

Originality's mortal coil

German novelist represents generation of budding plagiarists

By Nathaniel Lash
Senior Staff Writer

Cheating tends to bring about unpleasant consequences in the academic world. Fortunately, in the "real world," cheating is a far less offensive practice. Just ask Helene Hegemann, a 17-year-old novelist whose German bestseller, *Axototl Roadkill*, was recently exposed as a near-copy of the lesser-known novel, *Strobo*, flaunting at some points pages that were "adapted" nearly word for word. In spite of this "adaptation", the judging panel at the Leipzig Book Fair chose Hegemann's work as a finalist for a fiction piece (with an attached \$20,000 prize). To these judges, as well as her steadfast fans, she represents a new generation; a generation in which one "freely mixes" the massive amounts of information that the Internet makes readily available.

This "mixing" is nothing new to us. Covering songs is a time-honored tradition, and remixing music has gained popularity among artists, becoming a legitimate category at

the Grammy Awards. Subtler are the films that are either remakes of older successes or three-dimensional adaptations thereof. This is exemplified in recent works including *Alice in Wonderland* (A continuation of Alice's adventures) and *Avatar* (as seen in *Pocahontas* and *Dances with Wolves*). This pattern of weaving older works with our own inspiration has become



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an integral part of modern creativity. But how far can this go until our creations become completely diluted in borrowed ingenuity?

Hegemann has probably has

reached the same conclusion as many others: originality is far less profitable or time efficient than "mixing". If older works resonated with audiences, why throw them out now? No doubt that many reading this are guilty of using Wikipedia (itself conglomeration of countless sources) as their primary source. This article itself draws heavily from the ire of a New York Times article by Nicholas Kulish, mixed with interviews other journalists conducted, papers written on the prevalence of plagiarism in modern literature, and some of Nathaniel Lash's ideas about "originality".

Originality is under assault by convenience, wielded not only by the likes of Helene Hegemann, but the rest of us as well. We will always utilize the information we are immersed in, but we surely must hold on to our own ideas, our own imagination, and our own unique inspiration before Hegemann's fantasy of a world devoid of genuine work becomes a reality.

We've used up all of the good stuff

By Marcus Kahn
Managing Editor

Life is better now, or so they say. The statistics are there to prove it. The average life expectancy of a U.S. individual is about 78 years old. We've got plumbing. We've got heated houses. Most of us have jobs, or will have jobs that won't leave calluses on our hands. But is this really what defines the quality of life?

As mankind has progressed, it has brought with it an array of new technologies, and discoveries. Within the past two centuries Europeans filled in a huge blank spot on the map when they explored the interior of Africa. Another continent, Antarctica, was first sighted in 1820. But as the best and bravest zoomed around the country making these huge discoveries, they were removing the adventure and the mysteries for the rest of the world.

We've run out of things to find, and in order to fill that gap, we are looking back on what other people have done. The entire concept of archaeology is a recent invention. Before, people were too preoccupied with going out on the high seas, and finding out what is beyond

that inexplicable line which is the horizon to focus on whatever crap the previous civilization had forgotten to clean up. Think of it like a class in school. Mankind is finished learning all the relevant material, and it is now stuck reviewing.

The Polynesians got to sail across the Pacific and be flabbergasted by the beautiful isles of Hawaii. The British explorers penetrated into Africa, only to be astounded by the raw power of the Victoria Falls. But Carl Sagan is stuck looking through a telescope at some distant galaxy that he won't ever be able to go to. The show *Lost* perfectly illustrates how stumped mankind is. The idea of an undiscovered island that no one can find needs four seasons just to be explained.

We can Google any of the amazing places in the world, and a clear picture will pop up on screen. So if we finally plan that vacation to Hawaii's North Shore, we'll know exactly what to expect. Sure there might be a moment of, "oh wow, the waves are a lot bigger than the pictures made them out to be," but realistically, the romance of discovery has been lost as our knowledge of the world has grown.

Tightening up school security

By Jake Folsom
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Many of our neighboring schools have much heavier security than we do in South Pasadena. A couple of weeks ago the South Pas Police got wind of the possibility of a gun being brought onto campus. They sent several squad cars over as is standard procedure and the school was watched carefully just in case the call turned out to be true. Fortunately nothing happened, but it really brings up the question of security around our campus. If a student wanted to bring something dangerous onto campus, they would have no trouble doing it. There are no metal detectors or police officers designated only for the safety of our schools, something that the administration should consider.

Schools in the area, such as John Muir High School in Pasadena, have much tighter security than we can imagine. For example, at the front entrance of John Muir there are several metal detectors through which students are required to walk. There are also liaison officers who patrol the school throughout the day.

Because of the importance that schools like this put on security it drastically decreases the chance that a person can bring harmful objects or substances onto campus. At our school, any student could bring anything that they wanted onto campus, and unless one of our two security guards has reason to search, nothing will happen.

When we look at the measures that other schools go to in order to keep their students safe it seems extreme by comparison, but in reality this is the more common system in California. If we want to keep our school safe its time we step up our security and make more of an effort to keep the school safe. Not to say that SPHS is as or more dangerous than schools, but it only takes one student with an idea and a motive to do something devastating.

Our administration needs to take into consideration the safety of our students and devote a some time to ensure that our schools remain safe. If we amp up security, it could help to ensure that nothing tragic like a school shooting will ever happen here.



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Winter sports: pain greater than the gain

By Carlton Lew
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Last month, NBC announced an estimated 185 million viewers tuned in to the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver making these games the second most watched Olympics ever, after the 1994 games in Lillehammer, Norway. The games were filled with a number of outstanding performances. Many witnessed history as Apollo Anton Ohno set a U.S. Winter Olympic record with eight medals. Others saw a grieving Roannie Rochette skate to a bronze medal just two days after her mother passed away. Despite all these accomplishments, it has never been more obvious that these sports are too dangerous to be played, let alone be broadcasted as a symbol of global unity.

Despite the near zero visibility, the first run of the giant slalom was not postponed by the Fédération Internationale de Ski (FIS). American superstar Lindsey Vonn lost her footing and violently crashed into a fence during the event and broke her finger in

the process. This was obviously the wrong call because even the television cameras had trouble locating the skiers on course.

For the Olympics, The Whistler Sliding Centre was specially built for the sled events. Widely known by many as the fastest track in the world, it did not disappoint. During a training run, Georgian luger Nodar Kumaritashvili lost control of his sled on a turn and was thrown off, striking an unprotected pole on the side of the track. He was traveling at approximately 90 mph at the moment of impact. He died later that day. Due to the accident, many athletes removed their names from the competition.

Although it was the first accident on the track, many critics were not surprised. During an event in 2009, a luger clocked a time of 96 mph on the same track prompting the President of the Fédération Internationale de Luge de Course (FIL), to comment: "It makes me worry."

The training runs the previous year should have been a wake up call to the constructors of the

course. The venue should have been destroyed and reassembled with more safety pre cautions in mind. Unfortunately, this did not happen and Kumaritashvili paid the price for the mistake. When these daredevil athletes are afraid to participate in the Olympics, it should be a warning sign to the International Olympic Committee to make these sports safer, especially the bobsled, luge, and skeleton events.

All of these Olympic sports are both entertaining and exciting to watch. However, it is totally unfair that world-class athletes put four years of intense labor only to cheaply competitors put four years of hard backbreaking work only to cheaply entertain audiences with a sport that threaten athletes lives. When witnessing a horrific crash, it leaves one wondering if anything can be done to make these events safer. When more safety regulations are finally implemented, both athletes and viewers can live fearless of the terrifying crashes that have become a regular sight in many Winter Olympic sports.