

Dialogue Humanities Review is a free academic journal for secondary students

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

In an educational environment where test prep is the norm and humanities classes are sidelined in favor of promoting math and science, those of us who teach or promote literature, history, philosophy, and the myriad other humanities-based subjects are facing a real crisis of relevancy. The humanities have been widely relegated to elective status, and our students at times have difficulty finding “real world” applications for the critical thinking and writing skills we promote in our classes. This struggle for significance is understandable, however, as students largely write in an intellectual vacuum, where the only audience is their teacher and the only purpose is to earn a grade. *Dialogue Humanities Review*, our new online scholarly journal for middle and high school students, seeks to change all this.

Developing *Dialogue Humanities Review* over the past two years has been a labor of love, but it has proven to be worth the struggle. Our goal is to give students a forum to display and discuss their best humanities-focused essays, and the ten authors in our inaugural publication have taken a big step towards establishing the kind of dialogue we’re hoping to foster. If students discover that engaging, enthusiastic discussions about fields of study that have been deemed too subjective or “untestable” are not only possible, but are also down right fun, perhaps we will see a renewed interest in the humanities-based topics that we as educators are most passionate about.

It is with great pleasure that we present the inaugural issue of *Dialogue Humanities Review*. We hope that you read it with enthusiasm, and join us in celebrating the scholarly endeavors of these excellent young writers.

Sincerely,

Jessica Sambrano, Editor-in-Chief

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AFFLUENZA: AN AMERICAN EPIDEMIC

Siqi Liu

On June 15, 2013, a fifteen-year-old named Ethan Couch went driving with his friends in Tarrant County, Texas, with no driver's license and a blood alcohol level three times the legal driving limit. Later that night, he lost control of his pick-up truck—going 70 miles per hour—and killed four pedestrians. Psychologist Dr. G. Dick Miller testified in Couch's defense and blamed the crime on "Affluenza," linking the teen's behavior to his wealthy family background. The defense's success and Couch's 10-year probation sentence immediately instigated national outrage. Experts debate whether Affluenza, a term which refers to an addiction to economic growth, consumerism, and overconsumption, actually exists. If so, what are its implications for society? What else besides Affluenza can possibly explain the increasingly blatant displays of materialism that—although not uniquely American—have affected this nation more than any other? The roots of the "Keeping Up with the Joneses" mentality are complex, but by examining Affluenza's existence, one can gain a more holistic understanding of the problems that come with America's growing obsession with wealth.

Despite its popular usage in the media, Affluenza is not a recognized medical term. Nowhere does it appear in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, nor do doctors use it in medical diagnoses. According to therapist Jessie O’Neill, founder of The Affluenza Project, it is defined as “the collective addictions, character flaws, psychological wounds, neurosis and behavioral disorders caused or exacerbated by the presence of or desire for wealth.” This definition characterizes the phenomenon as a “virus” that infiltrates the very psyche of its victims. However, experts who dismiss Affluenza’s existence prefer to group the term with self-help books and urban legends. Stetson University associate professor Christopher J. Ferguson argues that it is merely a “product of pop psychology.” Because there has not yet been a scientific way to measure Affluenza, it has not earned a respected place in the eyes of those who demand scientific evidence. In fact, they brand it as a “contagious social disease” (Ferguson). The keyword is “social,” which suggests that it is a set of temporary, curable triggers rather than a sweeping epidemic that is both chronic and irremovable. Since Affluenza does not have proven neurological effects, some deny its existence entirely.

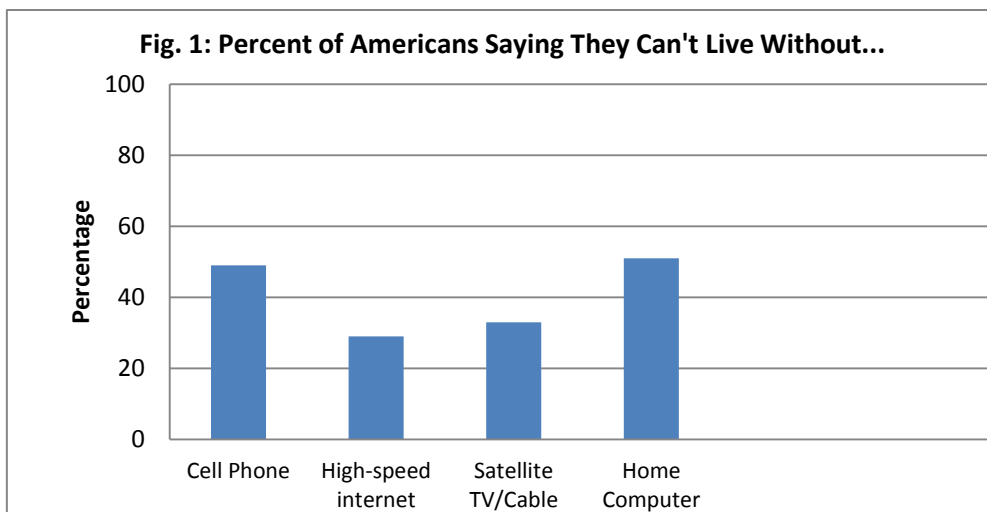
However, Affluenza does exist and is in fact deeply rooted in the American culture. Materialism is the evil twin of the American pioneer spirit, for there is a direct correlation between the early settlers’ dream of owning land and the contemporary culture that is on a perpetual search for wealth. John de Graaf confirms this correlation in his book *Affluenza: How Overconsumption Is Killing Us—and How to Fight Back*, describing Affluenza as an “obsessive, almost religious quest for economic expansion that has become the core principle of what is called the American Dream” (2). Today, this drive for excess accounts for everything from McDonald meals to reality television shows. Whether it is the supersized portions or celebrities’ lavish spending habits, in this country, more is better. Although the gluttonous mindset is seeing

a parallel growth in other nations, the United States has been hit the hardest. A commercial for Buy Nothing Day—a North American anti-consumerism movement—reveals that Americans, on average, consume five times more than Mexicans and thirty times more than Indians. The obsession with buying is clearly more than an ephemeral social trend; it is ingrained in the culture and rooted in the American Dream. Amitai Etzioni, professor of international relations at George Washington University, notes that while other cultures have historically regarded activities such as religion (in Europe) and education (in China) as the pinnacle of personal achievement, the American culture emphasizes social mobility and individual economic accomplishments. Affluenza serves as evidence that this uniquely American mindset is increasing in scope and severity. Forget about the settlers' dream of owning land—for most people, a house with a white picket fence is no longer enough. They need nice cars, televisions, and designer clothes.

Even among those who believe in Affluenza's existence, a number of people think that it only has a marginal presence in society. The aforementioned Couch case did launch the popularized term into media spotlight, but it was an isolated occurrence. Some experts point out that if Affluenza is truly rampant, one should be able to find a plethora of published research pertaining to its influence. However, while there is an abundance of research on entitlement, there have been very few comprehensive studies done on Affluenza specifically (Ferguson). The lack of research literature seems to imply that Affluenza's influence is so insignificant that it has not caught the attention of the academia. According to law professor Gregory McNeal in *Forbes*, the term has rarely been referenced outside the context of financial planning or inheritance before it leapt into media attention in the Couch case. Previously, it was used to describe wealthy individuals who received astronomical sums of money and had trouble managing the inheritance.

If only millionaires have to worry about huge sums of inheritance, then surely a majority of Americans are at a safe distance from the clutch of the “rich disease.

In reality, the belief that Affluenza only affects the top one percent is erroneous; this “virus” does not prey exclusively on the rich. Rather, it has a profound and extensive impact on members of all social classes. The most revealing evidence of this epidemic is the changing definition of luxury in the American language. According to Investopedia in *Forbes*, there has been a dramatic change in recent years of what is considered a necessity versus a luxury (see Fig.1). In a matter of decades, items such as cell phones and computers went from indulgences to essentials.



The rapid increase in purchases of such items creates a continuous surge in consumerism, which stimulates overspending. America’s obsession with media portrayals of the super-rich is another noticeable symptom of Affluenza. Laura Stampler writes in *Time* that The Rich Kids of Instagram—a website which posts Instagram photos of teenagers doing extravagant activities like cruising on yachts, climbing private jets, and even burning cash—has inspired a new reality television show named “The Rich Kids of Beverly Hills.” Along with shows like “High Society”

and “Gossip Girl,” the media’s fascination with the lives of the upper class reflects the interest of American viewers. Here the “Keeping Up with the Joneses” mentality comes into play: a combination of the audience’s reaction to media, marketing, and peers creates an increase in demand. Edward Bernays, the Austrian-American pioneer in exploring mass propaganda, theorizes that these factors explain consumer behavior because “a thing may be desired not for its intrinsic worth or usefulness, but because [the buyer] has unconsciously come to see in it a symbol of something else” (Bernays 52). Most consumers claim that what they buy is what they need, but in reality they subconsciously see their purchases to be symbols of status or influence—perhaps a way to appear trendy or impress their neighbors. The result of this mass marketing propaganda is an insatiable and growing desire for consumption across all socioeconomic strata. Perhaps it is also the reason why there have been so few studies done on Affluenza: excessive consumption is so embedded in the American psyche that it is nearly indistinguishable from culture.

But even if Affluenza is widespread, is it necessarily harmful? Some argue that extravagant spending is a beneficial behavior for society. In his dissertation “Living in Wealthy Neighborhoods Increases Material Desires and Maladaptive Consumption,” Professor Jia Wei Zhang writes that past studies have indicated that high levels of luxury spending have financial benefits. From an economic point of view, discretionary spending is at the core of business stimulation, providing profit for industries and creating job opportunities. The economy would unarguably collapse if Americans suddenly put a halt on luxury spending, hoard money in their bank accounts, and become a nation of penny-pinchers. The idea of denouncing Affluenza seems to be a threat to the financial industry itself, erecting a looming barrier against free market and choking the materialistic attitude that is necessary for a booming economy.

However, to fully examine the effects of Affluenza, one must look beyond the broad strokes of economic theory and study the negative implications that it has on the individual. One of Affluenza's greatest dangers is that those who have it tend to deny that they are spending excessively. This self-denial is a catalyst in financial disasters, muddling an individual's sense of fiscal responsibility and causing families to become embroiled in debt. According to a study by the Federal Reserve of New York, consumer spending debt is rising at the fastest rate since 2007 (Frizell). This same habit of overspending contributed to the web of risky mortgages and defaulted debts that culminated in the 2008 recession—something from which the nation is still recovering. The most disturbing symptom of overconsumption is its impact on victims' mental health. George Monbiot writes in *The Guardian* that increased consumerism leads to greater dissatisfaction and is linked to mental illnesses such as anxiety and depression. It turns out that people who measure their success by wealth find it harder to be content, and people who are privileged are more likely to harbor serious personality flaws. In a 2013 study conducted by Paul Piff, a psychologist at the University of California, Berkley, wealthier participants exhibited more self-entitlement than participants from disadvantaged backgrounds. A popular culture obsessed with the lives of the narcissistic wealthy translates into a society that is becoming more egocentric itself. Narcissism is not the only consequence of Affluenza, either. Psychiatrist Dr. Dale Archer identifies mass empathy as one of its most noticeable symptoms, citing a study which found a 40% decrease in empathy in college students when compared to those only two decades ago. The decline in empathy and parallel increase in narcissism paint a picture of a population that is both socially and psychologically crippled by Affluenza.

Although some like to believe that it does not exist, Affluenza is a growing phenomenon that manifests in multiple facets of American society, damaging individuals both economically

and psychologically. It stems from cultural values, not wealth, so no socioeconomic class is immune from its symptoms. Today's increasingly consumerist economy allows Affluenza to spread at an alarming rate as marketing and public relations reinforce Americans' materialistic tendencies. A society without materialism is impossible and impractical. However, it is crucial to recognize that Affluenza's unchecked growth may lead to complex and long-lasting consequences for future generations.

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WOULD YOU TRAVEL TO THE MURDER CAPITAL OF AMERICA?

Madeleine McArdle

Chicago is a world in itself. In 1951, Nelson Algren, a National Book Award winner and author of *Chicago: City On The Make*, described the city as “forever [maintaining] two faces, one for winners and one for losers, one for hustlers, and one for squares” (23). Algren called Chicago a “fighter’s town” (62) where “the Do-Gooders still go doggedly forward” (14). This two-faced perception of Chicago has proven timeless, as over fifty years later, Alex Kotlowitz defined Chicago as “a place eternally in transition” (*Never A City So Real* 13). These polarities of Chicago allow for a wide variety of perceptions. Chicago’s many faces reflect the unique experiences and day-to-day realities of its citizens. The viewpoints of Chicago’s citizens are stacked against the broad shoulders Chicago presents to the world at large. There are countless people who have succeeded in Chicago and champion it as America’s greatest city, but in the words of Studs Terkel, “Any honest description of Chicago must grapple the fact that much of the city’s history is a compendium of low deceit, smiling hypocrisy, organized crime, political

corruption, spectacularly unmitigated greed, institutionalized racism, dehumanizing class conflict, and brutalizing violence” (vii).

Since 2012, headlines like London’s *The Telegraph*’s “Chicago: the murder capital of America” (Loerzel, “How the World Media Covers Chicago”) have filled the press, greatly impacting Chicago’s worldwide reputation. That year concluded with a chart-topping 506 homicides in Chicago, seventy more than in 2011, according to the Chicago Murder Analysis. And even those numbers are misleading, considering countless homicides remain unreported. Alex Kotlowitz reveals “what’s not in the ‘Chicago Murder Analysis’: Over the past 15 years...an estimated 36,000 people were shot and wounded” (“The Price of Public Violence”). Eighty-three percent of this overwhelming violence occurs in only half of the city’s police precincts, allowing those unaffected by it to dismiss the violence that brands the lives of its victims. In light of this violent uproar, it will be argued that the way people view Chicago depends upon their interaction with this violence, which has its roots in geography, race, and social class.

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Chicago’s reputation for violence is not recent. Before the 1893 World’s Fair, “The city was widely perceived as a dangerous, evil, and unnatural place...Vice and disorder...were the special province of the city” (Spinney 120). In 1907, “Chicago, in the mind of the country, [was] pre-eminently notorious for violent crime” (Turner 575). The June 12, 1930 edition of the *Chicago Tribune* included a cartoon by John T. McCutcheron that “[depicted] Chicago’s growing reputation for lawlessness in the eyes of the nation in the late 1920’s and 1930’s” (Hoffman 84). As Judy Kritzberg, a longtime Chicagoan, puts it, “Chicago has always played host to violence:

The Haymarket riots...violence by police against union organizers...criminals who have easy access to guns, crazy people, gangs fighting turf wars..." (Kritzberg, Judy). The Chicago's violent history is long standing and seemingly endless.

The city's "open flouting of the laws of the time, its political corruption, its blind violence" (Reilly 29) brought Chicago notoriety during Prohibition. *Big Al's Official Guide to Chicago-ese* reveals, "No other city in the land mirrored the Roaring Twenties as did the Windy City" (Reilly 29). Chicago's gangsters monopolized the underground sale of alcohol during prohibition, dividing Chicago into specific territories that belonged to the various gangs. This physical separation exacerbated the territorial loyalty and aggression of the gangs, setting a standard that remains the structure of gang territory today. In the 1920's, the "battle lines shifted almost from day to day, depending on local alliances of convenience, political deals, and mob-figure assassinations" (Reilly 54). While these gangs have converted to drug dealing as their business, the current gangs embrace a similar custom of varying "battle lines." When the strict rules of the gang world regarding territory and privilege are broken, violence occurs and seemingly never-ending gang wars are started. As Jorge Roque, a man who grew up in Little Village on Chicago's Southwest Side, describes it, "It's been retaliation after retaliation" (*How Long Will I Cry?* Roque 68). While gang violence is not unique to Chicago, any complete understanding of violence in Chicago must include attention to these gangs.

Social class is a major factor in determining one's assessment of Chicago, because this violence only occurs in lower class areas. When immigrants flooded the city in the 20th century, most congregated into separate ethnic neighborhoods and worked for laborious, low-income jobs. The same was true for the African-Americans of the Great Migration, who were quartered off into specific neighborhoods, creating the "Black Belt" of Chicago. Prejudice was widely

prevalent, as these people of color remained in lower income classes, rarely attaining higher-paying jobs. The majority of people living in these south and west neighborhoods of Chicago have continued to live there, unable to rise above low-income. Pamela Hester-Jones, a woman who lost her thirteen-year-old son to a stray bullet, shares her perspective of the city: “The streets of Chicago are not safe” (*How Long Will I Cry?* Hester-Jones 35). The poverty-stricken population of Chicago’s south and west sides know the city as a monster, a fate from which they cannot escape. According to Kulmeet Galhotra, an attorney supervisor for the Homicide Task Force for the Cook County Public Defender, “There’s almost an expectation how that fighting is the way [these people] deal with conflict” (*How Long Will I Cry?* Galhotra 77). For them, the violence is unavoidable, altering their perspectives of Chicago.

VIOLENCE ON THE RISE

Currently in Chicago, an average of five people are shot each day, in a select number of neighborhoods. T-awannya Piper, a community activist in the far south side Roseland neighborhood, observes, “Kids I work with don’t even want to go home [from school]” due to the risk of running into violence on the streets (*How Long Will I Cry?* Piper 3). Harlon Keith Moss Jr., a former police officer, reveals, “There’s just more gun violence now. These kids, they pick up a gun and they’re more apt to shoot you and try to kill you. And it’s not only other gangbangers they target. They have no regard for regular civilian life” (*How Long Will I Cry?* Moss 16). Many parents living on the south and west sides of Chicago do not let their children play outside, given that they are in more danger in the open air. Eighty-two percent of the murders in 2011 took place in public areas, leaving civilians trapped in their houses out of fear of being the target of a stray bullet, a common cause of death in these specific neighborhoods. On

average, police “pull anywhere from 7,000 to 8,000 guns off the street each year” from both those who use guns as weapons and people who arm themselves in self-defense (*How Long Will I Cry?* Kotlowitz xvi). The violence that prevails over these neighborhoods leads to immense isolation between families and suspicion and insecurity among neighbors. To Reggie (last name unknown), a nineteen-year-old from the Back of the Yards neighborhood (named for its location behind the Union Stockyards), Chicago breeds an “every man for himself” mentality, forcing people into mistrust. He explains, “All I got to say—you don’t got nobody else but yourself. Even me. I’m a twin, but no matter what, you still by yourself” (*How Long Will I Cry?* Reggie 70). Children question whether or not they are going to grow up as they watch people, some whom they know and love, die every day. Gang membership is almost impossible to avoid in these neighborhoods. Physically living on one block versus another determines gang affiliation, even if participation is not desired. Membership is also becoming increasingly younger, as brothers and sisters follow older siblings into gangs. For these individuals, “everybody in their families gangbangs. That’s all they know, that’s all they do...It’s what is considered *the norm* in their home” (*How Long Will I Cry?* Piper 6). In some families, gang affiliation is generations deep and has the potential to affect generations to come.

Chicago’s violence is clearly worsening. In 1926 there were seventy-six killings, the highest murder count (Spinney 177) since the city’s founding. Compare this to the 415 killings in 2013, a figure from an article titled “Police: Chicago Reports 415 Murders in 2013, Lowest Since 1965”. On Easter weekend alone (2014), more than forty people who were shot (“More Than 40 People Were Shot”). Without intervention this violence can only worsen.

Even if one is able to physically escape the violence, its emotional effects last a lifetime. Much like war veterans, children growing up in the city’s violence show signs of Post-Traumatic

Stress Disorder, leading to “outbursts of rage, an inability to sleep, flashbacks, a profound sense of aloneness, a growing distrust of everyone around [them], a heightened sense of vigilance, and a debilitating sense of guilt” (Kotlowitz, “The Price of Public Violence”). The Department of Justice released a report suggesting “that children exposed to community violence might turn to violence themselves as a source of power, prestige, security, or even belongingness” (Kotlowitz, “The Price of Public Violence”). There are many attempts to control the violence through stricter gun laws and more police attention, yet this ignores the fact “that the violence eats away at one’s soul--whether you’re a direct victim, a witness, or...simply a friend of the deceased” (Kotlowitz, “The Price of Public Violence”). For those who grow up in such an environment, the perception of Chicago as violent can prove to be inescapable.

REPUTATION AND ITS FACTORS

Chicago’s violence has become so concentrated that parents are beginning to lose hope for their children. Their idea of what Chicago offers its people is polluted by the lives that are being taken all around them. Standards of the quality of life in these neighborhoods are dropping steadily lower, shown through John McCullough’s, a young Chicagoan, revelation: “My proudest achievement: I’ve been out of jail for a whole year!” (*How Long Will I Cry?* McCullough 23). According to Pastor Corey Brooks, “back when everything was segregated, people had no choices but to live in this area, take care of this area” (*How Long Will I Cry?* Brooks 37). He notes how during segregation, lower income black people “had living examples that education works and hard work pays off and determination goes a long way” (*How Long Will I Cry?* Brooks 37). When people with middle and upper incomes began moving out of these neighborhoods, what was left was “a neighborhood where people have been far removed from

the American Dream,” (*How Long Will I Cry?* Brooks 37) causing them to lose sight of the lives they want for themselves and their families. Brooks sees kids who think, “Life means nothing. Life has been devalued” (*How Long Will I Cry?* Brooks 41). In the most violent neighborhoods, education is poor and job opportunities are almost nonexistent. To many, the drug business appears to be the only way to make enough money to live comfortably. Jorge Roque of Little Village explained, “I’ve seen the gangbanging and drug dealing...It’s an addiction of feeling that you’re someone. Because everyone’s looking for that acknowledgement and acceptance. That was that one missing thing in our lives” (*How Long Will I Cry?* Roque 63). The gang violence stemming from gang involvement is a direct consequence of the lack of honest opportunity for people in these neighborhoods.

However, not all of Chicago is included in this violence. When asked about her perspective of Chicago, Ms. Judy Kritzberg saw the city as having “definitely become more sophisticated--better restaurants, better theater, music, etc.” (Kritzberg, Judy). While she has knowledge of Chicago’s violence, it has not impacted her directly. Kritzberg admits, “I am sure that anyone who is directly affected by the violence...will feel differently than someone who is not” (Kritzberg, Judy). Her husband, Barry Kritzberg, also a lifetime Chicagoan, holds a slightly different image of the city. He says, “Chicago is better, in some ways (more ethnic restaurants, more theater, etc.), and of course I like that, but it is also a city that turns away from the persistent problems of poverty, homelessness, and segregation” (Kritzberg, Barry). Mr. Kritzberg has witnessed the city change from a place where kids “actually played in the street” to one in which that is out of the question for many children, noting, “I would never see that today” (Kritzberg, Barry). The Kritzbergs, a white couple, live in the south side neighborhood of Hyde Park where they feel very safe. Journalist Noah Berlatsky, a white male, also living in Hyde

Park, “wasn’t directly concerned about the safety of [his] family” (Berlatsky, “How Bad Is Violence in Chicago? Depends on Your Race”) after a shooting occurred four miles from his house. However, Mikki Kendall, a black writer who lives four miles away from the shooting told Berlatsky, “I have a fourteen-year-old son who can’t go to the McDonald’s in Hyde Park at lunch because the school has noticed an uptick in crime at that location” (qtd. in “How Bad Is Violence in Chicago? Depends on Your Race”). She reasons that this differing perspective is because the police “give a false sense of security to white people” (qtd. in “How Bad Is Violence in Chicago? Depends on Your Race”). But for people of color living in the area, life is quite different.

When comparing all of these perspectives of Chicago, people of color have an image of Chicago that includes fear and violence, while white people seem to have more positive, perhaps narrow-minded, ideas of Chicago. This differing perspective is due to the history of people of color having faced great prejudice in Chicago. The city has been host to race riots and countless crimes of race, giving it the reputation of “the most racially segregated city in the country” (*How Long Will I Cry?* Harvey ix). One’s attitude toward Chicago can differ vastly depending on race and ethnicity.

According to Alex Kotlowitz, “Chicagoans...are tribal, living among their own, a city of insiders whose entire identity is wrapped up in their neighborhood or parish” (*Never A City So Real* 18). A white family living in Chicago’s posh Gold Coast sees the violence as nothing more than “not being in our neighborhood” (McArdle, Rich). Their idea of Chicago as an intimate city and a wonderful place to grow up does not change when reminded of Chicago’s crime, given that “[they’re] still protected by [their] police” (McArdle, Rich). According to Charlton, the youngest son at fourteen years old, the violence “doesn’t stay on [our] minds because [we] aren’t a part of

it” (McArdle, Charlton). Due to being far away from areas of the city where violence occurs, residents like this Gold Coast family do not think of it as a threat to their own security; their sense of Chicago is untainted by the poison of violence. According to Mr. Kotlowitz, “these neighborhoods are so physically and spiritually isolated from the rest of us that we might as well be living in different cities,” (*How Long Will I Cry?* xvii) leaving those outside of the violence to think of Chicago as a welcoming city with all of the resources needed to create a rich future, literally and figuratively.

It’s not only the people living in Chicago who incorporate violence into the city’s reputation; Chicago’s worldwide reputation revolves around violence as well, and it has the potential to dramatically damage the city. According to Tim Calkins, a strategy and branding expert and teacher at Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management, “Each report that deems Chicago as a dangerous town shapes the perceptions that people have of the city...Every time Chicago is in the headlines for violence, the reputation gets a little more tarnished” (qtd. in “Chicago’s image takes a hit”). In November, the French Foreign Ministry warned “its citizens to be careful about traveling to certain neighborhoods in Chicago” (Le Mignot, “French Tourists Warned”). Chicago’s tourism, apart from its economy outside of major franchises, is being undermined due to its unfaltering violence; people do not want to travel to a place that puts their safety in jeopardy. If warnings similar to the French government’s continue, the people who depend on tourism risk losing their source of income, increasing the number of impoverished and violent neighborhoods. This economic migration will potentially cause more violence if the new population also turns to Chicago’s drug trade as a means to make money, creating a downward spiral. The people currently living in these neighborhoods are already losing hope for their futures, as the violence surrounding them seems to never end. Calkin

questions, “If this continues, will it have an impact on whether companies decide to locate in Chicago? It’s a long-term concern” as “a large area can potentially be tarnished by a smaller pocket of brutality” (qtd. in “Chicago’s image takes a hit”). While many do not see the violence as a direct threat, allowing them to dismiss the idea of pushing toward change, they are indirectly impacted by the violence due to Chicago’s loss of financial opportunity and failing reputation. Eventually, all Chicagoans, no matter their race, social class, or residency, run the risk of being branded as violent, thus affecting their individual opportunities outside of Chicago.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, much work has been done to ameliorate Chicago’s violence in order to create a city that will support *all* of its inhabitants, giving each equal opportunity for success. A multitude of organizations, including the esteemed Cure Violence as well as the recently started SCY (Strengthening Chicago’s Youth) of Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago, work toward violence prevention, fighting the violence before it occurs by showing kids who are engulfed in the gang world that there are other paths to choose. The book *How Long Will I Cry?: Voices of Chicago Youth’s Violence* is a free book comprised of first-hand accounts of how the violence has worsened in recent years, as it has affected the lives of the individual authors. Its goal, much like Cure Violence’s documentary, *The Interrupters*, is to spread awareness of the horrors occurring just outside of where many unaware Chicagoans live, with the hopes that they will be inspired to help its victims in whatever way they can. By word of the Phoenix Editorial Board, “there has been progress despite the media’s depiction of violence in the city” (Phoenix Editorial Board, “Despite Violent Reputation”). However, Chicago’s violence, its greatest threat, will only be overcome if *everyone* is willing to change, but its reputation may be tainted forever.

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SMOKED OUT: AN ANALYSIS OF CHINA'S POLLUTION PROBLEM

Bianca Stelian

Over the last thirty years, China has become a global superpower, with its annual economic growth rates routinely exceeding 9%. Due to Deng Xiaoping's revolutionary implementation of capitalism, China has been able to develop as one of the world's largest economic forces, second only to the United States. However, this rapid growth has not come without consequences. With China's increased industrialization, a state of environmental disaster has fallen upon the nation, affecting cities and rural areas alike. Though the country has made its economic growth the priority for decades, a change of mindset is absolutely necessary in order to fix its massive air pollution levels and save its citizens from pollution's dangerous effects. China needs to make a compromise and focus on its environment rather than just its GDP in order to fully address the issue. Unfortunately, as the nation shows no signs of making its economy anything but the priority, and the pollution goals it has set are unrealistic and inefficient, China is unable to effectively handle this crisis.

China's coal consumption accounts for over half of the world's total coal usage, the harmful emissions of which are causing vast increases in disease and death. Coal is responsible for the majority of the country's sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, and particulate matter (PM) emissions, posing a threat to all Chinese residents who like to breathe. Such results of these high concentration levels include health risks to the cardiovascular system (the disease of which has become the country's leading cause of death), the cerebrovascular system, and an increase in cancer and premature deaths (Greenpeace Air Pollution). Recently, several scholars conducted an experiment in the Pearl River Delta region of China to assess the carbon emissions' effect on the likelihood of civilians to have cancer. Despite the measured gases only constituting 0.7% of the total emitted substances of the region, it was discovered that the gases contributed to the cancer inhalation risk by five times more than their mass, further demonstrating the harm these emissions cause to surrounding villages (Bi Phase Distribution). Such life-threatening effects are especially prevalent in rural areas: namely, the Shanxi province, a major processor of coal, which has a birth defect rate of 8.4%, the highest in the world (Greenpeace Air Pollution). This startling statistic has been linked to the area's massive coal consumption, which has been on the rise for over fifty years. Beginning in the 1950s, the Chinese government provided free coal boilers to people living north of the Huai River in regions like Shanxi, which is one of many poorer areas of China. Though the initiative may have been intended to allow the impoverished to stay warm over the cold winter, it has had major consequences, as PM concentration in the north is over 50% higher than before due to the heavy coal burning (Plumer).

These dangerous consequences not only affect the villagers but also the urban middle class who cannot afford costly air purifiers, especially residents of large cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Xi'an. The PM concentrations of these four cities greatly exceed World Health

Organization (WHO) air quality standards. A group of scholars recently studied the effects of hydrocarbons found in house dust on the neurodevelopmental levels of children living in urban areas like these. In doing so, they discovered that certain variations of these harmful gases were associated with inferior analytical and behavioral issues among children. A similar study performed on animals exposed to the same gases resulted in memory and learning deficiencies with detrimental effects on anxiety and depression levels (Wang). A Greenpeace report on dangerous breathing found that if the four previously mentioned large cities had effectively controlled their PM levels and met WHO air quality guidelines in 2012, premature deaths would have dropped by over 80%, while the economic benefits of this reduction would have generated over \$870 million (Greenpeace Air Pollution). Evidently, China isn't able to comprehend that saving its environment may be beneficial in more ways than one.

Unfortunately, these unattained economic gains are difficult for government officials to fathom, as many provincial leaders understand that spending more on pollution reduction reduces their chance for promotion, as it does nothing to boost the GDP. Those who allocate funds towards highways and transportation infrastructure, though creating environmental damage, end up increasing the GDP as well as their advancement opportunities. Political outcomes from 2000 to 2009 have demonstrated this pattern, with environmental investments dropping from 25.4% to 19.1%, while investment in infrastructure jumping from 60.2% to 72.7% (Davis). Effectively, China's environmental issues are a direct result of its political system, in which the state has absolute control and thus its decisions are in favor of benefitting the Chinese economy. Though increased industrialization turns profit for the state, it leads to monstrous pollution. A research project recently completed in urban China examined the effects of the costly traditions on the environment, the results of which demonstrating the carelessness the

country's government feels for its environmental issues. During the celebration of the Chinese Spring Festival in Lanzhou, Ye Yu, a local researcher, and her colleagues discovered that the event's celebratory fireworks caused particle size growth by over 600%, and with the combination of the factory emissions nearby, this led to a massive increase in dangerous particulate pollution affecting residents and their households (Yu). Clearly, the celebration had disastrous effects, and will continue to do so until the government recognizes the dangers it can cause.

Chinese businesses are valued over individuals, so they can be given direct or indirect consent from the government to pollute, thereby affecting many city-dwellers who live near the pollution sites. These residents have no law-backed ability to shield their property from the emissions or even appeal to a court for justice, as pollution cases are rarely heard and breaches of the law in this case are never investigated. The Third Plenum, a meeting between Chinese officials to discuss national reform, provided a platform to find a pollution solution, yet this only created further complications: the leaders suggest that China should create a system to independently address, supervise, and enforce all programs involved in China's environmental issues so that reductions in harmful emissions can actually exist, and exist productively. However, as stated in its official legislature, the government of China assumes all responsibility for the country, so the presence of an independent governing body is impossible. The government is not held accountable for their actions and the ultimate payback will be irreversible pollution in China (Qin). With the state controlling so much of the production of pollution in China, there is no place for citizens to have an influence.

This lack of respect for those worst affected by the pollution has led to disastrous smog scares. Just two months ago, the entire Chinese city of Harbin was shut down due to record levels

of pollution from massive coal consumption. While the WHO recommends daily levels of PM concentrations to be twenty or less, with anything 300 or above considered hazardous, during Harbin's shutdown, their recorded PM levels reached over 1,000. The schools and airport in the city were closed, and visibility in the city was reduced to less than ten meters, causing major traffic jams. Over 11 million people call Harbin home, meaning that disasters like these take a toll on many lives. Though Harbin was impacted the worst by the pollution, many other parts of northeastern China experienced the severe smog as well (Euro News China Record). In fact, these levels of pollution have become so colossal that they even inhibit Chinese airport staff from doing their jobs sufficiently. Due to the smog, less than 20% of flights departing from Beijing leave on time, with less than 30% departing on time from Shanghai. The delays were so severe that earlier this year, over the course of three months, more than 25 brawls in Chinese airports were reported. In January, aggravated travelers at Changshui International Airport exhibited their rage by climbing over check-in counters, taking over the airport's PA system, and physically attacking airport staff and ticket machines when their flights were cancelled due to low visibility. At Shanghai Pudong International Airport, similarly frustrated travelers facing delays have been running onto airport runways in protest and recklessly fighting with ground crew members (Traywick). With China's travel industry losing customers and support from their inability to handle the smog, China's economy inevitably suffers as well from the loss of revenue.

Surprisingly, with China putting so much of an emphasis on its economy, its blind reverence for industrialization actually creates massive costs, much more than one would assume given their use of coal, a quite cheap energy source. In fact, in 2010, according to a very conservative estimate, Chinese environmental degradation reportedly cost over \$225 billion, triple that of its cost in 2004 (Wong Cost). The few attempts to alleviate these costs by focusing on

environmental strategies have only been met with resistance from China's powerful state-owned oil companies, who have refused to produce cleaner-burning fuel for many years. Much of the fuel they use is high in sulfur, the reduction of which would require oil companies to buy over \$800 million worth of environmental technology, a cost that businesses do not wish to bear, despite their similarly large costs of harming the environment (Langfitt China's Air). It's obvious that though both options set businesses back financially, the pressure continues to focus solely on its GDP rather than the opportunity to save its ecosystem.

Environmental degradation isn't the only effect of this pollution crisis that is impairing China's economy. Due to the country's incredible amount of coal consumption, its foreign relations with the United States are beginning to show strain. Earlier this year, it was discovered that pollution from China is being carried over the Pacific and deposited on the west coast of the US, leading to many air pollution violations in US cities. On a day with typical weather, contaminants originating in China such as mercury ozone, sulfur and nitrogen oxides, black carbon, and desert dust reach the US easily. In fact, the EPA recently released a paper on the issue in which they suggested that the air pollution from China towards America would erase the US's improvements made from national emission control programs. Major plans to increase the export of US coal to China are now being called into question by the American government and populace out of concern that proliferations in Chinese coal consumption will lead to even worse air pollution abroad and especially at home. Some US coal-burning power stations are even beginning to shut down out of regards to the Chinese coal industry's impact on the US environment (Levitt US Cities). By polluting so much that other countries bear the effects as well, China is ruining its international relations, the weakening of which then decrease international willingness to trade or make deals with China, thereby hurting its economy.

Though regarded as a producer of much of the country's environmental woes, Beijing has actually done quite a bit to control air pollution over the last few decades. In the 90s, officials pushed industry out of the city and replaced coal-burning heating with natural gas heating. A major effort to improve air quality for the 2008 Olympics proved successful, and in fact, the city's newest fuel emission standards are superior to those of some European cities. Recently, Beijing announced a multibillion-Yuan campaign to improve its environment further, aiming to reduce its coal consumption to 10 million tons while continuing to decrease particle concentrations. However, these measures are only taken in Beijing, and air knows no bounds. Hebei, a province encircling the majority of Beijing, is much poorer and less developed, with lower fuel quality standards and a large amount of the dirty factories that Beijing has exiled. Whenever the winds blow, Hebei's factory, car, and coal power plant pollution blows into Beijing as well (Langfitt China's Air). Other neighbors of Beijing adversely affect the region as well: In 2011, Shandong and Hebei (both bordering Beijing) consumed nearly 700 million tons of coal together, exceeding the total annual consumption of large economies such as Germany or India, or even America, as more coal is consumed within 350 miles of Beijing than in the entire US (Shuo Beijing). Such a massive amount of coal has proven to be lethal when produced in such a small radius, demonstrating the urgency of this environmental issue.

Strong absolute coal caps are necessary not only for Beijing, but also neighboring regions as well – measures like the caps Beijing has instated have not been seen from Hebei or Shandong, nor has there been progress in creating regional air pollution control. Unfortunately, because the state doesn't have as much control over the rural provinces as one might expect, policies instated in the centralized government are often ignored by provincial leaders in regard for their regional economies. Though the service sector in Beijing accounts for over 75% of the country's GDP,

throughout the rest of northern China, much greater profit comes from industrialization, with employment and the economy relying on machinery, smelting, construction, and metal work.

Hebei reflects these norms, leading the nation in the production of pig iron and steel and accounting for over 80% of its region's coal consumption (China File Beijing's Neighbors).

However, it was discovered that refineries, smelting plants, and processors located in Hebei are adding not only to the village's issues, with Hebei villagers often choking on the fumes if they go outside on a particularly smoggy day, but also to the region's woes, drastically affecting Beijing as well by contributing up to 30% of the city's air pollutants, an amount which increases in even worse conditions (Chun Beijing). Due to the disastrous effects Beijing's neighbors have on the capital, Greenpeace estimated that if present conditions continue, Beijing will not meet the international air quality standard until 2031, requiring even more time to meet the WHO standard, which is stricter than the international one (Shuo Beijing). And with such aggressive restrictions imposed in Beijing, the rest of the country is equally likely to suffer, as Beijing's remaining heavy industries are highly likely to relocate to "pollution havens," regions where pollution regulations are less strict. Such regions are found in central and western China, where there is great potential for economic growth, but with the implementation of the new restrictions only in Beijing, these regions could face major environmental and health repercussions with the inclusion of heavy industries (China Dialogue Will Beijing). A national standard needs to be set, not only one for Beijing.

Following Beijing's lead, the entire country of China released environmental goals for coal consumption, yet these aims are either too modest or actually harmful to the country. The nation has resolved to reduce its coal consumption to 65% of total energy production by 2017, down from 66.8% in 2012, a meager 1.8% reduction spread out over five years. Though plans are also in place

to increase non-fossil fuel energy, the statistics are nearly negligible, proposing to raise the use of non-fossil fuels to 13% by 2017, up 1.6% from 11.4% in 2012. Though the country has called this China's "most comprehensive and toughest plan to control and reduce air pollution by the year 2017," increases or decreases less than 2% are neither comprehensive nor tough at all and will provide negligible progress, if any. Additional goals include closing outdated capacity in industrial sectors by 2014 and stopping construction of all unapproved projects in overfilled industries. However, this new order is difficult to achieve, as many unapproved projects such as Xinjiang aluminum smelters were begun with the assumption that they could go about business regularly. The market was also not anticipating this order, so China's economy could suffer from this sudden lack of growth and industry (Stanway China Sets). And while the environment needs to become a major point of focus for the government, officials should more carefully monitor their country so that any action that hurts both the environment and the economy will not occur.

China currently has two options regarding the nation's environmental woes. One is to create unrestrained, unsustainable GDP growth at all costs, ignoring the health and welfare of the citizens of China. The other is to promote greener, cleaner growth powered by smart investments in alternate energy. Unfortunately, the government has been focused on China's economy ever since the country's transition to capitalism under Deng Xiaoping in 1977, and shows no signs of altering its priorities. Thus, though focusing on environmental preservation would save over 1.2 billion lives annually from premature deaths and significantly reduce tensions between the government and Chinese citizens, ultimately the state is unable to part with its worship of its GDP (Shuo Beijing). In an attempt to address the issue, a Chinese nationalist newspaper, the Global Times, claimed this week that China's smog actually benefits the country by potentially impeding missile attacks and obstructing hostile spying (Luo). The author wrote this perhaps realizing that nothing

else has alleviated the global concern for the issue so far, so humor is a last resort. However, with such horrific pollution in China, the country's enemies wouldn't even need to utilize missile attacks to hurt China: the immense smog does their job for them by severely harming the people, the environment, and the economy.

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**“LOVE’S MYSTERIES:” THE EVOLUTION ON JOHN DONNE’S ATTITUDE
TOWARD ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS**

Fiona Bell

One of the most powerful paradoxes individuals encounter in life is the ephemeral nature of love. A union that seems eternal to those who constitute it may disintegrate under the force of opposing ideologies or changing perspectives. Lovers may fear the fragility of their love, doubt a partner’s fidelity, or question the destructive impact of physical distance. Perhaps the most difficult fear to control is the one generated by the lover’s distrust that the beloved can be true. Guided by natural fears and curiosity about human nature, writers and poets have addressed these questions within their sociocultural paradigms throughout history. Beginning in the 16th century the English poet John Donne developed many attitudes towards relationships between men and women. The poet’s conclusions about love were quite sophisticated and soulful given the typically pragmatic and political purpose of 16th century marriages. Even today, Donne’s conclusions in his later poems speak to the transcendence of individuals who cherish each other equally, love loyally, and feel deeply. As a young poet, Donne explored monogamy in his poems

and, deeming this union of two souls impossible, focused his poems on the meaning of sexual encounters; these poems convey erotic interest and consciousness of social standards, ultimately deriding spiritual monogamy and lacking the emotional sincerity that accompanies spiritual love. After entering into a loving and loyal marriage, however, Donne developed an ardent appreciation for the deep connection that can exist between two individuals on spiritual and physical levels alike. Donne's speakers are intimately connected to his biography, following the poet's personal journey through love from fear to understanding. Ultimately, the life's work of this poet represents the natural evolution of human consciousness in the age-old search for enduring love within an inconstant reality.

Donne's poems prior to his marriage examine the concept of monogamy, eventually judging it to be impossible. The poet's investigation was perhaps driven by a desire to understand his Anglican environment, which extolled a spiritual bond between husband and wife. The poem "Go and Catch a Falling Star," originally published in Donne's *Songs and Sonnets*, argues that it is unfeasible to find a woman who is both "true, and fair" (18), or loyal and beautiful. The speaker compares finding the perfect woman to absurd, mystical quests such as impregnating "a mandrake root" (2) or "hear[ing] mermaids singing" (5). The speaker finally concludes that if a perfect woman existed, she would be unfaithful by the time a man could meet her. Ultimately, Donne explores the interplay between men's desires to achieve unattainable feats and their fear of failure. However, despite the poem's inherent skepticism, the third stanza in which the speaker entertains the idea of a perfect woman existing is noteworthy:

If thou find'st one, let me know,

Such a pilgrimage were sweet;

Yet do not, I would not go,

Though at next door we might meet;
Though she were true, when you met her,
And last, till you write your letter,
 Yet she,
 Will be,
False, ere I come, to two or three. (19-27)

The tone in this stanza is assured and witty as the poet reaches a pessimistic conclusion about women. However, it is significant that the speaker imagines this flawless woman's existence and describes a meeting as "sweet" (20). The fact that the speaker even entertains this hope exposes a personal desire to encounter such a woman. The use of "yet" (21) demonstrates a tension in the speaker's consciousness: despite his momentary desire to meet the perfect woman, his fear of being disappointed convinces him not to undertake such a quest. Thus, by painting women as mystical, capricious, and essentially unattainable beings, Donne emphasizes the flaws he believes innate to the female sex. Nevertheless, the speaker's diction and tone shifts in the final stanza communicate an underlying desire to experience a monogamous union. Therefore, Donne expresses the inherent beauty and impossibility of monogamous unions, taking a cynical tone because he fears that women cannot be true.

This skeptical view of monogamy is echoed in Donne's poem "Air and Angels," which argues that women are spiritually impure. To begin, the speaker praises physical beauty; he believes that in loving a woman, he must have a physical form to worship: "Love must not be, but take a body too!" (10) The speaker finally rejects the notion that vast spiritual love can inhere the physical beauty of a woman:

Thy every hair for love to work upon

Is much too much; some fitter must be sought;

For, nor in nothing, nor in things

Extreme, and scattering bright, can love inhere; (19-22)

The speaker values physical beauty, describing it as “scattering bright,” but also realizes that the ephemerality of the physical is insufficient in expressing the greatness of spiritual love. Donne emphasizes the vastness of spiritual love through repetition like “much too much” (20) and through the enjambment, in which the phrase spills over onto line 22, highlighting the word, “extreme” (22). The speaker’s own notion of his overwhelming love outweighs any physical being with which he is presented. These two poems demonstrate Donne’s attitude towards physical beauty. In “Go and Catch a Falling Star,” he recognizes beauty’s value and its danger, for, in Donne’s opinion, a beautiful woman is never true. In “Air and Angels,” Donne admires beauty but recognizes its superficiality. Both of these poems suggest the value of physical beauty while simultaneously demonstrating its limitations for the man who seeks monogamous, spiritual love.

The speakers in Donne’s early poetry desire a meaningful union with a woman yet fail to realize this goal. In a manner reminiscent of Ovid, Donne’s speakers reconcile this impossible desire for a relationship by focusing instead on the salacious desire for sexual union. In his famous work, “The Flea,” Donne’s speaker attempts to persuade a woman to yield to him, tailoring his argument to her actions and twisting notions of honor in favor of his momentary desires. Similarly, the speaker in “The Damp” asks the woman to “kill th’ enormous giant, your Disdain;/ And let th’ enchantress Honour, next be slain;” (11-12), thereby encouraging the woman to discard societal values like disdain and personal honor and have intercourse with him. By characterizing his female counterpart as a slayer of giants in “The Damp,” the speaker

empowers women in an interesting role reversal given the status of women in English society at the time. This trend is continued in the elegy “To His Mistress Going to Bed,” in which the speaker requests his mistress to undress, all the while undressing himself. At the end of this poem, the speaker stands naked and vulnerable in front of a still-clothed mistress, breathless from the frequent use of trochaic meter. Donne’s erotic works, therefore, demonstrate an irreverent attitude towards society’s view of intimacy and even toy with conventional ideas of masculine and feminine power dynamics. Nevertheless, it must be noted that Donne’s fascination with sexual relationships resides in fantasy – the speaker rarely achieves the aim of physical consummation in any erotic poem. This trend is interesting, considering the poet’s vast personal experience with sexual encounters. Perhaps Donne chooses to omit physical consummation from his poetry because he believes that the consummation of sexual desire divests the relationship of its meaning. “Being had, enjoying it decays,” (16) as he articulates in “Farewell to Love.” By writing his poetry differently than he led his life, Donne further reveals his desire for a meaningful union that surpasses sexual pleasure. Thus, the erotic poems of Donne suggest the poet’s enduring preoccupation with the impossible: frustrated by the impossibility of spiritual union, the poet develops his erotic poems in order to warp notions of feminine honor and power. In this way, he attempts to assert power over those who have eluded his comprehension in both sexual and spiritual contexts.

This focus on the impossible elements of love shifted upon John Donne’s marriage to Ann More. Ann was the young daughter of a wealthy noble family in London. According to historian John Stubbs, Donne fell in love with the girl because she was, “too young to have been tainted by the ‘sickly dotage of the world’” (Stubbs 122). The poet’s cynicism prior to his marriage is reflected in his poems, which often take a pessimistic and irreverent tone, like some

of the aforementioned poems. Donne's attitude is understandable given his past as a womanizer whose "powers of soliciting chastity" (Stubbs 380) were renowned. In fact, the poet had not experienced a serious relationship with a woman before he met Miss More. Ann's naïveté may have allowed Donne to trust her love and loyalty, allowing him redemption from his licentious past. Though the Mores disapproved of the union, Ann and John Donne married in 1601. Their first years of marriage were difficult because of social isolation from their families and poverty; nevertheless, the poet was "happy...[in his] inner life with Ann" (Stubbs 182). As Donne began to appreciate the beauty of a true, spiritual relationship between a man and a woman, the issues he addressed through his poems evolved. Instead of questioning the existence of spiritual unions, he wonders how to reconcile a spiritual union with physical intimacy. Donne first explores the significance of lovers in the world; the most famous example is "The Sun Rising," a poem that reinterprets the classic aubade style with Donne's characteristic wit:

Thou, Sun, art half as happy as we,
In that the world's contracted thus;
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;

This bed thy center is, these walls thy sphere. (25-30)

The speaker disempowers the sun through the condescending tone and the imperative mode in the last sentence, effectively placing the lovers at the center of the universe. The poem conveys Donne's appreciation of physical pleasure with a woman whom he loves. Additionally, the speaker in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," argues that true love can be strengthened by physical distance:

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat. (21-24)

Donne's simile indicates that the lovers' relationship, like gold, expands when exposed to heat, or the challenge of physical separation. He praises the relationship that binds two souls regardless of their ability to indulge in physical love. In the poems from his marriage, therefore, Donne emphasized the beauty of physical togetherness and the strength of a spiritual bond. Ultimately, Donne unites these two ideas, arguing that physical and spiritual love must work in synergy. "Love's mysteries in souls do grow, / But yet the body is his book" (71-72), as he declares in "The Ecstasy." As Donne experienced a meaningful monogamous relationship with Ann More, in his poetry he celebrated the beauty of a spiritual and physical relationship between two lovers.

Every poet's focus changes over time and Donne was no exception; in his later years he became a minister and consequently concentrated his poems on religion, spirituality, and death. Nevertheless, the poetic shift from his bachelor to married life remained constant insofar as he praised the fulfilled experience of love. In fact, after Ann died giving birth to her twelfth child, Donne wrote "Holy Sonnet 17" in which he appreciated Ann's good nature and devotion; this indicates shift in his understanding of women because instead of viewing them as a collective, impious group he appreciates the human characteristics of an individual. The speaker remembers that, "admiring her my mind did whet/To seek thee, God" (5-6), thus expressing the notion that Ann's influence inspired the speaker to seek God. Donne's love for a woman kindled an even more abstract love – his relationship with God and spirituality. Donne's poetry

elucidates the evolution of a person: the reader meets a cynical young man, later a devoted husband, and finally an elderly person whose gaze turns to the afterlife. Following his marriage, the poet understood the balance between the physical and the spiritual and was thus able to value love in all of its contexts, both on Earth and in Heaven.

John Donne began his career philosophizing about the unattainable, whether it was the ideal relationship or even the fulfillment of lust. After his marriage to a young, loyal wife whom he loved, Donne assessed the importance of the physical and spiritual aspects in a relationship, finally deciding that both elements are crucial. Donne is a significant voice in the English canon because of his ability to reconcile two seemingly opposite views on love: it is indeed possible to love another's soul and his or her body, just as it is conceivable to remain connected when physically apart. By balancing the metaphysical with the physical, he creates the perfect relationship, ephemeral in its beauty and eternal in its meaning.

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EXCAVATIONS: ART AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Abraham Joyner-Meyers

From a few paces away, the picture looks like Aboriginal art. It appears to be a rough abstract drawing with stripes of color swirling over a pale canvas. Earth tones punctuated by white smear into a spiral, perhaps a rough caricature of a human face, such as in Aboriginal Cave Art (Tjungurrayi). As we get closer, small pinpricks of color and rocky texture become visible. Only once we come within touching distance do we realize the actual subject matter of the photograph: the deep pit of an industrial mine. The image changes from an Aboriginal painting to a high-resolution chromogenic photograph on canvas (27" x 34"): Silver Lake Operations #1, Lake Lefroy, Western Australia, 2007 by Edward Burtynsky. It is a scarred and mechanized landscape—quite the opposite of what we originally thought was in the picture. By applying the elements of form and design, the photographer changes a view of environmental degradation into a piece of thought-provoking art that makes viewers consider human impact on the earth.

In Burtynsky's picture, there is great variation of tone and texture. Each band of earth and rock in the photograph is a different color. The dirt outside the pit is ruddy orange and dark red.

As the pit gets deeper, the colors become rockier, moving through white, grey, black, and silver. At the bottom of the pit is a small turquoise lake, the opposite color of the hue of the surrounding dirt. Beginning halfway down, the solid swaths of color are punctuated with pinpricks of the vivid spots of the trucks and trailers working at the site. Each of the layers also has its own texture. Lower in the pit, white striations look rough in the grey rock. Gold pitting along the edge looks grainy. A smooth stone band makes long cuts in the rim. These differences are not variations in the photo but instead are minute differences in the layers of soil and stone picked up by the camera. The lines in the photograph are predominately long curves, often with small waves and the occasional sharp corner. Surrounding the pit are geometric shapes outlined by roads and filled with color. Strange polygons and uneven masses fill the upper right corner. The lower left corner contains wispy organic shapes and one hard-edged trapezoid. The variation in texture and color turns a hard-edged industrial scene into a more organic and visually interesting picture.

Burtynsky's image is taken from a significant altitude, perhaps from a helicopter, looking down into the mine. Because the artist timed his shoot so there would be no shadows, the pit appears very flat. Its apparent two-dimensionality encourages us to notice the patterns and contrast made by the colors of different levels of rock strata. Once we realize what Burtynsky's artwork shows, however, our understanding of the perspective changes and its three-dimensionality becomes apparent. This shifting view seems to suggest that the photograph holds multiple meanings. While viewers first see this picture as straightforward and two dimensional, the picture soon begins to show both its physical and conceptual depth.

When we look at the photograph for the first time, our eyes first fall along the curving edges of the pit, then spiral down the blackened road into the heart of the mine: the turquoise

pool, which functions as the focal point. The turquoise stands out dramatically from the rest of the ruddy red and grey picture. The water in the lake is strangely non-reflective. The photograph suggests radial symmetry, but is deliberately imperfect with the uneven colors, irregular curved lines, and the lake slightly offset from the center.

The design elements of the photograph strongly suggest that Burtynsky's work was far from spontaneous. The picture was taken from great height, requiring the artist to plan an aerial set-up. The lack of shadow leading to the illusion of two-dimensionality suggests that he deliberately used a scheduled shot. In addition, the profusion of artistic choices suggests that the picture was conceptualized in advance of its creation. The photographer neatly complements colors while defining their relationship with lines and shapes. For example, there is balance in the colors and lines surrounding the spiral formed by the road. The lines along the outer edge combine with the colors to create an image of unity, making a visible yin and yang swirl around the pit. Opposing elements come together in one image: the natural world and the industrial world, the beautiful and the destructive, the artistic and the mechanical.

Burtynsky seems very interested in the form and balance of his photo. He carefully uses subtle symmetry, a strong focal point, and rhythmic displays of color, shape, and line. The artist's decision to create the appearance of a two-dimensional piece leads the viewer to see the work first as a beautiful combination of colors and shapes instead of a fully representational image. *Silver Lake Operations #1* is clearly a realistic view of Silver Lake, full of crisp detail. Also visible are tire tracks and the vehicles that made them, as well as fine boundaries between each layer of stratification. Nevertheless, the artist's primary focus is not just precise imitation. There is no sense that the artist was striving only to replicate his perceptual view. Only after

viewers have engaged with the formal elements of the picture does its underlying argument begin to emerge.

The stunningly realistic representation helps Burtynsky capture our attention long enough to convey conceptual ideas about the necessity to understand humans' detrimental impact on the environment. *Silver Lake Operations #1* contrasts natural beauty and human creation. It shows us a transformation, from natural to industrial. The photograph depicts a landscape that might once have been beautiful, but has now been blown apart and dug up. The artist makes the landscape beautiful again by reworking it, at least in our imaginations. By showing the mine in such a stunningly beautiful picture, Burtynsky engages us in a complex way. He shows it to us neither as a simple landscape nor as a straightforward picture of destruction, but as a piece of art: something to make us think about our connection to the environment and something that stays in our memory because of its visual power.

Burtynsky's picture calls to our attention a part of the industrial world most people rarely see. The photo's name, *Silver Lake Operations #1*, might even give us a hint as to the artist's viewpoint: "operations" sometimes implies secretive or covert activities. While most of us don't think (or possibly even know) about this kind of destructive extraction, industrial mining like this is in fact central to our contemporary world. Most of the artifacts of our daily lives are made from mined ingredients. All of the different metals in our electronics, for example, must be mined out of the earth with similar processes. Even the metals used in Burtynsky's own process of photography were mined. Although the artist has a strong message, his work does not come across as angry or judgmental. Perhaps because viewers are welcomed into the picture by its visual interest, we are not immediately alienated or made to feel guilty. The photograph doesn't ascribe responsibility for this devastation to any specific person, company, or corporation.

Instead, we the viewers are asked to acknowledge our own role in this process. The picture doesn't tell us what to do, but it does require us to consider humanity's behavior.

Burtynsky's message both echoes and contrasts with the work of previous artists interested in portraying the environment. For example, photographer Ansel Adams takes a different approach, showing nature in order to glorify and exalt it. His *Half Dome, Merced River, Winter* shows a striking rock structure in Yosemite National Park. The snowy landscape also features a winding river surrounded by trees. The photograph shows a stunning untouched outdoor scene, suggesting both an ideal of the grandeur of natural beauty and a duty to conserve the land. In contrast, *Silver Lake Operations #1* shows the devastation of nature because of our dependence on what lies below the earth. In Adams's photograph, the water glimmers with a reflection of the Half Dome rock formation. In *Silver Lake Operations #1*, on the other hand, the water is dull and non-reflective. The clarity of the reflection in Half Dome emphasizes nature untarnished by human activity. In Burtynsky's piece, on the other hand, the chemically-polluted water sitting in the mine reflects almost nothing, perhaps symbolizing how humans often do not reflect on the effects of our actions on the environment.

Adams's celebration of nature's beauty may be more timeless than Burtynsky's work. Half Dome will continue to resonate in fifty years in the same way it does today. In contrast, the message of *Silver Lake Operations #1* resonates with current issues, right now. Burtynsky's specific intent seems to be to change people's actions in order to avoid an even more destructive future (Burtynsky, "My Wish"). If we refuse to make those changes, his picture will unfortunately continue to be relevant for a long time.

In *Silver Lake Operations #1*, Burtynsky shows us vividly how art can affect us and change how we view our own actions. His photograph carries a timeline from a natural landscape

of long ago, when Aboriginal Australians painted their art with dyes made from the soil, to a scarred landscape dug deep into the earth and colored with mining chemicals. Burtynsky also makes the land into art, albeit in a different way from the Aboriginal painters. Although his picture is of a devastated site, his artistic techniques transform it into a new vision. We see in his photograph an image of the desecrated future where the last vestiges of natural splendor are lost in our greed and in our inaction. Still, Burtynsky never lets us forget how beautiful the earth is, even when it is violently altered by humankind.



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**APPEARANCES SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS: PHYSIOGNOMY AND
PHRENOLOGY IN *JANE EYRE***

Alexandra Muck

“At the corner of the street,” Emerson once said, “you read the possibility of each passenger, in the facial angle, in the complexion, in the depth of his eye” (qtd. in Krystal). In this quote, Emerson refers to physiognomy and phrenology. Though they are both regarded as pseudoscience today, they were reaching the height of their popularity at the same time Charlotte Bronte published *Jane Eyre*. Supporters of physiognomy believed a person’s physical features, especially their facial features, were outward exhibitions of their inner characteristics. Similarly, those who championed phrenology believed the bumps and depressions on a person’s head, or more specifically their skull, gave evidence to the characteristics the person possessed. Prominent during the publication of *Jane Eyre*, these concepts enticed the reader into making judgments about the traits of the characters, especially Rochester, though later Bronte speaks out against the pseudosciences, rendering the judgments incorrect and changing the reader’s perception of Rochester.

Though the ideas of phrenology and physiognomy were initially put forth decades, and in the case of physiognomy, centuries, before the publication of *Jane Eyre*, they were becoming popular at the time of the novel's publication in 1847 with the help of ardent supporters and the printing of several books. The publication of a four volume set called *The Anatomy and Physiology of the Nervous System in General and the Brain in Particular* by Franz Joseph Gall introduced the concept of phrenology in 1810. Though Gall called it cranioscopy instead of phrenology, the science was still the same. Gall claimed the brain was divided into different organs, each of which housed a different trait (Regal). Gall originally identified 27 of these organs, but later phrenologists argued up to 43 (Regal; Walker). These traits ranged from love of children and pets to the desire to travel (Howe). When an area of the brain swelled, causing a bump in the skull, it meant the trait in that area of the brain was used often, so it was very well developed. Likewise, when a trait was not used, it would cause a depression in the skull. Gall's ideas were promoted by numerous people, including his student Johann Spurzheim, who coined the term phrenology, and George and Andrew Combe, brothers who founded the Edinburgh Phrenological Society in England (Regal). Physiognomy, on the other hand, dates back to the ancient Greeks and is the idea that someone's body, specifically their face, gives evidence to their personality (Highfield, Wiseman, and Jenkins). The belief was resurrected by Swiss poet and clergyman Johann Lavater in the late 18th century with the publication of his book *Physiognomische Fragmente* (Highfield, Wiseman, and Jenkins; Hall). With the help of their supporters, phrenology and physiognomy became very popular with the common people everywhere from England to America (Regal).

References to physiognomy and phrenology can be found in the works of Edgar Allen Poe, Charlotte Bronte, and many other authors from the Victorian era (Morse). Some literary

critics believe that phrenology and physiognomy were included in the works of these authors because they were the latest sciences, so they would help the authors' work appear current and modern. Authors who wrote Gothic novels or who lived during the Romantic period, a period that emphasized imagery and symbolism, may also have used phrenology because "it was, of course, a highly visual way of conveying character traits, a way which allowed the phrenologically knowledgeable reader to seem to draw his own conclusions, to enter actively in the story without the author having to resort to omniscience and direct character statement" (Hall). Many of the people who read the works of these authors were "phrenologically knowledgeable" because phrenology was becoming popular with the middle class, the main audience of these authors, during the 1820's and 1830's ("Phrenology").

Like her fellow Victorian authors, Bronte appears to employ physiognomy and phrenology in *Jane Eyre* as a substitute for straightforward character statement concerning Rochester throughout the time when Jane is his employee. In Jane's first encounter with Rochester, Jane describes her master as wearing "a riding cloak, fur collared and steel clasped" (Bronte 96). Though Rochester's clothing does not strictly fall into the sciences of physiognomy and phrenology, it can still be interpreted in a symbolic way. Readers during the Victorian period, who were accustomed to using the sciences, would be ready to make instant conclusions about a character based on his or her appearance. It would not be a stretch for them to read Rochester's clothing as indicative of his personality. These readers could believe that Rochester's cloak, which helps conceal his body, means he hides many secrets. Most of these secrets concern his past, like his marriage to Bertha, a madwoman who still lives in the attic of his house, and the history of his family. Jane, and consequently the reader, only finds out about these secrets little by little, and sometimes only with prompting from others. Rochester guards

his secrets carefully and does not reveal them unless he deems it necessary or they are forced out of him. Before Mason, Bertha's brother, objected to the marriage at Jane and Rochester's wedding, Rochester said he would tell Jane his secret, the secret of Bertha, only "when [they had] been married a year and a day" (Bronte 243).

In addition to the description of his clothing, Rochester's face does not portray him in a positive light, either. Rochester is described as having "a dark face, with stern features," and eyebrows that look "ireful and thwarted" (Bronte 96). Because supporters of physiognomy believe people's appearances match their nature, a dark face, like Rochester's, can represent a dark nature, suggesting all his actions may not be good and all his motives may not be free from malice. Physiognomy practices also say that "force of character is generally indicated by a thick eyebrow," and strong ones, like those of Rochester, can "indicate a love of revenge, [and] frequently also a strong tinge of brutality" (Lomax). It should then come as no surprise to the phrenologically knowledgeable reader when later in the novel, Rochester tells Jane that when he discovered a soldier courting his mistress, the same mistress that is Adele's mother, he "left a bullet in one of his...arms" (Bronte 123). Rochester is not above hurting others, and sometimes to extreme degrees, when they have hurt him. These features Jane notices about Rochester make him appear to be the opposite of "a handsome, heroic-looking young gentleman" when she was anticipating a man who "smiled and [was] good-humored" (Bronte 97). Because Rochester's features are not beautiful, it can also be understood that Bronte, with the use of phrenology and physiognomy in the descriptions of Rochester's face, and, indirectly, his clothing, is declaring Rochester is not a beautiful person, either.

Though Bronte seems to expose Rochester's personality with physiognomy and phrenology, she later contradicts the sciences by revealing they are not the best way to judge

character. When Jane returns to Rochester later in the novel, after his wife is dead and she has turned down an offer of marriage from St. John, she finds Rochester changed in both appearance and personality. He had to have a hand amputated, and he now has a scar on his forehead from when Bertha set the house on fire. Since imperfections in appearance indicate imperfections in character, according to physiognomy, Rochester's additional flaws should mean that his character is poorer than it was before. However, Bronte portrays Rochester as more docile now, needing Jane to lead him around since he can no longer see. Rochester's new personality in spite of his unpleasant appearance suggests that evaluations using physiognomy and phrenology may not always be correct, including the observations the reader previously made about Rochester. All throughout the story, Rochester was not the dreadful person that his looks suggested. Jane, who was supposed to marry the Rochester before the accident, but instead marries the Rochester whose appearance is even more undesirable, saw past these physical features earlier in the novel and continues to look past his physical features when she marries him. Just as Jane overlooks Rochester's appearance when judging his character, readers are encouraged to do the same.

Using the tools of physiognomy and phrenology in *Jane Eyre*, Bronte at first offers an analysis on Rochester, but later nullifies these conclusions and suggests the sciences are not accurate assessments of character. Because readers in the Victorian era used physiognomy and phrenology on a daily basis to judge others, Bronte was able to use the sciences to lure readers into perceiving Rochester as a dark and secretive person. Bronte reverses these perceptions later in the novel, though, forcing the reader to see Rochester through a different lens and admit the conclusions drawn earlier are invalid. The character of Rochester himself implies there is more to someone than their exterior features, and things are sometimes more than what they seem.

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UNIVERSALITY IN KAFKA'S *THE METAMORPHOSIS*

Siqi Liu

Franz Kafka, a German-language writer whose perspicacity bred some of the most influential works in western literature, wrote *The Metamorphosis* in 1912 while suffering from failing health and bouts of depression. While Kafka himself never considered *The Metamorphosis* to be his best work, today it remains one of his most insightful literary accomplishments. In this short story, Kafka juxtaposes the separate metamorphoses of Gregor Samsa and his family to illustrate the universality of hope, despair, and death that characterizes the struggle of mankind.

The simple precision of Kafka's language is anchored as early as the first sentence: "When Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin" (3). The simplicity of language reflects Gregor's unassuming nature and amplifies the strangeness of his world. Just as how Kafka's style is devoid of embellishment, so is the life of Gregor Samsa, who is nothing but an average "traveling salesman" toiling under "a grueling job" (3). In one night, Gregor's situation changes

from a universal human condition to a bizarre, repulsive spectacle. His acceptance of the metamorphosis augments this absurdity, for he ponders about work rather than his horrific physical condition: “Once I’ve gotten the money together to pay off my parents’ debt,” he thinks calmly, “I’m going to make the big break” (4). In this early stage of the transformation, Gregor continues to harbor the same dreams as he did in his human body. Much like a beetle trapped in its daily routine of survival, he attempts to continue his old routine without considering how his physical transformation would affect his abilities.

Soon after the initial metamorphosis, Kafka establishes the parallel between Gregor’s physical imprisonment in his new beetle shell and his figurative imprisonment in his old human body. Readers learn that for the past five years, Gregor has been the sole breadwinner for the Samsas. Despite his financial importance, however, his family treats him with ambivalence. They accept the money with “no special warmness” so that “only his sister [Grete] [remains] close to [him]” throughout the years (20). Gregor’s vermin-like position in the Samsa family preceded his physical transformation into an insect. Psychologically, Gregor remains unmistakably human after the metamorphosis. When he finally manages to get out of bed in his new insect body, he feels “integrated into human society once again [...] and [hopes] for marvelous, amazing feats from both the doctor and the locksmith” (11). Due to his already vermin-like treatment in the family, the transformation seems to Gregor more like minor sickness than a horrific tragedy—something that he believes can be cured by a doctor. This belief, although naïve, illuminates Gregor’s human hope amidst his animal transformation.

When Gregor is unable to unlock the door of his room on the morning of the transformation, he wishes for the locksmith to release him, symbolizing his desire to be freed from the suffocating routine of his life. However, this sliver of hope is soon brutally crushed by

his own father, who assumes Gregor to be a soulless insect and beats Gregor with a cane so that he “[flies] far into his room” and is imprisoned once again (15). The father’s cruelty to his son and financial savior illustrates that Gregor was merely tolerated because his family members—the real “insects”—needed to leech off his salary. Now that Gregor has transformed into an insect, the roles are reversed: he is no longer able to take care of his family, but instead must be taken care of. However, he is deprived of the human sympathy that he deserves, for his family is unwilling to take care of him as he once took care of them. What is more noteworthy than Gregor’s physical transformation, therefore, is that it does not affect his mental or emotional capabilities—a crucial fact that his family fails to comprehend. Kafka juxtaposes an absolute physical metamorphosis with an absolute lack of mental metamorphosis to emphasize the unspeakable despair in Gregor’s situation.

As Gregor loses his position as the man of the house—at least in the financial context—his family’s attitude towards him rapidly deteriorates from pity to outright disgust. A new, strained relationship forms between Grete and Gregor as she becomes his main caretaker. Initially, Grete treats her brother’s condition like some kind of illness and offers him his favorite food as a human: “a bowl filled with fresh milk, [with] small slices of white bread” (16). This milk is soon exchanged for rotten food when it is clear that Gregor no longer follows a human diet. Since he has forsaken his human habits, Grete assumes that he is also no longer able to feel as humans do. One day, when she comes into his room and sees him looking out the window, “not only [does] she not come in, she even [springs] back and [locks] the door” (22). Grete clearly fails to understand that Gregor still possesses human emotions. To make his sister feel more comfortable, Gregor goes to the extreme efforts of arranging a sheet “in such a way that he [is] now completely covered up and his sister [cannot] see him even if she [stoops]” (22). Grete

appreciates this new arrangement, grateful rather than concerned that her brother has now “shut himself off altogether” (23). Grete’s inconsideration, therefore, stands in stark contrast to Gregor’s kindness. Although they both struggle to deal with aftermath of the metamorphosis, they approach it with different attitudes—Gregor with hope and tolerance, Grete with despair and callousness.

As Gregor’s parents and sister become less sympathetic toward Gregor to focus on their own survival, they gain financial independence and freedom. Grete takes a job as a salesgirl, his mother begins to sew lingerie for money, and his father gains a position of authority both at the workplace and at home. The uniform that his father wears becomes a symbolic beetle shell, for “his father [refuses] to take off the official uniform even in the house” and sleeps in it “most uncomfortably yet peacefully” (30). While the shell symbolizes imprisonment for Gregor, it represents power and strength for his father. The father evolves from a useless family member into the man of the house, and the contrast between Gregor’s waning strength and his father’s increasing power is ironic and absolute. The juxtaposition of their separate metamorphoses shows that hope and despair—although two completely different ideas—can coexist and reinforce each other even between individuals in the same family.

At the same time that her father transforms, Grete—who becomes increasingly domineering in her role as Gregor’s caretaker—undergoes a metamorphosis of her own. The sensitive girl who once sobbed in sympathy for her brother metamorphoses into a woman with a hardened heart. She begins to neglect Gregor, “[shoving] any old food into Gregor’s room with her foot” (32) and not bothering to clean his room. After Gregor unwittingly reveals himself to the lodgers the Samsa family has taken in, Grete betrays him out of despair and anger, saying to her parents, “Maybe you don’t realize it, but I do. I won’t pronounce the name of my brother in

front of this monster, and so all I say is: we have to try to get rid of it” (37). For the first time, Grete refers to her brother as “it,” indicating that she no longer deems him worthy of human compassion. Because of Gregor’s profound love for his sister, Grete’s betrayal robs him of the last remains of his hope. As Gregor’s dream of integrating into the human world perishes, so does his desire to live. But even in the last moment of his life Gregor struggles to hold on to his humanity. As he dies, “he [thinks] back on his family with deep emotion and love,” demonstrating that he still possesses human sensitivity and understanding (39). His metamorphosis physically destroys him, but it never completely robs him of his morality. The juxtaposed metamorphosis of Grete from a naïve girl to a less idealistic woman portrays the opposite: as she becomes stronger, she also becomes less humane.

Gregor’s death completes the Samsa family’s evolution because it relieves his family members of their duty to be tolerant. While Gregor is an insect with a human soul, his parents and Grete are humans with insect souls. Their metamorphosis is evident as they develop a newfound desire to revive themselves spiritually and financially, which paints quite the opposite image from the lazy, dependent family before Gregor’s transformation. However, the tangible benefits of this metamorphosis come at a price: their gradual loss of sympathy toward Gregor illustrates a decay of their souls into those of unfeeling vermin. Nonetheless, the morning after Gregor’s death signals the beginning of a new life for them. It is accompanied by a seasonal change, for “there [is] already some mildness mixed in with the fresh air [...] [and] it [is] already the end of March” (40). The beginning of spring indicates the end of a long hibernation for the insects of the Samsa family, who have molted into stronger creatures capable of standing up to their lodgers and even taking a day off from work (41). They have finished feeding off Gregor,

whose body they have sucked “completely flat and dry” (40). Ironically, as Gregor gradually weakens from despair, the other characters have fostered a sense of hope and new beginning.

While his family prospers, death becomes inevitable for Gregor—as the victim of an indifferent society, he was imprisoned from the beginning by his desire to remain faithful to his family and human qualities. This imprisonment gave him both hope and despair, causing him to yearn for success but also be trapped in an inescapable and monotonous routine. His metamorphosis revealed that these two values cannot coexist in his world, and as a result, the only path that remained was death. Through Gregor’s struggles to stay human, however, he succeeds in gaining some dignity. His soul, in the end, is still intact. In the memorable last lines of the story, the parents watch Grete “[stretch] her young body” (42) and ponder about finding her a husband, suggesting that they will now feed off her youth and strength. Although they contributed to their current state of prosperity, they are already preparing for worse days ahead when Grete could come into use. Unlike Gregor’s fantastical transformation, Grete’s metamorphosis into a young woman is more commonplace. Kafka juxtaposes two vastly different metamorphoses—one bizarre and one ordinary—to prove that mankind’s struggle is universal and perpetual. As the cycle of hope, despair, and death ends for Gregor, it is just beginning for his family members. Kafka removes the fantastical element at the end to illustrate that even without horrific physical transformations, mankind will still experience metamorphoses that are multi-dimensional and complete.

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**“EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED HAS A DIM, HAZY CAST OVER IT:” NICK
CARRAWAY’S POETICISM IN *THE GREAT GATSBY***

Frani O’Toole

“Intimate revelations” in Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* “quiver on the horizon” (1); never fully disclosed, they are kept, distant and blurry, from the reader. The narrator, Nick Carraway, uses poeticism to withdraw from any sort of personal, emotive introspection. Particularly when confronted with the two extremes of love and loss, Nick uses poetic language to obfuscate the text, burying the most sensitive truths under cosmetic, surface-level observations. The function of his writing, therefore, becomes like the parties, materialism, and consumerism that pervades the novel: a distraction. In truth, Nick is too affected by the events of the novel to understand them, much less present them in a straightforward manner. In this way, the narration becomes as tricky as the narrative, and readers must sieve through a convoluted text to understand Nick’s character.

Nick often uses poeticism to distance himself from what he writes about; especially in episodes that would direct attention toward him—such as his love affair with Jordan Baker,

friend of his cousin Daisy Buchanan—he uses language to coax the focus elsewhere. Describing Jordan’s appearance, Nick says “the last sunshine fell with romantic affection upon her flowing face [...] then the glow faded, each light deserting her with lingering regret, like children leaving a pleasant street at dusk” (14). By avoiding any clear analysis of Jordan and his relationship with her, he reduces their affair to a simple attraction; while he presents her appearance beautifully, he neglects to probe any deeper, and leaves the reader with only a shallow understanding of Jordan. Though he discusses parties and the weather and champagne endlessly, he never devotes passages to his attachment to Jordan. Nick is ambiguous with his past relationships, too, including his possible engagement to a girl back in the Midwest. Glossing over these intimate details and disclosing little about himself, Nick appears to circumvent his emotions. In this way, language becomes Nick’s façade; by dwelling on these exteriors, he avoids introspection.

Nick’s relationship with Jay Gatsby is another area where his poeticism manifests itself; with Gatsby, however, this interest in disguising emotions through language is shared. Nick says that Gatsby picks “his words with care” (48), and attaches a certain lyricism to Gatsby’s character. “Even through his appalling sentimentality,” Nick says, “I was reminded of something—an elusive rhythm, a fragment of lost words, that I had heard somewhere a long time ago [...] what I had almost remembered was uncommunicable forever” (111). The two men seem to share a special relationship with words and language—their poeticism is accompanied by “lost words” and thoughts remaining “uncommunicable forever.” It appears the way these two complicated men frame their stories allows them to bury their “intimate revelations” and “abortive sorrows and short-winded elations” (2). Neither Nick nor Gatsby seem capable of expressing their emotions, and instead depend on the “sentimentality” of their language to compensate for their difficulty communicating.

This “sentimentality” also appears to help Nick cope with the traumatic events of the summer. Instead of encouraging him to confront the reality of emotional incidents, Nick’s writing helps him to retreat: he uses poetic language to distract from the gravity and urgency of what he witnesses. The first episode of this violence is at Tom and Myrtle’s apartment, when Tom breaks Myrtle’s nose with “a short deft movement” (37). Rather than lingering over Tom’s action, Nick fixates on his surroundings: “There were bloody towels upon the bathroom floor, and women’s voices scolding, and high over the confusion a long broken wail of pain [...] the despairing figure on the couch, bleeding fluently, and trying to spread a copy of *Town Tattle* over the tapestry scenes of Versailles” (37). Instead of addressing Tom’s violence directly, Nick withdraws into a characteristic complacency—by focusing on details and descriptions, his responsibility to the scene is forgotten by the reader. He emphasizes his role as an observer, understating his involvement in the episode; in this way, he is able to partly disassociate himself from the narrative. Later, when Myrtle is killed in the car accident, Nick describes her death through the state of her body, her “left breast swinging loose like a flap, there was no need to listen for the heart beneath. The mouth was wide open and ripped at the corners, as though she had choked a little in giving up the tremendous vitality she had stored so long” (136). In both passages with Myrtle, Nick uses poetic language to give the scenes a distracted, blurry quality—incapable of confronting the violence directly, he finds relief in detachment.

Soon after Myrtle’s death, Gatsby is murdered by Myrtle’s vengeful husband, Wilson; closer to Gatsby than he was the Myrtle, Nick’s response to Gatsby’s death is even more revealing. He leads into the shooting by sequencing Wilson’s actions, but leaves Gatsby’s death itself hazy and unresolved:

There was a faint, barely perceptible movement of the water as the fresh flow from one end urged its way toward the drain at the other. With little ripples that were hardly the shadows of waves, the laden mattress moved irregularly down the pool. A small gust of wind that scarcely corrugated the surface was enough to disturb its accidental course with its accidental burden. The touch of a cluster of leaves resolved it slowly, tracing, like the leg of transit, a thin red circle in the water. (162)

At the climax of the novel, in what should be an emotionally charged moment, Nick eases the excitement through his lyricism. Here, Nick concentrates solely on the pool and neglects to describe Gatsby whatsoever. It appears Nick is using his “cardinal virtue of honesty” (85) as an excuse to skip any sort of subjective interpretation or reflection; Nick invents an obligation to the “truth” and limits himself to simple observations. His only reference to Gatsby is the “accidental burden”: incapable of even mentioning Gatsby by name, it appears that Nick has yet to reconcile himself to Gatsby’s death. Nick’s details and descriptions, then, become a way for him to remove himself from what he narrates.

Coming “back from the East last autumn” (20), why has Nick returned to the events of the summer? Nick’s agenda as narrator, it seems, is to find some sort of closure with regard to “the East that was haunted” (171) for him. The lack of clarity and honesty in his language, however, implies that Nick is still too traumatized to accomplish this agenda. Language, to Nick, is what material goods are to Daisy and what parties are to the residents of East and West Egg: a façade. Beneath the flashy exterior, then, lie the truths that Nick finds himself unable to express and unwilling to confront; relying on the poetic and the figurative to tell his story, Nick retreats from that which is all too real.

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PILLARS OF SALT AND WHITED SEPULCHRES

Ian McKeachie

I. Robert

He was a tall man—disproportionately tall, almost childlike with his dangling arms and scrawny legs. He had huge hands and feet, but a small head that wobbled uneasily on his thick neck.

This was a man who had done terrible things. He was sixty-something when I met him, but in the 1970s, when he was only nineteen, he'd left home to spend three years fighting in Vietnam. He'd gone to war just to pay for his college tuition, not actually invested in the anti-Communist politics of the war itself. This full-grown child, standing in front of me with a glass of wine in his enormous hand, had killed innocent people for a cause he probably hadn't even understood.

But Robert was cheery tonight. A guest at a Christmas party, his cheeks flushed red to match his flannel shirt, he chatted with anyone who would listen about his experiences in the war. His stories featured none of the death, none of the pain or guilt or fear that I knew must be buried somewhere in his past. He talked about boots that didn't fit, and meals that weren't

cooked right, and pranks that had been played deep in the Vietnamese jungle. He glossed over the unpleasantness that was war and gave me a version of his past with all the shadows erased. The image he provided had no depth to it, no contrast to the light it presented. All the details were blurred away by rationalization and idealization.

He was not the man he should be. He wasn't the man I *wanted* him to be. Because anyone with the label *Vietnam vet* should be dark. He should be an alcoholic, or a womanizer, or sunk in nihilistic depression—something, anything, to convince me that there was still a shadow of his past lingering in his consciousness. But Robert refused to conform to my ideals of the ruined war hero. He was soft-spoken and gentle, but there was something about his demeanor that was deeply unsettling to me. Every so often, Robert would start on a story before he realized that it was too violent or too political for him to share. He would snap his mouth shut for a moment, then quickly start on another, more acceptable, *safer* anecdote.

I can't completely explain why, but he felt disingenuous to me. Hollow. On the outside, he was normal enough, but there was something there that just wasn't right. His smile was wide enough to split his whole face in half, but it never seemed *real* to me. It was a Cheshire grin: hanging in the air, but not connected to the rest of his body. He was trying to show me that he was pleasant, and happy, and well-adjusted, but he just didn't maintain the façade well enough. His light persona cast a dark shadow, clearly visible in the way he refused to make eye contact with me when he was telling a story. In the way he hunched his shoulders every time his train of thought went somewhere he didn't want to be. He was so uncomfortable with that shadow that he refused even to curse in my presence. In telling me his war stories, he replaced every word harsher than *goodness* with a *blankety-blank*.

II. My War Hero

I'll never forget the first time I saw *Apocalypse Now*. Martin Sheen, sent into the Vietnamese jungle on an assassin's mission, drinking and smoking and cursing and killing, was the essence of war to me. He was the *Vietnam vet*. He was the one who had voyaged to the heart of darkness, and was forever tainted by that journey.

III. Sodom and Gomorrah

And when morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful to him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my LORD: Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and

that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. (Gen. 19:15-26)

IV. Looking Back

Lot's wife was punished because she looked back at what she was supposed to have left behind. Given a chance to escape the sin of the place she lived, she was supposed to escape it *completely*. She wasn't allowed to have any regret, any attachment at all to Sodom and Gomorrah, but she did. And just that one instant of looking back was bad enough that she was frozen—eternally a pillar of salt looking at the burning city that was once her home. She was still attached to that city, and so she was destroyed with it, unable (like her husband and daughters) to move forward and pursue a new life.

What is it about the past that captivates us so much? In looking back, in clinging to something that no longer exists, we let our pasts define us. Like Lot's wife, we find ourselves pillars of salt, unable to move forward or to look away from what *used* to be. The past taints our minds even after years of separation.

Martin Sheen was a pillar of salt. He would never be able to escape the horrors of what he'd seen and done in Vietnam. That I expected, and respected.

But my real-life *Vietnam vet*, Robert? Somehow, he wasn't. Every time the darker parts of his past came up in conversation, rather than getting stuck in them, he ignored them altogether. Rather than fixating, he denied. He was the Lot, the man who did what he was supposed to and looked forward—looked to Zoar and ignored the burning city behind him.

I'm not sure I can respect that.

V. My Other War Hero

On February 13th, 1945, the city of Dresden in Germany underwent one of the great massacres of human history: an American firebombing resulting in the deaths of more than a hundred thousand people. Among the survivors of the firebombing was then-prisoner of war Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., an American soldier.

Later in life, Vonnegut went on to become one of the great writers of the American literary canon. His 1969 novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*, a fictionalization of his experiences at Dresden, is generally considered his masterpiece. The novel isn't just about the firebombing itself; it follows the main character, Billy Pilgrim, through the course of his life, tracing how Billy's marriage, career and eventual nervous breakdown are all affected by the trauma of Dresden.

Billy Pilgrim is a pillar of salt.

Because of that, I respect him, or at least I understand him more than I understand Robert. Billy's not particularly likeable, or even sympathetic, but his attachment to his past makes him pitiable. And I haven't been able to establish any kind of emotional connection to Robert at all, not even pity. Every time I try, that Cheshire grin of his cracks the world in half. I see the world Robert wanted me to see, but I also see the gaping, empty space with everything that he tried to reject.

And that hole—that *left out* part of Robert's past—makes the rest of it seem so unreal, so incomplete. It devalues the rest of Robert's universe.

That hole makes him unworthy of my pity.

VI. Tracing the Story

Apocalypse Now is actually based on a book called *Heart of Darkness*. Written in the late 19th century by Joseph Conrad, it follows a man named Marlow (the equivalent of Martin Sheen) as he travels into the Congo for a British mining company. At the end of his journey, Marlow meets Mr. Kurtz, a violent man who has established himself as a god among the natives.

The Congo in this book is a violent, evil, greedy place. The natives are the objects of rape, torture, and murder, used as slave labor by the mining company. And after seeing the horrible things that civilized people have become capable of at the heart of the Congo, Marlow is unable to return to society and act as if things are normal. He can never get past the things he's seen.

He's a pillar of salt.

The producers of *Apocalypse Now* took Marlow and made him an icon, an undying symbol of the anger they felt at the atrocities committed in Vietnam. They took a new world and tied it to the old, crystallized it in a plot written by a man who died a long, long time ago.

I guess they're pillars, too.

VII. In Vonnegut's Words

Kurt Vonnegut wrote an entire novel about what he went through in Dresden. That makes him more like Lot's wife than almost anyone else. Not only did he look back, but he actually forced his way back into the burning city that had been his home in 1945. He forced himself to reexperience the firebombing, to crystallize it, to put it on paper for all the world to see.

This is what he has to say about Sodom and Gomorrah:

Those were vile people in both those cities, as is well known. The world was better off without them.

And Lot's wife, of course, was told not to look back where all those people and their homes had been. But she did look back, and I love her for that, because it was so human.

So she was turned to a pillar of salt. So it goes.

People aren't supposed to look back. I'm certainly not going to do it anymore.

I've finished my war book now. The next one I write is going to be fun.

This one is a failure, and had to be, since it was written by a pillar of salt. (Vonnegut 21-22)

He's not wrong. *Slaughterhouse-Five* was meant to be a cathartic book, to release him from the past. But like Martin Sheen, like Billy Pilgrim, like Lot's wife, Vonnegut will always be defined by his past. He'll always be labeled the *Dresden survivor*. His experience in Dresden isn't just a part of this one story, it's an integral part of his consciousness as a whole, and any attempt he makes to free himself from it must be a failure.

In Vonnegut's own words, *so it goes*.

VIII. Museums

When I was eight years old, I went with my parents to Vietnam. There was no particular reason for it to be Vietnam, except that we'd never been before and it was exotic and exciting. There are two main cities in the country: Hanoi, in the north, was the center of Communist power during the war, and is now the capital of the country; while Saigon, in the south, was the base of operations for the anti-Communist movement.

There are two museums I distinctly remember from my trip to Vietnam—one from each city. In Hanoi, there's a former prisoner of war camp where the Communists held American soldiers during the war. It's known as the *Hanoi Hilton*, because everyone in Vietnam knows

that Americans will only sleep in a Hilton. The museum has the uniforms of the former guards on display, along with a series of captioned photographs explaining how important the Hanoi Hilton was in protecting Vietnam and winning the war against the Americans. But there are large sections of the prison—the quarters where American soldiers were kept, the squalid places where they had to eat and sleep and shit—which are completely off-limits. I guess there are some relics of the past that aren't quite glorious enough for a museum.

To be honest, I didn't actually go to the second museum, the one in Saigon. I was napping in our hotel, and my parents went without me. (As I recall, the hotel was a Hilton.) But I'll always remember what my parents told me when they came back from the *Museum of American War Crimes*. The museum was full of pictures of dead and dying people. There were weapons and uniforms, which had been used and worn by American soldiers as they killed thousands of unarmed civilians. There were records of the damage done by Agent Orange. And there was one photograph that was nothing more than an American soldier in uniform, almost childlike with his dangling arms and scrawny legs, grinning into the camera. The caption reported that this man was rejoicing after having just killed a woman and her two children in a small Vietnamese village.

The Vietnamese government is a pillar of salt.

IX. The Counterpart to the Pillar

The character of Mr. Kurtz, who exists in both *Apocalypse Now* and *Heart of Darkness*, represents the pure, base, violent desires of mankind. But most of the characters in both the film and the book aren't like Kurtz. He's meant to shock us in the way he embraces his base impulses. And while he's overtly violent, his counterparts in the story are all gentle, mild-mannered

hypocrites. They rationalize their actions in the Congo (or in Vietnam) with the logic of imperialism; they idealize their experiences in the heart of darkness and try to create light. All of them are still a part of the evil, but they deny it, and that makes them empty. Hollow.

In *Heart of Darkness*, these men are likened to *whited sepulchres*: reliquaries which, on the outside, are whitewashed and appealing, but on the inside are filled with rotting corpses. The metaphor comes from the book of Matthew:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. (Matt. 23:27)

Those who deny what they inherently are don't change their identities. They just become hypocrites. Whited sepulchres. On the outside, they may be acceptable—even pleasant—but there's a disconnect between what they show the world of themselves and what they actually are. There is the Cheshire grin, a smile that's just a little too wide to be true, a smile without a face or a personality behind it. In constructing an agreeable persona, they empty themselves of all the disagreeable things that defined them. They empty themselves of all substance.

X. Applying the Metaphor

The image of the whited sepulchre was originally used to refer to *evil*. The sepulchre represents the idea that ignoring evil or denying its existence doesn't get rid of it. It only leads to the kind of hypocrisy that makes evil even stronger. But we can take the metaphor a little farther and say that *any* rejection of a defining aspect of our consciousness will turn us into whited sepulchres, as surely as getting stuck in a part of ourselves will turn us into pillars of salt. When we deny our pasts—that what we've seen and done will affect us for the rest of our lives—we don't rid

ourselves of them. They're still there, the bones on the inside of the sepulchre, just hidden from sight.

That's what happened to my old *Vietnam vet*, Robert. He was nice enough on the surface, but I knew there was something ugly he wasn't talking about. He'd hidden the bad parts of his past away, because he didn't want to show them to the world. But because he refused to acknowledge the uglier things that he had seen and done in Vietnam, his entire personality became fake. It was forced, it was insincere, and it was *obvious*. Robert had tried to whitewash his past, but it was clear that the image was doctored. Nothing real could ever be completely without darkness.

That's something that I don't think Robert ever realized.

XI. Rumfoord

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, there's a character named Bertram Copeland Rumfoord, who is a seventy-year-old Harvard history professor. Despite his profession, Rumfoord is astonishingly comfortable ignoring the past. When he meets Billy Pilgrim, he's in the process of revising his *Official History of the Army Air Force in World War Two*. The original edition contained no mention of the firebombing of Dresden, but Rumfoord is forced to discuss it in the new version:

"Americans have finally heard about Dresden," said Rumfoord, twenty-three years after the raid. "A lot of them know now how much worse it was than Hiroshima. So I've got to put something about it in my book. From the official Air Force standpoint, it'll all be new."

"Why would they keep it a secret so long?" said Lily [Rumfoord's wife].

"For fear that a lot of bleeding hearts," said Rumfoord, "might not think it was such a wonderful thing to do." (Vonnegut 191)

Rumfoord would be perfectly happy denying that Dresden had ever happened, if he could. To him, the past is an inconvenience; he's already trying to distill his twenty-seven volume history, and he sees Dresden as just another thing that he has to do. He doesn't actually care about the people who died in the firebombing. He doesn't even care about the accuracy of his official history, and wishes he could leave Dresden out entirely, for fear that it might cause bad press for the military. This kind of hypocrisy devalues Rumfoord, both as a person and as a historian. He doesn't feel real to me. He presents himself as a historian who cares about the past, but that image leaves a gaping hole where all the rest of him should be—all the parts that he leaves out because they're not convenient. It's that Cheshire grin all over again, splitting the world in two.

Bertram Copeland Rumfoord is a whited sepulchre.

XII. After Sodom Burned

And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters. And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down,

nor when she arose. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. (Gen. 19:30-36)

XIII. A Fate Worse than Salt

This is the part of Lot's story which is usually left out of the telling. Lot and his daughters escaped the fate of Lot's wife by never looking back at Sodom and Gomorrah, but once they were safe, a new problem presented itself. Lot's two daughters, worried that they would never have children, drugged and seduced their father.

The irony here is that what Lot and his daughters escaped was a city of sex and sin. Lot may have gotten out of the city itself, and been saved from the fire and brimstone that consumed it, but in doing so he condemned himself to the sins of adultery and incest. He only *superficially* escaped the city; after Sodom burned, he was still subject to the same iniquity that ruled before. Even though it wasn't intentional, he became a sort of hypocrite, rejecting one form of sin only to find himself committing another.

Lot's wife became a pillar of salt. He became a whited sepulchre.

XIV. Dementia

I once made a trip to an assisted living facility to volunteer with my grandmother. I don't remember it terribly well anymore—I've blurred away the details in my mind, and now there's not much left besides a series of wrinkled faces and wheelchairs and little Dixie cups with pills in them that people had to swallow. But one thing I do remember distinctly is an old, old woman named Ursula who sat in the corner. She had big, white hands coated with makeup to hide the

blue blood pulsing under her skin, and she would fold those hands sternly in her lap like she was sitting in church and didn't know what else to do.

I sat and talked with Ursula for no more than ten minutes. In that period of time, she asked me my name at least five times. When I told her, she would make gulping motions with her mouth, like a dying fish, and would pull her white hands up for a moment to cover her face in shame.

I'm so sorry, I've asked you that before, haven't I? You'll have to forgive me, dear, I'm old. You forget everything when you get to be my age.

Of course I forgave Ursula, every time. She couldn't help that she forgot things.

But talking with her was a horrific experience, just for those times when she realized she was repeating herself. When she made a desperate feeble attempt to regain the presence of mind she used to have. Because immediately after her apology, her mouth would snap shut again, and her ivory hands would clasp themselves together in her lap like she was sitting in a church and didn't know what else to do.

And it repeated.

Those were the moments when I saw how truly *empty* Ursula was. It wasn't her fault, but she had lost her memory. She had lost her *past*. She couldn't cling to things gone by the way people were supposed to, and that made her seem just as *wrong* as my *Vietnam vet*, Robert.

Ursula was, is and forever will be a whited sepulchre.

XV. A Choice

We all have pasts and are, to some extent, defined by them. Some of us, like Lot's wife and Kurt Vonnegut, take this to the extreme, becoming stuck in the past and unable to move forward.

Some of us, like Robert, willingly push the past away, and some of us have it forcibly taken. Regardless of what our circumstances are, we're presented with a choice: we can reject the past, and end up unrealistic and hypocritical like the Rumfoord of *Slaughterhouse-Five*; or we can confront it, and hope we're strong enough not to get caught up in it like Billy Pilgrim, Martin Sheen, and Vonnegut himself.

I'm not even sixteen yet, and I'm already turning to a pillar of salt, clinging to fragmented images from my past. I'm defining myself—my whole worldview—in terms of museums I visited almost a decade ago, of people I met but can't even perfectly remember. But I think that's better than the alternative. It's better than ending up whitewashed like Robert, leaving out all of the parts of the past that don't fit into the image he wants to present. Or empty like Ursula, trapped in her inability to remember anything at all. Because I'm still *here*. I'm still whole; even if I'm defined by the past, there's something there to be defined. I have substance. The past is an integral part of who I am, and if I didn't let it define me—if I cut parts of it out, like Robert or Rumfoord—then I wouldn't be *me*.

It sounds cheesy, I know, like a PSA that would have aired when Ursula was a kid, but if I lost the past then I would lose the things that shaped my consciousness in the first place. And that would make me seem *wrong*. It would make everything I said disingenuous, it would turn my smile into a Cheshire grin without any sincerity or even any understanding of what sincerity *is*. If Martin Sheen had come back from Vietnam without any indication that he'd been changed by what he did there, then he wouldn't be *real*. He would be empty, like my sepulchres, who look fine on the outside but don't have any substance inside.

I think I'd take a pillar of salt over a whited sepulchre any day.

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THE TRUE HORROR OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

Valary Zvyagin

Men who murder because of another's eye, drunkards who hang their favorite pets and wall up their bloodied wives, and tortured victims of the infamous Spanish Inquisition: such is the content of Edgar Allan Poe's most famous works. Poe was the innovator of modern Gothic stories; he is hailed everywhere for his horrific, wild, tales. But one of quite normal questions that we tend to ask after reading them is, why would these horrible accounts become world famous? Why would perfectly normal people relish in them, and scholars study them? The answer lies within. When read, these stories thrust us into the inner worlds of mad narrators, allowing us to "see" this world only as *they* could show us. We see their thoughts, their rationalizations, and the psychology behind their insanity. These psychological concepts are almost forbidden in our society; they address murder, insanity, obsessive love- all the malignant things in our lives that we like to think of as non-existent. Then, as a result of the surrealism of the events, and of the twisting maze of logic used by the narrator, we are allowed to take a step back from the story, toning down the level of horror within it. But, it still sends chills down our

spines. Consider Halloween: there are all sorts of horrible things, but they aren't truly real. We still find fright because they are *almost* real. And we love it because fear is thrill; it jerks us away from our monotonous complacency. When it isn't real, it's exciting, interesting; we delight in it because we are still not truly living a horror story, but feeling as if, for a moment, we are. Poe's literary genius comes from the way we are able to experience the little-seen aspects of insanity and terror, without truly having to experience it ourselves.

Obsession: the domination of one's thoughts or feelings by a persistent idea, image, or desire. It is a very real problem in our world; around 1,006,970 women are stalked annually. Of those, 81% that were stalked by a husband or former intimate partner were physically assaulted (ncjrs.gov, Stalking in America). As shown, it is unnatural, and unhealthy, to have such a great fixation on any object or person. Perhaps this is the reason that some of Poe's greatest works are centered on this very concept. "Berenice" is the tale of a man who falls victim to obsession, unwittingly digs up his mistakenly buried fiancée's grave and, after killing her, pulls out her teeth: the object of his fascination. Reading this causes shudders, and usually horrified expressions. But still, for some reason, we read on. A majority of the rather short story is spent detailing his fall to obsession. Through this, we are allowed to get lost in the twisting logic and confusion of his obsession, his hallucinations. His explanations and descriptions of the trivial things that he studies for hours are confusing and fascinating. And when combined, the most intriguing part of this story is that we are immersed in his reasoning, able to follow his twisted passions; "I saw them *now* even more unequivocally than I beheld them *then*. The teeth! – The teeth!- they were here, and there, and everywhere, and visibly and palpably before me; long, narrow, and excessively white, with the pale lips writhing about them, as in the very moment of their first development." (Poe 231) This man is haunted, consumed, by his unnatural

fascinations. And this is true reason that this story is chilling; we can experience the madman's side of events without undergoing such a horrible affair ourselves. Our heartbeat quickens, our faces near the page. Our eyes dart from side to side, drinking in the words. We are allowed, for these few moments, to be dangerous and different through another- by immersing ourselves in forbidden ideas, forbidden actions- forbidden lives.

While tales of harmful infatuation and fascination are spooky, the most blood-curdling tales that Poe has to offer are those of cold-blooded murder. "The Tell-Tale Heart" is the story of a madman, who smothers someone with an entire mattress only because of his pale blue eye, before hiding his dismembered body beneath the floor boards. While this description of a killing is horrific, we are still captivated by the logic and rationalizations of this insane man. We see the twisted excuses and reasons that drove him to kill someone who had done him no harm; after all, "I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture – a pale blue eye, with a film over it...very gradually- I made up my mind to rid myself of the eye forever." (Poe 498) Whenever murders are committed in our world, there usually are excuses behind them. However, they are excuses such as hate for the victims themselves, a desire for money, or revenge--not for an eerie eye. These rationalizations and excuses do not justify the taking of another's life, but the logic behind them is still somewhat possible to follow. In this story, this isn't the case. This man is completely mad, and because of Poe's writing, we can see directly into his thoughts: see everything that went behind this murder, and still pick out the flawed concepts that went into this horrific plan. We dress our minds in a murderer's costume; we can see the precautions, the plan, the process of hiding the body. Every single part of the murder we are able to see, and understand, without doing any of these horrific things or even

considering doing them. We feel the suspense; wait with bated breath right before the murder is committed, as a murderer would. We experience the horrific moment of disclosure of the crime, the terrible aftermath. We see everything that we can never see otherwise- down to the last detail- the last emotion- the last, sane thought that we can wrangle from the mind of a madman.

Even with strange, far-fetched deviations from a normal human mindset as shown in the above two stories, there are still patterns that we can find within the thoughts and reasoning of Poe's narrators: fundamentally, we can distinguish what is happening. However, in "The Black Cat", this is hardly the case. Regarded as one of the most disturbing short stories by Poe, this is the narrative of an animal-loving man who cuts out the eye of, and eventually hangs, his favorite pet: a black cat. Then, out of loneliness, he finds another black cat, which he proceeds to loathe, because he sees it as his dead cat haunting him in the form of another. Finally, when his wife stops him from beheading the creature, he kills her instead, walling her (and, unbeknownst to him, the cat) up in their basement. The most difficult part of this story to digest is that, except when he is in the process of murder, the narrator doesn't truly seem crazy. This is shown in the way he starts off his narrative; "For the most wild, yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect, nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence." (Poe 531) His tone, the way that he is portraying things, undermines the idea that he is dangerous. However, as the story goes on, we begin to feel, through the first tendrils of an idea, that something dark is within him, something deeply mentally amiss, starting when he murders the utmost object of his affection: "I slipped a noose about its neck and hung it to the limb of a tree; -- hung it with tears streaming from my eyes and with the bitterest remorse at my heart; -- hung it because I knew it loved me". (Poe 533) There are no sane people who would kill the very pet that they adore. This is one of the reasons that this story

is one of the most chilling of all- the same still applies in that we are allowed to see the abnormal thinking behind all of his crimes, but in this case, there is no method to his madness; we can't tell why things are going on, or what is going to happen next. And, to add to that, all these horrible events occur while we are still trying to unravel his tangled logic. As those accustomed to normality and routine, chaos, especially in the mind, is unsettling and unfamiliar. The effect of this fear is similar to fear of the dark: we don't fear the dark itself, and neither this mind, but we do fear what could be hidden just in the shadows.

Even with all of the horrific events that happen in these stories, the psychological concepts are by far the spookiest. His writing twist our thinking, makes us question things that we never would have before; people love this so much that they are genuinely obsessed with Poe; there are such things as Edgar Allan Poe *dolls*. But then there are those that hate Poe. These people are disgusted or completely horrified by the concepts in his stories, and more likely than not, this is because they subconsciously tie the ideas to the author himself. They think, what kind of person would be able to create such horror, such ghastly tales? The vicious obituary done by so-called friend Rufus Griswold after Poe's death, and the character assassination that began from it doesn't help either; the beliefs that Edgar Allan Poe was cynical, incapable of helpful criticism, melancholy, and half mad. Granted, he was self-destructive in many ways, and sharp-tongued, but he was not many of the pre-conceptions people have, either from this or what we imagine from his stories. It is important to understand that no author is without inspiration; there is always an influence. So perhaps Poe had inspiration that no one would ever truly want to have: his own experiences. So many of Poe's most famed characters have many of the problems that he himself did: gambling, opium addictions, alcoholism, and rejection in love. Of course, he himself was never fully-blown insane, but a combination of these problems influenced even his

strangest characters. And it's not that other people never had the same problems he did. But he was able to *synthesize* thoughts and emotions that came from these issues, and somehow create stories that we still enjoy today out of them. So, perhaps many of these stories were Poe's own direct reflections on murder, drinking, drugs, all of the things mentioned in his stories. For example: In his mid-twenties, he married his thirteen year old cousin Virginia. He was said to have truly loved her, as shown in the love poem Eulalie, and was severely traumatized when she passed from tuberculosis, after ten years of marriage. He died two years after. So many of his stories are about loss and love; it's plausible to think that these were his very thoughts. Then, take "Ligeia", a haunting tale about a love-obsessed man who sees his dead wife come back to life. This character is in the haze of opium for a majority of the story, dealing with the loss of his beloved. Poe was suspected of using opium. There are plenty of factors that influenced him, creating the image of the tortured Romantic artist. And with his dark and troubled life, his purposefully ambiguous explanations, and mysterious death, we will never know what truly went on through his head. Or, perhaps we do. Perhaps all of this, his many short stories, no matter famous or little-known, gave us not only the a glance into the minds of killers, but also a bizarre view straight into the mind of one of the most famous authors of our time.

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SPIRITUAL INDIA: RESTORING THE WHITE SAVIOR WITH PURPOSE

Sejal Jain

As an Indian-American teenager, I've become accustomed to answering venturesome questions about my roots: do I wear a red dot? Do I eat with my hands? Am I doomed to an arranged marriage? These questions, as well intentioned as they are ignorant, stem from an idea of Indian culture created collectively by Western media, which commonly depict India as traditional, overly religious or superstitious, and unmodernized. Today, India is one of the world's six emerging globalized markets, its largest democracy, and its third largest economy, boasting an internationally competitive IT sector. However, Western films continually downplay India's socioeconomic advancement, resulting in a troublesome disparity between what India is and what audiences perceive it to be. By exploiting the "innate spirituality" of the Orient to target white audiences both fascinated by and unfamiliar with its exoticism, Hollywood filmmakers turn modern-day India into a getaway for visiting Westerners to "find themselves." In order to escape first-world struggles, these Westerners often respond to a call to action from

helpless Indian locals. This misrepresents Indian culture as regressive, subjugating characters of Indian descent to their more “advanced” and “secular” Western counterparts.

Many of the stereotypes of Indian culture are communicated visually to the audience, in the backdrops of Western films, instead of through the main dialogue itself. In Ryan Murphy’s *Eat, Pray, Love* (2010), based on a memoir by Elizabeth Gilbert about traveling to Bali, Italy, and India to find herself after a divorce, the protagonist’s first experience in India involves a “road game of chicken played at breakneck speed with overloaded trucks, bellowing cows and ambivalent pedestrians. The taxi slows, and...She is besieged by aggressive flocks of beggar children and skeletal men on crutches” (Moore). Here, the protagonist’s only exposure to India is to its pitiful lack of traffic infrastructure and the masses of people drawn to a white woman for help. This scene appeals to the Western idea that countries like India are developmentally lagging, and that they seek not structural help, but rather, charity from first-world countries like the US to lift them out of systemic poverty. This is the character’s only time spent in urban India, as she then spends four months in an ashram isolated from civilization, claiming that “outside the ashram is all dust and poverty” (Moore). But this assumption omits that India’s urban centers, home to 30% of its population, are at the forefront of its economic expansion. The McKinsey Global Institute estimates that “cities in India could generate 70 percent of net new jobs created to 2030, produce around 70 percent of Indian GDP, and drive a near fourfold increase in per capita incomes across the nation” (Sankhe). Cities like Bangalore are cultural monuments as well, because they mark India’s first post-colonial steps towards globalization. The protagonist’s inability to experience discomfort in an unfamiliar metropolis, one that is rich and variegated, and comprises far more than “dust and poverty,” undermines the culture instead of the ignorance it is approached with. *Eat, Pray, Love* erroneously conflates India’s preservation of age-old

traditions and religions with an inability to progress past the ways of ancient Indian civilization. As such, India is respected only as a spiritual place, or “timeless, otherworldly, incomprehensible and waiting to be discovered by westerners in search of self” (Mask). Because this mysticism implies regression, however, the movie subjugates India by invalidating both its economic capacity and its cultural abundance.

Similar visual themes appear in Roland Joffe’s *City of Joy* (1992), a film about Max Lowe, an American surgeon who leaves his practice and travels to Calcutta. As he enters this particularly poor part of India, the camera pans over “the decaying but colorful buildings, the overflowing crowds, the omnipresent lepers and the people washing in the streets” (Turan). Similarly, one of the first scenes in British director Danny Boyle’s *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) showcases a violent riot in the slums, during which the protagonist’s mother is killed. Time and time again, audiences see Indians primarily in mobs or masses on the streets rather than as individual characters, establishing themselves as part of the peripheral scenery before they become part of the action. Though the city of Bangalore is notoriously crowded and ill-planned, these characteristics can be attributed to the fact that it is a new city, able to come into being only after the British let go of their imperial hold on the subcontinent. During the First and Second Industrial Revolutions of the 19th century, early American cities, too, were messy urban sprawls, harshly criticized for poor sanitation and unsafe working conditions. India’s metropolitan growth is not inherently slower; rather, it has simply been set back by colonialism, a historical context often omitted in the Western narrative of India’s prosperity. Western filmmakers incorporate overwhelming crowds in order to visually educate white audiences about Indian inner-city poverty without exploring its roots. These details allow Western audiences to experience

sympathy for the plight of the downtrodden masses, but absolves them from understanding the history that accompanies it.

The squalor and poverty that make up the setting for the film also appeal to white audiences by creating a sense of exigency, or a call to action, for the white protagonist to respond to. In the case of *City of Joy*, a local nurse convinces Max, the protagonist, to begin working at her clinic. Along the way, he gives Hasari, a secondary character, the courage to stand up to the thugs that swindled him out of his savings. As Max spends more time in the slum, he attempts to overthrow the gangs that control it. Max's role as a "messiah" figure perpetuates the imperialist notion that "all it takes is one white man to rescue or transform a foreign community. Max will save the City of Joy by inspiring the people with American ideals, helping the Indians to overcome their cultural passivity and to stand up for their rights" (Vera, 40). Max's involvement in the slum serves two functions: one, to resolve Max's own lack of purpose by calling him to action, and two, to insinuate that the Indian people are powerless against corruption and embezzlement (byproducts of urbanization) without the democratizing and empowering leadership of the post-industrial white savior. In reality, however, post-independence Indian history is studded with leaders emblematic of the "common man." Mahatma Gandhi lived a life of minimal material possessions, and galvanized India's laborers, farmers, and lower-class workers on a platform of empathy for their marginalized condition. In May of 2014, an overwhelming majority of Indians elected Narendra Modi of the Aam Admi (Common Man) Party, who was once a train station tea vendor, as prime minister. The popularized common man is a leader figure who is "one of us," or highly representative of and empathetic towards the majority. The success of this form of leadership in Indian politics negates the existence of a

culture in which everyday citizens are incapable of creating change on their own and must seek help elsewhere.

Like the main characters in *Eat, Pray, Love* and *City of Joy*, the British retirees in John Madden's *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* (2012) are initially dismayed by the lack of sufficient technology, utilities, and amenities found in their new Indian retirement home. They then experience similar revelations, in which they forego first-world needs and embrace the "adventure" that India promises to be. Says Judi Dench's character, "India, like life itself, I suppose, is about what you bring to it" (Lalwani). Couched in these terms, India appears to bring more adversity to the table than intrinsic value—a curse that one learns from, rather than a blessing that is gratifying in itself. The idea that the characters' supposed descent into a less mechanized way of life propels their self-discovery echoes the orientalist degradation of "Middle and Far Easterners as primitive others" (Said). This misrepresentation devalues the East's technological innovations and contributions to modern science, and discounts the extent to which globalization has improved the standard of living across the board.

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel also features interracial relations that arbitrarily give more power and esteem to the Western character. In the film, ex-executive Muriel Donnelly is perhaps the most xenophobic of the group. For many days, she does not touch the Indian food set out by one of the servants, and eats only chocolates. But, admiring the servant's insistence, Donnelly thanks her. The servant invites her to come visit her family, but Donnelly refuses to eat the food prepared for her, and cries out when she incorrectly presumes that the servant's children wish to steal her wheelchair. Despite Donnelly's affront to the meal and the hospitality offered, especially from a household running on a minimal income that feeds many mouths, the servant still extends friendship and respect to Donnelly after the visit. The servant's sparse lines and

unwarranted kindness in response to Donnelly's bigotry indicate a lack in her character's development over the course of the film. Because the servant's character is emotionally one-dimensional and unrealistic, audiences are less likely to empathize with her or remember her role as central to the action. Instead, she functions as a placeholder for the call to action that Donnelly responds to. This demonstrates that their relationship is not meant to illustrate the effect of marginalization on the untouchable minority, but rather, the heroism of the white savior. Hushing and taming the servant's voice on screen only draws attention away from the real-world victims of systemic classism, and condones existing injustice. The hotel owner explains the servant's kindness by claiming that Donnelly is "the only one who acknowledges her." But glorifying Donnelly insinuates that her disrespect towards the servant disrupts, rather than feeds into, the caste system, simply because any form of conversation constitutes acknowledgement. The exaggeration of Donnelly's goodness stems from the assumption that Western characters' values exert a positive and equalizing force on the surrounding community. By reasserting Western ideological superiority, filmmakers appeal to Western audiences at the expense of the misrepresented East.

Western audiences often absorb the visions of a traditional India, a mystic India, and a regressive India pictured on screen and apply them to real life. These visions explain why some might ask me if I wear a red dot, or echo Oprah Winfrey, who famously asked, "Is it true that Indians eat with their hands still?" when she sat down to dine with a family in India (Abbey). They also explain why, in the wake of the Delhi gang rape last year, many were quick to blame Indian culture for being inherently more passive towards violence against women than Western culture, even though Western nations, too, have witnessed their fair share of gender-based inequality and violence. This is not to say that India is free from cyclical poverty, nor has it

outgrown vestiges of social inequity from the classist, sexist, and ethnocentric conflicts of decades past. However, as long as Western media continue to equate the Indian “other” with the “lesser,” they will hinder India from progressing as a global power. Stereotypes persist because we often behave in the ways society expects us to behave, creating self-fulfilling prophecies. Likewise, Indians who recurrently see powerlessness, squalor, and a lack of autonomy in their people on screen are more likely to mimic that passivity in real life. And those who believe in the ideological superiority of the Occident will continue to expect Western heroes in every movie set in the Far East. If we dismantle the Orientalist paradigm in filmmaking, and choose instead to accurately represent the country’s increasing modernity and changing value system, we might shed light on the promise of India’s growth, rather than the expectation of its stagnation.

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