Abstract discussion will be held on Tuesday, 11/2/2017 at 7pm in the DC Swarthmore Room.

Howl’s Moving Castle:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Fall 2017

This abstract was not released in accordance to the timeline specified by the Students’ Association Constitution. The confronting party consented to the release of the abstract. The confronted party consented to the release of the abstract.

Key:
Wizardry 300: the course in which the violation took place
Madame Suliman: confronting party, professor of Wizardry 300
Howl: confronted party, student in Wizardry 300

Summary/Pre-Trial:
In Wizardry 300, students were required to submit spells related to articles over the course of the semester. The trial concerned Howl, a student who had plagiarized portions of three of his spells. Howl and Madame Suliman disagreed on which portions of the spells had been plagiarised, though both agreed that plagiarism had taken place in the three spells. Madame Suliman brought the case to Honor Council because they both agreed that Howl had plagiarised; they did not, however, agree on which parts of the assignment had been plagiarised.

During fact finding, the jury determined that Howl’s plagiarism was due mainly to misunderstanding of the difference between plagiarism and summarizing when he was dealing with technical language, and that the plagiarism was not intentional. Therefore, the jury developed a set of resolutions that centered largely on education for Howl.

Fact Finding:
During fact finding, the parties appeared to have some disagreement about which sections were plagiarized, although they both acknowledged that plagiarism had occurred at some points in the spells. There were some technical phrases that Howl felt were “descriptive” and “I just couldn’t find another way to phrase it.” Madame Suliman explained that the students in Wizardry 300 had had an extensive assignment on plagiarism at the beginning of the course. Madame Suliman also noted that the assignments were worth very little of the grade (less than
1%) and it would have been better to not turn the assignments in and receive a zero rather than plagiarize. She noted that a number of the passages she pointed out as plagiarism were “borderline, but the number of them together is a problem.”

Howl also noted that these last few assignments were on subjects he was less familiar with and which were less relevant to his thesis. He felt that this problem would not have occurred on earlier assignments which were more in his field of expertise, and were more based on practical models, rather than written descriptions. He noted to the jury after Madame Suliman had left the room that on certain technical phrases, “I don’t want to change how it’s phrased because these are the exact terms the author wants to use, and changing it doesn’t capture what this paper is about.” However, he also acknowledged that certain passages were plagiarized, including one that he forgot to put quotations around. In relation to the plagiarism assignment that he had completed, Howl noted that he wished he had had more help with the idea of a spell itself, and how to avoid plagiarism when you are summarizing someone’s work.

Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:

The jury unanimously felt that a violation had occurred. Some members of the jury were frustrated that Howl hadn’t owned up to all of the sections of suspected plagiarism that Madame Suliman had identified, while others felt like Howl had made an understandable error in judgement, and that he was still learning where to draw the line with paraphrasing vs. plagiarism. There was disagreement over how detailed the statement should be, specifically whether or not it should be left vague so as to allow the jury the freedom to address spells other than the three in question, given that Madame Suliman appeared somewhat suspicious of other spells that Howl had turned in. However, most jurors felt that it was only right to deal with the three spells in question, and thus consented to the following statement of violation:

[Howl] violated the honor code by plagiarizing portions of spells [redacted]. (9 consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Circumstantial potion:

Howl explained briefly that this semester had been stressful, that the assignments were time consuming, and that he had had a family conflict around the same time. He said he had been rejected from a job and that balancing academics with applying to graduate schools and jobs was difficult. The trail chair then read an email from Madame Suliman in which she suggested that Howl receive a course grade one letter grade or one half of a letter grade lower than what he would have and work to prepare a guide on avoiding plagiarism.

The jury proceeded to ask Howl questions about specific resolutions. Howl noted that he had been to the writing center a lot freshman year and that it was helpful in learning how to structure writing assignments. He hadn’t used it much after then, and felt that using it on smaller assignments might not be the most effective use of time.
When asked, Howl said that he felt that his relationship with Madame Suliman was comfortable, and that he would be comfortable continuing to work with Madame Suliman. When asked about rewriting spells, Howl said that he’d rather have his grade deducted than rewrite them because they were not relevant for his thesis, and he’d rather focus any educational efforts towards the thesis itself. Howl didn’t think he was qualified to write a guide for future students on how to write spells without plagiarism, since he felt like he was the one in need of the guide, but reacted positively to the idea of working on the guide with a writing tutor.

Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:

The jury discussed the grade change. Some jurors were in favor of the greater grade change of Madame Suliman’s proposed options, and others with the lesser grade change, but they decided that Howl should receive a 0 on the three spells that Madame Suliman submitted to Honor Council, and that Howl’s grade in Wizardry 300 would be deducted an additional 5%. The jury calculated that the resolution fell approximately in between the two recommendations, about a 6.5% reduction total.

The discussion of the other resolutions was relatively straightforward, which the jury formulated to meet the trial goals of education, restoration, and accountability. Resolution 5 was formulated after a discussion of how Howl didn’t seem to feel the weight of his actions in relation to their potential impact on the community as a whole, but rather had seemed to view plagiarism more individually.

One juror stood outside on the resolutions as a whole because they felt that separation needed to be more strongly considered because of a line of the Honor Code that reads “An act of plagiarism constitutes a student’s withdrawal from the commitment to the academic honesty required by the Honor Code, and will normally result in separation from the community and the recommendation of a grade change.”¹ The other 9 jurors felt strongly that separation would not be appropriate or helpful in this case. However, the jury agreed to discuss the question of separation more during the finalizing portion of the trial.

Tentative Resolutions

1. The jury recommends that Howl receive a 0.0 on spells 7, 8, and 9. The jury recommends that, after this grade deduction, his final grade be reduced additionally by a half letter grade (5% out of 100%). (10 jurors consent)

2. [Howl] will rewrite one of the spells in question, of [Madame Suliman]’s choice, by the beginning of the [semester]. He will meet with someone from the OAR or writing center to go over his paraphrasing on that assignment and paraphrasing in general in the first two weeks of the [semester]. (10 jurors consent)

3. [Howl] will write a document giving advice on how to write spells, explaining the

¹ Haverford Honor Code, section 3.04, part 1, at the time of this trial.
process of effectively summarizing someone else’s ideas while giving proper credit. He will meet with someone from the OAR, writing center, or Honor Council to help complete this document. This will occur by [date]. (10 jurors consent)

4. [Howl] will meet with [Madame Suliman], if [Madame Suliman] is willing, to go over his rewritten spell and talk about any further questions he might have about plagiarism and his spell-writing guide. In this meeting, [Howl] and [Madame Suliman], if [Madame Suliman] is willing, will also come to agreement on what the plagiarized portions were of his past spells. This meeting will occur by [date]. (10 jurors consent)

5. [Howl] will read a selection of abstracts chosen by the Honor Council librarian in the spirit of understanding how Honor Code violations affect the community as a whole. After reading these abstracts, Howl will rewrite his Honor Code essay, specifically addressing how his violation affects the community as a whole. This Honor Code essay will be sent to the jury and [Madame Suliman], and can be appended to the abstract if [Howl] so chooses. This will occur by [date]. (10 jurors consent)

6. [Howl] will have the option to write a letter to the community, to be appended to the abstract. (10 jurors consent)

Resolutions as a whole: (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside)

Statement on reporting to institutions of higher learning:
While the majority of the jury feels that this should not be reported as a disciplinary procedure to other institutions of higher learning, a portion of the jury feels otherwise and believes that the severity of plagiarism should be considered. (10 jurors consent)

Finalizing Resolutions:
Madame Suliman emailed that she was in support of the resolutions as a whole. She mentioned in her response that she thought the text of the Code should be revised so that the Honor Code honestly represented the community’s standards to ourselves and the world, but did not think that separation was necessary in this case. Howl asked some clarifying questions about the resolutions, and then left.

In response to Madame Suliman’s comment, jury added resolution 7—a recommendation to honor council to write a plenary resolution to amend the separation clause of the Honor Code—to address the inconsistency between the code's statement regarding separation and trial's usual resolutions. The jury noted informally to Howl that if he had any thoughts on the potential plenary resolution or wanted to collaborate on it, the jury would be more than happy to do so, but the jury didn't feel the need to put that in as a recommendation for Howl since the jury felt it was an issue with the Honor Code and not with Howl’s violation specifically. However, the jury included the resolution to meet the trial goal of education for the community. The juror who had previously stood outside on resolutions as a whole now felt comfortable consenting to them with
the addition of this resolution.

**Final Resolutions**

1. The jury recommends that [Howl] receive a 0.0 on spells 7, 8, and 9. The jury recommends that, after this grade deduction, his final grade be reduced additionally by a half letter grade (5% out of 100%). (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

2. [Howl] will rewrite one of the spells in question, of [Madame Suliman]’s choice, by the beginning of the [semester]. He will meet with someone from the OAR or writing center to go over his paraphrasing on that assignment and paraphrasing in general in the first two weeks of the [semester]. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

3. [Howl] will write a document giving advice on how to write spells, explaining the process of effectively summarizing someone else’s ideas while giving proper credit. He will meet with someone from the OAR, writing center, or Honor Council to help complete this document. This will occur by [date]. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

4. [Howl] will meet with [Madame Suliman], if [Madame Suliman] is willing, to go over his rewritten spell and talk about any further questions he might have about plagiarism and his spell-writing guide. In this meeting, [Howl] and [Madame Suliman], if Madame Suliman is willing, will also come to agreement on what the plagiarized portions were of his past spells. This meeting will occur by [date]. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

5. [Howl] will read a selection of abstracts chosen by the Honor Council librarian in the spirit of understanding how Honor Code violations affect the community as a whole. After reading these abstracts, [Howl] will rewrite his Honor Code essay, specifically addressing how his violation affects the community as a whole. This Honor Code essay will be sent to the jury and [Madame Suliman], and can be appended to the abstract if Howl so chooses. This will occur by [date]. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

6. [Howl] will have the option to write a letter to the community, to be appended to the abstract. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

7. The jury recommends that Honor Council write a plenary resolution to revise the line “An act of plagiarism . . . will normally result in separation from the community” (§ 3.04 (1), Haverford Students’ Constitution) to more accurately represent the frequency with which Honor Council trials result in separation. Should this plenary resolution be drafted, the jury encourages Honor Council to contact the jurors and invite them to participate in the drafting and presentation of this resolution. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Resolutions as a whole: (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
Statement on reporting to institutions of higher learning:
While the majority of the jury feels that this should not be reported as a disciplinary procedure to other institutions of higher learning, a portion of the jury feels otherwise and believes that the severity of plagiarism should be considered. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Post-Trial:
The resolutions were not appealed.

Discussion Questions:
1. Should separation always be considered in cases of plagiarism?
2. Where is the line drawn between plagiarism and paraphrasing?
3. Does the phrasing of the Honor Code portray Haverford and Honor Council’s processes in a misleading manner?
4. Is it appropriate for juries to recommend that Honor Council write a Plenary resolution in order to address issues that came up during the trial?