

Veritas



Honors Journal
Nassau Community College
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Veritas

Go home and write
a page tonight.
And let that page come out of you—
Then, it will be true.

Langston Hughes
“Theme for English B”

An Interdisciplinary Journal
of the Honors Club
of Nassau Community College

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***Veritas: An Interdisciplinary Honors Journal of the
Honors Club of Nassau Community College***

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About *Veritas*

Members of the Honors Club, its faculty advisors, and the Directors of the Honors Program take pride in issuing *Veritas*, an interdisciplinary research journal of the Honors Club at Nassau Community College. While the works included in *Veritas* are predominantly critical in nature -- literary analyses, research papers and projects, and expository essays -- the journal also proudly showcases creative contributions -- poetry, art, and journal entries. Contributors to the journal are Honors students whose writings are found to be exemplary by Honors faculty and Faculty Advisors to the journal.

The goals of *Veritas* are to provide a venue for Honors students to publish their finest academic work as undergraduates, to inspire them to continue to write with a view toward publication, and to further prepare them for scholarship at four-year institutions.

Veritas extends a call to all Honors students who wish to submit critical as well as creative work for publication and to Honors faculty who wish to see their students' writings publicly showcased. Submissions should reflect the writer's/artist's name, N number, email address, and the name of the professor for whom the work was written or created. Work should be saved in Microsoft Word or in a JPG file (for illustrations) and emailed as an attachment to one of the Faculty Advisors to the journal at the following addresses: virginia.hromulak@ncc.edu or david.pecan@ncc.edu. Hard copy contributions may be sent to the Honors Office at Bradley Hall, Room 1, with the note "Honors Journal Submission" clearly indicated on the envelope.

Those of us associated with the creation and production of *Veritas* hope you enjoy reading the journal, that you find it enriching, and that you are inspired to contribute to it in the future.

Faculty advisors to this journal and the Honors student editorial staff review all work submitted to *Veritas*. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or of the college.

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***Deconstruction & Differance:
Derrida in the Dawn of Postmodern
Decadence***

Dustin Birtell

Jacques Derrida's influence has infiltrated various depths of modern society in its postmodern condition. Like radioactive dye in an MRI, an ideal observer can illuminate any aspect of our culture for our social body has been irradiated by Derrida's theories of deconstruction and *differance*. Deconstruction is an analytical approach which seeks to simultaneously find and subvert the dominant or culturally dominant meaning of text. *Differance*, a term which Derrida contrived, identifies how the identity of words is represented by a dichotomy synchronized in a fashion of juxtaposition. Both theories, that of deconstruction and *differance* suggest that language with its knaveries, inhibits our ability to transparently articulate meaning. I will be elucidating these principals and their elusive nature in the following paragraphs. Any individual should discern illustrations of deconstruction and *differance* from examples ranging from the construction of color schemes, to the seriousness with which one analyzes, interprets, and initiates the practical application of his/her religion.

Differance is a central concept in Derrida's theory of deconstruction which serves as a critical outlook concerned with the relationship between text and meaning. The term *differance* means "difference and deferral of meaning." I will refer to this difference and deferral of meaning as a linear articulation. It can be circular and/or infinite in its nature. Every word in any language is defined by other words. These words, which we use to define the original word, are also in turn determined and defined by additional words. This process can be infinite, or we can circulate back to the original word. If we sustain this linear progress we risk descending into oblivion. The difference amidst these words, the play, the give, the nuances in and between; these differences are *differance*. Derrida writes in his essay titled "Difference:"

It is because of *differance* that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called present element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of the past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element...".

To further our understanding of the difference between these words and how they establish meaning, consider the following: What is Christianity? To elaborate on the idea that meaning comes from *differance*, the definition of which, as I stated earlier is to differ, or to defer. Christianity is not Judaism, it is not Islam, it is not Buddhism, etc., and all are words to exemplify what Christianity is not. By the process of definition, however, Christianity's meaning can be determined with words

as well. Therefore the word Christianity requires other words such as “religion”, “faith”, “teachings”, and “Jesus Christ”. Religion is defined with “worship”, “superhuman power”, “God”, and “faith”. Faith is defined by “blindness”, “trust”, and “confidence”. “Blindness”, “trust”, and “confidence” are then defined by more words. This linear articulation is a progressive trend and the further we try to define the word at hand, the more effort we expound, the more we detail our articulations in an attempt to stipulate the original meaning of a word are, the more likely a paradoxical effect can occur advancing us linearly further and further into the depths of linguistic paralysis. This paralysis, is a corollary ramification which is inextricable from our attempts to be objective.

Derrida insists that “meaning is made possible by the relations of words to other words within the network of structures that language is.” For example, people have often thought of binary opposition as a method of definitively confining definition. Let us take a moment to analyze how things are often described not just by what they are, but what they are not. These are examples of binary opposition: “good vs. evil”, “yes or no”, “right and wrong”. The theory of deconstruction with *differance* in mind differentiates and/or supplements the concept of binary opposition as it attempts to establish meaning. The color white is not only identified as not being black, or being the opposite of black, but also by not being blue, red or green. In fact, not only is the meaning of white derived from not being all of these other colors, the very existence of the words used to describe all of these other colors reinforces not the actuality of white, but the meaning of white as ascertained by our linguistic preferences. To further elaborate this point, not only is white not black, but because we know what red, blue and green are, the very existence of the words used to describe these other colors supplements the meaning of white. These words help to define white in an oppositional sense, in the same manner black does, and equally by the differences between each color not only as they exist, but by the words which exist to describe them.

There is an extremely important distinction that must be made here, as this concept can easily be interpreted that all of the other colors help define what white is, but this is not the case with Derrida’s theory as it is the words, the construct of our languages, that we have assigned to all of these other colors which help to both differentiate and establish/supplement the meaning of white. Thus, according to Derrida, the meaning of white is only meaningful via the edifice of language and the differences at play which establish meaning not in a singular sense, but with a plurality existing only as a fabrication of language.

Differance is in the difference of our linguistic subtleties and what deconstruction attempts to do is breakdown this *differance* by subverting the primary/intended meaning and in doing so, a new *differance* is established. One of the unfortunate consequences of this application is another paradoxical effect which, if exaggerated, we risk descending into a meaningless abyss. If, for example, something can mean anything, it can mean everything and if something can mean everything, then it can mean nothing. I will refer to this descent into meaninglessness as “death by deconstruction.” Death by deconstruction is a concept which stems from extremity. In defense of deconstruction one can choose to deconstruct to a

varying degree, however, one should be aware of their own bias if possible.

Derrida first used the word *differance* in 1963. This was a time period when society, were becoming disillusioned by meta-narratives. Deconstruction allows us to subvert meaning, avoiding manipulation. Conceivably one ambition of deconstruction is to avoid mass manipulation, but one must be wary for however de-centered this may seem, by destabilizing the tinges of meaning we can unfortunately disembark in a cascading formality which can lead us into a “death” via deconstruction. This inherent threat of deconstruction does not necessarily imply that the plethora of meaning is meaningless, but rather that different meanings at different times can be equally meaningful to different people.

A vital dimension to which deconstruction belongs is that of the political. One can be easily deceived to look at death by deconstruction as a fallibility of the theory itself, but before one casts such doubt on deconstruction, it is necessary to consider its political implications. Deconstruction is best applied to the political realm in the sense of a varying degree which means, in essence, the subverter can tailor the extent to which he/she chooses to deconstruct. In order to emphasize the validity of the power of deconstruction in politics, let us first look to some historical movements. In the Era of Modernism, for example, it had become common belief that our society had lost its center. There was a disillusionment which followed the Age of Enlightenment that art, literature, architecture and philosophy had become fragmented and de-centered (Powell 8). Derrida’s theory of deconstruction forces one to question whether there ever really was a center to begin with. Deconstruction, with its utilitarian use of *differance*, suggests that we need to circumvent the dominant theme. There is a discrepancy in establishing what was intended and what was primary, and recognizing what was avoided. Switching the emphasis to what was avoided, and by capturing the reality of that possibility, we thereby are using our interpretation of what is secondary to ensure we are not sub-consciously being persuaded by the primary theme/subject matter. What is intended in this deconstruction theory is to ensure we are not being swayed by a master theme, which, like a system of power anticipates the resistance, the primary subject matter anticipates our attempt to try and analyze its motif. Therefore, one can draw the conclusion that as a society, by utilizing deconstruction, we could potentially intervene effectively in transforming contexts which are politically motivated (Derrida).

The meta-narrative of the Age of Enlightenment (that reason was our savior) failed us (Powell 8). Powell affirms that what happened during Modernism and in losing the center, ultimately triggered a subsequent explosion of misogyny. Powell iterates Friedrich Nietzsche’s lack of tolerance for the enlightenment values (10). Derrida’s theory of deconstruction forces one to question the fundamentals of society’s so called midpoint and whether the established intermediary could actually be individuated from an illusion.

For the Post-modern optimist, the idea that there never was a center to begin with is liberating. To be technical, it is not that there never was a center, but that the center was a social construction and if we could construct that “center”, then it is only rational to realize we can assemble any center, which is what seemed

to have occurred as our society transcended from Modernism into Post-modernism. Individuals of our society began to erect their own individual centers exploiting these hinge points into micro-narratives (Powell 32). The idea of a center which we could all independently construct, individually believe in, and autonomously will on command, fills the void created by the collapse of the meta-narrative. This void closely resembles the power vacuum left behind after a hypothetical elimination of a Mid-Eastern terrorist organization. What society is doing, in deconstructing its religions, in tearing down the center, in finding whatever meaning the individual may wish: society has incorporated social media as a tool of collusion to further aid a crusade of self-centeredness. This is what I like to call the center-of-self and members of society seem to be deconstructing everything but themselves.

In deconstructing identity, it appears as though Post-Modernism has reconstructed the individual. One narrative is no longer incompatible with the other; mini-narratives and plurality suggest that we no longer have to abandon one narrative at the cost of the other. Thus Derrida's deconstruction does not just force one to question the center, but to take into account that any center is possible, or multiple centers for that matter. Any meaning, any reality which one may yearn for, is now an attainable conception and climactically, a productive manifestation. This pandemonium could mean mayhem, or perhaps, this anarchy of meaning could inspire our emancipation. By deploying deconstruction in the frame of the political, we can subvert subversion. In deconstructing our identity, society has reconstructed the individual; individually identifying how individuality identifies the individual. *Differance* enables deconstruction to deconstruct any one meaning allowing us the opportunity to individually individualize what this plurality of meaning means.

Is deconstruction extricating? Is deconstruction a descent into chaos? Is *differance* really all that different from the different differentiations which previously differentiated the different differences of our language? The most significant distinction which I can make to clarify deconstruction, *differance*, and the deceitfulness of language is in its inability to clearly communicate ideas. Remember, Jacques Derrida was so sure that language was incapable of properly communicating ideas that he wrote several books and spent hundreds of hours lecturing to prove it (Diaz).

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A Universal Theory

Zainab Vasi

The idea that everything in this world is connected is not a new one. Pantheism, the belief that a ubiquitous divine being links everything in the universe, is an ancient religious doctrine that is the basis for many faiths, such as Hinduism. In the early twentieth century, Einstein made waves in the scientific community by suggesting that such a theory might actually be provable by science. In the years that followed, science, and physics in particular, advanced by leaps and bounds, in no small part due to Einstein's Theories of Special and General Relativity. However, the "universal field theory," as Einstein dubbed it, seemed to have fizzled out of the public eye. In 1985, however, physicists Michael Green and John Schwartz provided some foundation for a theory which had the potential to be that "holy grail" of physics: the Superstring Theory, or "string theory" for short. In 2016 the concept (by this point fully developed) came back into prominence with the scientific discovery of "gravity waves," which strengthened the theory even further. The fact is the realization that the entire human race on this tiny planet in a very average-sized galaxy is somehow joined to nebulae, where stars are born, could not be more socially relevant or significant than it is right now.

The reason superstring theory is heralded as the top contestant for the Theory of Everything is because it marries two previously irreconcilable theories that together are the base of modern scientific thought: Einstein's Theory of General Relativity and quantum mechanics. Physicist Brian Greene explains, "The usual realm of applicability of general relativity is that of large, astronomical distance scales. On such distances Einstein's theory implies that the absence of mass means that space is flat. In seeking to merge general relativity with quantum mechanics we must now change our focus sharply and examine the microscopic properties of space" (127). The problem arises when we try to "zoom in" to ever smaller length scales. According to Einstein's theory, space should remain flat and placid no matter how far we magnify it. However, quantum mechanics operates on the "uncertainty principle," which states that a particle's speed and its position can never be known at the same time. The more you know one, the less you know about the other. "Trying to pin down both is a bit like grappling for the soap in the bathtub; just when you think it's in your grasp, it slips away" (Falk 129). Every single thing in the universe is subject to the quantum fluctuations inherent in the uncertainty principle, that is, the constant undulations of matter upon observation: "The notion of a smooth spatial geometry, the central principle of general relativity, is destroyed by the violent fluctuations of the quantum world on

short distance scales. On ultramicroscopic scales, the central feature of quantum mechanics—the uncertainty principle—is in direct conflict with the central feature of general relativity—the smooth geometrical model of space” (Greene 129). This means that general relativity works on large distance scales —the scales relevant for most astronomical applications—but is rendered inconsistent on subatomic scales. While most physicists were able to ignore this apparent incongruence and go on using both theories as needed in their research, others were “deeply unsettled by the fact that the two foundational pillars of physics as we know it are...fundamentally incompatible” (Greene 130). This is where string theory comes in.

Music has long since been the metaphor of choice for those trying to describe the cosmos. From Pythagoras’ “music of the spheres” to the “harmonies of nature” that have influenced inquiry throughout the ages, we have collectively sought the songs of nature within scientific discovery: “With the discovery of superstring theory, musical metaphors take on a startling reality, for the theory suggests that the microscopic landscape is suffused with tiny strings whose vibrational patterns orchestrate the evolution of the cosmos” (Greene 135). According to string theory, the universe at its deepest level is made up not of atoms, but of mind-numbingly small loops of string. A typical string size is about 10-33 centimeters long. To compare this size to something more palatable, the string is to the size of an atom as an atom is to the size of our solar system. The vibration patterns of these strings are thought to give rise to the properties seen in the known particles, such as protons, neutrons, and electrons (Falk 151). An analogy is often made to the strings on a violin. The violin can produce a variety of notes based on how the strings are vibrated. The nature of these strings reconciles the apparent incompatibility of general relativity and quantum mechanics, thus making it the foremost contender for the Theory of Everything.

The allure of an explanation that unifies the entire universe has long drawn scientists towards the quest for a universal theory. Although the concept was popularized by Einstein, it is a subject that has enthralled scientists for centuries. The first documented Theory of Everything was constructed by the Greek philosophers Leucippus and Democritus in the fifth century BCE. Following the rise of modern science in the seventeenth century, Laplace attempted to create his own Theory of Everything based on the work of Newton and Galileo. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, a scientist named Lord Kelvin pronounced that a Theory of Everything, based on the discovery of electromagnetism, was at hand. In the 1920s and 1930s, Einstein, as well as other physicists, became engrossed in finding a unified theory (Brown 2-5). The existence of a universal theory is something that appeals to scientists, and to the public at large, because the discovery of such a concept would validate our place in the universe. The idea that we, a puny, delicate, short-lived little people, are made up of the same exact things that are the heart of what has fascinated us since our emergence on this planet, is an incredibly powerful one. Therefore, it is not just one group of people, or even one culture that is affected by the discovery of such a theorem; rather, it is the human race at large. Every single culture has been entranced by the cosmos

for as long as it has been around. It is only logical that a theory that would tie them to the very thing that captivated their attention for so many centuries would hold an equal, if not greater, fascination for them.

The universal theory is extraordinarily alluring; however, the fact that it exists in an age when a superficial difference, such as the color of one's skin, leads to animosity and racism, is a sign of how lopsided our society has become. Humans, on the whole, are constantly looking for their place in the universe. To that end, countless cosmologies have sprung up among human thought in order to fill that gaping void which is the source of our existential crises. No matter how an individual believes the universe was created, the idea that it is elegant in its design is almost intrinsic to human nature. We want the universe to be beautiful and mellifluous. To have a proposition for a theory that has the potential to fill that void, and confirm something all humans, at the core of their beings, long for, and then to get caught up in pettiness and frivolous differences, borders on the imbecilic. The underlying social message is clear: we are all, on some level, connected. This includes not only the human race, but the world at large. So, by causing damage to one another, to the environment, and to Mother Nature, we are harming ourselves. This also makes the concept very personal. We are responsible for our own demise as a result of our own actions.

Taking into account the modern political and social environment, the significance of a theory that has the potential to unite not only mankind, but every single atom to ever have existed, is almost ironic in its urgency. In an atmosphere where people in power are able to demean entire groups simply because they look different or behave in a manner that contrasts with their own, the significance of the notion that we are all united is major. If string theory is correct, and we are all made up of, essentially, the exact same "stuff" as everyone else around us, it is impossible to justify discrimination on the grounds of race, or ethnic background, or religious beliefs, or choice of dress, or sexual orientation, or any other relatively minor difference in terms of lifestyle choices, because, in the "big picture," it simply doesn't matter. In a universe in which vastly disparate objects, from galaxies, to dust mites, can be boiled down to masses of tiny "strings" vibrating in unique melodies, how can the difference in the vibrations of a few strings warrant or merit such a strong reaction? The reality that many people seem unable to accept is that humans are immeasurably more similar than they are different. This denial is the reason we are caught up in squabbling over imaginary boundaries we have drawn on the continents, going so far in "protecting" our own areas that we justify killing innocents. The person responsible for dropping a bomb over Aleppo, or casually shooting an unarmed man, or jeering at a person with a disability, would do well to remember that the war and hatred that we inflict upon one another is liable to rebound upon ourselves. The way we interact with one another could determine the way our "strings" vibrate.

The essence of string theory is a proposition that has the power to unite two opposing laws of physics, and, by extension, all the matter in the universe, under one roof. Although it has not been physically proven, it has a high probability of being the "Theory of Everything." The idea that everything in

the universe can be explained by one simple theory is appealing not only from a scientific perspective, but from an aesthetic one. Even if superstring theory does not turn out to be the correct Theory of Everything, the gravitation humans have had over the ages towards the quest for a Theory of Everything is proof that some such theory must exist. There is much to be said for human instinct, and our collective instinct as a whole over the years is surely indicative of the presence of such a concept. However, our values do not seem to have advanced at the same pace as our scientific knowledge has. We are fixed in a state of blind repudiation of the laws of physics, ignoring the implications of the fact that we are all the same, and that we are all connected. How is it that, on one hand, we are able to accept that the electrons in a carbon atom in the cell of our brain is connected to the subatomic particles that comprise every heart that beats, and every star that shimmers in the sky, but we cannot implement that thought process into the personal aspect of our day-to-day lives?

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The Rise of the Social Media Bourgeoisie

Anthony Bevacqua

The episode *Nosedive*, from BBC's science fiction series *Black Mirror*, offers an interpretation of what the world could look like in a future that places too much power in the binary system of likes and dislikes on social media. The computer age comes with consequences that may have reshaped the way people behave and interact with one another. By participating in social media, we have made ourselves visible to the public in a way that is changing the dynamics of human interaction. The visibility social media provides is effectively trapping the individual into monitoring what he or she shares. We are constantly subjected to peer evaluation in the form of likes and color commentary. The power of social media is stripping interpersonal relationships of their deep and meaningful value in favor of surface-level interactions. Through the lens of Michel Foucault and Charlie Booker's series *Black Mirror*, we can see how social media functions as a virtual panopticon and what implications this has on the future of our society. The power of social media can serve to not only de-individualize the average citizen but, in a Baudrillardian sense, it can also alter the use and exchange values of how we are seen and perceived by others on social media.

Some could argue that social media has become the driving force of morality in the modern world. It is the stick that one uses to measure oneself against one's peers. In exchange for adhering to the morality of social media we are rewarded in the form of "likes." These "likes" serve as a form of social currency that is traded back and forth between friends and complete strangers on the internet. Those who accrue the most likes can wield more power in the world of social media by becoming trendsetters for what is the norm. It may seem like human nature for one to put forth into visibility only the very best of oneself but now there is an ulterior motive for doing so. It is commonplace for many to share photographs that accentuate their best features while discarding ones that display an unfavorable light. We selectively share narratives about and pertaining to our lives, beliefs, morals, and accomplishments in the same fashion. Although we might believe that what we are sharing on social media is a reflection of our own identity, in actuality this façade of surface-level interactions is merely a construct of identity. *Black Mirror's* episode *Nosedive* explores a world where the superficial interactions that take place on social media have spilled over into our daily lives and become the governing principle of how we function.

The main character of the episode *Nosedive*, Lacie, lives in a future that is centered on how others rate each other on social media. In our world, we obtain credibility through the bureaucracies and institutions that determine our credit

score, grades, degrees, certifications, background checks, and reference letters to obtain validation for our class signifiers. Lacie's world has abandoned this system of validation in favor of a social media power score ranking of 0 to 5. This score determines what jobs are available to you, what friends you interact with, which home you can live in and everything else that determines your social status and class within society. Individuals in Lacie's world are forced to monitor their behavior because every social interaction is subjected to a rating that can either boost or lower their power score. The freedom to express true emotions is repressed because the benefits that come along with having a higher social media score outweigh the cost of sharing one's unfavorable opinion.

Paul Oliver refers to the Foucauldian ideas of the individual becoming more passive and malleable in the wake of the computer age. He remarks, "the awareness of this extensive power of the state to observe the individual gives a sense of powerlessness to the extent that the individual feels little freedom for freedom or decision-making . . . and in the face of this there is a tendency to assume that the individual human being has little freedom of action, little autonomy and little power over their lives" (Oliver 61). Citizens of Lacie's world who have a high power ranking score are part of a network that sets the trend for what is to be considered the norm and what is delinquent. In such a society, there is less of a need for a strict system of penal codes because there is a social morality that is both self-governing and far more restrictive than any other exercise of power that predates it.

What *Black Mirror* does in its episode *Nosedive* is show the potential dangers that come with commodifying the public opinions shared through social media. French philosopher, Jean Baudrillard, uses the Marxist terminology of use and exchange value to describe a new form of alienation one can feel in our postmodern era. According to Baudrillard, our culture uses the media to differentiate the various levels of social prestige that coincide with our conspicuous consumption. What Baudrillard or Karl Marx did not account for was the way this conspicuous consumption can be applied to the social narratives one buys into and not just the material objects one accumulates. We already live in a world where one's social currency can be converted into actual currency. Trending topics play a major role in driving the marketplace. The narratives that we consume in the form of "likes," "shares," and "comments" are constantly being tracked and monitored. Therefore, the advertisements that appear on the margins of our browsers are a reflection of our recent search history and internet activity. Our opinions in the world of social media have gained an exchange value that is being used to regulate and predict how we will behave. In a primarily capitalist governed world it is not hard to imagine a future where class structure and social hierarchy is determined not only by the commodities that we consume but also by the narratives we express interest in over social media.

Black Mirror invites us to imagine a world where the panoptic schema is used to strengthen the power of social media's influence on human behavior through peer regulation. Foucault explains how power is to be viewed as a strategy that governs interpersonal relationships. A key component of power, per Foucault,

is visibility and how it can serve to trap an individual to alter his or her behavior when one knows one is being watched by others. In his commentary on Jeremy Bentham's concept of the panopticon Foucault asserts, "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (Foucault 51). When we know that we are being watched, we alter our behavior to conform to what is widely accepted as the norm. In Lacie's world, the stakes were much higher because her livelihood rested upon the approval of others; however, there is a similarity between *Nosedive's* dystopic vision of our future and the way social media functions in our society today.

The power of social media is affecting the actions of free subjects in our modern society and reshaping how we see others, ourselves, and the world around us. In many ways, the visibility, self-monitoring, and peer regulation that are present in social media make it the perfect example of a virtual panopticon. In *Black Mirror's* episode *Nosedive*, we are invited to look at the potential effects that the superficiality of social media can have on our society in the days to come. The more influence that is gained by social media, the more plausible it may seem that we can one day live in a deindividualized society.

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The Dehumanizing Crisis

Alex Kontos

While technology is both good and bad for society, it has one main crippling effect. It is dehumanizing individuals at an alarming rate. Robert Fishman and Thomas Friedman both argue in their articles, “The Generation of Generation Q” and Generation Q’, respectively, that members of Generation Q are far too reliant on technology to function without it, and that it has “silenced” this generation. Fishman discusses how self-centered technology has made young people act by arguing that Generation Q simply doesn’t care and says nothing at all about real life issues. Friedman, on the other hand, is a Baby Boomer who grew up without the influence of technology, providing a unique point of view on the issue. Friedman argues more of a cultural problem that involves young Americans being much less radical and politically engaged. I concur with both these positions, but I would go further. I believe technology is dehumanizing individuals at an alarming rate for a few reasons. I argue that members of Generation Q are thinking in less sophisticated ways, becoming emotionally detached from one another, and therefore are less social and personally interactive with others. Technology is also causing a separation between Generation Q and the natural world.

Now, more than ever, school systems throughout the world are integrating computers and other forms of technology into education at an exponential rate. By doing this, children are unable to problem solve efficiently and perform complex tasks with other peers in group activities. In his article, “Is Technology Hurting Our Kids?”, Jason Saltmarsh explains, “The promise of interested student achievement through the use of technology hasn’t really produced any significant results in the past 20 years . . . [in fact] studies show that increased screen time is harmful to children’s social and physical development” (1). It is imperative that young children learn how to cooperate with others, and the practice of constantly putting devices in their hands is actually counterproductive to what the educational system is trying to accomplish. Young children from the ages of 2-7 still have very pliable minds and are developing at a rapid rate. As Saltmarsh argues, “The American Academy of Pediatrics discourages any screen time for kids under two years of age, suggesting that access to any entertainment media should be limited to just two hours a day for older kids” (1). Young children are not the only targets of this anti-social phenomenon. It affects adults in the same fashion.

As connected as we feel with technology and the interactions it can create with people from all over the world, as adults, we often find ourselves growing more and more distant from reality, which is quite ironic. One may argue that certain

human connections could not have been made without technology, and while this may be true, I argue that technology gives us the illusion of connecting with other people. In reality, that connection is nothing more than a screen projecting words, images, and sounds. Robert Fishman asserts in “The Generation of Generation Q,” that “For my generation, technology has had a distinctly quieting effect” (107). He claims that Friedman has it backwards: “We don’t lazily hide behind technology so much as it inspires us to stay quiet.” I would agree with Fishman in that technology’s “distinctly quieting effect” has become a sad reality that is slowly but surely becoming an everyday occurrence. The worst part of all of this is that it is nearly impossible to stop the rapid evolution of technology in an attempt to reverse that part of it that contributes to dehumanizing its users. We all see people making less eye contact with one another and less conversation on a daily basis, which is quite frightening because society claims to be more “connected” than ever before. An example of this is found in an article entitled “Four Ways Technology Hurts, Not Helps Us.” “While Facebook and other social sites are a great way to keep in touch with people you don’t see much, they often leave us with little to discuss with our close friends in person, making us turn to our smartphones out of boredom.” We have gotten to a point where we seemingly know too much about each other through sites like Facebook and begin to ignore each other when we are actually together, face to face.

Technology has also directed us towards a virtual reality, pulling us away from the natural world in which we live. Earth is a beautiful planet that offers endless experiences and sights that can only be appreciate through the naked eye. Throughout the past decade or so, virtual reality has become such a norm in society, it is almost impossible to imagine modern-day society without video games, computers, and smartphones. While all of these inventions are important to postmodern life, they give a false sense of reality to the user. In her article, “Is Modern Technology Killing Us?”, Erica Etelson asserts that “Technology separates us from the natural world by diverting our focus from natural to human-made wonders. Everyday, we are offered a free gift of joy and serenity through the courtesy of Mother Nature, but we usually opt for artificial pleasures like video games” (2). It’s easy to understand that if we could seemingly be limitless in a virtual reality where we make the rules and could have anything effortlessly, that we wouldn’t want to leave that perfect world to face life’s realities. That is the problem. A false world with false beings creates false experiences. Virtual reality appropriates one’s biological and experiential life, which is full of real experiences. Living within these false worlds truly takes away the quality of life that we only get to live once.

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Chaos by the Cross

Joseph Jennings

One of the most often depicted scenes in art is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and many artists willing to paint it would find it tough to exceed the work of the extremely talented and creative French artist Marc Chagall. His 1938 painting *White Crucifixion* is a masterpiece of composition, a harmony of many different symbols and signs which ultimately serves to show his own feelings towards the tragic story of Christ's death on the cross. Chagall achieves this goal masterfully by boldly contrasting many of the elements in his work.

One such contrast is immediately evident in this painting: that of darkness versus light. A ring of somber hues surrounds the dying Christ, drawing our attention at once to the bright shafts of light which envelop His figure. A pure, white beam, like a searchlight, falls silently from heaven upon His motionless body. What seems to be a menorah of candles stands at the foot of the Cross, humbly doing its part to light up the lower regions of the painting and provide a luminary balance to the composition. Christ's body itself seems illuminating. Seeing all this, our eyes are almost tempted to avoid the darkness which dominates the majority of the painting. Hordes of frantic people, attired in dark clothing and seeming to stumble blindly around the dim, foggy haze which Chagall has chosen to make his backdrop, run desperately from the light back into their own black existence. The fires which leap up from every direction somehow look equally black and dismal. The sea and the sky are likewise affected; what great monumental event could be happening, to darken these great blue expanses? Chagall makes it obvious: the Crucifixion which he paints is in every way important to us, as it gives us refuge from the horrors which we must face, day after day, in our lives. He shows this contrast well in his painting. The entire world is cast into a pit of inexplicable darkness—except for the soft, white scene of the man on the Cross.

As light dispels darkness, so also must the calm follow the storm. The face of Christ provides another thing which draws us to look upon Him: His absolute serenity. It glows like a light of its own out of the Cross, again separating the central figure from the rest of the composition. Upturned houses, fleeing figures and an approaching army surround Him. And yet, after all the trials of His passion, we see almost an ironic stillness and quiet upon Christ, which Chagall masterfully portrays. This depiction is largely one of disorder; but even so, it seems upon the first impression that this is a calm, peaceful picture, almost a landscape, because it is so obviously dominated by and centered around the peaceful Christ. Only later can our eyes make out the scenes of destruction

which surround Him. Chagall is well known for contrasting chaos and calm in his paintings, and this is certainly no exception.

A less apparent contrast, though our subconscious may see it at once, is the dramatic crossing of horizontal and vertical lines. This in fact may be the most effective distinction between Christ and the rest of the painting. All which surrounds the cross is directed horizontally—the running figures, the scrolls on the ground, the boat, the overturning houses, even the fires and the hovering souls in the air. The only objects to be seen which follow a basic vertical direction are the Cross (and Christ's body upon it) and the ladder beside it. They are, it seems, the only things in the world which can at this terrible moment remember that there is indeed a God, and that His plan is currently being carried out. They stand in the center of the composition like two arrows, pointing the way to heaven and to God. Everything else, both animate and inanimate, is on the brink of despair. The difference this time is subtle, but Chagall uses it to make perhaps his greatest point: never give up faith.

Chagall is one of the greatest modern symbolic artists, an artist who uses symbols more than direct visuals to achieve his goals in a painting. *White Crucifixion* is a masterpiece, a stirring drama of symbols which evokes completely a sense of very real pathos. There is perhaps no other depiction of the Crucifixion which so effectively brings to light the sharp contrasts which pervades the tale of Christ's passion and death.

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The Postmodern Map-Maker: Fredric Jameson

Maria Galatro

In Jim Powell's book, *Postmodernism for Beginners*, he refers to Fredric Jameson as one of the designated mapmakers for the postmodern era (34). Jameson's role as a mapmaker was to observe and document prevalent characteristics of postmodern culture as well as to identify potentially problematic character flaws of postmodernism. Jameson was a cultural pessimist, whose criticisms of the postmodern world were evident in his ideas and theories. In an excerpt from his book, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, one of Jameson's criticisms was about how postmodern architecture cannibalized older styles of architecture (37). Another of his ideas was concerning postmodernism's apparent lack of historical awareness and its need for cognitive mapping (40). While looking deeper into both of these ideas and exploring current examples of both postmodern architecture and the end of historical awareness, we will discover how these examples both support and challenge Jameson's theories and discuss the benefits we gain from recognizing these ideas in our world today.

In the first idea, Jameson observed postmodernism's use of past architectural styles as a type of cannibalism. According to Powell, Jameson described the style as "the merely decorative, superficial, gratuitous eclecticism of Postmodern architecture cannibalizing all the architectural styles of the past" (37). To Jameson, postmodern architecture had devoured all of the previous styles, then took bits and pieces from each and created something different. One of the criticisms Jameson had of this cannibalized architecture was that the shapes used were non-traditional to the point of being unrecognizable. In Jameson's description of the Bonaventura Hotel, he said it was "a surface which seems to be unsupported by any volume, or whose putative volume (rectangular, trapezoidal?) is ocularly quite undecidable" (Jameson 31). Familiar shapes such as squares, circles and triangles had morphed into new shapes that became indecipherable. He referred to this as an "evolutionary mutation" (31). The shortcoming, as he pointed out, was that though there was "a mutation in the object," there had not yet been "any equivalent mutation in the subject; we do not yet possess the perceptual equipment to match this new hyperspace..." (33). In essence, the observer has not yet undergone the mutation that would provide the capability to fully understand the architectural mutation being observed.

A recently renovated rehabilitation facility on Long Island provides a current example of Jameson's idea of the 'cannibalization of architecture' (Powell 37). What was once a quaintly outdated, long term care, family owned nursing home has mutated into a corporate owned, state-of-the-art, high turnover, short

term care, postmodern monstrosity. The original building was a white, single story, rectangle. The makeover included a new façade at twice the original height, a large glass enclosed entryway, and a massive, open reception area. What once was a flat roof line, is now a disjointed semi-circle. The roof line appears to have started off as a fluid curve from one end to the other, but the center was removed (depressed downward), leaving two towering structures on either end of the building, which light up at night. These unrecognizable shapes are what Jameson called an “evolutionary mutation” (Jameson 31). As a challenge to Jameson’s idea that a building’s reflective glass skin repels its external environment (33), in this case, the ‘glass skin’ encasing the entryway is transparent, allowing passersby a clear view into the expansive lobby. Also a challenge to what Jameson called “suppression of depth” (34), this glass enclosure’s transparency gives the structure the illusion of depth without exposing all of its secrets. This is just an ‘illusion of depth’ because behind the new addition lurks the same old compartmentalized structure with low ceilings. Jameson wrote of the Bonaventura Hotel, that it “aspires to being a total space, a complete world, a kind of miniature city” (33). The nursing facility also operates as a “miniature city,” separating itself from the rest of the city that lay beyond the building’s walls. This mini-city is equipped with a beauty salon, a spa, a gym, a formal dining room with a grand piano and a bakery café, because the smell of freshly baked cookies is a much more inviting aroma than the fragrance of a typical nursing home. And in true postmodern fashion, this building is double-coded with dual functions. According to fellow map-maker Charles Jencks, by combining two different architectural styles (or two different functions), the building “can mean two things at once” a concept that Jencks called “double-coding” (Powell 89). In this case, the building first functions as a home for many people. Second, the structure also operates as two very expensive night-lights.

Jameson’s second idea was focused on postmodernism’s separation from its past and the need for an “aesthetic of cognitive mapping” (Powell 40). According to Powell, Jameson saw the postmodern era as “the end of a genuine awareness of history.” This awareness is “what we need to unify the past-present-future of the sentence -- to unify our psyches and our lives” (40). Jameson felt that through cognitive mapping, historical awareness could be used to establish a connection between our past and our current reality. This practice could help members of the postmodern world to have a greater understanding of the meaning behind a work of art or a deeper emotional connection to other people. Jameson’s theory was that Marxism would provide us with this awareness of history and could be used as a foundation for mapping our relationship to the outside world (40). Jameson’s use of Marxism to create historical awareness and empathy through a greater understanding of human struggle will be explored and challenged in the next example.

A discussion in which the statistics for Holocaust-related deaths is called into question and provides a current example of Jameson’s cognitive mapping theory in action. The real question is this: If the actual number of deaths were less than what the statistics show, would this somehow diminish the emotional

significance of this tragic event? Numbers, though useful in terms of scope, are not the only means of legitimizing the significance of an historic event. The real tragedy is not how many people died during the Holocaust, but that any people died at all. For Holocaust survivors, it is impossible to forget their emotional connection to the past. They see the haunting reminders of the event's emotional significance represented by the series of numbers tattooed on the inside of their arms. How is it possible that some people have no understanding of the emotional magnitude of a tragic event? Maybe this case of historical indifference originates from a symptom of the postmodern condition . . . an apparent inability to empathize with others. Jameson described postmodernism's effects on feelings as "not merely a liberation from anxiety, but a liberation from every other kind of feeling as well, since there is no longer a self present to do the feeling" (32). A part of the postmodern condition is the decentering or fragmentation of 'the self.' According to Jameson, "a once existing centered subject..." has "dissolved" (32). Without the presence of a unified self, subjects are unable to process the emotions which enable us to establish emotional connections with others. This condition is directly connected to postmodern culture's lack of historical awareness. This unawareness could be the product of being spoon fed the cold and emotionless textbook version of history as children. There is no way to accurately depict a highly emotional, multi-sensory, first-hand human experience of history by reducing it down to a couple of black and white pictures along with some text describing dates, locations and statistics. When the recitation of history leaves out the perspective of the human experience, it is seen as unrelatable and further widens the chasm between the postmodern world and its past. This chasm, or separation from the past, is the reason why Jameson stressed a need for cognitive mapping. He recommended the use of Marxism as a means of building a relationship between the past and the present. This is an understandable recommendation since Marxism provides a clear description of the struggles of the working class. In his discussion of Van Gogh's painting, *Peasant Shoes*, Jameson explained the need to "reconstruct" the historical environment that the artwork represents: "Unless that situation – which has vanished into the past – is somehow mentally restored, the painting will remain an inert object..." (29). By recreating the historical background, the observer establishes a deeper connection to the artwork. In Jameson's interpretation of the painting, he described it as "the whole object world of agricultural misery, of stark rural poverty, and the rudimentary human world of backbreaking peasant toil, a world reduced to its most brutal and menaced, primitive and marginalized state" (29). Jameson's knowledge of Marxism allowed him to create an emotional relationship to Van Gogh's painting by understanding the struggles of the peasant. This historical awareness allows us to access a feeling of empathy for others, whether in a historical context or in the present, by giving us a basic understanding of the struggles they may be faced with. Though Marxism is one way to assist with cognitive mapping, my challenge to Jameson's idea is that Marxism is not the only way to create historical awareness. Consciousness of your own family history creates a historical context to which we can compare

present day situations. This would in turn help us to feel more compassion and empathy for others, as well as to strengthen our relationships in the present.

In my own experience of cognitive mapping, being half German and a first generation American, my own family's history has given me the historical context necessary to unify my past to my present. Although my family was not directly affected by the Holocaust, they were impacted by the after-shocks of World War II and Germany's divided government. They lived in East Berlin, while it was under Soviet rule, prior to the construction of the Berlin Wall. In a passage from Susan Sontag's book, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, she discussed "the rape of one hundred and thirty thousand women and girls (ten thousand of whom committed suicide) by victorious Soviet soldiers unleashed by their commanding officers in Berlin in 1945" (Sontag 49). Oma, my grandmother, was one of those women who had been raped. If she had been one of the thousands to commit suicide, my mother and I would not exist. My mother was just a child when she and my grandparents fled Germany. They had to wear three sets of clothes and left all of their belongings behind because in order to leave, they needed to look like they would return. Being stateless, they had to stay in a refugee camp (for more than three years) until they were finally sponsored to come to the U.S. (when my mother was seven years old). This personal example is in agreement with Jameson's concept of cognitive mapping. Knowing my own family history has provided me with historical awareness. Having this historical reference point has been beneficial. Similar to how Marxism functions in Jameson's interpretation of Van Gogh's painting, this awareness has given me a deeper understanding of human struggle and suffering, a strong emotional connection to the past, and greater empathy and compassion for others in the present.

Jameson's ideas are beneficial in helping us to better understand postmodern culture, as well as to identify symptoms of the postmodern condition and to learn from them. Though his criticism of postmodern architecture being a cannibalization of all past styles depicts a disturbing image, his description of buildings, made of unrecognizable shapes that seem to defy gravity, is scarily accurate. In the current example of postmodern architecture, a newly renovated rehabilitation facility supports Jameson's observation that a random association of shapes and styles are used on one structure. But this example also challenges his view that a reflective glass exterior is used to repel the building from its environment. In this case, clear glass was used, not reflective, allowing the interior lobby to be viewed from the exterior. Jameson's criticism of the postmodern age signifying the end of historical awareness and an inability to feel emotions (both being necessary to form connections to the past and relationships with others in the present), is supported by the current example given of a discussion questioning the statistics and emotional significance of a tragic historical event. And though his theory that cognitive mapping is necessary to unify our past, present and future is valid and supported by the current example, Jameson's theory that Marxism is the only way to resolve this issue is being challenged. Awareness of your own personal history, knowing all that your ancestors sacrificed and suffered through to get you to where you are today, will give you an appreciation and

understanding of your past and your present. You will benefit from this awareness by developing empathy for others. It will give you new respect for people who suffered through historical tragedies, it will allow you to feel compassion for others in the present, and ultimately, it will enrich your life with deeper, more meaningful relationships.

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The Pleasure of Pain

Lauren Tyson

Ensnared within Emily Dickinson's poem "I started Early - Took my Dog" is an overall theme of seduction where a woman's literal battle with the enveloping ocean metaphorically speaks to her seduction by a man. The elements analyzed in this essay to explore this seduction are images, symbols and conflict.

The use of natural and seemingly playful images and words in the poem are effectively used to delicately persuade the reader of the darker seduction that occurs. The speaker tells us that until now she had never been intimate with a man: "But no Man moved Me - till the Tide" (9). The imagery of the ocean slowly enveloping her from past her shoe to over her bodice portrays the slow upward movement of the seduction. The figurative meaning behind "And made as He would eat me up" (13) further speaks to the all-consuming act of intercourse and penetration. It is followed by the line "As wholly as a Dew" (14), which clearly refers to the moisture and wetness associated with intercourse, a delicate playful interchange that the poet uses to contrast the figurative meaning of intercourse and the literal moisture of the ocean. The use of the word "overflow" (20) illuminates the image of ejaculation as the waves consume the woman, intensifying the sensations and release of energy associated with both the literal and figurative meanings of the sexual act. These very sensual images of the ocean's creeping capture of the speaker and its soft touch to her experience as water washing over her are contrasted by the sharp and sudden enjoyment of intercourse which adds to the depth of the experience.

Along with very effective imagery, Dickinson also uses very powerful symbols to convey the figurative meanings in this poem and often the two are interwoven. The symbol of "His silver Heel" (18) gives a colorful addition to the poem where the reader can imagine the soft hues of the ocean and the rolling foam that is soft to her skin. The "silver Heel" (18) is also a phallic symbol and the color silver is a reference to the color of semen after the seduction reached its climax. The use of the word "Pearl" (20) in the line "Would overflow with Pearl" (20) has many layers of meaning in this poem. The word is used to similarly reference the 'overflow' (20) of ejaculation at climax. A pearl also symbolizes wisdom and in this context, it could be the wisdom that the speaker now has after partaking in intercourse for the first time and gaining this experience. "Pearl" could also symbolize the speaker's virginity before this seduction and purity leaving the physical body thereafter. And, of course, another powerful phallic symbol that exists within this poem is the "Extended

Hempen Hands” (6). Interlaced into this poem are many seemingly playful symbols that have a deeply effective meaning in the context of this seduction.

The third element that ties this poem so delicately together is the presence of conflict, both external and internal as well as literal and figurative. The surface conflict is the literal and external conflict between a human and the sea. The battle of the waves and the way they travel up the speaker’s body is portrayed in “Went past my simple Shoe” (10). The surprise of how far the speaker had wandered out into the ocean and the conflict of surprise is depicted in line 16 when she states, “And then - I started - too” (16). The end of the conflict comes when the speaker is no longer battling with the water of the ocean and was freed from its possession, which is shown in “The Sea withdrew” (24). The figurative conflict that exists in the poem is the conflict between pleasure and pain. The pleasure is the physical pleasure of intercourse and being seduced. The pain comes from the inner turmoil of losing her virginity and knowing she can never get it back. The idea of having to live with that and the conflict of making that decision is prominent in this poem. Also, the “Extended Hempen Hands” (6) is an indication that the seduction has been initiated, almost like someone extending his hands as an offer of service and/or greeting. The confession that occurs in “But no Man moved Me - till the Tide” (9) tells the reader that this is something the speaker has never done. Not only that, but the addition of “till the Tide” (9) tells the reader that she has been persuaded and there is actual seduction taking place. There is also conflict in the last stanza when the seduction has ended, which is shown with “The Sea withdrew” (24). The inner struggle is one of wanting the moment to last and hold on to the experience verses letting it end and watching it disappear knowing that there is nothing she can change about it.

Expecting this poem to be nothing but a delightful dance between a woman and the sea, the reader instead becomes captivated and enraptured by a tale of seduction.

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Reflection

Rebecca Ramdhan

“The Slump” by John Updike and “The Real Bad Friend” by Robert Bloch both deal with self versus self by using opposing naming strategies. While “The Slump” contains a nameless main character, “The Real Bad Friend” contains a main character who has split himself into two with a name for each side of him.

In “The Slump”, the main character is the narrator -- a nameless individual who delves into his past as he tries to figure out why his abilities in baseball are starting to wane. John Updike’s intention in omitting the name of this character lies mainly in making a stream-of-consciousness narration more believable. No one refers to himself in the third person when he is thinking, especially not when the character is analyzing himself. Updike allows for the content of the character’s thoughts to create who the character is. The short story is written as if the reader should already know that the main character is married, that he has children, and that he has a career in baseball. It picks up from the middle of his life, as a snapshot of his reality. As he tries to figure out why his abilities are deteriorating, he shows a passion for baseball in the way he talks about it: “It’s that I can’t see the ball the way I used to. It used to come floating up with all seven continents showing, and the pitcher’s thumbprint, and a grass smooch or two, and the Spalding guarantee in ten-point san-serif...” (84). The narrator thinks intelligently, too, alluding to Kierkegaard, a philosopher and theologian known as the “father of existentialism” (85) in his thought process. Contrasting that intelligence is his diction, using words that are simplistic or rough, “Now, heck... I think maybe if I got beaned... I don’t know...” (84, 85). He speaks as if he were speaking to a friend.

On the opposite end, Robert Bloch intentionally uses naming in “The Real Bad Friend” to portray self versus self by making George and Roderick seem like separate people, therefore detaching the main character from himself. George is introduced as unassuming and obedient, while Roderick appears to be a wicked troublemaker. However, as the story progress, the reader comes to realize that Roderick is actually an amalgamation of every rebellious thought that George held inside, and that Roderick is a mere projection of those thoughts. George unknowingly deals with a different version of himself, struggling with whether he should fight or allow Roderick’s wild whims to come to fruition. The start of the conflict is when Roderick proposes driving George’s wife mad, selling the house, and going to the West Indies. He asserts, “We can go there together. You’d like that, wouldn’t you, George? The two of us down there, I mean, where we wouldn’t have to be afraid of what we did, what people would think? I could help

you George” (92). George goes on to deliberate Roderick’s plan, not realizing that they are one and the same, and that those are his own desires. George refuses to face himself straight on, creating Roderick unconsciously in order to continue to project his problems into him instead of understanding that the problem rests in his own heart.

The naming methods create a different feeling for the short stories, and describe identity differently as well. In “The Slump”, the main character explores himself based on the content of the life he has lived. He is nameless because he’s looking into his actions, what he’s filled his mind with, and whoever is important to him. His identity is defined more by his experiences rather than his name. Robert Bloch, on the other hand, uses names in order to show the separation of self between George and Roderick. Even the meanings of their names correlate with their character, to some degree. George means “tiller of soil, or farmer,” which correlates with the way he works a simple job and lives a rather dull life. Roderick, on the other hand, has a name that means “fame, king, a famous ruler.” Roderick often speaks as if attaining something is easy. He also has a large sway with George, showing his dominance over George and over life as a whole. The names become a sort of confinement of these pieces of the whole character. The name of a character can also have an effect on the reader’s ability to relate to the character. John Updike’s main character without a name becomes more open, and despite the nature of the character’s experiences, readers can easily place themselves in the position of the narrator. The fact that the narrator is facing a roadblock in life, something that everyone faces at some point, gives a personal connection to the character based on the reader’s own experience. With George and Roderick, however, the names close off the characters and make them less relatable. In the reader’s eyes, no one else can be George and no one else can be Roderick.

Robert Bloch and John Updike both use names to their advantage to show their characters dealing with themselves, despite the vast difference in their decision to use names or not to. Both methods show how a character views himself, as well as how willing he is to face himself. The nameless main character of “The Slump” is very ready to analyze his life and his identity. His whole thought process revolves around comparing who he once was to who he’s become over time, and his need to know what changed. George, however, is completely unprepared to face his darker thoughts and wishes, mainly due to a complex with his mother who asked him to be “a good little boy” (92). Roderick, being the persona George created to contain those thoughts and wishes, is the only form that is comfortable for him if George wanted to evaluate what is right and wrong with himself. The names make it clear that George can’t bring himself to accept Roderick as just another part of himself.

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Black and White

Crystal Huang

The “Stranger in the Village” written by James Baldwin is a personal piece that highlights the conflicts and perspectives of slavery during the late 20th century when he visited a small Swiss village in Loèche-les-Bains. Baldwin wrote the essay to challenge the world through education of the disparity and paradigm that existed back then throughout the American Society by comparing it to the reactions of the Swiss village. Baldwin argues that white supremacy is based off an assumption, which is that they have created civilization. Therefore, it is its job to be responsible for the world and see those who are not responsible as inferior. This has produced contempt within the minds of those who are regarded as subordinate. As a result of this dynamic, Baldwin argues that we deny human complexity to people of color and never challenge ourselves to face the reality of this pathological separation. Two perspectives express the transformative relationship that occurs throughout the story. One, the strong rage and hatred Baldwin experienced as the result of harsh and inhumane prejudice, and, two, the pitying empathy felt towards the superior white Europeans who he believes are actually uneducated and blind to their historical realities. This struggle for equality and reason is ongoing in American history in part because of blindness to human reality and truth.

Baldwin’s conviction is that ‘these people cannot be, from the view of power, strangers anywhere in the world’ (67). This phrase illustrates the dynamic relationship viewed from the conquered and the conqueror, the prisoner and the master. Even as secluded as the village people were, they held the intrinsic belief and right to exist in the world with no fear while the others, especially Baldwin, must act with caution and consternation no matter where they are. What is intrinsic? Something that is inborn and instinctive, something belonging naturally. However, Baldwin implies that he would always be the stranger in the world. By definition, stranger alludes to someone who is a visitor or an outsider, a person unaccustomed to the feeling, situation, area, place, etc. Consequently, Baldwin sees that because he is the unfamiliar one, whether in the village, American society or in the world, his degree of human value is singular and separate from the conquerors. The dominance comes from the notion that the Europeans are essentially the ‘Creators of Modern civilization’ (72) and therefore, they have the eminence and power to decide the fates of those deemed as unequal and different. Historically, white men are descendants from great artists like Michelangelo or Da Vinci or Rembrandt or Dante; their existences bear greater authority because they have these relationships in history unlike Baldwin, who had ‘no credentials’ (67). Everything the white Europeans have, or are entitled to, is ‘inherited’. They

were born into this world with the world at their hands. Their rights existed before they were born and were handed down similar to how one receives love simply for being part of the family. While Baldwin stayed in the Swiss village, in his contempt and terror, he speaks of ‘watching the conquerors arrive’ when he walks along the streets like his ancestors. In “Stranger in the Village”, rage is the most consistent emotion that is engaged as he visualizes how the past African ancestors felt when they saw the white soldiers conquering their homeland through fear, violence in the form of justice, religion, and greed. He mockingly compares himself to an ‘ordinary representative’ to the ‘Herrenvolk’ (67) who is unable to fathom the animosity that ‘cannot be hidden’ as it grows and strengthens into contempt. The term ‘Herrenvolk’ is a term derived for the ‘master race,’ indicating to the reader that Baldwin feels that this term exists solely for the European culture, for their ‘authority’ that is compared to a mountain, and their perceived perfection. Again, Baldwin points out how the rage is an inevitable emotion that that cannot be ‘brought under the domination of the intelligence’ (67). In other words, the rage that was built up deludes and blinds the black community that they cannot dissemble or break it down; that the rage is the sad bond that strengthens and keeps the people alive. However, Baldwin acknowledges that the paradigm exists due to two opposing parties. One is a force of acceptance, the oppressed African Americans, who are convinced of their state of being and give up their rights willingly rather than fight or protest. The second is the white Europeans who continue in their racist state out of contempt, false superiority and ignorance, which is why there is the repetitive violence.

On the contrary, the village is a representative of the world with its two dominant perspectives. On one side, some of the people are purely ‘astonished’, in the most innocent sense, as he describes of the ‘charm of genuine wonder’. He believes that most of the ignorant views of African Americans result from rumors or stories rather than actual truths. There is a complexity of tensions and fears because of the unknown. While the other side, similar to the majority of American Society, subconsciously justifies their cruelty and brutality to uplift their superiority while degrading an innocent race of people they perceive as comparable to animals in a show of false authority. Even though Americans had a long history with people of color, they continue to reject the human complexity of these people and deny them their rights. In both situations, society influences the masses as the elite “white men” in power abuse their authority to falsify the state of being of African Americans as savages objectified and controlled. During a scene in the Swiss village, Baldwin goes into detail about the custom of ‘buying African natives to convert them to Christianity’ (65). When the bistro owner’s wife was speaking in pride and pleasure of this, she was genuine in her belief that this was ‘right’ while Baldwin is horrified yet reflective about her misunderstanding and lack of knowledge because the reality they both see are on opposite sides of the spectrum. Similar to how the children acted as they shouted ‘Neger!’ (69) with misconceived good humor, Baldwin realizes the possibility that the people in the village could be compared to some in the world who cannot understand that these demeaning names bring suffering; that from birth, people are conditioned or

expected to act this way against African Americans. People who are conscious in their racism deign people of color as inferior as justification of their preference of the discrimination and dehumanization. The majority of the white men, aware that they are in better position and livelihood than the black men, assume the mask of superiority and deny that people of color hate white people because they do not want to 'change places'. Baldwin describes of the older women who never pass with a 'friendly greeting' but rather avoid his way, or of children who have been taught that the 'devil is a black man' (69). Both the women and children cannot process the simple fact that black people are the same as them because of pride, or because they subjugated themselves to learn that black people are evil and demons, therefore sin. Society and religion are the two most powerful weapons used against the color minority because the majority, like the owner's wife and children, have illogical thoughts that are consequences of a generational mindset, where white people downgrade or demonize people of African descent. Some of the men 'suggest that I learn to ski', a simple sentence, but also erroneous and prominent thinking. They cannot understand on a basic level that a savage could do the same thing they can. Ignorance is apparent in these three situations, due to their limited knowledge of black culture and repression of the truth that black people have complexity. Those who never saw his colored skin before fear and hurt others in retaliation; those who accuse him as 'le sale negre' (69), or 'dirty black', have no bearing of the consequences of how grotesque Baldwin or how ugly Baldwin feels when he sees 'discontented Europeans' (70) treat black people like cattle in cages rather than human beings. A common point present in all children, women and men, is that they grow up and live in this racism; the white and black people grow accustomed to this 'paranoiac malevolence' (the former meaning excessiveness or irrational suspiciousness and distrustfulness; the latter meaning intense often-vicious ill will or hatred). Each side looks at each other with conscious contempt and violence. In both European and American societies, the people hold onto hatred to such an obsessive degree that it borders on being a disease that they created themselves nonetheless. The people are afraid of what Baldwin is, of what he brings and what he stands for, a change in their status. In both point of views, the people overall remove responsibility from themselves, offering platitudes as excuses as they escape from reality, because it is simpler to lash out injustice towards those removed from human complexity. Therefore, these victims lose the meaning of their state of being.

Baldwin illustrates the abyss that created when white men are the cause of the darkness surrounding the world. The idea of white supremacy lies on the fact that 'white men are the creators of civilization' and therefore it is impossible to accept another foreign race without impinging the idea that they are the 'protectors' of the land. However, a point of necessity to entail is that the Americans deny their moral beliefs to justify this cruelty and subordination of the African Americans. While they claim that they are the great conquerors, their moral compass that 'people are created equal' abandoned because these beliefs cannot explain the moral chaos surrounding slavery and subjugation. Baldwin writes in detail of how 'morality is based on ideas and that all ideas are

dangerous' (71), adding that ideas 'lead to action' (72); he believes these moral beliefs can spur on ideas of freedom and rebellion in the eyes of all people. So white people are confronted with remaining faithful or becoming morally free of them, which is a driving force that results in the inhumane treatment of actions such as the mob lynching and segregation. The majority of Americans base their brutality on the idea of denying moral investigation. Baldwin pities the fools who tangle themselves with the struggle of living a life full of lies because they cannot accept him and so they try to deny his human complexity and weight. The strain of the denial causes many of them to be forced under a rationalization that is pathological. Maybe because the root of the problem is so simple, they cannot realize that they aren't the only race in the world who has ideas, who has morals and emotions that they continue the repetitive cycle of violence. Baldwin states, "But I am not a stranger in America and the same syllable riding on the American air expresses the war my presence has occasioned in the American soul"(69).

Baldwin illustrates that the American white man has to find a way to live with the Negro in order to 'live with himself' and that the struggle would be a continuous war in America history. He uses the term, 'same syllable riding.' Simply put, Baldwin believes that one day people will connect with each other to be side by side regardless of color or race and will understand that the home of the 'Negroes' is now America as their culture is synonymous with, and is, American history. Survival is dependent not on the white population but also on the black population because they were forced to be sent to America. This rising development is based on the resilient ability to turn his, the black man's, 'peculiar status' in western civilization into something of value and an advantage. This is the change in society because now another group in the shadows has a voice challenging his master's rights.

Another prime advocate that is comparable to Baldwin in his argument about changing the perception of black people in America is Martin Luther King Jr. In his brilliant thought-provoking piece, "Letter from Birmingham Jail", King also calls out to the continuous struggle for the barely-existent equality of the "Negro" community, that the ongoing violence is the product of two forces, the complacent black community and the hypocritical white leaders. Baldwin also believed that the complexity of racism and discrimination is not solely one-sided, but has multiple reasons and causes. If the black community is complacent in its situations and watches while the white men continue to strike fear and prejudice, the violence will persist forever. King states:

One is a force of complacency, made up in part of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, are so drained of self-respect and a sense of 'somebodieness' that they have adjusted to segregation and in part of a few middle-class Negroes who, because of a degree of academic and economic security and because in some ways they profit by segregation, have become insensitive to the problems of the masses. The other force is one of bitterness and hatred, and it comes perilously close to advocating violence." (231)

Complacency is synonymous to 'giving-up,' and it is one of the reasons why there has been limited change in the divisions between black and white people. The dominant perspective justifies prejudice against colored people because they are unable to accept people who are different yet still the same as them. It is truly a sad admission to see that history so warped in favor of the victors and champions' side just like Baldwin believed, denying the victims their truth, respect and honor. Baldwin called his status in America as a "battle of identity" (73) which relates indirectly when King writes, "we have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights" (223). The hundreds-year internal strife has existed and has never changed. Slavery exists only under another name, segregation, as it clouds the minds of black children, women, and men in bitterness toward the white people. Because segregation exists, peoples' personalities are distorted and deformed into a mangling mass of evil which could only be destroyed, not by attacking with violence, but with compassion, tolerance, and love. That 'little girl' in King's story who wasn't allowed to go to the waterpark because the color of her skin would pass on the pain and rage that Baldwin spoke off to the next generation. So what is so significant about both writers is their emphatic message to the world of the conflicting relationships that result from a repetitive violence that could only be conquered if one commands compassion and love to all those who live.

The invariable pattern of denial of human intricacy is continuous with American society in the 1989 major case of assault, murder and rape, 'The Central Park Five'. A group of five black and Latino teenagers were convicted unjustly for the rape and murder of a young jogger woman, sentenced between 3 to 15 years with no basis of DNA sampling, little to no evidence, and a coerced guilty statement with illegal means of police interference. Afterward, in 2002, the real rapist confessed while he was in jail with one of the Five for another crime of rape along with several other brutal wrongdoings. Authorities concluded that the actual rapist's DNA matched and the details about the case was only known by the perpetrator. This case reiterates the inhumane treatment of people of color, legally and factually, as the five teens are prime example of how American society can disregard their ethical laws and morality to people of color. The consequences of the mass hysteria based on this case resulted in an immoral desire to convict these five teens based on their race rather than logic or reason.

One of Baldwin's comments in *Stranger in the Village* relates to the circumstances of this case. He states, "Joyce is right about history being a nightmare – but it may be the nightmare from which no one can awaken. People are trapped in history and history is trapped in them." (65). Baldwin refers to James Joyce's novel 'Ulysses' wherein Joyce writes "History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake"(65). 'History will always repeat itself' is the cognizant message denoting that people cannot escape from the past because it determines the present and future. Despite the fact that most Americans recognize how inhumanely African Americans were treated during the time of Jim Crow and prior when they were enslaved, they fail to think of black people as human beings and instead accept their perceptions about the whole race as animals or

subhumans. Once the shock of the phenomenal result of The Central Park Five' case was printed in the news, three opinions were consecutively present in the people. The majority of the white population of New York City was condemning the actions and the group, denoting them as the 'Wild Ones' giving them a bestial aspect, denying that the law enforcement acted with use of malicious unethical practices. On the other hand, some were still in disbelief with the brutality of the crime, with the fact that racial discrimination still exists especially how the police forced the guilty admissions. Still others protested the malignant racial treatment challenging the people about the morality of the judgement. Because the Five were treated unequally, most of the black community used their voices to fight against the status quo, which was probably unusual in the times Baldwin lived.

In the last few pages of his essay, Baldwin believed that time will slowly diminish white men's authority in the world and give rights to others who now are 'responsible' for the world too.

Though the nightmare persists, some African Americans do have opportunity for better education, higher-status work, family, and a voice in the government.

In conclusion, Baldwin offers two perspectives in his essay, one from a native/stranger perspective and the other from that of a liberation, mocking the masters of their downfall. He believes that the once great defenders of civilization are no longer in charge because the 'world is no longer white' anymore, America will be white and black, due to the emerging new cultures that exist and new ideas that are forming. The European race will no longer have the power or luxury to look at black people as strangers because America is their home now.

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**“It’s a Delicacy:” Love and
Taste as Delicacy in *The Cook,
The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover***

Christopher Mello

“Wash me thoroughly,” sings Pup throughout the halls of the restaurant where Peter Greenaway sets *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover*. Pup’s begging for cleansing, for redemption through scripture, speaks to the unwashed nature of the restaurant and its patrons, specifically Spica and his gang. Given its religious context, central to the tale is one of the Seven Deadly Sins of Augustine gluttony. The gluttony of Spica, the titular thief, stems from both a voracious appetite and, more importantly, an unwashed or unrefined palette. Without regard for delicacy, delicacy becomes nonexistent. It follows then, that the only delicacy left in Spica’s kingdom is regard for delicacy itself. *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* is a film about the death of taste and the crushing of any sort of love by the act of unrefined consumption.

To analyze gluttony one must look at the glutton. If Greenaway has created a separate universe in *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover*, then Spica is its all-consuming black hole. Indeed, given his size and style of dress, likening the thief to a large black mass is not a radical idea. Moreover, Spica’s presence has gravity and plenty of it. The players and moving parts which make the film’s world turn are brought together and bound by Albert Spica. Without Spica, Georgina never meets Michael and never needs to. Without Spica, there is no film. His physical gravity is emphasized more literally in the restaurant’s dining room, where Spica sits in the center of his table, orbited by his cronies. This analogy of orbit and the previously established cosmological context speaks to Spica’s naming. Spica shares his name with a blue giant star, the brightest star in the constellation Virgo. Being such a large star ensures that Albert Spica’s namesake has gravity to match his own. Yet perhaps Spica, the film’s star, is more appropriately likened to the aforementioned black hole, the remnants of some supermassive star. Indeed, if a black hole is a mass from which nothing, not even light can escape, then so too is Spica’s gravity and indiscriminate consumption inescapable.

Aside from his gravity, the importance of Spica is in his indiscriminate taste. While he proclaims himself an epicurean and declares to Richard that he will try anything, Albert Spica has an unrefined palette, which prefers culinary crime to delicacy. When his wife is presented with a special meal through the compliments of Richard, Spica complains that he would want the same. Yet when the cook presents Albert with the same dish, he has no taste for it. Further, Richard refuses to use the ingredients that Spica has brought him as they are unworthy and not of good quality. He knows this not by checking the food, but simply through

knowing Spica's tastes. And no one is better suited to judge a man's taste than the man's chef. As far as his consumption of food is indiscriminate, his consumption of those around him may be more extreme.

As a glutton, Spica's domain is, of course, the restaurant's dining room. Here, his consumption of the other characters is emphasized through light and color. A red glow fills the dining room, re-coloring the clothing of the patrons. Red represents blood, and the discolored clothing of the patrons represents the slaughter of these relative innocents. The only patron seemingly free from this red glow is Michael, Georgina's eventual lover. As Michael is a man of taste, who originally has no relation to Spica, he is not yet consumed by the glutton's reach. Spica's disregard for taste has, in the early parts of the film, not yet devoured taste itself. Michael is the most free from the bloodying effect of the restaurant's lighting, yet his lover, Spica's wife, Georgina, is the most affected. Her entire wardrobe is constantly turned a bright red, symbolic of Albert's complete consumption of her.

Physically, Albert's crimes against his wife are some of his most heinous. Most popular among Spica's methods of torture is forced consumption. He consumes the souls and spirits of his victims by force feeding them. In the opening scene, Spica and his gang force feed a man dog feces. Later, he feeds buttons to Pup, the dishwasher, along with the boy's navel. And upon discovery of Michael's hideout in the book depository, Spica kills him by force feeding him a book on the French Revolution. He forces his wife to consume something worse than navels or books or feces as he forces Georgina to consume him.

Yes, the sexual implications of this statement exist and are evident in the film. Albert rapes Georgina in a fit of rage while demanding that Pup watch the act. But as Georgina later reveals in her monologue to Michael's cadaver, Albert does not often show interest in sex, choosing rather to have Georgina penetrate herself in his presence with objects he keeps in a box. But Albert's force feeding of himself to Georgina goes further than this physical level. There is emotional abuse present in their relationship, and whenever Georgina is absent, Albert rushes to find her and trap her. This is first explored in Albert's foray into the women's lavatory in search of his wife, who is on her first escapade with Michael. Later, in her aforementioned speech, Georgina elaborates on her various attempts at leaving her husband. Four times she has claimed to have left him and four times he has brought her back. Using gifts and declarations of love, Albert has won Georgina back time and time again. This story brings itself to life as, at the final confrontation between Georgina and Albert, Albert tries bribing his wife to come back to him and to forget the whole thing happened. But this time, Georgina does not give in. In Michael, Georgina has, for the first time in her life, tasted quality and can never go back to the horrifying and tasteless act of consuming Albert. When one is finally exposed to quality, one will begin to find the status quo substandard.

Georgina isn't the only person close to Albert who is consumed by his presence. Not even his henchmen are free of his vampiric consumption. In no one is this more apparent than in right-hand man, Mitchel. Albert's consumption of Mitchel isn't the physical sort of consumption he inflicts on Georgina and his

various other victims. Instead, Albert has consumed Mitchel's very being - his identity. Mitchel's actions, from the way he tortures people to the way he eats, are nothing but mimicry of Albert. Yet, Albert still criticizes the way Mitchel acts despite Georgina's defense of Mitchel. She states that Mitchel's rude behavior is not his fault as he is merely trying to act like Albert. Mitchel's desire to be important to Spica has turned into a desire to be a reflection of Spica, albeit a much smaller reflection. Albert Spica's presence in his life has stripped Mitchel of any sense of self. Albert has eaten his identity.

Yet the one most literally consumed by Spica is the one initially off his radar. Michael, the titular lover, is initially safe from Spica's consumption, as he is a man of taste, delicacy personified, and Albert Spica scoffs at delicacy. However, the consumption begins as soon as the two make contact. Albert throws his book away several times before inviting Michael to come sit at his table. Here, Spica repeats his consumption of identity by assuming Michael is Jewish. "Michael?" he says, "That's a Jew name." Michael's correction of the fallacious assumption means nothing to Spica who continually refers to Michael as a Jew or, in a memorable exchange, "Jewish gynecologist."

Eventually, Spica's consumption catches Michael harder than any victims before. First he turns his gluttony on Michael, force feeding him books until he is choked and killed. Then, in the film's climactic moment, Spica is forced to literally eat Michael's cooked corpse, courtesy of a very irate Georgina. But Michael is more than just a dish or climactic moment; he is Albert's foil and the delicacy in a world devoid of such things.

In the final confrontation, when Georgina feeds Michael's cooked body to her husband, she mockingly encourages him with the line "Try the cock, Albert. It's a delicacy, and you know where it's been." While on a surface level, it is simply a silly, throwaway line, it is actually the piece of dialogue most central to this reading of the film. Michael and his love, genital or otherwise, are the only delicacies in Georgina's restricted life. He is her tastemaker, her exposure to quality that makes everything else seem subpar.

Michael is a man of taste. An intellectual and an epicurean, Michael is what Albert claims to be. He is a reader, like Albert claims Georgina is. Yet Georgina does not place value in books like Michael does. Georgina's values have been instilled in her by her tyrannical husband and when she enters the book depository with Michael she asks what value the books could possibly have. "You can't eat them," she says in speaking about the inability of books to make a person happy. But still, the connection of minds is present from the beginning as is apparent in the couple's first wordless escapade.

Michael's taste in food is also shown to be very good. He is served the same special dishes Richard serves Georgina. These special, experimental dishes Richard claims to be reserved for those with the best taste and the most interest in exploration. This shared, unspoken interest in experimentation and exploration draws Georgina and Michael together for the first time.

It is important to note Richard's role in the film as well. As the titular cook, Richard facilitates the meal that Michael and Georgina have made of their

romance and it is only through him that Michael's status as delicacy becomes textual. When presenting Georgina with experimental and fine dishes, Richard brings the meal in a covered platter. He then uncovers the dish to show Georgina what lies beneath. The second time Georgina sees Michael in the restaurant, something similar occurs. Richard walks Michael to his table and removes his coat for him, presenting Georgina with this meal of meals. The cook uncovers Michael in view of Georgina and, in doing so, begins to prepare Georgina's feast. Michael is Georgina's feast as her partaking in his flesh opens her mind to a new world of possibilities that were limited to her before. To her, he becomes the very thing that expands her palette and destroys limitation. He is delicacy simply because of his regard for delicacy. Taste itself has become a lost art in Spica's restaurant and as a rarity it becomes regarded as delicacy. Michael's status as such enlightens Georgina and frees her from the consumption of Albert and his force feeding of her. With Michael, this new delicacy, Georgina finally has choice in what she consumes and she chooses quality. Georgina's consumption of Michael's love then creates a further delicacy in the film: their romance itself.

As Richard hides their romance from Albert, he suggests that he not only wishes to protect the lovers, but also that he deems Albert unworthy of the sight of the two in the way that he determines the tasteless beast to be unworthy of his specialty dishes. Thus Richard becomes more than just a chef of food; he becomes the chef of the film itself. His actions and plans serve as both catalyst and facilitator. His most experimental dish, it turns out, is not his cooking of Michael's body, but the romance itself.

Michael's death is then Spica's ultimate crime against taste, the final move in stamping out delicacy from his unrefined world. Albert kills Michael with his own taste, choking him with pages from a book on his favorite subject, the French Revolution. In killing Michael in this fashion, Albert extinguishes the flame that has created the most beautiful meal Richard has ever created and Georgina has ever tasted. Thus they conspire against Albert and bring the film to its final act of cannibalism.

When vowing to kill Michael, Albert proclaims "I will eat him." Giving further evidence to the claim that Michael is delicacy, Albert is not too keen on actually eating him when Georgina force feeds Albert his words. This is perfect revenge against the glutton who thrives on consuming the energies of those around him by forcing their consumption. Here, Georgina, with a gun to Albert's head, forces him to consume an actual human. She forces him to face his crimes by committing their most extreme extrapolation, actual cannibalism. Yet when the flesh finally enters Albert's mouth, Georgina shoots him. Albert is not allowed to consume delicacy. As Richard would not present him with his finest dishes, Georgina would not deem him worthy of the finest dish she ever tasted. He would not appreciate the finer things about Michael, as apparent in his killing of Michael. As such, he is not worthy to partake in the flesh that saved her from the misery of bland, blind consumption. When she shoots her husband, she breathes the film's final word, "cannibal."

But this accusation of cannibalism does not refer to the final act of actual cannibalism. If it did, then Georgina and Richard would be equally guilty of the crime, having cooked the body. Instead, the film's final words refer to Spica's way of life and his consumption of the souls and energies of those around him. Additionally, his lack of regard for taste and his blind consumption of actual food suggest that he may as well be eating human flesh. In Georgina's mind, the final act of cannibalism is the least cannibalistic action of Spica's life. While now free of his grasp forever, her energies have already been eaten by Spica and she will never be whole because of it.

The Cook, The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover presents a bleak view of consumption in a world filled with gluttons. Yet Greenaway suggests that love, while not conquering all, creates temporary refuge from the overwhelming consumptive efforts of evil men. In its harsh view of an empty world, the film finds delicacy in love, knowledge, and taste itself and offers hope to a bland world almost in spite of itself.

Work Cited

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The Irony Instilled in Life

Michael Dwyer

Irony is nature's construct of conflict that leaves people with a distinct sense of vulnerability. Irony through film is unparalleled to any alternative depiction because the visual and verbal combination engulfs the viewer into the conflict on a personal level. In the movie *Psycho* directed by Alfred Hitchcock and in Kenneth Branagh's production of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, we are introduced to cosmic, situational, and verbal irony to add depth to the conflict.

In *Psycho*, there are three specific scenes that powerfully take advantage of cosmic irony. In the first, the protagonist, Marion Crane, had just stolen \$40,000 from her workplace and is leaving Phoenix, Arizona to live a new life with her lover in Fairvale, California. In her travel, she detours to a motel because the weather conditions are unfit for driving. What is meaningful to the scene is the type of weather. She stopped driving because it was pouring an absurd amount of rain. The fact that it is raining foreshadows the upcoming cosmic irony because water is a significant symbol in religion. Water is seen as a cleansing agent both physically and holistically; it is used in church to heal people of their sins. The Jordan River is an important religious landmark because it is a river where people voyage to in order to be baptized and cleansed of their sins. Water is also used to protect people and sustain life as seen when God parted the Red Sea for Moses in order to protect the Israelites from the Egyptians. At this point in the film Marion is currently residing in the motel and is in the bathroom taking a shower. This next scene is crucial to the cosmic irony because as she is taking a shower, she is feeling guilty about stealing the money and is confiding in herself to act righteously and return it. The scene couldn't have been better constructed because she is both literally and spiritually cleaning herself of dirt and sin on her soul. In the moments following, Marion decides that she is going to fix this situation. Before she can get a chance to undo her wrongdoing, however, she is fatally stabbed to death in the shower. This leaves the audience pondering if she met the holy standard to make it into heaven before she passed and thus instills an unsettling feeling in the viewer throughout the rest of the film. In the third scene another level of cosmic irony is displayed when Norman Bates, the owner of the motel, disposes of Marion's body and the evidence. Rather than burying it underground or burning it so nobody can recover it, he decides to dump it in the swamp, a body of water. This solidifies that her actions are permanent and out of her hands, as she sinks deceased underwater with the \$40,000. It's also important to recognize the idea that while you have material possessions while you are alive, none of those follow you in the afterlife.

Both verbal and situational irony also make an appearance in Mary

Shelley's *Frankenstein*. In the movie *Victor Frankenstein* is a man who is very gifted and intelligent, but faces the tragedy of losing his mother while she gives birth to his younger brother. This event scarred Victor and is the reasoning behind what follows next in the film. He decides to dedicate his life to avenge his mother's death by playing God and reincarnating life in order to cheat death. After years of his life are devoted to finding an answer to creating life, he successfully reaches his goal. This scene is vital in terms of situational irony because one would think after achieving a goal you put so much of yourself into, you would be ecstatic. This is not the case for *Frankenstein*. He is in complete horror of what he created and the potential it had to cause harm. His creation is much stronger than an ordinary person, and what's going on in its mind is completely unknown to Victor. As the creation scene unfolds, the viewer can infer the monster has the mind of a newborn and similar to other animals when they are first born, he looks towards his parent for nurturing and stability. The miscommunication between the creator and the created is very ironic, producing a push/pull effect because the monster is almost waddling like a newborn towards Victor, while in return Victor is doing everything in his power to keep him away. Further into the film we see the monster has matured and can think and act on his own while *Frankenstein* hasn't changed much of all. In the ice cave scene, they are discussing a solution to make both parties satisfied with their lives. Through dialogue we can see the roles are almost inverted as this artificial monster made of many people is the one speaking with sense while *Frankenstein*, who is a natural person, is really acting like a creature devoid of any sense or morals. The verbal irony depicted demonstrates how similar the two could possibly be. Even though one is not a natural human, they both have similar minds. Through the interaction the monster is bombarding Victor with criticism of his actions saying "You gave me these emotions but you didn't tell me how to use them" and "What of my soul? Do I have one? Or is that a part you left out?". While the monster isn't human, he acts as Victor's conscience throughout this scene and shows human-like attributes. Both films manage to portray the same concepts of irony in diametric fashions. Both movies exemplify the fact that God has an ultimate power that cannot be unmatched by a person or creature.

Frankenstein's Victor tries to play God by creating life and in the end, he loses everything and everyone he loved while *Psycho's* Marion acts sinfully and is ultimately punished through death. Both stories show situational irony by leading the audience to believe something positive is going to happen, when the complete opposite occurs. *Frankenstein* turns out to despise his creation, and Marion doesn't get the opportunity to fix her wrongs when she awakens to the realization of her mistakes.

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A Twist to Reality

Jayne Avila Leon

Freudian Theory suggests that the oral, anal and phallic stages of human development must successfully be completed in order to be psychologically healthy. Norman, from the film *Psycho*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, and the narrator of the film *Fight Club*, directed by Chuck Palahniuk, both unsuccessfully complete the phallic stage of psychosexual development and this leads to their mental abnormalities. Both of these characters become fixated and obsessed with a parental figure, when considered through Sigmund Freud's theory of the Oedipal Complex. Through that theory, one can obtain an understanding pertaining to *Fight Club's* narrator and Norman Bates' conscious and unconscious mind.

The Oedipus Complex begins in the phallic stage of psychosexual development. The Oedipus Complex suggests that a young boy develops an attachment to his mother, which triggers feelings of killing his own father. The Id desires his mother until he reaches puberty and views his father as a blocking agent to that union (Freud 141). Metaphorically speaking, the child fears the father's power to castrate him, leaving him powerless. Once the child inevitably identifies with his father, however, the complex is satisfied. At this phallic stage, the Superego develops. In *Psycho*, Norman Bates' childhood involves problems with the penis and masturbation (140). This is evidenced in the film when Norman seeks pleasure from his own body. Norman creates a strong sexual desire and attachment toward his mother from a young age due to his abnormal relationship with his biological father.

In the film, his mother is portrayed as a verbal abusive mother whom is very controlling and possessive over her son. She never allowed him to have a relationship with anyone other than herself. His fixation as a child led to his desire for his mother and love for her beyond the limits of a son. Through Freudian theory, we can see that Norman's personality as an adult is affected. He becomes extremely envious of his mother's new relationship following his father's death, where he cannot tolerate another man in her life, as he only has her and she only needs him. He fears that their relationship will be diminished, and he decides to kill his own mother and her boyfriend. The Oedipus Complex comes in when he transfers the same emotions of wanting to eliminate his father towards his mother's boyfriend. He is confused and cannot adjust to the idea of his mother loving another man other than himself. It seems almost unjust to him that she can have a relationship with another man but he cannot interact with other women. He would rather kill his mother for betraying him than have another man love her in his presence.

As a result, Norman's alter ego allows him to believe he is his mother. Norman experiences blackouts where he acts like his mother and dresses like her. The guilt of killing his own mother was enough to justify digging her out of her grave and keeping her body in his home for ten years. But, when the id is triggered by his meeting with Marion Crane, he cannot help but desire her. He then dresses like his mother and kills her as his own punishment. Norman is consciously unaware of his actions during his blackouts, and he justifies "mother's" actions by cleaning up the mess that she made. His temporary leave from reality consistently leads to the death of an innocent woman as his mother would have wanted. He feels no conscious guilt or remorse for his actions because he truly believes they were deviant acts of his mother.

In *Fight Club*, the narrator is projected in the beginning of the film as a shopper who buys Ikea furniture and views life in a pessimistic way. He has no meaning of life, he hates his Monday-through-Friday job, he has no love life, and he believes he has insomnia. He attends a testicular cancer support group meeting only to find how comforting it feels to finally cry and feel some type of emotion. His partner at the support group, Bob, is castrated and has breasts. The narrator warms up to him as if he was his mother due to the reality that he had no parents growing up. Bob becomes his closest relationship to a woman and allows him the narrator to open up. Bob gives him the attention and affection a mother would and changes the narrator's perspective on life. He realizes there is more to life and all he had to do was cry to realize his life could change.

The narrator clearly has a dissociative mental disorder and conjures an alter-ego named Tyler to cope with his life. Tyler takes over his mind and forces him to be a man. He doesn't want to follow any cultural standards and develops his obsession for fighting. From this passion, he develops the fight club with Tyler that grows rapidly with many members. Through Tyler, the narrator can develop his masculinity through fighting and being part of a group where men can be men. Furthermore, Project Mayhem then develops which is a terrorist group or a cult that the narrator believes the leader to be Tyler. The goal of Project Mayhem is to bomb credit card companies to clear everyone's debt. By doing so, there will be all will have zero balances, which will create complete chaos. Eventually, the narrator realizes that he and Tyler share the same identity, and he must stop his plans. However, he faces the scary reality that his cult will not allow him to terminate the mission. This goes to show how much power and authority he reflected onto these people, and how he influenced them to stay committed to the cause. Tyler is the man that the narrator longed to be and admired so much. He is his inner soul attempting and succeeding to live freely. Once his conscious mind or his ego realizes what his unconscious side has done, he attempts to find balance by fixing his wrong doings. Tyler is empowering but the narrator finally realizes that he can let go of his alter ego and be still be happy with the person he has become.

Norman and Tyler experience traumatic childhoods that bond them. Their lack of parental figures during childhood allowed them to grow into men who sought other people's pain as a way to comfort them and feel emotions such

as pleasure. Norman experienced a traumatic childhood where his Id interfered with the bonding relationship he should have had with his father and led to his obsession with his mother. *Fight Club's* narrator's idealistic portrayal of the man he longed to be his entire life was a reality only in his unconscious mind. The interrupting factors during the Phallic Stage of development contributed to the disruptive emotional and mental states of Norman and the narrator.

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How to End Genocide: Communication, Understanding, and Tolerance

Lauren Taglienti

A controversial topic that has persisted since the beginning of time is genocide. Genocide is the intentional murdering of a certain group of people who are of the same race, political belief, or cultural belief, that is not justified, by any means (Merriam-Webster.com). Genocide is an ongoing issue that must be ended. Through the public participating in open conversations concerning genocide and morality and through understanding one's own origins, as well as others' history, genocide can be prevented.

Genocides have been committed for centuries. One of which dates as far back as when the Europeans began settling into the New World in 1492. The Europeans brutally, remorselessly murdered the Native Americans. In addition, the settlers gave the Native Americans blankets infected with smallpox with the intention to kill their population. Forty years later, in 1532, Francisco Pizarro annihilated the Inca Empire. Pizarro kidnapped the Inca emperor, Atahualpa, deluded him into giving Pizarro silver and gold, and killed him. With the Inca people in disarray after their leader's death, Pizarro and his fellow Spaniards proceeded to slaughter them. Four hundred and seven years after the genocide of the Incas, in 1939, a genocide known as the Holocaust arose. The Holocaust was a genocide in which Nazis starved and murdered Jewish and Christian people in concentration camps out of anti-Jewish and anti-Christian prejudices. The Holocaust ended in 1945, and seventy-one years later, in 2016, a different genocide is being committed. Currently, members of the terrorist organization Isis slaughter Yazidis, Christians, and Shiite Muslims, amongst other captives, including American travelers. While these genocides may seem different, they all happen due to the same misconceptions: misunderstanding and intolerance. Once understanding and tolerance are practiced amongst all cultures, there will no longer be genocides. Additionally, it is pivotal for people to learn about these genocides and others in order to understand why they are unnecessary and why such misconceptions are of the utmost danger. Finally, the above genocides entail thousands of people being murdered; however, genocides are not limited to thousands of deaths. Genocides also include acts of terrorism, such as bombings or mass shootings. The death tolls of such can range from a few lives to hundreds of lives.

How could a conflict as relentless as genocide possibly be precluded? One idea, from Louis Althusser, is that a society "can avert the fatality of war by conducting an international moral campaign" (qtd. in Kazanjian 367). If people throughout the world are introduced to, and can understand, the same peacekeeping

ideas, then conflicts, such as genocide, will not arise. This “international moral campaign” that will end the war of genocide can be conducted in the form of open conversations that can be held anywhere from a school setting to a gathering with family and friends. If people come to a consensus of a logical, moral understanding that killing is wrong, then there will be no senseless killing.

Genocide, being a brutality towards a group of people based on an irrational hatred for that group, stems from misunderstanding of the group. Paulo Coelho, a United Nations Messenger of Peace, stated that, “We live the same life, but we can have misunderstanding or non-understanding, and that’s what we have to work on. Instead of talking about our differences, we should talk much more about the things we have in common” (“Interview with Paulo Coelho”). Focusing on the similarities between people has a more positive impact on human relations than focusing on people’s differences. Relating to others’ stories whilst discussing heritage and culture is focusing on similarities, acknowledging differences, taking them into consideration, and understanding and accepting them. Correspondingly, “culture makes people understand each other better. And if they understand each other better in their soul, it is easier to overcome the economic and political barriers” (“Interview with Paulo Coelho”). Regardless of people’s differences, culture is what binds people together. While there are thousands of different cultures, there are similarities between them, and those similarities are what prevail and are what people relate over. Speaking with others about these similarities and accepting the differences between people and their respective cultures will build tolerance and understanding, making the act of acceptance easier.

Participating in conversations is the optimal form of teaching why genocide is disastrous. Conversations are interactive and are open to personal anecdotes and questions. Philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca explained that, “Writing does well, but personal discourse and conversation does better; for men give great credit to their ears, and take stronger impressions from except than precept.” Discussing a topic, such as genocide, has more impact on a person than reading about it does. Through conversing about genocide, one’s knowledge about genocide would expand, and he/she would grow to understand why genocide is detrimental and intolerable. The said conversations would consist of numerous subtopics, including morality, philosophy, and history.

During dialogues concerning genocide, one would discuss the history of genocide, the mistakes of the past that led to genocide, as well as philosophy and morality. Conversing about philosophy and morality allow one to discover why mindless hating and harming people is unacceptable. Seneca wrote that, “The best conversation is with the philosophers that is to say, with such of them as teach us matter, not words-that preach to us things necessary and keep us to practice them” (248). Holding open conversations about a topic of importance is more efficient and influential than a teacher sermonizing and stressing his/her own beliefs and/or the facts of genocide to his/her students. Speaking with others about genocide is more productive and effective than simply teaching about genocide. A teacher can give hundreds of lectures about genocide, but he/she does not know whether the students are actually paying attention, no less understanding and agreeing

with the information being taught to them. Therefore, by having a teacher speak with his/her students about genocide, the students would be engaged in a two-way dialogue, and would, as a result, learn more. The students could express their opinions, beliefs, share stories, and ask questions to ensure a rich understanding of just how detrimental genocide is to any society.

Genocide is undoubtedly a difficult topic to speak about. A discussion can be started with important questions and statements that catalyze the mind to think deeply about the subject. An experienced teacher, named Ms. Sterling, taught as such:

Ms. Sterling, a veteran of over twenty years, began her school year by having her students ponder the meaning of the statement, “Every true history is contemporary history.” In the first week of the semester, Sterling thrust her students into the kinds of epistemological issues that one might find in a graduate seminar: What is history? How do we know the past? (How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School)

Having participants contemplate the meanings of philosophical topics pertaining to history is the best way to begin a conversation. The moderator of the conversation, or the teacher, would have an intense understanding of the epistemologies of such topics, thus making the conversation more comprehensive for the participants.

In addition, a key part to the conversations would be to listen to, tolerate, and understand others’ opinions and stories, as long as they do not put someone else or himself/herself at risk. For example, if someone’s opinion is that hurting someone else or himself/herself for the sake of inflicting pain is justified, then one would explain to the person why his/her opinion is harmful. In turn, the person would reflect on the topic and understand and correct his/her thoughts. This element of the dialogue incorporates practicing tolerance and understanding, which would thus show the importance of tolerating one another’s life in the process of combating genocide. After all, “only by breaking down the walls of intolerance and division can we prevent new conflicts and genocide” (New York Daily News). By people discovering how to coexist with one another, genocide will be prevented.

Furthermore, there are more similarities between people than there are differences. Coelho explained that, “People have to understand that their neighbors are not different even if they have a different religion, different sociological background” (“Interview with Paulo Coelho”). No matter where a person comes from, what religion a person believes in, what size a person is, what shape a person is, people, as a whole, are not different. When it comes down to what every person is constantly striving for, every human is a participant in *conatus*, which is “the tendency of all things to persist in their own being” (Collins English Dictionary). Throughout history, every human has always needed the same basic necessities: food, water, clothing, shelter, and love. These details are what every human being has in common; these are the components of life that bind every human together. The aforementioned components of life have existed throughout time, and they always will. Once humans realize that, as a species, we truly are not

different, there will be no mindless judgement, and genocide will cease to exist.

Conversing about one's own history, one's peers' histories, and mistakes of the past that have led to genocide enable one to relate to others and have a deeper understanding of history. It is vital to remember history "because if we forget, we are guilty, we are accomplices" ("Elie Wiesel - Acceptance Speech"). Memory of an unfortunate event will prevent it from happening in the future because one would learn from the mistakes of the event and ensure that those mistakes are never to be made again. If one does not remember the mistakes of the past that led to genocide, one cannot learn from those mistakes, and genocide will persist. Similarly, Corrie Ten Boom, a woman who assisted Jews in escaping the treachery of the Nazi Holocaust, wrote, "Today, I know that memories are not the key to the past, but the key to the future" (qtd. in Reitsema). Memories of the past are what will save the future from repeating the same infamous mistakes of the past.

Understanding one's own family history will enable one to relate to the history of others. It is important to "take seriously the story that God has given you to live. It's time to read your own life, because your story is the one that could set us all ablaze" (Allender 5). If one has an understanding of one's own story and family history, then one can relate their familial and personal stories to those of other people. While uncovering one's familial history, one may discover that one is part of a nationality that one did not previously realize. This event can really open one's mind to the idea that no matter how different one's background is, one is indeed a human and deserves to be treated like one. In addition, understanding other people's stories and histories will lead to the tolerance of them.

Gaining knowledge about the history of genocide will prevent one from making the same mistakes that have led to genocide in the past. Additionally, one knowing and communicating the history of others and the history of oneself to the public will enable people to relate. Relating sets a strong foundation for people to understand one another and in turn, tolerate one another. Tolerance is the strong force that will exterminate genocide.

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With Name Comes Identity

Miriam Sterrett

In both “The Slump” by John Updike and “Cathedral” by Raymond Carver, names are not a necessity. In fact, in the case of many characters, they are intentionally left out. In these stories both narrators and their wives remain nameless. This absence of names is a conscious decision on the author’s part in terms of defining identity and constructing the self.

Throughout these two stories, the authors are communicating an idea of how a person’s world view contributes to his self-construction and confidence. Choosing to seemingly neglect the naming process has a huge effect on how the nameless narrators are portrayed. They both lack a self in the beginning of the stories.

“The Slump,” for example, begins in this way,

They say reflexes, the coach says reflexes . . . but I don’t think it’s the reflexes so much — last night, as a gag to cheer me up, the wife walks into the bedroom wearing one of the kids’ rubber gorilla masks and I was under the bed in six-tenths of a second, she had a stopwatch on me. (84)

The little information we immediately receive concerning this protagonist pertains to his contemplation of his problem. In a similar way, Carver starts “Cathedral” by showing us the thoughts of the narrator before we are introduced to him. We become involved in his waiting as he considers, “This blind man, an old friend of my wife’s, he was on his way to spend the night. His wife had just died” (72). In “The Slump” the protagonist is consumed with overthinking his problem and little else, not even naming his wife. In “Cathedral”, however, the suspicion, prejudice and jealousy of the narrator is evident from the very beginning. He is prejudiced against anything he is ignorant about and suspicious and jealous of his wife’s relationship with the blind man.

In both stories, this choice not to name both protagonists and to have them refer to themselves or their wives only as “I” or “my wife” displays something about the characters of both men. In “The Slump” very few names are even given to things. The few that are mentioned are the “Van Allen Belt,” “Kierkegaard,” “DiMaggio,” and “Topping,” the last two associated with baseball and the Yankees. We realize from this what is most real and important to the narrator. He doesn’t even bother calling his wife by her name. In “Cathedral” we are introduced simply to the blind man in the protagonist’s head but later the narrator’s “wife” calls him Robert. The protagonist considers his wife’s words about Robert and Robert’s wife, Beulah,

She'd told me a little about the blind man's wife. Her name was Beulah. Beulah! That's a name for a colored woman.

"Was his wife a Negro?" I asked.

"Are you crazy?" my wife said. (73)

This shows us the unpleasantness of the protagonist and an insight into his relations with his wife. Even though Beulah has died and never appears in the story, it is clear that she had more of a self than the biased narrator whose wife does not even refer to him by name. There is simply no connection or understanding between them. Robert and his wife's relationship can be contrasted to the protagonist's marriage where they don't use each other's names. Both narrators are alone, one consumed with his failure, the other with his prejudice against others.

John Updike depicts a change of self in the protagonist throughout his story. He is a less confused man in the end but is it tranquility he finds? Throughout the story, the narrator continually brings us back to the ideas of Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher, who was known as "the father of existentialism" (85), as well as his doubt in his own hitting abilities. However, he not only doubts his abilities; he overthinks the whole problem, continually dwelling on the mental and intellectual side of his slump rather than the fact that he has to swing the bat at the ball. After all his meditation on Kierkegaard and hitting, he comes to believe that he doesn't really care enough for baseball or success in that area. When he gets up to bat he feels for a second that everything is as it used to be, "Then something happens. It blurs, skips, fades, I don't know. It's not caring enough, is what it probably is, it's knowing that none of it — the stadium, the averages — is really there, just you are there, and it's not enough" (85). The protagonist has been dwelling on the ideas of Kierkegaard and existentialism, which deals with the belief that each person is his own manager, responsible for his own life. In fact, according to this view, each man determines the course of his life by the strength of his will. It is understandable then for the narrator to be deeply discouraged for in this philosophy, all the pressure is placed on the individual to create his ideal life. When speaking of "you" being there alone and nothing else being real, he realizes that it is up to him to decide his fate and he in himself is not adequate. He remains in the slump and yet he realizes for himself, none of it really matters.

In "Cathedral" the change in the narrator is noticeably different. Before he even meets the blind man, Robert, his prejudice against him is clear. He doesn't want to understand others as he says to himself, "He was no one I knew. And his being blind bothered me" (72). He neither uses his wife's name nor the name of her former husband, ". . . why should he have a name?"(73), which shows us his inability to have real relationships. When Robert appears with the narrator's "wife" (74), he greets the protagonist warmly and in less than a page has given him the name "Bub"(74). This immediately intimates that Robert possesses three things the narrator does not: a name, an identity, and the ability to name others. Robert not only gives "Bub" a name; but, by the end of the story, he has given to him the identity or self which comes with a name. "Bub" learns to see differently as the name Robert has given him comes with a self, a way to have relationships, and identify with others.

Both authors by their choice to leave the narrators nameless compel us to empathize with them and be drawn into their lives. In consequence of this, we learn that without a name, self and identity are weak and with that weakness comes a lack of ability, a powerlessness and the realization that you are alone. But with an identity comes a name and the ability to live in reality and have unprejudiced relationships with those around you.

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Presidential Rhetoric and the War on Drugs

Matthew Kern

The history of drug policy in the United States has repeatedly masked the most salient issues and the very nature of the problem. While drug use presents dangers, drug use cannot explain the extent of conflict surrounding this history. In actuality, issues surrounding the war on drugs stem from the language in which they are associated. Presidential rhetoric has proven effective in garnering support¹ by painting a distorted image of the realities. Today, drugs and deviance are seen as one in the same. Addicts are depicted as desperate and violent, and dealers are often portrayed as foreign and malicious. Various presidents have associated opposition groups with drugs in an effort to debase resistance and enact policies conducive to their agendas.

In her book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Era of Colorblindness*, Michele Alexander writes “What has changed since the collapse of Jim Crow has less to do with the basic structure of our society than with the language we use to justify it,” and that now, “we use our criminal justice system to label people of color ‘criminals’ and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind” (2). Individuals who are labeled as criminals or felons are subject to various and far-reaching forms of stigmatization and discrimination, which extend far beyond their prison sentences. Upon release, individuals are denied access to public housing, both federal and state financial aid, and even their right to vote.² Without access to public housing, individuals are unable to apply for jobs or receive financial aid. Without financial aid, individuals are unable to better their situation through education. In revoking one’s right to vote, the individual is forever denied a voice in decisions which directly affect their lives. These restrictions highlight systemic bias and aversion to “criminals,” as well as a desire to purge such crime within the borders.

Drug policy has always been intertwined with other social issues in the United States. Prior to the twentieth century, federal and state governments did little to regulate the sale and consumption of narcotics, but as the Civil War came to an end and the United States began developing a global presence, it faced new issues regarding what to do with freed slaves and immigrants seeking work. White

¹See, Whitford, Andrew B. and Jeff, Yates, “Policy Signals and Executive Governance: Presidential Rhetoric in the War on Drugs,” and, Hawdon, James E. “The Role of Presidential Rhetoric in the Creation of a Moral Panic: Reagan, Bush, and the War on Drugs.” Both these studies look at the efficacy of presidential rhetoric in shaping both features of the state, as well as shifting the focus of the public.

² For more on the collateral consequences of drug-related crimes. See, Chin, Gabriel “Jack.” “Race the War on Drugs, and the Collateral Consequences of Criminal Conviction.” *Journal of Gender, Race & Justice*. Vol. 6. (2002) 253 - 261.

Americans who had long feared black uprisings developed a heightened anxiety fueled by popular rumors conflating black drug use and violence. In addition to this, some immigrants brought with them past times of recreational drug use to the United States. These would couple and soon an anti-drug ethos would develop in an effort to preserve American culture. Rhetoric surrounding the passage of the Harrison Narcotics Tax Act and Marijuana Tax Act all reflect a defensive response to the issue and has served as the basis for anti-drug policy to this day.³

In 1971, President Richard Nixon would call on congress to double spending on drug enforcement stating that drug use “has assumed the dimensions of a national emergency.”⁴ Such rhetoric has had a massive impact on the language of American politics moving forward. Nixon’s message played on the longstanding fear that drug usage poses moral and physical dangers to the American people. In an interview with *Harper’s Magazine*, John Ehrlichman, former Domestic Affairs Advisor under President Nixon, stated that African-Americans and the anti-war left posed political threats to the Nixon administration. In the interview, Ehrlichman goes on to say that in doing so, “We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.”⁵ In order to do this, Nixon had enacted the Drug Abuse and Control Act in 1970. Under this, drugs were categorized based on their psychoactive properties and ranked in order of their potential for addiction and medical benefit.

The policies enacted by President Reagan have had adverse effects on the criminal justice system and have led to a straining penal system. President Ronald Reagan built off of Nixon’s classification system and made some of the most significant contributions to the war on drugs. These contributions came in the form of the establishment of mandatory minimum sentencing and policies which provided extra funding to state police in an effort to combat drugs. The passage of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 and the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program put these policies into practice. In a radio broadcast, President Reagan stated that:

the results of our task force have been dramatic. The Vice President tells me drug-related arrests are up over 40 percent, the amount of marijuana seized is up about 80 percent, and the amount of cocaine seized has more than doubled. The important thing is we’re hurting the traffickers. It’s true that when we close off one place they can move somewhere else. But one thing is different now: We’re going to be waiting for them.⁶

The proactive rhetoric and the policies enacted under Reagan have led to a dramatic increase in the American prison population. Today the United States houses a prison population estimated at 1.5 million people, almost half

³Musto, David F. *The American Disease: Origins of Narcotic Control*. N.p.: Oxford UP, (1999) For more on what lead to the passage of the Harrison Narcotics Tax Act and Marijuana Tax Act.

⁴Nixon, Richard: “Special Message to the Congress on Drug Abuse Prevention and Control,” (June 17, 1971)

⁵Baum, Dan, Vauhini Vara, Kiana Hayeri, Rebecca Solnit, Bruno Latour, Anais Nin, and Jessica Bruder Dale Maharridge. *Legalize it All*. *Harper’s Magazine*. N.p.,(Apr. 2016).

⁶Reagan, Ronald. “Radio Address to the Nation on Federal Drug Policy,” (October 2, 1982).

(47 percent) of inmates in federal prisons are serving sentences for drug-related crime.⁷

In his most recent State of the Union Address, President Donald Trump stated that, “For decades, open borders have allowed drugs and gangs to pour into our most vulnerable communities. They’ve allowed millions of low-wage workers to compete for jobs and wages against the poorest Americans. Most tragically, they have caused the loss of many innocent lives.”⁸ Since the end of the Civil War, this kind of carefully coded rhetoric has become synonymous with our current day war on drugs. Like his predecessors, President Trump’s speech is designed to make Americans fearful of drugs by implying potential physical and supposed moral dangers. By associating drugs with immigrants, Trump has been able to garner support for his immigration policies in an effort to cultivate a strong national American identity. This historical continuity of inflated rhetoric continues to seek the exclusion of others at the benefit of the incumbent administration.

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⁷ Carson, E. Ann. “Prisoners in 2016,” *Bureau of Justice Statistics*. (January 2018). 48 percent of blacks and 56 percent of Hispanic inmates are serving time for drug related offenses.

⁸ See, Trump, Donald. J, “64 - Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union,” (January 30, 2018).

Have an Open Mind

Kyle Catanzano

At birth, a baby is given a name so that the child knows who he or she is in the world. Once named, a bond is made between the child and the parents so that the child knows who he or she belongs to. However, while the child ages, he or she begins to develop his or her mind and learn what's right from wrong. The parent is an integral part in developing the child's mind because as PBS.org states, "Although a parent's role in their children's learning evolves as kids grow, one thing remains constant: we are our children's learning models." The films *Frankenstein*, based on the 1818 novel by Mary Shelley, and *Psycho*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, show how Freudian theory influences and acts as a lens through which the viewer discovers how why individual acts the way they do in a struggle to find their place in an unfriendly world.

In *Frankenstein*, the main character, Victor, wants to make a major scientific discovery through most of his life. Indeed, after the death of his mother, Victor discovers a way to cheat death. Isolating himself from the world, he remains within his new home in Ingolstadt, trying to formulate some way into making his research come alive, that research involving a way to reanimate a human who had previously died. In his egocentric madness, Victor begins collecting decomposing body parts from deceased citizens all over Ingolstadt. He closes himself off from the rest of the world to pursue his destiny and is successful in creating a creature. As Victor focuses only on his work, he does not understand what had happened to him *psychologically*. During his time as a young child, his "Id" and "Superego" suffered a malfunction and drastic change because of his mother's death. The Id wants to satisfy his needs and desires but throughout his years, but in Ingolstadt, the Id blinded Victor from the blunder that he was making in his laboratory until the creature was born. Instead of feeling satisfaction over his discovery of reanimated life, Victor found disappointment because he finally realized how much of a danger his creature was to the world. On the other hand, Victor's Superego, which is also known as the conscience, had also been corrupted. The explanation is simple. When there was an outbreak of cholera in Ingolstadt and his friend, Henry, and fiancé, Elizabeth, came to Victor's door to persuade him to leave, he was reluctant in welcoming them due to his fear of his project being discovered when they were. A healthy conscience would have compelled Victor to forget about his work and leave the city. Also, Victor's monster was suffering from an underdeveloped psyche because it did not know anything about the world it was brought into. The creature did not know right from wrong, who it was, or what it wanted although it did understand danger due to the fact that people

were constantly trying to harm it. Similar to an animal raised in captivity, once the monster was exposed to the open world, it had to learn how survive and pick everything else up along the way. Had Victor a healthy conscience, it would not have allowed the creature to face his new life alone.

Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* is another film that examines the psychotic nature of the human mind. Norman Bates, who is *Psycho*'s protagonist, is an extreme example of how the Id, Ego and Superego have all been tainted by a horrid past. Norman had been abused by his mother at a young age, and he does not know right from wrong nor does not have a high self-esteem. However, Norman acts on desire, especially around women. Ironically, this desire is not entirely his own; it instead becomes his mother's, and Norman's mother is not interested in making friends. Whenever Norman has a sense of arousal, the repressed psyche of Norman's mother is unleashed, and she only has one motive which is to kill. Norman's Id does not comprehend that it is under a gender strain role because Norman takes on both male and female genders. Since he suffers from multiple personality disorder, Norman cannot fully comprehend his sexual identity. Norman does not realize that he himself is insane; instead he acts as though his mother is the one doing the killing even though she is actually a corpse laying in her bedroom. Instead of controlling his mother's blood lust, he would respond to the killing startled and immediately clean up any mess that she created. The true reasoning behind Norman's impulse to clean up after his mother is that he is terrified of her. Ironically, Norman was the cause for the death of his mother and her boyfriend. More than likely, Norman could not deal with murdering his mother, so he repressed the resulting guilt and regret, thus creating a persona in his head as a coping mechanism. This was what the psychiatrist revealed as the end of the film. He adds that the mother persona took complete control of Norman, most likely for the remainder of his life. As the film concluded, it was recognizable in Norman's face that he was no longer around. While he was hunched over, covering himself in a blanket, which made him look frailer, it was Mother who was the one actually speaking the entire time to the psychiatrist. The Norman that the audience saw at the start of the film is clearly not the same person that is seen in the cell. There is only a monster who claims he would not harm a fly.

The mind is an amazing fragment of the human brain. It allows a human being to think for him or herself as well as make decisions based off of those thoughts. However, it is important to know right from wrong, because just like in both films, making one wrong decision can change a person's life and send him or her spiraling into madness from which there is no escape. Without the mind learning from all qualities of life, human beings would not be able to process the difference between sanity and madness. After all, Norman Bates did say "We all go a little mad sometimes."

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The Not-So-Cool Pool Players

Micah T. Sterrett

In her poem “We Real Cool,” Gwendolyn Brooks seems to simply introduce us to seven pool players who are living the fast life and presenting how they feel about it. However, as we dig deeper, we discover that this is only a superficial understanding of this work of poetry. What Brooks is really trying to convey through this poem is the true identity of these pool players and subsequently all those like them and she does this through her speaker, language, and form.

It is not hard to discover who the speaker is in “We Real Cool.” We are told in the epigram that the speaker or speakers are one or all of some pool players at a place called The Golden Shovel. The fact that the speaker is introduced in this way speaks volumes about his identity. When we are introduced to people, some of the first things we ask is about their vocation or where they went to school. However, we are told none of these things concerning the speaker of the poem, and it becomes evident as we continue to read the poem that he has neither -- no job, no school. This means that the speaker had not found an identity commensurate with what most of the people of the 1960s thought meaningful, namely getting a good education and finding a profitable profession. Rather, the poem makes it clear that the speaker finds his fulfilment in things that would have been frowned upon by the general society in his day such as drinking, “Thin[ning] gin” (6), partying, “Jazz[ing] June” (7), and generally living for his own pleasure.

The language that Brooks uses serves to underscore this identity founded in pleasure even more. The way the speaker talks is not smooth and polished but rather broken and disjointed. He has little or no knowledge of English grammar, which is evidenced in the first line where he says, “We real cool” (1) instead of “We are really cool.” Also, he repeats the same word, “We” (1,2,3,4,5,6,7), again and again throughout the poem, which, while being a useful poetic device, is not a proper way to write or speak English. In other words, the speaker chose not to go to school because it did not bring him the instant gratification he desired and so, as a result, he does not even know the correct way to write and speak his native language.

Lastly, the form of the poem shows us how the speaker identifies himself and what the ultimate outcome of his embracing this identity would be. All the lines and sentences in the poem are very short. Brooks does not dwell on any of the speaker’s activities but moves quickly from one to the other, as witnessed when the speaker moves from “Left school” (2) to “Lurk late” (3). This shows us that the speaker must be constantly entertained and amused in order to find happiness

and so is always rushing from one thing to the next, hoping that something new will give him meaning and a reason to live. The tragic thing, however, is that he runs out of things that bring him pleasure and ends up perishing. We learn this through the words “Die soon” (8), which the form also communicates. Throughout the poem all the lines end in “We” and the rhythm and line length are very similar. The last line, however, is different. It does not end in “We” or fit in with the rhythm but ends abruptly before it has reached the length of any of the previous lines. This clearly portrays to us the outcome of the speaker and all those who pursue the identity he did. Pleasure will only give you meaning for so long. Eventually you will run out of resources to gain the pleasure you desire or no new pleasures will be found to give you meaning in life. When this happens your life will suddenly come to an abrupt end, just like this poem.

So, when first reading this poem, it may seem that the pool players are really cool. However, as we explore further, we realize that their identity is found in pleasure which is a very fleeting thing and eventually the pursuit of this identity leads them to a not-so-cool end.

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Commonalities of Norman Bates And George Foster Pendleton

Shane Viola

George from “The Real Bad Friend” and Norman Bates from “Psycho” have oddly similar character traits but carry a different persona to the outside world. Norman Bates has a very close relationship with his mother despite her death which matches George’s unusual relationship with his mother after death, but not as extreme in George’s case. What makes these individuals so comparable to each other is how they demonstrate Freudian concepts as well as symptoms of Dissociative Identity Disorder. In George’s case, he moves his negative feelings to a fictitious friend named Roderick, while Norman moves his own feelings to his mother. George has a fantasy to get rid of his wife and goes through an elaborate mental process to shift his plan to fruition. It begins when he attempts to make her go crazy but his plan backfires and lands himself in jail, while Norman’s actions were different in that he did little planning, acting impulsively as a sign of his guilt for his erotic feelings towards women.

Norman Bates as well as George Foster Pendleton have a mental illness called Dissociative Identity Disorder. Dissociative Identity Disorder, also is known as DID, is a mental disorder which is characterized by the presence of two or more distinct or split identities or personality states that continually have power over the person’s behavior. We know this about George from the beginning of the story when he mentions that he meets Roderick in a very peculiar place:

George hated to remember the way he’d met Roderick. He didn’t like to think about the service, or going haywire there on the island and trying to strangle the sergeant, and ending up in the stockade. Even so, it might have been much worse, particularly after they stuck him in solitary if he hadn’t met Roderick. (91)

‘Solitary’ means being alone and is often used as a form of punishment that can cause mental trauma. Experiences through a war as well as childhood trauma are linked to causing the disorder. Norman also has DID as he switches from being Norman to his mother. Norman most likely developed this disorder from childhood as his relationship with mother is considered to possibly be incestuous. He takes on his deceased mother’s persona whenever he is sexually aroused which conflicts with his mother’s need to be overly possessive of Norman.

Displacement, according to Freudian theory, takes place when we displace the person or object we are really concerned about to someone else, moving one’s feelings for a particular person to an object related to him. This concept can be seen in both of these characters. As George was arrested and being held in court, he kept blaming Roderick.

Roderick was the crazy one. They had to understand that.

But they didn't understand that, and it was George whom they locked up. George Foster Pendleton, not George Roderick the naughty boy.
(105)

George blames Roderick but clearly, Roderick is someone George created and resides solely within his own imagination. George is tired of his boring life, considers himself to be dull, unhappy with his job, and feels suppressed by his life. He feels powerless and displaces his problems onto Ella. Norman Bates has a conflicting relationship with sexual desire, as he experiences it; he feels wrong because his mother considered any aspect of sex to be shameful. When Norman encounters this feeling, he switches into his mother's persona and kills anyone who tries to take her son away from her. When Norman switches to his mother, she displaces the jealousy of Norman being with another woman to the woman that Norman is attracted to.

The Oedipus complex according to Freudian theory is when a male sexually desires his own mother. Both of these characters show signs of an Oedipus complex. George actually admits that the reason he married his current wife is that she reminded him of his mother:

Ella did remind George of his mother. And when his mother died, he'd marry Ella because she was big and took care of him, and the way it worked out it was she who made most of the decisions. As a child, he was taught to be a good little boy. Now he was a good little salesman, a good little-potbellied householder, a fetcher-home of Kleenex, a mower of lawns, a wiper of dishes, a wrapper of garbage. (92)

However, in this story, George essentially fights against this urge; thus this story represents a rejection of his current way of life. Norman's Oedipus complex is much more extreme as he lets his mother control his life. Norman never tries to fight against this urge. After his mother's death, he continues to sexually repress himself as he absorbs her identity.

Despite all the similarities these characters share, they differ in the way they present themselves to the outside world. Norman lacks confidence and comes off as very awkward as he speaks to Marion Crane. In contrast, George is a salesman with a wife and shows better social skills. Norman is very well kept, dresses well, and is organized, while George is sloppy and more careless about the way he looks. George was damaged by interactions with others, as he mentions how people were cruel, aggressive, and violent. Norman was damaged because of the lack of interactions with others as the only person he was ever close to was his mother. In the end, neither of these two characters had a happy ending as Norman went to a mental institution and George went to jail.

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“Mother’s Gentleman”

Kevin Velez-Luna

During the 19th Century, many intellectuals challenged society’s beliefs in different branches of study: Karl Marx through economic theory, Friedrich Nietzsche through philosophy, and Sigmund Freud through his psychoanalytic theories. Since these days, many of their works have been used as a lens to analyze modern-day society and literature. Though many question Freud’s theories on sexuality, these theories can be used to comprehend literature and thus reaffirm Freud’s hypotheses. In both *Psycho*, a film by Alfred Hitchcock, and “The Real Bad Friend”, by Robert Bloch, Freudian theory can be used to understand the actions of each character and their possible causes.

The Oedipus complex is one of the most noticeable features of both George in “The Real Bad Friend” and Norman Bates in *Psycho*. Based on the Greek Tragedy of Oedipus Rex, Sigmund Freud formulates this theory to explain the development of an individual through their sexual desires as children. In boys, it would be known as the Oedipus complex, while in girls it would be known as the Electra complex. This theory states that just as Oedipus Rex found attraction towards his mother and inevitably killed his father, a male child will find attraction to the opposite sex progenitor in the family. Only through the resolution of these sexual conflicts will individuals have fulfilled these stages in their personal development.

In the film *Psycho*, the Oedipus complex is seen when Norman states, “A son isn’t a great lover.” In “The Real Bad Friend,” this is shown when Roderick, George Foster Pendleton’s alter ego, tells George, “That’s the real reason you married her, wasn’t it? Because she reminded you of your mother and your mother had just died, and you were afraid of girls in the first place but you had someone to take care of you” (91). Both George and Norman display a sexual desire towards their mother, Norman through the statement of a son being a lover, and George in the characteristics that his wife and his mother shared.

Inevitably, the repression of these sexual desires leads to a hostile approach towards authority. In both Norman and George, this can be seen in the way they direct themselves towards their mother and other people. When Norman encounters any individual that alters the balance in his life, he appeals to his double identity; this being his mother. To correct this imbalance, Norman kills the causes of this imbalance. George, on the other hand, only becomes hostile towards other individuals when Roderick takes over. This is seen throughout the story, even at the end. When George is locked in prison, he continues to take on the persona of Roderick when thinking of an escape. He believes Roderick will help him escape

“even if he has to kill a guard to do it. And he’ll kill Ella, too, before he goes. And then they’ll travel on down to the islands, just the two of them. And there’ll be girls, and whips gleaming in the moonlight” (106). He expresses the need of violent acts to defy the authority that is preventing the resolution of his conflict.

It can also be inferred that both characters have a phallic fixation, due to an abnormal family set up during their development as children. In “The Real Bad Friend” this is seen in the relationship Roderick and George share with Ella. Roderick admits that: “Ella did remind George of his mother and when his mother died he married Ella because she was big and took care of him” (92). On the other hand he constantly repeats “Drive Ella crazy” (92) and “. . . he’ll kill Ella, too” (106). The present conflict of self vs. self can be interpreted as a malfunction in the maternal role that the character George had during his childhood. While George loves his mother and is a “good little boy” (92), Roderick is the antithesis “a naughty little boy” (103) and wants to drive his mother crazy. These points inevitably change the image the reader has of the character and implies a conflict within the adult personality.

Norman Bates also displays actions that can be interpreted as a phallic fixation due to an abnormal family set up as a child. Based on Sigmund Freud’s psychosexual theory, the phallic development stage occurs between the ages of 3-6. It can be inferred that during this time Norman’s family suffered a modification to which this stage of his development was affected. In the film, Norman’s mother had a lover once his father passed away. In an effort to complete the phallic stage, Norman tries to adopt the role of his mother’s lover. However, due to her abuse, Norman encounters a sexual repression that resulted in his envy, anxiety, and inferiority towards his mother’s free libido. This expression is shown through the murders he commits on women whom he feels attracted to in an effort to maintain a close relationship with his mother.

Freud also proposed the existence of three components that balance the personality of an individual; the id, the ego, and the superego. The id is in charge of satisfying all the unconscious pleasures. The ego maneuvers in both the conscious and unconscious mind in an effort to please the individual. The superego is in charge of regulating socially acceptable behaviors. It is during the ages of 3-6 that the superego develops. Just as both characters had a phallic fixation, an alteration in their superego could have occurred. This alteration is evident in the way both characters regulate their desires through the creation of an alter ego. In *Psycho*, this contrast is expressed through the preservation of mother, the altered figure, and Norman Bates, the person who acts within the social standard. In “The Real Bad Friend,” George is the clear example of a “quiet man:” “George Foster Pendleton, a vacuum cleaner salesman, aged forty three. . . had been married to the same wife for fourteen years, lived in the same white house for an equal length of time, wore glasses” (90), while Roderick shows contrast with his ideas of violent acts against women in the island fantasy he shares with George, which scares George:

. . . you owned those girls body and soul; then you could have . . . a long black whip with little pointed silver spikes at the end, and the spikes would tear the soft flesh and you would make the girls dance

and little red ribbons would twine around the naked bodies and then --- But that was Roderick's doing putting such thoughts into his head. And suddenly George knew he was afraid of Roderick, Roderick, always so soft voiced and calm and understanding; always ready to listen and offer advice and ask nothing in return. George had never realized until now that Roderick was as cruel as all the rest. (94)

This excerpt from the text is of great importance because it demonstrates the struggle between the superego and the id. George realizes Roderick's cruelty and chooses to ignore it. Further on in the story, the alteration in the superego leads to the incarceration of George due to his action towards Ella.

Though many disapprove of Freud's psychoanalytic theories, they can be used as a lens to analyze the actions of characters in literature and people in the real world. Thanks to this form of analysis, many of the conflicts characters present in a story can be understood within a certain context. The truth, however, many characters only be understood through the lens one chooses to see through.

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The Battle with Myself

Dennis Romero

In “The Real Bad Friend” by Robert Bloch and “The Slump” by John Updike, the authors use the strategy of naming. The two stories are examples of self-versus self. Both of the main characters are trying to solve a deep-seeded psychological problem: one wants to get rid of his evil side and the other must solve his homerun drought. The strategy of naming enhances the conflict in both stories as the main characters try to overcome their alter egos.

What Bloch is trying to convey to the reader through the naming strategy in “The Real Bad Friend” is that some people have two different sides to them. In other words, Roderick is George’s alter ego. George is a vacuum cleaner salesman while Roderick represents his evil side. Roderick hates George’s wife, Ella, and throughout the story he strives to drive her crazy. Roderick is quite successful in the process but George eventually stops Roderick. But the thing is that Roderick is not a real person. The author does a great job in making the reader feel like Roderick actually exists. In fact, George truly believes that Roderick is a real person. He even tries to frame Roderick at the end of the story by telling the police that Roderick was the one responsible for everything that was happening to his wife. But, George failed miserably as the police did not find Roderick but found the mask that he would wear to scare Ella through the window; so the police concluded that George was the one behind it all. The author’s use of the naming strategy further affects George because throughout the story he is worried about what Roderick will do next to drive Ella crazy. As Roderick is carrying out his plan to drive Ella crazy, George is stressing out trying to fix the mess that Roderick created. Ella does indeed go crazy; she goes to a doctor while George was making phone calls to all the people that Roderick called impersonating Ella. George would make the phone calls to fix the problems that Roderick created; for example, Roderick had ordered the plumber to go to the house and rip everything out (95). He also made calls to an appliance store to deliver four refrigerators for no apparent reason and to a moving company, who asked Ella when they would be moving (95). These events were not only negatively affecting Ella but also George because he felt bad for her. George knew exactly who was behind everything, and he just wanted to make things right as well as stopping Roderick from continuing his actions. George’s alter ego achieved his goal, which was to get rid of Ella, but at the cost of George being arrested as a result of his alter ego’s actions. In the end, George seems to be okay with it because he says, “George isn’t mad at [Roderick] anymore. He realizes now that Roderick is his best friend, and wants to help him” (106). He adds, “Oh, George trusts Roderick now. He’s

his only friend. And he often wonders just where he'd be without him" (106). By not giving Roderick a name, Broch was able to convince his reader that George and Roderick were separate characters, setting up the surprise ending.

"The Real Bad Friend" can relate the "The Slump" because the narrator's wife tries to scare him out of his slump with a gorilla mask as it had worked in the past. A mask plays a key role in both stories as it drives Ella crazy and takes the narrator out of a slump.

"The Slump" is similar to "The Real Bad Friend" as the narrator deals with the conflict of self-versus self. The difference is that Updike doesn't give the narrator's alter ego a name. The narrator's alter ego is just his 'bad baseball-hitter side.' The narrator is in a hitting drought and his family is trying to get him out of it. The narrator wants to start hitting home runs again but it seems as if he's scared. The narrator says, "They say I'm not hungry, but I still feel hungry, only now it's kind of a panic hungry" (84). The narrator doesn't feel like himself which in the sports world analysts would call a 'slump', hence the title of the work. But it isn't the first time this has happened to the narrator. He says, "My wife comes at me without the gorilla mask and when in the old days, whop!" (85). What the narrator means is that usually that trick would work, but this time around it was not working. The narrator just does not see the ball the way he used to. He says, "Now, I don't know, there's like a cloud around it, a sort of spiral vagueness, maybe the Van Allen Belt, or maybe I lift my eye in the last second, planning how I'll round second base, or worrying which I do first, tip my cap or slap the third-base coach's hand" (84). Before the slump, the narrator would see the ball coming at him clear as day as he says, "It used to come floating up with all seven continents showing, and the pitcher's thumbprint, and a grass smooch or two, and the Spalding guarantee in ten-point san-serif, and whop!" (84). The narrator is in a fight with himself to get back to being his better self and that's how the no naming strategy affects the construction of his sense of self. He knows he still has it in him but when the lights come on, he freezes up and doesn't know why. Naming strategy affects the story here because the narrator knows he can't blame anyone else but himself. In the "Real Bad Friend", George had someone to blame and that was Roderick for everything bad that was happening to his wife. In the narrator's case of "The Slump", he can't do what George did. The narrator has to find it within himself to get out of the slump he's in and start hitting home runs as his teammates and family are counting on him to perform well.

Both stories depict the conflict of self-versus self as it is something that we as people go through on regular basis. We are in a battle with ourselves as we try to better our lives whether it be in the gym, at school, or trying to get a better career. Our alter egos are sometimes our worst and best friends. George and the narrator of "The Slump" are in a competition between themselves. Just like all of us, they try to let the best side stand out but sometimes, as in "The Slump" and "The Real Bad Friend," the alter ego gets the best of them.

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When the Script Changes

Randeep Singh

The two texts, “Someone” by Alice McDermott and “Batman and Robin Have an Altercation” by Stephen King, have unsuspecting characters who are oblivious to obvious dangers that are breaking their already fragile lives apart. Would their worlds have not changed had the outside dangers not invaded their lives? Probably not, the main reason being that their lives had always been trapped by the disguised dangers that were always near them.

In “Someone,” when Marie and Walter Hartnett got together in the candy shop, the place seemed to be harmless. Quiet comfortable, actually. The readers get a sense of peace emitting from the couple because of the normal and uncomplicated aura. Yet, Marie is slightly troubled as Walter’s gaze kept averting from Marie, and he wasn’t paying much attention to her. Though slightly troubled by this, she did not pay much mind to his lack of attention to her. Moving forward, when her daughters began dating, she gave advice to them about this. She said, “‘Here’s a good rule: If he looks over your head while you’re talking, get rid of him. Walter Hartnett . . .’”. But by then they would throw up their hands: ‘Jesus, Mom, no more Walter Hartnett stories’” (McDermott 2). This gives the reader an idea that there might not be a happy ending to Marie and Walter’s romance. He didn’t care about her or her feelings and was taking her for granted. There’s no real danger present in the story at that point. Although, it was with Marie the whole time. She just did not know it then.

“Batman and Robin” follows the complicated lives of Dougie Sanderson and his father. The latter suffers from Alzheimer’s and has trouble distinguishing Dougie from his other son, Reggie, who had died in a car accident. When the narrator says “That’s the bad news about what his father has -- he is capable of random cruelties that, while unmeant, can still sting like hell” (King 69), the reader understands that Dougie was still fragile from what happened to his brother. If some other regular folk would have made the mistake of confusing Dougie with Reggie, he or she would’ve been considered ignorant or neglectful like Walter was to Marie. But, Pop wasn’t doing or saying these things on purpose. For now, the danger in “Someone” is unnoticeable and not worth being worried over, but it is much higher in Dougie Sanderson’s story, as he must’ve had to do a lot of emotional coping upon losing a brother and now for dealing with his father’s illness.

For Marie, her world was starting to take a shift. When Walter got intimate with her, “she felt the momentary terror of not knowing what he was going to do as he moved his mouth toward her and then felt it increase a hundredfold when

she understood” (McDermott 6). Walter hadn’t asked for her consent; hence, she felt violated and terrorized. She didn’t know what Walter was going to do to her. Readers also get an idea that Marie had never been intimate with anyone else before. After the incident, she felt confused about her conflicting emotions. On one hand she felt acknowledged but she also felt “a hot black rush of shame” (8). She felt a little comfortable when Walter talked about marriage and having kids. Later on in the story when they had gone on a few dates and getaways, Marie started to fall in love with Walter. She was relieved that the intimacy wasn’t repeated, yet, the danger was always there. For example, one night when “they went on the movie together and a party, where he drank half a bottle of whiskey, then leaned heavily against her walking home” (9), Marie must’ve felt extremely frightened as a drunk man can be very unpredictable. He could have taken advantage of her.

On the other hand, Sanderson receives a shock when his father tells him about his affair with Norma Forester forty-five years ago. Their quiet evening got disrupted by this unexpected revelation. Dougie is true to believe that, “what memories remain to them are a jumble-pilfered puzzle piece in a cigar box -- and there’s no governor on them, no way of separating the stuff that’s okay to talk about from the stuff that isn’t. Sanderson has never had a reason to think Pop was anything but faithful to his wife for the entire forty-some years of their marriage, though perhaps that’s the assumption all grown children make if their parents’ marriage was serene and collegial” (King 70). His father lacked a filter and said everything bluntly but, it wasn’t on purpose and Dougie understood that. Sanderson’s world suddenly became more dangerous than before as earlier he just had to worry about his father’s well-being and now the assumptions that he had made about his father as a son had changed. But, compared to “Someone,” the danger was much less. The fear of knowing that someone can take advantage of you anytime, and walking alongside that fear after every date or every time you pass a dark alley, can be dangerously overwhelming.

What the stories have in common is a sudden change in the script. Marie was heartbroken when Walter told her that he was marrying someone else. In her world, Walter was the danger that was present the whole time and also, the villain who caused her pain. In “Batman and Robin,” Sanderson and his dad got into a car accident. The driver, of the truck that hit them, turned out to be a criminal and was given the name Tat-man as he had a lot of tattoos. When Sanderson gets beaten up for asking insurance information, Tat-man becomes the villain of this world. The danger that was present in his world was his emotional coping about his father’s illness, his non-filtered speech and his brother’s death, but the villain turned out to be someone else. Both villains caused emotionally scarring pain.

Then came the saviors of the two worlds. Gabe, Marie’s brother, tries to comfort her, but he isn’t very good at it:

She touched his arm. Even through the fabric of his sleeve, she felt him withdraw a little. Something in him, in his muscle or in his bone, withheld. ‘Who’s going to love me?’ she said. The brim of his hat cast his eyes in shadow. Behind him, the park teemed with strangers. ‘Someone,’ he said. ‘Someone will.’ (McDermott 18).

The readers get a sense of Gabe being cold to Marie. It's probably because Gabe and Marie never got chance to connect with each other since Gabe had gone to the seminary when Marie was a little girl. Gabe gave her solace in a way that he believed was the most that could be done. In "Batman and Robin" Pop killed Tattman with a steak knife that he stole from the restaurant. He did that because Tattman was beating Dougie, but later he doesn't even remember who that man was. Like Gabe, Pop tried to help Sanderson in a way that he thought was right. They felt obligated to help Marie and Dougie just because they were there, and they didn't put in much effort into understanding what they were really going through emotionally. Stephen King has been known for writing stories in which a sudden twist occurs in a safe and happy world which causes physical and emotional damage.

As the saying goes, "Every dark cloud has a silver lining." These incidents are going to affect Marie and Sanderson's lives in a big way for a long time. Their saviors weren't the best ones. Even though they were there for them in person, they had little acquaintance with their emotional state. In both stories, safety was fragile. The danger was present the whole time even before the villains appeared. In "Someone," the danger was Walter Hartnett's unpleasant romance and avoidance, and in "Batman and Robin," the danger was Dougie's emotional coping with his father's health and his brother's death. The villains imparted pain in different ways but on the same level.

Stigmas and Stereotypes of Having ADHD

Paul Murillo

ADHD is medically defined as a learning and behavior disability where an individual has a very hard time concentrating on tasks and is consistently hyperactive. However, society defines it in a much different perspective. It is defined as a stigma to parents, students, and teachers by setting a perspective limit and 'glass ceiling' to how much a student can achieve academically and throughout their lives. Similarly, it is stereotypically defined by society that only children from a socioeconomically poor background get it, those who have it suffer from a lack of social skills, and cannot succeed in their professional lives. An attempt to discover how ADHD affects academic and personal achievement and how much of their labeled stereotypes is true and accurate could be done by gathering collective data from individual studies. I argue that the common stereotypes of ADHD for children are not true based on this research as they are biased and as this medical disability is overly diagnosed worldwide leading to a misunderstanding of the meaning of ADHD.

According to several surveys and researches, the biggest stigma associated with ADHD is how much those who have it could succeed academically. There are many viewpoints and tests that have been conducted in the past on the topic such as Dr. Irene Loe and Dr. Heidi Feldman's medical research journal, "Academic and Educational Outcomes of Children with ADHD", a research that focuses on academic achievement of children both with and without proper medical treatment. This journal consists of their argument on how without proper medication, "Children with ADHD [will] show significant academic underachievement, poor academic performance, and educational problems...show significant decreases in estimated full-scale IQ compared with controls...score significantly lower on reading and arithmetic achievement tests...achieve lower ratings on all school subjects on their report cards, and have a lower class ranking than matched normal controls" (Loe & Feldman 644, 646). They will have a very hard time learning at the same pace as those who take medication do, consequently hindering them from academic achievements such as Honor Roll, Principals List, and placing them in special education classes. There would be a perceptive limit and 'glass ceiling' as to how much they could achieve academically and throughout their lives. The reason why these children who do not take the proper medication will tend to fall behind in their academic studies is because of the advantages of the medication itself, which help the brain focalize more on the task at hand rather than environmental stimuli (ie: birds flying, squirrels running around). The medications for ADHD, such as Ritalin, Adderall, or Strattera are stimulants that

assist the brain's neurotransmitters to reduce the hyperactivity and impulsive actions caused by ADHD. Therefore, without the proper treatment, people who are diagnosed with especially severe ADHD will tend to fall behind due to the lack of their ability to focus.

On the other hand, there seems to be a lot of promise and potential for children who take stimulant medication for ADHD. In the journal, the authors also argue, "Stimulant medications reduce the core symptoms of ADHD at the level of body functions...psychopharmacological treatments have been shown to improve children's abilities to handle general tasks and demands...improve academic productivity as indicated by improvements in the quality of note-taking, scores on quizzes and worksheets, the amount of written language output, and homework completion" (Loe & Feldman 646). Therefore, children will have an easier time learning at the same pace as those without ADHD, facilitating academic achievements such as Honor Roll, Principals List, and gaining placement into more accelerated classes. They would be able to break the 'glass ceiling' of how much they could achieve without the medication, debunking this stigma of not being able to amount to much because of ADHD, and allowing them to persevere in the classroom and throughout their personal lives. Also, due to the overdiagnosing of ADHD, most children usually don't even have problem when it comes to school work, only hyperactivity, therefore making the stigma biased.

Similarly, another stereotype researchers argue is whether a family's socioeconomically poor status is the cause of the development of ADHD in the early stages of a child's life. In Dr. Alan L. Sroufe's medical research article, "Ritalin Gone Wrong," he compares the percentage of children from poor and affluent backgrounds diagnosed with ADHD. He conducts this research experiment by following a group of 200 children living in poverty and keeping track of the course of their lives, progress in school, and relationships with their caregivers (parents/guardians). His initial hypothesis was that children born into poverty would have a higher likelihood of developing ADHD because they would be more vulnerable to behavioral problems than children living in affluence. What he discovered was, "By late adolescence, 50 percent of our sample qualified for some psychiatric diagnosis. Almost half displayed behavioral problems at school for at least one occasion, and 24 percent dropped out by the 12th grade; 14 percent met criteria for ADHD in either first or sixth grade" (1). As shown, many of the participants had a hard time keeping away from trouble, displaying symptoms from an early age, and struggled to finish high school. Does this mean living in poverty is the direct cause of the development of ADHD? Environment certainly affects the average IQ of a child, which has been proven countless of times by several studies. In the 2005 study "Adoption and Cognitive Development: A Meta-Analytic Comparison of Adopted and Nonadopted Children's IQ and School Performance", a research study investigating the IQ differences of children in poor and affluent backgrounds, it was argued that a child raised in a low SES (socioeconomic status) would have on average a 12 to 18 IQ point difference in comparison to a child raised in a high SES (Ijzendoorn, Juffer, and Klein, 301-302). In the same study, psychologist Schiff and several of his colleagues

proved this claim by using two siblings born to low SES parents, who were raised separately by a low and high SES parent, showing that the sibling who was raised by low SES parent had 14 points less than the other sibling (Schiff et al. 310).

Leading on to the idea of how low SES affects kids, there are many reasons to why low SES actually affects ADHD. In Sroufe's medical research article, he also compares the quantitative data of children diagnosed with ADHD from both poor and rich socioeconomic backgrounds. He states, "In comparison with children from all socioeconomic groups, the incidence of ADHD is estimated at 8 percent" (1). This means that the population of children in poverty make up over half of all children diagnosed with ADHD. But still we ask the question: how about the other half; how about the children born and raised in middle class or upper class families? If they are not poor, then why do some individuals of that population have ADHD as well? He elaborates by stating, "Plenty of affluent children are also diagnosed with ADHD. Behavior problems in children have many possible sources. Among them are family stresses like domestic violence, lack of social support from friends or relatives, chaotic living situations, including frequent moves, and, especially, patterns of parental intrusiveness that involve stimulation for which the baby is not prepared" (1). In doing so, he is saying that it is the environmental factors of a child during childhood that determine if he or she gets ADHD, not the socioeconomic outcome of being poor. Therefore, poverty is not the direct cause of ADHD, debunking this stereotype, but an indirect cause because poverty results in more environmental problems for a child, making Sroufe's initial hypothesis partially valid and only a "half-truth".

In comparison to children getting ADHD from environmental factors within families and surroundings, many theorists also suggest it is the ultimate cause of a lack of social skills. One theorist who believes this to be true is Chris MacLeod. In his article, "How Adult ADHD Can Affect Social Skills and Relationships", he states, "There are a few reasons why adults with ADHD can have trouble in social situations...if they had ADHD as a child, that could have caused them to fall behind in learning social skills in the first place. Kids with ADHD are more likely to be rejected by their classmates, which gives them less opportunity to learn how to behave from their peers" (MacLeod 1). He believes that ADHD is the direct cause of children not having developed social skills from an early age; that it is due to a lack of socially engaging with others. This makes a lot of sense because children with ADHD have a hard time learning, listening, and understanding concepts in academic work. This difficulty can expand to their personal life as well because it requires the same types and amounts of skill. He supports this hypothesis by stating that children with ADHD are, "Not the best at reading other people's facial expressions or body language, causing them to miss information most of us would've picked up quickly and instinctively. Partially, this is because their ADHD makes it harder for them to interpret this channel of information...because their minds are distracted and focused on other things" (1). Again, this reminds us that much of conceptualization goes on beyond the classroom and expands to an individual's personal life. However, this is only part of the answer and there are many dimensions MacLeod has foreseen, the most

important being: is ADHD the ultimate cause of a lack of social skills, or can other disorders cause it as well? Does having bad social skills mean you have ADHD?

While most children learn social skills during childhood, they can be underdeveloped for a variety of reasons (other than the cause of ADHD). Some children face negative experiences in school such as being beat up, constantly teased, and become the target of rumors and gossip. According to Fharzana Khan's editorial, "Anxiety Disorders", it can be the cause of developing Generalized Anxiety Disorder, or GAD for short. In her words, it is, "Characterized by excessive, exaggerated, almost daily anxiety...they are constantly worrying about family and friends. The anxiety of GAD is generally out of proportion to the actual situation. Eventually, the anxiety dominates the person's thinking and interferes with daily activities" (Khan 1). This can cause some children to never learn the social skill of being secure, resulting in constant insecurity within oneself and their surrounding environment. To the general population, this would be viewed as an odd behavior because it contradicts the social norm of security within oneself and their environment, sometimes to excess. It would be seen by others as a trait of social-awkwardness, labeling the individual as socially handicapped or a non-follower of societal norms.

Similar to having General Anxiety Disorder, there are other psychological conditions that can be caused by an underdevelopment of social skills. Especially in foreign countries, children are being exploited on a daily basis. They are being kidnapped or sold for random and are turned into profit, most notably through sexual slavery, prostitution, and are being raped on a day to day basis. According to Khan's editorial, this can be the cause of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD for short. In her words, "PTSD is extremely debilitating. It follows from an exposure to a traumatic experience such as rape or being a victim of a natural disaster. The traumatic experience is continuously re-experienced in nightmares or flashbacks...affected individuals lose interest in things they enjoy, they are startled easily, have feelings of hopelessness and tend to be more aggressive" (1). This can cause some children to never learn the social skill of self-confidence, resulting in a constant sad feeling and down-talking upon oneself. To the general population, this would be viewed as an odd behavior because it is very contradictory to the social norm of individuals always being confident, and sometimes overly-confident in what they do. It would see it as a trait of social awkwardness, labeling the individual as socially handicapped or a non-follower of societal social norms.

There are many stigmas and stereotypes placed on children with ADHD that are biased due to this medical condition being over diagnosed, creating a misunderstanding of the meaning of ADHD. By gathering collective data from individual studies and research documents, we now see how ADHD affects academic and personal achievements in and out of the classroom and how much the actual stigmas and stereotypes are actually false due to misconception. Similarly, we read how children of all socioeconomic backgrounds are vulnerable to it due to the environment being the major factor and those having it not being the only ones who suffer from a lack of social skills. It breaks the perspective limit and 'glass ceiling' created by parents, teachers, and students to how much

a student could achieve academically and throughout their lives. By knowing the separation of fact from fiction of this popular disability, doctors can be informed of the causes of ADHD, know the stereotypes of the disability, and make more a more accurate diagnosis amongst children. Likewise, individuals amongst society could be more informed of what ADHD actually is, stereotyping less and understanding more.

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