Frank Conroy Dies at 69; Led Noted Writers' Workshop." The New York Times - Breaking News, World News & Multimedia. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"Moldova Country Profile - Overview." BBC News. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

The New Yorker. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

Nypl.org. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

Parker, James. "SpongeBob's Golden Dream." The Atlantic. N.p., 1 June 2009. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"Random House." Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc, n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"Robert Penn Warren : The Poetry Foundation." Poetry Foundation. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"Rwanda Travel Guide - Wikitravel." Wikitravel - The Free Travel Guide. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

Salman Rushdie. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"Somalia Travel Guide - Wikitravel." Wikitravel - The Free Travel Guide. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"Somalia | World News | The Guardian." The Guardian. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"Sunnis and Shia: Islam's Ancient Schism." BBC News. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

Swofford, Jan. "MacDowell and Yaddo: Reflections on My Years at Various Artists' Colonies." Slate Magazine. N.p., 19 Dec. 2011. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

"Tobias Wolff." Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc, n.d. Web.
21 Apr. 2015.

The Weinstein Company. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

Welcome to Bennington College. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.

Yaddo: A Retreat for Artists in Saratoga Springs, New York. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.