

Note on *Inklings* 2021

James Baldwin runs through this year's *Inklings*, a hovering ghost abiding in the school—and the nation. Biomythographies of sexuality, speculations on infinity, coronavirus comic zines, lessons on AI from *Frankenstein*: these pages carry both the lightness and weight of an indescribable pandemic year. In this year of masks, identity mattered—whether birding in Central Park or writing to grandmothers or walking while Asian. Letters, just like Baldwin's letter to his nephew, mattered—here are letters to teachers, to ribosomes, to lovers of hockey, to future selves. Jazz mattered. Dreams mattered. New York mattered. Muck mattered. The art of Mexican Americans mattered. Mothers and fathers mattered. (The CIA, not so much.) Across these pages, Black lives—and the nation's grappling with Black lives—mattered. Here are writers, painters, historians, scientists, filmmakers—who spent the year learning in bedrooms or masked in the halls—showcasing that the will to create and to learn, to read and to reflect, to care and to adapt matters. Going through submissions, the *Inklings* editors were witness in weekly Monday lunch meetings to the Fieldston classrooms' swirl of work. We thank the teachers and the students who shared their work with us. This year we all knew as we sat in our history classes that our own moment was History, and this time capsule, *Inklings*, is only one jot of the year's moment. We hope, in its small way, the effort to preserve it matters.

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Inklings

2021

Lidia Colavita
Form VI
Sonnet

Before Morning

What sound does water make when falling on
this sleepless night, so thin and musical?
What sky—will we ever know if angel
or demon—bends over us in longing?
It was impossible to close my eyes
and not see this strange, gradual and strange, show,
when slow lights outside my open window
were young cupping hands holding fireflies.
And not for anything would we exchange
this splendid night of gloomy granite stars
and waking dreams that we can't touch or use,
smiles we don't know how to receive and change,
the red door that opens near firefly jars,
and, barely audible through rain, the Muse.

She Is a New Yorker

A young twelve-year-old girl stops to look both ways before crossing the street between 82nd and 83rd. It is supposed to be a trivial task, a meaningless action forgotten by the next day. She keeps her eyes down, making sure that she doesn't trip as she is swept along by the current of busy New Yorkers. She notices a man walking toward her, carrying what looks like a trash bag full of heavy objects, and moves to avoid collision. She realizes too late what he is doing. She watches as he swings the trash bag and falls to the ground, nursing a now throbbing head. She wonders what the hell just happened. She finds out later, through Google, that she was the fourth victim of a homeless man whose twisted sense of vigilantism encouraged him to search for Asian women on the street and hit them with heavy trash bags. As that twelve-year-old girl, I wonder why it had to be this moment, more than any other, that shattered my innocence regarding the racism in my city, why this moment reshaped my view of New York to include the injustices that I now have to fear as a woman of color. I wonder why my experience was only one hate crime in a sea of many, why it was just another statistic.

Growing up in NYC is, without a doubt, an unparalleled experience. I have been told that it is the mark of a true New Yorker to be enamored with the constant stentorian bustle that roars from the City That Never Sleeps. I like to consider myself one such New Yorker, even if I was born in ShangRao, China. Over my fifteen years living here, I have managed to immunize myself to the blaring noise of the streets, perfect my NYC walk, and foster my NYC pride. I am, in my mind and in my heart, a New Yorker. But even in a city that is nicknamed The Melting Pot for its diverse population, New York is still a city of social hierarchy, ingrained prejudice, and discriminatory laws. And because of that, I am still not universally recognized as a New Yorker, or even as an American, because I am Chinese. My loyal residence and even my assimilation into American culture are all extirpated by my physical appearance. So, even though I earned my right to be a New Yorker, I am still asked "Where are you really from" by a supposed friend from my camp. I still endure conversations that go along the lines of, "Are you illegal?" "No, I was adopted." "Oh, well still, welcome to America!" with the grocery bagger. I am still forced to smile stiffly at the cab driver that sees me and jeers, "Sorry Sweetness, this cab don't go to Chinatown," before I assure him that I am headed to the Upper

West Side. In their eyes, I am not a New Yorker and I am not an American. I am just a surprise that doesn't exemplify the stereotypes and habitual routines of a "normal" Chinese. Sometimes I wonder if I am ever seen beyond the profile that my physical appearance presents - if I will ever be seen, not by society's profile, but by my own.

I am a New Yorker. That is a part of my profile that I am sure of. But the rest of my profile is still muddy, even to me. As a light-skinned, adopted Chinese girl, I don't exactly have a place. Adopted from China and whitewashed, I am shunned from Chinese culture, yet, bearing the physical features of my heritage, I am prevented from belonging to American culture as well; too white for the colored, too colored for the whites. Even in New York's sea of diversity, I still feel alone. I am a middle ground, isolated from the two main groups that can find solace in their similarities.

Two girls sitting together, both women of color, yet yellow skin contrasts the darker brown as they discuss their respective experiences of racial marginalization in the 7th-grade Bridge-to-Bridge program. One girl, the darker one, rants about the times in which she felt less than human. The other sits quietly, listening and commiserating with her peer until it is her turn to talk. The thirteen-year-old Chinese girl begins to share her own story. Not long into her narrative, she is interrupted. "But your skin is light, not dark. You don't experience the same discrimination as me. What is so bad about being stereotyped to like math? It isn't a big deal." She sits mutely while other kids, the ones who have a right to their experiences, continue to speak. Her pain remains unheard and dilapidated because she has lighter skin. For a long time after, she believes she has no right to her pain because there is always worse out there. As that thirteen-year-old girl, I wonder why it had to be this moment that I realized that I wasn't fully accepted by other people of color; I wasn't colored enough.

I learned later that it was colorism that dictated the shame I felt for feeling oppressed. It is an unfortunate truth that the European, light-skinned complexion is favored as a beauty standard in today's society and that people of darker skin experience alienation from society because of their diversion from that standard. However, that does not invalidate any of the experiences that lighter-skinned people of color experience. Colorism and the Oppression Olympics (a competition between two groups about who is more discriminated against) are especially prevalent in New York's color spectrum of a population. It is that which makes my confusion even more evident as a New Yorker; amid the array of different people, especially in marginalized groups, people of color still find social hierarchy amongst themselves, and they sacrifice others to maintain it. For example, with the Coronavirus, the Chinese have found themselves the subject of hatred by the whole world, and their hatred is not buffered by any other minority group defending them, even if that hatred is fueled by false stigmas and racism that every marginalized group should be familiar with. The Chinese still stand alone.

As COVID's origin place was in China, people have since taken to calling it the Chinese Virus, and as a result, the animosity against the Chinese has skyrocketed. This intensified resentment resulted in a hate crime spree against Asian citizens, especially in New York. There have been accounts of street beatings, racial slurs, train stabbings, shootings, et cetera, against all people who look East Asian. I, fitting this description to a tee, have not been exempt from this newly rejuvenated anti-Chinese sentiment. In a grocery store, a lady tagging chips glared at me with deep hatred in her eyes and, in colorful linguistics, blamed me for bringing the virus to the United States. I stared after her in shock long after she stormed away. On the train, as I boarded, I found an open seat and sat down. Four people relocated themselves to the other side of the train, covering their mouths and averting their eyes from me. I wanted to scream that, just because I have curved eyes, did not mean that I would transmit COVID to them. But I sat mutely, knowing that it wouldn't change anything. Funny how COVID not only made me fear my own city, but it also made my city fear me.

A now sixteen-year-old Chinese girl sits on her bed, writing a paper on what her NYC should be. She focuses on her narrative as an Asian and realizes that there are so many injustices that she has to write about, she doesn't have room to mention anything that she loves about her New York. And she does, she loves NYC. All she wants to do is rave about the Dim Sum place she went to with her father on Sundays to eat until she couldn't move, or describe the dumpling place on Eldridge Street that, despite its shabby condition, produces the best dumplings known to man. But she doesn't. She focuses on Asian oppression because, as a Chinese American, it is the most prevalent thing she can think of when she sees her city through that lens. So she ends her paper by acknowledging that, while she has given herself to New York, New York is not fully hers. She understands that the injustices she experiences make her a living representation of the way justice is arbitrary for people of color like her. But despite all of that, she still calls herself a New Yorker. She is still enamored with the noise, the movement, and the life that New York City has given her. So while her New York is flawed, and maybe not even meant for her, she still calls herself a New Yorker in the hopes that the world could change enough that New York gives itself back to her and acknowledges her as a part of its culture. Until then, she chants to herself, and to the world, that she is a New Yorker. She is a New Yorker. She is a New Yorker. She is a New Yorker. As that sixteen-year-old girl, I wonder if the world will ever listen; I wonder if the world will ever agree.

Ryan Zucker
Form VI
Braided Essay

*The Exclusive Outdoors:
On Birding and Baldwin*

My phone's alarm sounds off at 5:15am on a brisk May morning, and the harsh electronic dinging makes my eyes shoot open. I look around and get out of bed. I prepare for the day as quickly as possible, taking care not to wake my parents who are still asleep down the hallway. I put my mask on, gather my gear, and leave home while the sky is still dark. The city streets are quiet, with only a few people passing by. I reach Central Park just as color begins to pour into the eastern skies. I take in the greenery and stillness, beginning to discern individual birds from the ambient soundscape. The trees are alive with migratory birds—warblers, flycatchers, and vireos of many different species make their presences known with their own distinctive voices. The buzzy chromatic scale of a Prairie Warbler, the harsh chattering of a Baltimore Oriole, and the melodic tune of a Warbling Vireo all come together to form a chorus. Time seems to slow down as I begin to visually scan each bird, starting with a spiffy, tuxedo-patterned Black-throated Blue Warbler, identifying and tallying as I go.



On May 25th, 2020, Chris Cooper, a middle-aged Black gay man and longtime New York City birder, was out in the park searching for spring migrants, his usual routine on an early May morning. On this particular morning, he was walking through Tupelo Meadow, a location within the protected Ramble area, when he noticed an off-leash dog running about through the bushes. Legally, dogs must be leashed in the park after 9am, and they must always be leashed in the Ramble. But many dog owners feel that these rules don't apply to them and are routinely dismissive of other park-goers who remind them of their obligations. Chris approached the dog's owner and told her that her dog needed to be leashed—that this was a protected area, and that this habitat was important for migratory birds, plants, and insects. The owner, Amy Cooper (no relation), refused. Chris began to record her and her dog with his phone. She did not like this and felt challenged. She told him that she would call the police and “tell them there's an African-American man threatening my life,” and proceeded to follow through, feigning a distressed voice as she pleaded for the operator to “send the cops immediately,” describing Chris Cooper only as “a man—African-American, [with] a bicycle helmet.” During the call, she leashed her dog to control it. Chris Cooper simply thanked her, stopped recording, and walked away.



I've been interested in nature for as long as I can remember, but I've been avidly interested in birds since I was seven years old. After finding a book containing beautiful photographs filled with dozens of species, all taken in New York City's Central Park, I started to go out in search of birds, both in the city and further afield. Since then, my interest has only grown, and birding has become my life's main passion. I bird wherever I can, whenever I can. On this particular May morning, I've already seen over a dozen species of warbler—a colorful, varied type of migratory bird that moves through the park en masse in spring and fall—including the fiery-throated Blackburnian Warbler, with its impossibly high-pitched song, and the smart-looking Wilson's Warbler: yellow with a neat black cap, resembling a yarmulke. I walk around densely wooded areas and lonely paths, sporting a hoodie, binoculars, and a camera. Peering into the foliage, I get strange looks from passers-by, but nothing more. They don't suspect that I'm doing anything nefarious, and carry on with their business.



Chris Cooper is a star figure in the local birding community, renowned not only for his birding prowess but also for his willingness to help anyone find a bird they might be looking for or to impart useful identification tips in easy-to-remember ways. I've had the privilege of knowing Chris for many years, ever since he helped me find my first Black-billed Cuckoo in the Ramble when I was eleven years old. Since then, I've been birding with him countless times, and it's an honor to call him my friend. This spring we've crossed paths in the park multiple times each week, with him always sporting a rainbow bandana as a face covering. We exchange notes about what birds we've each seen, and where we've seen them. I was lucky enough to be standing next to him when he spotted a Summer Tanager, a beautiful brick-red songbird seen here only a few times per year, along the shore of the park's Turtle Pond. I was able to repay the favor two days later, however, when I spotted an equally uncommon Yellow-throated Warbler at the very same spot and shared the sighting with him.



In his 1962 work *The Fire Next Time*, Baldwin writes specifically about the way Black and white people view each other in America, both at an individual and societal scale. When Baldwin speaks on how the white man sees the Black man, among other things, he speaks of fear. The white man is scared of the Black man—scared of what he might try to do to break his societal chains, scared that he might upset the balance of power commanded by the system. When speaking about police presence at a Nation of Islam rally, Baldwin notes that the officers “were afraid....indeed they were, and I was delighted to see it....I might have pitied them if I had not...discovered, through ugly experience, what they were like when they held the power and what they were like when you held the power.” (48-49) For examples of the dynamics when police hold the power, one need look no

further than the events of this year. A long history of police brutality continues to rear its ugly head, with the murders of several unarmed Black men and women, including Ahmaud Arbury, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor. Unfortunately, the list goes on. Police interactions, driven by fear and discrimination, are dangerous to marginalized communities in America.



Chris Cooper posted the video of his encounter with the dog-walker on that May morning to social media, where it quickly garnered millions of views. I was shocked to see it on his personal Facebook page soon afterward. Chris and I are frequently the early-morning birders in the park at sunrise, and I had spent the morning pleasantly birding with him just two days before this incident. In the aftermath, Amy Cooper was fired from her job at an investment firm, and Chris Cooper appeared for interviews on major news channels. The truth of the situation is that, had the police arrived while both Coopers were still present, there is no telling what they might have done to Chris. Would they have listened to the weepy white woman claiming she was being threatened, or the masked Black birder? They might have used excessive force, or worse. Amy Cooper held the power in this situation, and told the police that a Black man was “threatening her life,” when all he did was tell her to leash her dog. She knew that the police could be used as a tool to further her own selfish needs and enforce her own will. On that same day —May 25th, 2020—George Floyd was tortured, for eight minutes and forty-six seconds, and killed by a group of police officers in Minneapolis, Minnesota, causing a massive wave of protests and a racial reckoning that the country is still in the midst of today.



I go birding all around New York City, and I can do so alone without fearing for my safety as a straight white male. “I bird wherever I can, whenever I can.” There's an inherent privilege in that statement. The birding community is largely composed of white men, and Black birders face a much more difficult experience in enjoying the outdoors. A Black person sporting binoculars and walking around in the woods could, due to the racial biases of a white person, be seen as “suspicious” or “scary.” Thus, Black birders are often prevented from birding alone in areas that, while perfectly open to white birders, are inaccessible to them. If a white man the same age as Chris Cooper had told Amy Cooper to leash her dog, she likely would have listened, and she definitely would not have used the police as a racially charged weapon. As Baldwin wrote, and Amy Cooper demonstrated, fear can be weaponized. In this case, her entitlement and her irrational fear against Chris Cooper could easily have prompted the police to act out of fear as well, hearing that a white damsel was in distress. The police, as Amy Cooper well knew, would work for her—she was attempting to use them to enforce her preconceived notions of white supremacy and ownership of the outdoors. The systems of oppression in place in this country have erected barriers to enjoyment of the environment and the outdoors that feel as real as brick walls.

“I have begun this letter five times and torn it up five times. I keep seeing your face, which is also the face of your father and my brother. Like him, you are tough, dark, vulnerable, moody—with a very definite tendency to sound truculent because you want no one to think you are soft.” This is how James Baldwin (Baldwin) starts his letter to his nephew (James) in *The Fire Next Time*. It reflects just how important this letter, this rhetoric, is to him. For him to have rewritten a simple letter five times over shows the amount of care and effort put into what would go on to help prepare his nephew for the abrasive world that will never wait for him.

As a writer, and Black writer at that, I completely understand the weight Baldwin feels writing this letter. When Black people speak, we have to be immensely exact with what we say and how we say it. Tearing up a letter five times is natural, especially since Baldwin’s letter carries the significance of shaping James’s life. When I was a little kid, I would sit in my room coloring. I would have a very specific image in my head that I was trying to draw. Every time my drawing didn’t come out exactly how I pictured it, I would crumple up my paper and throw it against the wall. I blew through almost half a stack of printer paper before I broke down and cried. I was so mad at my hands for not doing what I wanted them to do perfectly. I felt so much pressure to perform to an insanely high standard that I had imposed on myself. This mindset, although I didn’t realize it then, was most likely due to the pressure society puts on youth of color to break away from the narrative of damage-centered research and be better than the world sees you. I felt the pressure to be an amazing artist because if I wasn’t, people would think Black people can’t be artists.

I was six.

Baldwin, between the debate with William Buckley and the readings we’ve gone through, is very particular with what he says at any given moment. I think this is because people of color are under so much scrutiny that if we give the white world just one reason to think of us as lesser people, everything we’ve worked to achieve gets disregarded, as our entire being can be picked apart by this one slip-up. Baldwin demonstrates masterful assimilation into white culture during the debate, enough to prompt Buckley to refer to Baldwin as an equal (aeonmagazine 2019). This pressure can start to seep into personal life even when you don’t need to alter your behavior. Code-switching becomes an instinct that can get tricky to figure out when it’s needed. Then, we’re called ‘white-washed,’ ‘Oreos,’ and we develop a sense of impostor syndrome. I feel like I’m constantly going to get figured

out and exposed for either not truly being as I present myself to the white world, or being disowned by my culture. It’s a delicate balance between owning my identity and being “destroyed by [being] what the white world calls a nigger” (Baldwin 4). Society simultaneously puts so much pressure to and not to conform. On one hand, you’re an anomaly if you contradict the preexisting image people already assume you are. But on the other hand, if you align with it, you’re deemed the stereotypical [insert identifier here]. This perpetuates damage-based thinking, albeit more subtle and nuanced. Instead of focusing on the oppression that a community goes through, you focus on what society has deemed “wrong” about the community. It still orients you towards the negatives and disregards the achievements of said community, it’s just a different set of obstacles that impact them.

As I get older, it becomes more apparent to me that the people of color around me are perfectionists. Many of my friends, family, and even myself are seemingly fixated on making sure everything we do is as close to perfect as possible. This focus is great when applied correctly because we can find the most minute and obscure detail that nobody else would notice, but it also impedes our ability to see the bigger picture. I had an assignment in second grade where I had to make a drawing. I made a really cool pattern with boxes. When it came time to fill in the background, I sat there and colored each box individually. After about twenty minutes, my teacher came over and showed me that I could color over the entire page and fill the whole paper in a third of the time. I was amazed at how efficient I could be. I was so focused on the details that I failed to see the bigger picture.

The same goes for talking about race. When discussing race in America, we have a damage-based perspective that debilitates us and prevents us from being able to actually make progress. We focus on the struggles of a community, or, like Baldwin, we get so caught up trying to say the perfect thing, that we find it hard to say anything at all. America needs to stop tearing up its letters. We need to be able to commend communities for the good they’ve achieved and stop emphasizing hardship. If children were able to draw without fear of damaging the world’s views of their entire demographic, or if people didn’t have to embody the picturesque human being in order to be seen as one, we could start to free the world of the restraints it has put on itself. We need to shift our perspective, because “we cannot be free until [the world] is free” (Baldwin 10).

Letter To White Jews

On the Dick Cavett show in 1968, fifty-two years ago, there was an interview with James Baldwin and Yale professor Paul Weiss. Baldwin discusses the oppression of Black people in America and the reality he faced as a Black writer: “The gap, the distance placed between myself and the assessment of my own experience, was much greater than it would be for any white man in this country.” Paul Weiss, who has been arguing with Baldwin’s personal experiences the entire interview, simply responds with “I don’t believe it.” What a telling statement summing up his viewpoints. Whenever Baldwin brings up his oppression, Weiss perpetuates the myth of colorblindness, insisting that explicitly discussing race only increases division, “[emphasizing] something that is already there.” He sits slumped in his chair like a carriage horse with blinders, pitifully unable to see the bigger picture.

Seeing the name Weiss, I decided to do a bit of research, and his background was not at all surprising. He was Jewish, raised on the Lower East Side by two working-class immigrant parents from Eastern Europe. His Hebrew name was Peretz, the same as my father’s. He worked hard to become a professor (Hull, 2013). Why does this matter, and why was his upbringing so predictable? I have noticed that many white Jews with similar backgrounds refuse to truly listen to and internalize the experiences of people of color. When white complicity to the oppression of people of color is brought up, the defensiveness Weiss displays rears its head once again. This complicity lives within so many Jewish communities, despite widespread praise of activists like Elie Wiesel, whose most famous quote is, “We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.” This resonates with many as it pertains to Jewish oppression but doesn’t always translate when it pertains to other marginalized groups.

I believe this defensiveness exists because many white Jews do not understand that our Jewishness does not negate our whiteness. However, all of us are aware, internally or externally, of our inherent privilege as white people and understand how our white skin serves as a shield. Funnily enough, this becomes apparent in the frantic responses one often hears when addressing white privilege around white Jews. For example, “My family came from nothing! We worked hard to get where we are!” Clearly, the speaker here associates whiteness with wealth, power, and privilege, and is trying to negate their whiteness with their ancestors’ financial situation. Here’s another one: “Jews were not considered white in the

holocaust!” Firstly, the word “were” is used, but yes, people still think of us as a separate race. And you get upset when they do (rightfully so) because of the trauma that comes with that definition. But by saying this you realize the danger that people face when they are not considered white. Our tacit white privilege can also be seen in the way some of us changed our names to assimilate into American society, hiding our Jewishness and emphasizing our whiteness: from Goldberg to Gold, from Stein to Stone. These changes were made for our safety, because of our history of persecution. Ironically, this was true for Weiss as well: Weiss’s mother gave her sons “‘Anglicanized’ names, chosen [in an] attempt to elevate the boys’ status in the American social structure” (Hull, 2013). It is essential to recognize that one of our ancestors’ most important attributes for survival was the ease with which they could masquerade as white Christians.

By being purposefully oblivious (and you can tell it’s purposeful by the very responses meant to prove exemption from obliviousness), white Jews like Weiss are “trapped in a history which they do not understand; and until they understand it they cannot be released from it” (Baldwin, 1993). By being purposefully oblivious, some of us have become the “innocents,” in Baldwin’s words, the ones who are truly complicit, whose publicly perceived innocence is the true crime. “We cannot be free until they are free,” Baldwin writes to his nephew (Baldwin, 1993). As you sit at the Passover seder and sing about your proclaimed freedom, your escape from the Egyptians who kept you in chains, by ignoring the oppression of others you are becoming restricted and disillusioned once again. You are becoming the innocents Baldwin speaks about who keep themselves and everyone else from deliverance. You sing “let my people go” as if the stories of the Torah and the struggle towards liberation are tales of a distant past, but Exodus is more relevant today than it has ever been. There is no Moses or Pharaoh to let us go today; we need to let ourselves go, from passivity and ignorance, to begin to contribute to the work that will, in the end, constitute a truly free society. This may be hard to conceptualize because you treat people of all races with equality and respect, or believe you do. Baldwin makes the point: “I don’t know what white people feel, but I can only conclude what they feel from the state of their institutions.” In other words, while treating everyone with equality and respect is absolutely critical, it does not erase the upsetting reality that entire institutions are oppressing people of color and we have the privilege to be blind to it.

Many of you may remember the story of Jonah, who had to reckon with his personal responsibility regarding societal issues. After Jonah ignores an order from God to help the people of Nineveh, he is forced to jump into the sea to quell a storm from God and is subsequently swallowed into the belly of a whale. The whale’s belly is Jonah’s safe bubble to wait and reflect. There he realizes he has to stop running away from the truth and do what he has always known is right. Many of us recently have been or are still sitting in our version of the whale’s belly, whether that be our white privilege, our financial security, or pandemic-induced isolation from the rest of the world. But people are dying because so many, Jews and non-Jews, are still in their own whale’s belly, which is becoming more and more

transparent as we witness more injustice in our country. People of color are being disproportionately impacted by police brutality, food insecurity, and the coronavirus crisis; racism creeps into every institution and every mind like a parasite. We see what is going on, but we have the choice to stay in our bubble because we are white. While staying in the whale's belly can be comforting and familiar, it is also restricting. We can't move anywhere or do anything; the belly is only just big enough for our bodies to fit in. Away from the whale's belly is the unknown, which can be scary, but there is also light and movement and opportunities for positive change.

None of this is to say that I am not proud to be a Jew because the opposite is true. And none of this is to say antisemitism does not exist or to say that it is not on the rise or to say that it is not dangerous and violent and hateful. There is hatred of Jews on the left and the right. Being a Jew they will ask you about the Israel-Palestine conflict, treating you as if you are the Prime Minister, personally responsible for Israel's decisions. People are usually separated from the actions of foreign governments who happen to share their religion, but with the Jews, this is not the case. This is blatant antisemitism, and is just one example. It makes the very existence of being a Jew controversial and difficult, but none of these are reasons to not wholeheartedly support the fight for Black lives. It is critical that we learn to be pluralistic and hold multiple truths. You can be oppressed AND have white privilege. Your family could have come to America with the clothes on their backs and worked to become wealthy, AND their whiteness helped them get there. Our knowledge of generational trauma and persecution should compel our allyship. By fighting for others we fight also for ourselves and for everyone's freedom, and this fight does not diminish one's Jewishness but strengthens it.

I am not speaking for people of color and I am not speaking for all white Jews; I am just telling you what I have seen and why I believe it to be true. I've had that "what about the Jews" mindset because it was the perspective of my parents and my grandparents but I have grown and am still growing. We also must realize that this mindset completely excludes Jews of color. I love the Jewish community and that is why I can be honest with you: if you are not trying to grow you need to. Let us remember that Yom Kippur is a holiday rooted not just in repentance but in justice. In this new year, after this unusual Yom Kippur, let us resolve to work towards justice and strengthen our Jewishness in the process.

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Maribel Mendoza
Form V
Personal Narrative

El Apartamento de Abuela

Grandma says, "I put your blankets and pillow down, buenas noches mija." I say, "Thank you, Grandma. Good night." We smile, and she walks down the hallway.

Every night, when I would stay at my grandma's for the week, we had this interaction. My mom would sleep in my aunt's room, my grandma in her room, and I on the couch. We were a family, and family will always provide a place for you to sleep. It seemed like this couch represented my coming of age; sleeping on a slim, less than comfy couch, having to go to school the next day, day after day. Grandma would cook us dinner; we ate her delicious arroz con gandules, and I would maybe have a conversation with her. We did not speak a lot. But I could have tried. Grandma was quiet. But every night, she laid the blankets down the same way. She was prepared every night to do so, and—despite its being a simple task—she would not let it get too late for me to do it myself.

By staying at my grandmother's, I gained a sense of what it is like to live in the inner city and connect with the social environment near Mosholu Parkway and in The Bronx. One of the reasons that I stay at my Grandma's during the week is that it is close to school and I only need to take two buses rather than the two-hour commute from my house in Queens. The first stop on the Bx10 is directly across the street from the apartment. I transfer to the Bx7 at Broadway that takes me directly to school. This trip I take every day takes me through the neighborhoods of Norwood and Kingsbridge. Common experiences for me are waiting impatiently for the bus with other New Yorkers, getting mad at the bus driver when they desert us at our stop, and rushing to the Dunkin Donuts to grab something to eat before the bus comes. Some days are worse than others, but I am thankful that I get to have such a close relationship with other New Yorkers through our similar routes and commutes. When I think about how much New York culture I have gained from staying at my Grandma's (and from knowing her as well), it makes me grateful for the slightly uncomfortable couch I sleep on. It wasn't just convenience that made me stay at my grandmother's but it was my tether to New York and its culture that even a teenager attending a private school in Riverdale could feel.

My grandma immigrated to New York with her family when she was seven years old. In the forties and fifties there was a surge of immigration from Puerto Rico; immigrants were hoping to escape poverty and find jobs. One thing Grandma told me about her family's immigration to the U.S. was that when my great-grandfather wanted breakfast, the only thing he knew how to order in En-

glish was “ham and eggs.” Since my grandmother learned English at a very early age (because it was important to survive in New York City), she grew accustomed to it, and so did my mom and her siblings. My siblings and I often blame our parents and sometimes Grandma for our little understanding of the language—that is, Spanish—but we try our best. Nevertheless, Grandma instilled in us that family is important. Creating a life for your children that was better than yours was what she hoped to pass down to her children. My mom does the same. By making a space for her grandchildren to stay, no matter the time or day, she was helping us in a way no one else could. Whenever someone in our family was coming to New York City, the first thing anyone would ask was “Are you staying at Abuela’s?” This question was, of course, rhetorical because if you were going to come to the city, you had to visit Grandma.

My grandma was My New York. My connection to her was my connection to New York City, then to Puerto Rico, to my ancestors, to my heritage and my culture. I lost part of that connection when she died last year. My grandma raised me in that apartment; she raised all of us there. After she passed, everyone talked about their experiences with her: in the apartment, during holidays, during their childhoods. My cousins, brother, and I spoke about how good the spaghetti was that Grandma would make for us. During holidays, all of us stayed over at the apartment while our other relatives went back to their homes. We would listen to her favorite jíbaro albums during Christmastime and set up the tree while we listened. On Christmas Day, my mom would bring out the güiro, maracas, and straw hats, and we would form a parranda in the apartment, while Grandma happily watched and enjoyed. Grandma would buy us Italian ices on the corner of 206th and Bainbridge Ave on those hot, summer days. She would take us to the McDonalds at 204th and Perry Ave and buy us those “oh, so good” nuggets and fries. All of these experiences are a part of my culture as a New Yorker and as a member of a Puerto Rican family. A couple months before she died, I went to get her McDonalds and ran errands for her (which I was reluctant to do, and I hate myself for). She was incredibly thankful that she had her granddaughter there to do those things for her—more thankful than I was when she did them for me.

I need to put the blankets and pillow down myself now. She’s not here to do it for me. I can’t say goodnight to her because I never said good morning. I can’t tell her about my day at school or my bus ride from there. She never got to see me perform in the school play or for me to tell her about all the culture and history of New York I am learning so much about, and which she had practically lived every day of her life. I couldn’t do my Spanish project about mis abuelos on her because it still hurt too much. I wish I had talked to her more about her life in the city, her struggles and experiences as a Spanish-speaking immigrant, and how she had built a life for herself and her family. The only way I can move forward is by writing pieces like this, celebrating her life and reflecting on our relationship.

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Noel Quiñones in discussion with the author. February 28, 2021.

Dahlia Mendoza in discussion with the author. February 28, 2021.

Mirembe Mubanda
Form III
Letter

Whose Little Girl Am I?

“‘Whose little boy are you?’ My heart replied at once, ‘Why, yours.’”
James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (29)

Dear Halmony,

How do we find ourselves together, celebrating Thanksgiving over microwaved dumplings as we watch *Gossip Girl* on your sixty-five-inch television screen? You, a conservative, avid Fox News watcher, skeptic of racism, who immigrated from Korea and married my grandfather at a young age after bonding over *McBurgers* and *Shakespeare*. Myself, a Black, Biracial, half-Ugandan, liberal girl, who spent her summer phone-banking for progressive political candidates across the country.

When we spend Christmas together, you urge my father, your son-in-law, to sit at the head of your chestnut wooden dining room table. I thought of you one humid summer afternoon in Uganda. The air was thick, when we left my Jaja’s compound, foreshadowing the heavy rainstorm. As Sunday, my Jaja’s driver, sped through the bustling streets of downtown Kampala, I stared out the van’s window into the neighboring hills covered in matoke farms, wondering about the distant aunties I was driving to visit. When we entered my aunt Efrance’s compound, I noticed the chipped light blue paint on her gate, the uneven patches of red, clay-like dirt, the yellow stucco of the walls, and tin sheets of the roof. My aunties all wore colorful busuutis with flourishes of moss green and dark purple streaks, dots and strips decorating every section of the dress. Immediately, I noticed how my Asics running shoes, faded jeans, and Old Navy t-shirt made me look like a tourist, not a Ugandan, reminding me of the many times you gifted me princess tiaras, but how I often ditched them for bike helmets.

At one point in our conversation, one of my aunts scolded me for not bowing to my Jaja. “Who will bow for me when I am older?” I replied. They evaded my questions and began to teach me correct positions of bowing. “No one!” I protested, “because I am a woman!” They stared at me with expressions of scandal spreading over their faces. I could practically read their thoughts, “What a stubborn American Child!” “It’s tradition,” they responded. “A sexist tradition!” I added. Together, we debated back and forth until one of my third cousins—a devout Muslim man—explained how the expectations of women are changing; I was unaccustomed to the culture and would therefore refuse it. While he may

have been unable to fully comprehend my identity, specifically my feminism, I was grateful for his effort to be sympathetic and understanding. I know I am still your little girl, Halmony, but I hope that our relationship will eventually develop these qualities too.

As I phone-banked across the country, I often thought of our visits, you watching Sean Hannity spread conspiracy theories as I privately, but dramatically, rolled my eyes at the television. During my very first call in Kentucky for Senatorial candidate Charles Booker, a woman named Mabel responded to my conversation opener by saying, “Halmony, I’m a Republican.” Mortified, I mumbled “goodbye” and quickly hung up. As I continued to call for Booker, I spoke with voters in rural corn-farming towns, with populations smaller than 632 people. In the same sessions, I reminded voters in the city of Louisville that there was only one polling location for their city with nearly 700,000 residents. I listened to one middle-aged Black man from Louisville complain about his frustration and disappointment with Kentucky’s elected officials. To him, this was one of the most important primaries; it was a chance to elect a fellow Black man who understood his struggles. Other days, I phone-banked for Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and spoke with women who initially complained that I was interrupting them as they fried their tostones but, eventually, could not stop expressing their gratitude for their congresswoman. Speaking with citizens in places from corn-farming towns to a grandmother’s kitchen overlooking a bustling street in Queens helped me understand and respect other’s perspectives that shaped their identities. These conversations also broadened my own understanding of how we can better comprehend each other’s lives through respectfully listening and debating. Even if our conversations veer from their initial topic and refocus to the latest episode of *Gossip Girl*, I hope we can at least begin having them.

Halmony, I gradually developed an understanding of your mindset through conversations with my busuuti-wearing aunts in Kampala and through phone calls with cranky, Spanish-speaking grandmothers in Queens. These interactions show me the complex layers beneath one’s identity such as how the government worker in Louisville is also a Black man and single father of a six-year-old girl. They teach me how your views are shaped by personal experience and perhaps lack of exposure to perspectives outside your Korean community in Flushing, Queens. For example, your family’s dry-cleaning business failed when they first arrived in America and you fear the “socialist” party in South Korea is plagued with corruption. Both incidents induced an understandable fear in you of the government holding too much power over citizens. “My family could have maintained its business, but our taxes were too high!” you argue. You spend endless hours caring for my elderly grandfather with Parkinson’s disease and dementia as you listen to Tucker Carlson calling the NFL players’ decisions of choosing to kneel illegal and attacking Christine Blasey Ford by aggressively questioning her memory. Meanwhile, I read the New York Times editorial section every Saturday morning as I munch on whole-wheat Cheerios, reflecting on articles about the necessity to protect Black women, written by artists such as Megan Thee Stallion.

You may choose to avoid any political conversations, which, I admit, will sometimes be awkward. My heritage is my pride; I honor my Ugandan, Jewish, and Irish ancestors. They shape my identity and my beliefs. I hope to learn about your family as well. Have they always lived in Seoul? Or did they migrate from a rural seaside village? What was it like for your father to flee North Korea during the war? I hope we can build from our heritage questions to more complex topics about identity and values. Possibly, I will one day be able to share the fear my father carries when he goes on a light jog in Central Park, carrying his government ID and wearing bright clothes, or the way he becomes tense when traveling in areas without other Black people. You could explain the pain you hold as a result of being isolated from many members of your immediate family. Over time, these conversations might bridge long avoided topics that define important aspects of our family and bring us both to worlds outside our comfortable, privileged bubbles and into a space of compassion.

Lucienne Troy
Form V
Short Story

Are You My Mother?
(after Sabrina Orah Marks)

There's a knock at my door. It's Judy Woodruff, my mother. She peeks her head into my room and asks if I'm okay. I'm sobbing. "No," I answer softly. She comes over and starts combing my hair with her fingers, rocking me back and forth like she used to when I was a baby. The only issue is she never used to rock me when I was a baby because Judy Woodruff is not my mother. "You are not my mother," I tell her, removing her wrinkled hands from my head. But I accidentally crush her hands in my fingers, forgetting how frail she is.

"Well, if I'm not your mother, at least you will have a souvenir," she says.

I put the hands in a jar and place it in my backpack. I set off into the night to catch the nearest bus.

I board the bus and spot Lin Manuel Miranda. He is wearing a brown coat with a black cap. He signals for me to sit next to him, and I settle into the blue seat beside him. "Are you my mother?" I ask him as he puts down his newspaper.

"Well, do you know the time?" he replies.

"I know a lot of things, like buckaroos and Korean barbeque, but I do not know the time. Do you know a song?"

"I do know a song," he says while removing a small piece of yellow paper from his pocket. "It goes a little something like this: the black cat jumped and the beggar played his fiddle. One or two pennies and maybe he'll do a jiggle." He takes off his cap, which smells of sardines and sunshine, "but I am not your mother."

"Have a nice life," I say, getting up from the cold seat. I get off on Main Street in Camden, Maine. It's daytime now. I stop by the diner to get a stack of pancakes a mile high. My server is Taylor Swift and she comes over to take my order. She's wearing a beautiful purple locket. "What can I get for you honey?" she asks, with a voice as smooth as silk. "Well, I'd like a stack of pancakes a mile high with raspberry syrup," I respond. Taylor Swift tells me it's coming right up. I follow her into the kitchen and pull on her apron. I clutch her leg and hold on like a small child. Taylor Swift starts petting me and pulls out a leash from her back pocket. "You can be my puppy," she suggests kindly. But I don't want to be her puppy, I want to be her daughter. I ask Taylor Swift if she is my mother. She takes off her shoe and puts it on her head. Then she walks to the back of the room and comes back with a huge gift bag. "For me?" I ask, gesturing at the gift.

"Yes. For you."

After ripping out crumples of tissue paper I find a small red box. I open it up and lying inside is a purple locket just like Taylor Swift's. I start to smile, thinking that Taylor Swift must be my mother if she is gifting me a locket that matches hers. My mother, Taylor Swift, clips the delicate locket onto my neck, and I feel the cold chain tickle my skin. She gives me a big hug and then turns away abruptly with the words, "I am not your mother."

I run out crying and board a bright red trolley. If Judy Woodruff is not my mother, and Lin Manuel Miranda is not my mother, and Taylor Swift is not my mother, then Helen Maroulis must be my mother. I take out my flip phone, the one my mother gave me, and punch in Helen Maroulis's number. The phone rings twice and then I hear her familiar voice on the other end. "Hello?" she says.

"Hello, Helen Maroulis. I hope you are well," I say.

"Why yes, I am fine, and yourself?"

"Well, I could go for some sardines, but other than that I am quite alright. May I ask you a question?"

I hear a quiet, monotonous buzz and fear that Helen Maroulis has hung up. But after approximately five minutes, Helen Maroulis responds, "I suppose, but make it quick."

"Do you like pancakes?" I ask.

"Why of course I like pancakes."

An involuntary grin spreads across my cheeks, as I know that Helen Maroulis must be my mother if she likes pancakes as much as I do.

"Why don't you come over?" asks Helen Maroulis.

"I would love that."

The trolley drops me off at Helen Maroulis's front door and I knock three times. She opens the door and tells me to come inside. Inside her house are dozens of vases of flowers and a huge acrylic painting of a cat with a monocle.

"I made something for you," says Helen Maroulis, pointing her hand toward the kitchen. My heart starts racing as I contemplate what my mother might have made for me: perhaps a clay locket or a kazoo. I am immediately hit with the smell of warm vanilla fluff and look at the table. It takes me a moment to realize that my eyes do not deceive me, and that before me lies a mile-high stack of waffles. Waffles.

"Why?! Why!" I cry to Helen Maroulis, sinking to the ground and melting like margarine. "Because. Just because," Helen responds.

Helen Maroulis bends down to rub my back although her hands feel foreign to me. I consider taking them as a souvenir, as I did with those of my former mother Judy Woodruff, but Helen Maroulis's hands are strong. She senses my distress and turns on Helpless from the Hamilton soundtrack. I reminisce about my former mother Lin Manuel Miranda; he never would have betrayed me like this.

"There, there," Helen Maroulis comforts me.

"How could you do this?" I ask helplessly.

"Because I needed you to know."

"Needed me to know what?"

"That I am your mother."

"But I don't want you to be my mother!"

"I love you to the moon and back."

Those were the words I had wished to hear my entire life. On the lonely, dark days, I had always longed for a mother to whisper those words while holding me in a gentle embrace. But coming from the pancake traitor, Helen Maroulis, they felt icy cold. And she was missing one part: "times infinity."

Marissa Meng
Form VI
Artwork

Untitled



Lena Habtu
Form V
Analysis

Eight Bites

“Eight Bites,” a short story by Carmen Maria Machado, follows an unnamed female narrator through a series of events leading up to and following her gastric surgery. Initially, the narrator believes herself to be an outcast, a woman who is fat and therefore “othered” by society. She, like her three sisters before her, decides to undergo a medically unnecessary gastric surgery that will limit her ability to consume food in order to fit into a society in which thin bodies are the ideal. *Eight Bites* poses two different concepts of “otherness.” In the eyes of society at large, any woman who is considered fat is othered. Characters like the narrator, her sisters, her daughter Cal, and even her curvy Dr. U fall into that category. The second layer of otherness comes from the perspective of the narrator. In her eyes, the true others are Cal and Dr. U, two women who are fat and do not seek body modification. This approach to existence is truly “other” to the narrator and unsettles her throughout the narrative. Machado challenges our concept of who the “other” is, extending it beyond characters who are fat, forcing us to question why certain characters feel the need to conform.

In my analysis, I will be using the word “fat” as a neutral physical descriptor, as one would use the term “brunette” or “tall,” rather than as the derogatory term our society has designated it to be. The fact that I have to explain my usage of the word “fat” or “fatness” in this essay proves that our society thinks of “fat” as an intrinsically bad word, and the narrator has digested this perspective, which has influenced her understanding of her self-worth. Because of her fatness, the narrator considers herself to be the “other” within her society. In the days leading up to her surgery, the narrator explains that she “was tired of the skinny-minny women from church” and “looking into the mirror” only to see “things [she] hated” (167). The narrator shares one of her most formative memories from her childhood. She recalls how, as a rule, her slender mother ate only eight bites of any meal set before her. She maintained this “eight bite rule” seemingly effortlessly; never once giving in and consuming a ninth bite. The narrator didn’t possess the same self-control. As she describes, “one day ... I ate eight bites and then stopped” (166). After noticing that her plate “was full still, barely a dent in the raucous mass of pasta and greens” (166), she continued to eat “eight more bites” and afterwards “was still hungry, and so [she] had eight more” (166). After the shame she felt surrounding her body’s need to eat more than eight bites, she “began to cry” (166). The narrator’s mother clearly ascribed to the mentality that thinner bodies are more socially superior and

she strove to attain that idea through her restrictive eating. Through her relationship with her own body and mealtime actions, she passes this mentality down to her daughters without speaking a word. This was damaging to them because their naturally fat bodies did not fit the physical ideal that the narrator's mother worked so hard for through her eight bite rule. Ultimately, the narrator decided that she "could not make eight bites work for [her] body, so [she] would make [her] body work for eight bites" (167).

This story is told through the lens of a single narrator, one who has internalized the rejection of fatness, and from her perspective, fat women who do not actively seek to make their bodies thinner are beyond her understanding of both herself and the world. To her, these women are truly "other." Two characters in the narrative, Dr. U and Cal, demonstrate this otherness simply because they have fat bodies and do not actively try to change them. Their otherness is more nuanced and lies in their security in themselves as opposed to the superficial otherness solely based on what someone's body looks like. Dr. U, the doctor who performs the narrator's surgery, is a "sweetly plump" woman (168). The narrator questions Dr. U's motives in practicing these surgeries, asking herself, "What was she doing, sending me on this journey she herself had never taken?" (168). The narrator clearly finds it challenging to comprehend Dr. U's defiance and non-compliance with the system, while she is offering this service to other women. For the narrator, the accepted mindset is that if your body is fat, you're expected to want to escape it.

The narrator's own daughter, Cal, is fat without wanting to change herself, and the difference in their perspectives creates a rift between Cal and the narrator over time. The narrator's older sisters—all three of whom had fat bodies until going through with this miracle surgery that they sing praises of—gushed about their daughters' reactions to their mothers' surgeries; their daughters "sent ... flowers" (170). The narrator is sure that Cal won't react similarly. She can't see why Cal is unhappy with her decision to undergo the surgery or why Cal does not want to pursue body modifying practices herself. It's not that she doesn't love her daughter, it's that she doesn't understand her. When her daughter, whose body closely resembles her own body pre-surgery, asks her, "'Do you hate my body, Mom?'" (178), the narrator is unable to respond. To the narrator, Cal is young, and her body is malleable and has time to change.

Moreover, there seems to be a subtle resentment that the narrator holds for Cal and how birth has affected her own body. This relates to precisely what the narrator disliked about becoming a mother. Something about pregnancy, her body existing in proximity to someone else, changed it. After giving birth, the narrator says that her body "would never look right again" (167). She rejected the body that her daughter caused. In a subtle way, Cal may have read that as a rejection of herself (her daughter) as a person. Cal can't comprehend the lengths to which her mother would go to alter her own body, rather than accept it in its natural state. Although the narrator never explicitly says that Cal's body is undesirable, she projects those insecurities onto Cal by rejecting her own body, when Cal's body so closely resembles her mother's. When Cal asks the narrator, "Do you love every part of me?" the

narrator is unable to respond and disconnects the phone (178). It seems that this question makes the narrator deeply uncomfortable, perhaps because it reflects back upon her own self-love, or lack thereof. Instead of grappling with these issues, the narrator chooses to avoid them and fails to delve into the driving forces behind this otherhood. She does not examine the decisions of Cal and Dr. U for her reader, simply because they may be beyond her comprehension. She takes Cal's defiance at face value; it is inconvenient to her, but not something she cares to question or explore further. Machado poses the question: why do the "non-others"—the narrator, her mother, and her sisters—find it so challenging to comprehend Cal and Dr. U's non-compliance with the system?

Machado utilizes a key writing technique to spotlight the "othering" of Cal and Dr. U: they are the only characters in "Eight Bites" who have names. It seems that only characters with the agency to step outside of the cycle are named. We see that the "non-others"—the narrator, her mother, and her sisters—are rendered nameless, and as a result of their decision to conform, they are reduced to being named solely in relation to others with names such as "mom," "sister," and "mother." These women who conform bear some semblance to the "disappearing women" in Machado's other stories, and are defined not by their names or legacies as individuals.

As compared to the other short stories of *Her Body and Other Parties*, the story "Eight Bites" is particularly striking because Machado intentionally excludes men from this narrative of women's self-perception. As a result, the reader is shown a cycle of body dissatisfaction that women perpetuate themselves. Struggles with body image and body acceptance are not a phenomenon that women have in any way brought upon themselves. However, Machado creates a world for us in which men are completely out of the picture. There are no offhand, absentminded remarks made by a father or uncle that our protagonist realizes, in retrospect, was offensive. No man ever walks up to any of these characters and informs them that they are fat, and therefore undesirable. And yet, day-to-day, it can be seen that interpersonally this cycle tends to be overwhelmingly enforced by women, particularly within their families, almost creating a cycle of body shaming as an inevitable inheritance. Machado highlights the damage caused by mothers who project their insecurities onto their daughters, which can end in one of two ways. Firstly, like our narrator did, the child could adopt the body shaming habits and mindset of her mother, as the narrator did with her own mother. Or, as seen with Cal, the child could break the cycle. Cal is subtly queered, and this may impact her decision of whether or not to conform. The narrator mentions that Cal "lives ... with a roommate who is not really her roommate and she will not tell me and I do not know why" (175). Later, on the phone with Cal, she "listen[s] for the voice of the other woman who is always in the background, whose name I have never learned" (177). Cal's queerness—which is mentioned only twice by her mother, both times in passing—may play a role in her ability to hold her own in her identity as a fat woman. The short story hints at Cal seeking therapy, where she may ultimately have to come to terms with the devastating fact that her mother didn't love all parts of her child: her

fatness and perhaps her queerness. While none of the “non-other” characters are confirmed to be straight, it can be assumed that they are, particularly because they have children, which traditionally implies heterosexuality. The queerness of Dr. U is left to the reader’s interpretation, but it could be inferred that queerness—living without seeking male approval—is liberating in some way to these characters and allows them to exist without feeling the need to alter their bodies in their natural states.

By the end of “Eight Bites,” the narrator steps into the role of the “other” herself. On her dying day, Cal will visit with her own daughter for their “annual visit” (181). Perhaps the surgery was the last straw, straining their relationship until it neared its breaking point. As she dies, the narrator realizes that this surgery, one she was so adamant about going through with, to the extent that she demanded it be irreversible, caused more harm than good. The arms of the ghost of her past body that had been lingering silently in her house for the last forty-odd years will hold her as she dies. Power within her was lost when she lost this part of her body. She dies regretting her decision, closing with an apology to her former corporeal form, in a way that almost evokes a sense of homecoming.

Lucienne Troy
Form V
Report

*The Future of Food:
Lab-Grown Meat*

Globally, humans consume about 350 tons of meat each year. Americans alone consume 26 billion pounds of beef annually. Due to the high demand for meat products, industrialized agriculture has been a cornerstone of society. Now, we are seeing its downside: it has greatly contributed to the climate crisis, with livestock worldwide accounting for about 15% of greenhouse gas emissions. Studies have additionally linked red meat to cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity. Furthermore, the use of antibiotics in animal agriculture has contributed to the spread of antibiotic resistance, one of the rising global health crises. The agricultural industry also utilizes unethical practices toward animals that have pushed some consumers to become vegetarian or vegan. Although plant-based proteins have gained popularity over the years, nothing has been able to replace real meat—until now.

Lab-grown meat is a promising alternative to producing genetically real meat that does not require slaughtering animals. It is synthesized through the cultivation of animal cells in vitro in a controlled environment, free from bacteria and diseases. In 2002, the first edible lab-grown meat was produced—a fish filet made from goldfish. Since then, numerous start-ups have worked to create lab-grown meat products, and although they are not yet commercially available, they should be marketable within the next few years.

Analysts project that the plant-based and lab-grown meat markets could be worth up to \$85 billion by 2030. According to Matt Simon from *Wired Magazine*, the promise of lab-grown meat is not to stop eating animals but to eat much less of them. If lab-grown meat fulfills this promise, it could have major effects on the environment, the agricultural industry, and society as a whole, making it a technology instrumental in our future.

Although the precise methods by which cultured meat is produced varies among labs, they are generally similar. Lab-grown meat starts with animal cells (typically muscle, fat, or stem) that are cultured using an appropriate growth medium. By using the growth medium, which contains nutrients to promote growth and survival, and providing warmth, oxygen, salt, sugars, and proteins, the animal cells divide and expand into meat. The idea behind it is to trick the cells into thinking they’re still inside their owner. Using this method, scientists can theoretically create an unlimited amount of meat from just one piece of meat. Food technology company Mosa Meat says that one tissue sample from a cow can yield enough muscle tissue to make 80,000 quarter-pounders.

There are several dozen cell-culturing companies worldwide, and the U.S. is home to at least nine of them. The companies receive a lot of individual funding from people including Bill Gates and Richard Branson. Some of the better known companies include Meatable, Just, Finless Foods, Mosa Meat, and Future Meat Technologies. Meatable is a Dutch startup that claims it could produce cultured meat from the stem cells of animal umbilical cords, hence never needing a dead animal in the first place. The CEO of Just, Josh Tetrick, has been testing lab-grown foie gras at the Just test kitchen in San Francisco where regular foie gras is illegal. Tetrick says that Just has made the process cost-effective enough to take to market. According to CEO of Finless Foods, Mike Selden, FF takes a bit of fish meat and looks for stem-like cells called progenitor cells “that have the ability to differentiate into different lineages.” Mosa Meat claims that its cultured meat generates up to 96% lower greenhouse gas emissions, while Future Meat Technologies claims that its products take up to 99% less land and 96% less freshwater, and emit 80% fewer greenhouse gases. Despite the slight differences in production, all the companies share a common goal: combating climate change.

There are many ways in which lab-grown meat could make a positive impact on the environment. The meat industry has contributed to the severity of climate change, and according to Slow Foods, “just in the second half of the twentieth century, global meat consumption increased fivefold, growing from 45 million tons of meat consumed in 1950 to almost 300 million tons today. If not stopped, that number could double by 2050.” This could cause even more devastating effects, given that one-third of the world’s arable land is used to grow and feed livestock, leading to deforestation, and that beef accounts for about 41% of animal agriculture’s greenhouse gas emissions. An Oxford study showed that similar to the start-ups’ claims, lab-grown meat could be produced with up to 96% less greenhouse gas emissions and water than conventional meat.

Despite the clear data of the meat industry’s large contribution to climate change, producers face a key issue in having to convince consumers to stray from traditional meat. Surveys have shown that the public has a low interest in eating cultured meat, much less letting it replace regular meat. Research published by the University of Sydney and Curtin University on September 8th showed that 72% of Gen Z is not ready to accept cultured meat although 41% believe it could be a viable nutritional source. Participants had concerns regarding taste, health, safety, and whether it is a more sustainable option than regular meat. And, although the federal government initially promoted meat alternatives, state governments have not; Missouri, for example, passed a bill in May 2018 limiting the use of the word “meat” to an “edible portion of livestock or poultry carcass.” These are all barriers that meat labs must overcome before their products can hit the shelves.

To learn more about the implications of lab-grown meat and its possible impacts, I interviewed history teacher Lou Resnikoff, whose knowledge of food and agriculture has allowed her to make informed opinions about the topic.

Lucy Troy: Does the lab-grown meat industry put farmers and agricultural workers at risk of losing their jobs?

Ms. Resnikoff: It causes instability to workers who are already at a disadvantage... I can describe slaughterhouse jobs as some of the worst jobs in the US economy. They’re effectively unchanged from the way that they existed since the nineteenth century. So the idea that those jobs would go away gives a wrenching amount of instability for the people currently working in that industry. And on the other hand, those are already really horrible jobs.

LT: Will lab-grown meat have a significant effect on climate change?

MR: All tech won’t have any impact on its own... It’s society’s choice to make a difference... Lab-grown meat may maintain business as usual because it doesn’t build a culture of consumption that shifts meat from being the center of our consumption... We still don’t know what kind of carbon footprint [lab-grown meat] will have, but there’s a way of raising animals and building cuisines around meat that have less harmful consequences on the environment.

LT: What are some examples of ways we can reduce the footprint of animal agriculture?

MR: We need a massive recentering surrounding animal agriculture... We can build smaller farms, use less land, implement rotational grazing, use forested areas for grazing, and use silvopasture... All these practices can take CO2 out of the atmosphere.

LT: How will the shift from our reliance on farms to labs impact our society?

MR: It depends on what animals you’re talking about, but this would create instability for people who are already in marginal positions [in agriculture].

LT: Should the government help fund start-ups that are working to produce lab-grown meat?

MR: I feel like that money is better spent elsewhere and I also feel like the extent to which those startups are going to be super profitable is going to be hard to access and reproduce... it’s going to take an incredible amount of capital and grant to build and develop these technologies... I don’t feel like it’s concentrating power in a way that replicates the inequalities that already exist in animal agriculture instead of disrupting that inequality in a concentration of power. There’s a lot of support for industrial agriculture... If we thought about how to grow meat sustainable and justly, there would be a lot more jobs.

The future of lab-grown meat holds hope, fear, and anticipation, and we must embrace these feelings as we begin to encounter cultured meat in our grocery stores and homes. Lab-grown meat could transform the way we eat food and could spearhead other green innovations in agriculture and cuisine. It has already shown promise in being able to ameliorate the effects of climate change and could be a more sustainable option than traditional meat. On the other hand, it is hard to assess the future of cultured meat without having data regarding its large-scale production. As Ms. Resnikoff alluded to, it might be more worthwhile to put our efforts and trust into sustainable agriculture, given our ongoing reliance on it.

Furthermore, cultured meat producers must overcome an abundance of challenges before their products will be ready for consumption. Still, meat labs are racing to make their green meat the first to make it into consumers' mouths, and there is no telling what will happen when society is met with this culinary revolution.

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Ben Shulman
Form V
Recommendation

Letter of Recommendation:
Tea

Legend has it the story of tea began in the gardens of the Han Dynasty as a single leaf from an overhanging tree plummeted into Emperor Shen Nong's cup of hot water. Delighted with his delicious discovery, the Emperor sang its praises throughout his kingdom. The glorious new drink spread throughout China, becoming renowned not only for its medicinal properties but also for its calming effects. Hundreds of years later, on the other side of the country, Buddhist monks enamored of the drink culminated in the Tea Ceremony: the ultimate metaphor for harmony and simplicity, the cornerstones of their Confucian thought. The simple beverage of boiled botanicals became a part of their way of life.

Tea spread further, along the Spice Road from China to the Middle East, then to the Mediterranean and Europe, creating regional varieties at every location. Chai emerged in India, the Moroccans favored mint, the Greek popularized chamomile, and the English, of course, created English Breakfast. Over hundreds of years, tea became embedded in nearly every world culture.

Despite its former dominance of the beverage world, tea has been forced out of the spotlight in recent years. Boiled organic matter beverage compatriots, coffee and tea, started off on the same footing. Brewers in antiquity, looking to begin their day with a hot, potentially caffeinated beverage, could have interchangeably opted for either of the two similarly labor intensive drinks. Coffee has adapted to exemplify modern beverage trends, utilizing premade grounds, home machines, instant powders, and whatever Keurig's latest invention is to become ever more efficient. As the country's labor force has demanded greater and greater ease from their beverage preparations, coffee has disregarded its rudimentary, laborious origins and has joined the pantheon of sugary, caffeine-dense drinks that fuel Americans.

Tea has not adapted to the priority of efficiency like coffee has. Celestial Seasonings Raspberry Zinger sells "the very taste of a calm summer's day," Yogi's Pure Green, and "a journey of serenity". Even Twinings' Lady Grey black tea, markets its product as "exceptionally uplifting and refreshing botanicals." Caffeinated varieties, unable to find a niche among the beverages of the productive, have begun to market themselves as something else. Calm, uplifting, and refreshing are certainly qualities that consumers wish for in spas or beds, but not in beverages. Only children or hippies would wish for such things in the midst of a busy day. With such marketing, it is no wonder that tea is seen as superfluous, a luxury, not an everyday practice.

The very impulse for industry that drove merchants to carry tea across continents has come to define our lives. Throughout modern history, the country has steadily become more enraptured with efficiency, forcing Americans to prioritize alacrity over all else. This phenomenon exponentially accelerated with the advent of the mobile phone, as even mornings and breaks in work and school have become usable time that we feel obligated to use productively. There is no time for fruitless endeavors like making a cup of yerba mate. As the world fills us with stories of entrepreneurs and success stories-- pumping us full of five thousand ads per day, selling our data so we can be better sold to, and incessantly praising industrious capitalists-- it has become increasingly clear that in this digital age, every second is too valuable to waste.

There is something beautifully awkward about the amount of time that it takes to make a cup of tea. The water takes a minute or two to boil, and the tea bag has to be removed four or five minutes after it is deposited. Neither of these two periods are long enough that the drink can be left unattended. As much as we sometimes don't want to admit it, there is little that can be done in either two or five minutes. Seven minutes of waiting feels much longer than it actually is; there's a reason that they say a watched kettle never boils. In the absence of a task, the brewer is forced to do something that our packed schedules rarely allow for: think about nothing. This nothing, however, rarely is actually nothing. It takes the shape of worries from the week, plans for the weekend, pain in a relationship, or any other thought that has been delayed until after everything else is done. As the dried leaves bleed their essence into the water, these thoughts stumble out of our swamped brains. This brief moment of meditation, spent gaping at the water as it eases from clear to a murky green, becomes Thoreau's beloved wilderness. In our beverage caused respite from the day, we are momentarily freed to do the unthinkable: lollygag.

It may not be a full Tea Ceremony, but a five-minute tea break still does invoke the simplicity and calm the monks were looking for. That childish, hippie, "fight the man" impulse for unstructured time, much to their chagrin, is not only healthy, but incredible for re-calibrating in order to return to work. Do not let the kids, hippies, and monks scare you away; the tea break has value to us average folk as well. When we emerge from our tea break wilderness, we return rested. When you go back to whatever stress you had before, you get to take a cup full of tea with you. It tastes pretty good, it is enjoyable at any temperature (even if you let it go cold), but most advantageously, it lets you waste time.

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Teabag



What Is a Monster?

In her novel, *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley uses her characters to represent different ideas about humanity. Through the various personalities within the book—whether it be Victor’s narcissism and ardent craze for knowledge, Henry Clerval’s reserve and contentment, or Justine’s strong religious convictions, which lead to her acceptance of her wrongful execution—the reader is shown different behaviors and qualities that give meaning to the word “humanity.” Shelley forces the reader to think carefully about the narrow divide between humanity and monstrosity, and on which side of this divide the characters belong, most especially the creature (referred to hereafter as “the Creature”). Distinguishing characteristics of the human race are an ability to use reason and logic, the experience of deep emotions that can dictate one’s actions, such as misery and joy, and an everlasting need and desire for companionship. Monstrosity, on the other hand, is defined by significantly clearer and less nuanced qualities. A monster has a limited mental capacity and a singular goal, typically destruction. By way of example, a zombie is a monster who wants and tries to eat humans, and this desire is the only thing driving the zombie’s behavior. A monster does not naturally seek love or the friendship of others. With the above parameters serving as the distinction between humanity and monstrosity, Mary Shelley’s creature is a very powerful representation of humanity in its purest form, and not a “monster.”

Humans are uniquely emotional and one’s feelings often drive a response to a particular circumstance. By contrast, the mind of a monster is programmed to complete a particular task without experiencing any of the emotion that might propel the actions of a human. Throughout the novel, the hideous Creature takes actions that are a direct result of his feelings. Shortly after its creation, the Creature encounters the DeLacey family and is motivated to act after learning about their difficult circumstances and witnessing their compassion. Upon discovering their poverty, he explains, “This trait of kindness moved me sensibly. I had been accustomed, during the night, to steal a part of their store for my own consumption; but when I found that in doing this I inflicted pain on the cottagers, I abstained, and satisfied myself with berries, nuts, and roots...I discovered also another means through which I was enabled to assist their labours... and, during the night I often took his tools...and brought home firing sufficient for the consumption of several days” (114). The Creature’s behavior in this first experience with a real human family is the opposite of monstrous. His actions are compassionate, selfless, and heroic. He has developed feelings for the DeLaceys and takes action based on

those feelings, expressing his innate kindness, as opposed to the inherent cruelty of a monster. Furthermore, the Creature's motivations change as his connection to the family deepens. At first, he simply wants food, but once he understands the family's challenges, he alters his behavior to help ease their suffering. Could there be a starker example of pure humanity? A monster would not be capable of either feeling such emotion or helping another being in such a dramatic way.

Sometime after, the Creature approaches the blind DeLacey in an attempt to win his friendship, but when the rest of the family returns to the sight of an ugly, wretched being, they are petrified. Misunderstanding his intentions, they are unresponsive and Felix attacks him. The Creature, devastated and overcome by anguish, launches into a wild and uncontrolled rage, and exclaims to Victor, "Cursed, cursed creator! Why did I live? Why, in that instant, did I not extinguish the spark of existence which you had so wantonly bestowed? I know not; despair had not yet taken possession of me; my feelings were those of rage and revenge. I could with pleasure have destroyed the cottage and its inhabitants and have glutted myself with their shrieks and misery" (138). This reaction, monstrous and cruel as it may seem, is an utterly human and completely plausible response. Rage is a human emotion, and there is a meaningful difference between an unprovoked rage and a rage resulting from an intensely painful episode, such as the rejection experienced by the Creature. Humans do not naturally seek revenge or look to inflict pain upon others, but a true monster does. With that said, once emotionally harmed and enraged, humans might react in a "monster-like" manner. The Creature's bitter and violent outcry detailed in this passage reinforces the idea that he is, in fact, an embodiment of humanity, and not actually a monster.

For a significant portion of the novel, the Creature torments Victor in such a terrible way that the reader is forced to villainize him. Indeed, his actions—killing nearly all of Victor's loved ones—are inexcusable, and his behavior is monstrous. And yet, at the end of the story, Shelley reminds us of and reaffirms the Creature's humanity by describing his reaction to Victor's death. The Creature explains to Walton, "Yet I seek not a fellow feeling in my misery. No sympathy may I ever find. When I first sought it, it was the love of virtue, the feelings of happiness and affection with which my whole being overflowed, that I wished to be participated. But now that virtue has become to me a shadow, and that happiness and affection are turned into bitter and loathing despair, in what should I seek for sympathy? I am content to suffer alone while my sufferings shall endure; when I die, I am well satisfied that abhorrence and opprobrium should load my memory... No guilt, no mischief, no malignity, no misery, can be found comparable to mine" (223). The Creature's description of the feelings of sympathy for which he was once compelled to look, and the darker emotions into which they ultimately transformed, is representative of a very human, emotional journey. An actual monster is engulfed in darkness from the moment it is born and cannot recognize the beauty of love or understand the depths of despair. The Creature explains how his "whole being has overflowed" with "happiness and affection," and how the "guilt" and "misery" he feels are overwhelming to him. Had the Creature been a monster, he

would not possess such profound emotion, nor would he be compelled to end his life, overwhelmed by despair upon his creator's death. A monster would continue to torment, inflict pain, and cause havoc. The Creature's immense emotional capacity shines a bright light on his humanity, and to classify him as a monster would be an error.

Another distinguishing characteristic of the human race is the need for companionship. Humans have a natural desire to connect with others, whether it be a friendship with a kind family or a romantic love affair with a mate. Monsters are incapable of relationships; their minds lack the capacity to love; all energy is focused on their mission. Upon the Creature's awakening, Victor explains, "He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs" (59). While Victor interprets the Creature's "stretched out hand" as threatening, his very first actions suggest his inclination to bond with other beings. Moreover, the Creature "[mutters] some inarticulate sounds" in an attempt to communicate with Victor, and his first emotion is a slight smile. Before having any real experience in the world, the Creature is kind and harmless. By contrast, upon inception, a real monster would pursue terror and violence. This creature instead seeks a friend, and when denied Victor's love, he searches for companionship elsewhere.

Encountering the DeLacey family, the Creature spends a great deal of time studying them, until he finally works up the courage to approach the old blind man. Sensitive to his own horrid appearance, he knows a blind man would not be repelled or frightened by it. In the Creature's retelling of the story, he explains to old DeLacey, "I am an unfortunate and deserted creature, I look around and I have no relation or friend upon earth. These amiable people to whom I go have never seen me and know little of me. I am full of fears, for if I fail there, I am an outcast in the world for ever" (136). The Creature's words powerfully tell of his deep desire to be embraced by people. He seeks to connect with the DeLacey family and he describes his fear of being ostracized from society and the world. A real monster does not desire to be liked, or even to be hated; it thrives on others fearing it. The Creature, on the other hand, longs for people to love him and accept him, despite the fact that he is not one of them. That the Creature represents a pure form of humanity is illuminated by his desire for companionship that, as is the case with all humans, is inherent to his nature.

When the Creature explains his story to Victor mid-novel, he demands that Victor make him a mate. The Creature has been completely alone in the world from the moment he was created and unable to form bonds with human beings; he finally realizes his only hope for companionship is a mate made just like him. He tells Victor, "If any being felt emotions of benevolence towards me, I should return them a hundred and a hundredfold; for that one creature's sake I would make peace with the whole kind! But I now indulge in dreams of bliss that cannot be realised. What I ask of you is reasonable and moderate; I demand a creature of another sex,

but as hideous as myself; the gratification is small, but it is all that I can receive, and it shall content me” (148). His desire for meaningful interaction is so significant that he explains to Victor how intensely he would reciprocate “emotions of benevolence” and how peaceful he would be if immersed in friendship or love. No monster would aggressively devote itself to finding love, and the Creature’s dogged pursuit of fellowship throughout the novel supports his humanity. The Creature is greatly pained by loneliness as the only living being in the world with such a hideous face and form, foreclosed from connecting with humans. His aspiration and deeply felt need for a mate causes the Creature to act out in frightful ways, thus explaining the “monstrous” behavior. Later, when Victor destroys his work on the female being, the Creature bursts into the lab and, infuriated, he exclaims, “Slave, I before reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself unworthy of my condescension. Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master; obey!” (172). Upon Victor’s refusal, he warns, “It is well. I go; but remember, I shall be with you on your wedding-night,” (173). The Creature proceeds to kill Victor’s best friend and then murder Elizabeth, holding true to his promise and his warning. His passion is overwhelming, leading him to commit the cruelest of acts. But how often does a person lash out in anger upon learning they cannot possess something they desperately want? Denial often feeds into the desire for the thing denied. The Creature expresses emotions that might well be felt by a human being drowning in loneliness and unable to find even a hint of love or friendship in the world.

Even at his most despicable and wretched moments, when, by all accounts, he appears to be a monster, the Creature’s humanity is evident. Shortly after Victor’s death, the Creature explains to Walton, “For while I destroyed [Victor’s] hopes, I did not satisfy my own desires. They were for ever ardent and craving; still I desired love and fellowship, and I was still spurned. Was there no injustice in this? Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all humankind sinned against me? Why do you not hate Felix, who drove his friend from his door with contumely? Why do you not execrate the rustic who sought to destroy the saviour of his child? Nay, these are virtuous and immaculate beings! I, the miserable and the abandoned, am an abortion, to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled on. Even now my blood boils at the recollection of this injustice” (224). These are not the words of a monster, which, bent on destroying its victims, takes pleasure in the suffering of its targets. The Creature is not satisfied to destroy and cause pain. He explains that “love and fellowship” are two things he most desires, thus distinguishing him from a terror-craving monster. Questioning why he is hated by humans as opposed to Felix, the Creature forces the reader to ponder the differences between himself and humankind, and upon examination, one can only conclude that there are few.

Throughout *Frankenstein*, the Creature appears to be a most terrifying and villainous being. Yet, upon hearing his story recited to Victor, the reader is compelled to see the humanity evident within the Creature’s soul, whether by his strong emotions that greatly influence him to do both good and bad, or his con-

stant, unquenched thirst for companionship. By making such a monstrous-looking creature such a close representation of humanity, Shelley directs readers to think about acceptance and rejection in society. The Creature is instantly repudiated by Victor and the DeLaceys solely because he looks different. The history of our world chronicles countless instances of humans behaving similarly awfully to one another, whether based on appearance, religious beliefs, mental infirmities, or any number of things that might render a person unique. The underlying message here is paramount: someone or something may look and seem very different but still possess some or all of the same qualities as the person judging “the other” based on appearance. Victor rejects the Creature, creating a sequence of horrifying events. Yet all the while, in reality, Victor and the Creature share traits of intelligence, curiosity, the desire to love and be loved, and an appreciation for nature. They also share a hatred for the other, which, ironic as it seems, suggests they have far more in common than what may have initially been evident. *Frankenstein* forces us to question how we treat others and how we allow difference to impact our behavior towards those dissimilar from ourselves. One can only conclude that behavior based on dissimilarities between living beings is often irrational and immoral. The novel offers a powerful lesson about what “humanity” means.

Let's Start with THE COVID-19 Pandemic

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. IT NOW HAS INFECTED 111 MILLION PEOPLE AND KILLED 2.46 MILLION. IT HAS ALSO DEVASTATED SO MANY AND DRAMATICALLY CHANGED THE WAY OUR LIVES WORK. IT PROVED TO BE DISASTROUS TO THE WELL-BEING OF THE ECONOMY AND BUSINESS, AS WELL AS POSING A CHALLENGE FOR ALL PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SYSTEMS IN THE WORLD.



So, what made COVID-19 like this?

We should start at the basics!

FIRST OF ALL, COVID-19 IS A TYPE OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE. ITS FULL NAME IS CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019. FROM ITS NAME, YOU SEE THAT COVID-19 IS CAUSED BY A VIRUS

VIRUS PATHOGEN

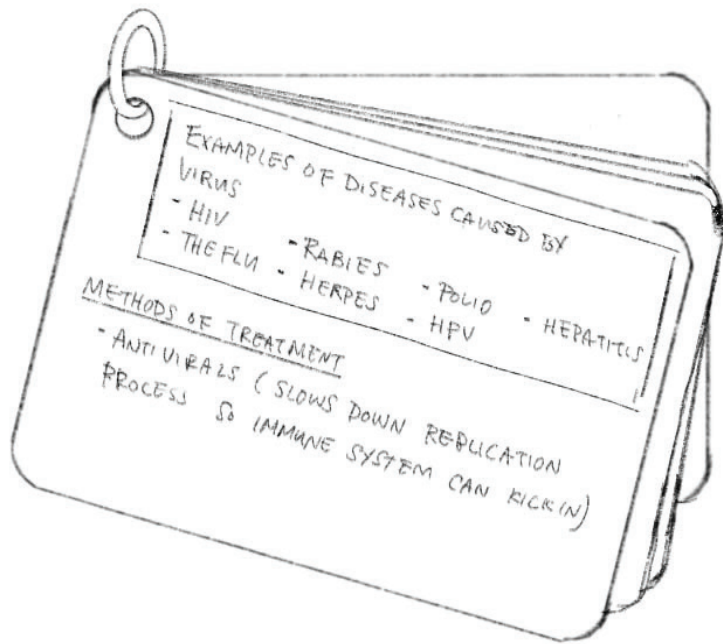
* NOT ALL VIRUSES LOOK ALIKE

CHARACTERISTICS

- LACKS A NUCLEUS
- HOST SPECIFIC
- HIGH MUTATION RATE
- ALWAYS HAVE GENETIC MATERIALS & PROTEIN
- LACKS PROOF-READING
- ALWAYS HAVE GENETIC MATERIALS & PROTEIN
- HAVE LIPID ENVELOPE

METHODS OF REPLICATION

1. **LYTIC CYCLE**
 - VIRUS USES RECEPTORS TO INJECT GENETIC MATERIAL INTO CELL. THEN HIJACKS THE CELL & CREATES VIRUS DNA & PROTEIN. VIRUSES THAN BREAK OUT OF CELL & INFECT OTHERS.
2. **LYSOGENIC CYCLE**
 - VIRUS INCORPORATES ITS OWN GENETIC MATERIALS INTO THE HOST'S GENOME AND REPLICATES WITH THE HOST CELL. THE HOST CELL WOULD REPLICATE NORMALLY UNTIL SOME SORT OF STRESS ACTS UPON IT AND THE VIRUS WILL BE RELEASED.

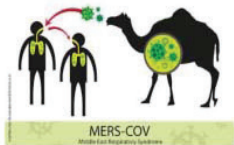
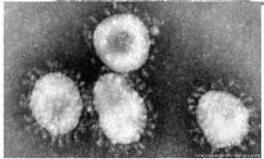


COVID-19 IS ALSO A ZOOONOTIC DISEASE, WHICH ARE CAUSED BY PATHOGENS THAT ARE USUALLY CARRIED BY ANIMALS, BUT CAN ALSO CROSS-OVER TO HUMANS.

BECAUSE RECEPTORS EXIST, DISEASES CAN OFTEN BE HOST SPECIFIC, BUT IN SPECIAL CASES LIKE COVID-19, DISEASES CAN BE PASSED ON FROM ONE SPECIES TO ANOTHER.



COVID-19 is from a family of viruses that is responsible for common colds, MERS & SARS.



We also need to understand the chain of transmission.

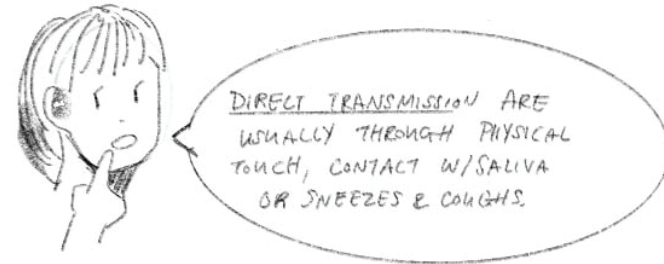
Let's look at an ex. with Zika virus



ZIKA VIRUS WAS FIRST FOUND IN A RHESUS MONKEY IN THE 1940S. THE MONKEY WAS A RESERVOIR FOR THE VIRUS, IT WAS A HABITAT FOR THE VIRUS & DOES NOT EXPERIENCE THE SYMPTOMS OF INFECTION

THROUGH INDIRECT TRANSMISSION (SUCKING OF BLOOD THROUGH VECTORS), THE VIRUS WAS PASSED ONTO MOSQUITOS, WHICH BECAME AN ANIMAL VECTOR FOR THE VIRUS WHICH IS AN ORGANISM OF TRANSMISSION.

THROUGH INDIRECT TRANSMISSION AGAIN, THE MOSQUITO PASSES THE ZIKA VIRUS TO HUMANS BY BITING THEM. THE HUMAN IS NOW THE HOST OF THE VIRUS. THE HOST IS USED FOR THE VIRUS TO DEVELOPE BUT IS NOT BENEFITED IN THIS RELATIONSHIP



Okay, now back to COVID-19.

IF YOU REMEMBER, COVID-19 BACK IN MARCH OF 2020 WAS NOT CALLED A PANDEMIC, BUT RATHER AN EPIDEMIC. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE 2?

PANDEMIC



*Globe is not realistic

EPIDEMIC



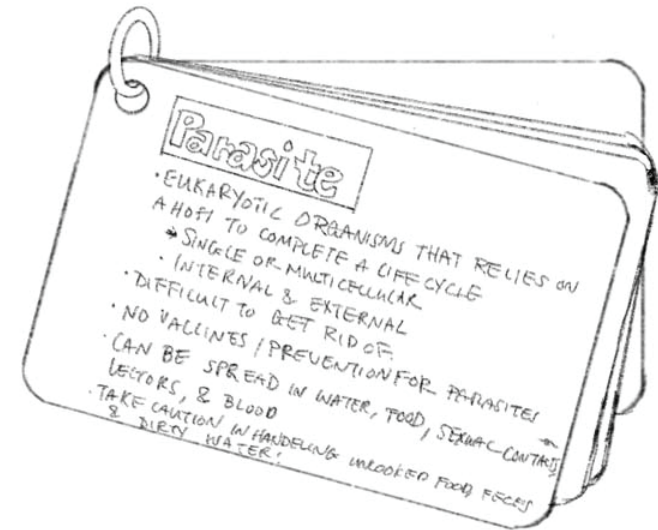
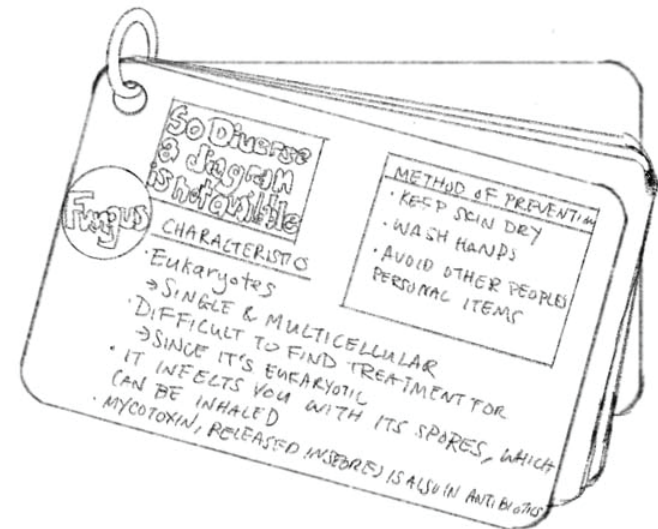
*NOT A REAL CONTINENT

A PANDEMIC IS AT A GLOBAL SCALE WHILE EPIDEMICS EFFECTS A LARGE REGION



THERE IS ALSO AN ENDEMIC,
WHICH IS A DISEASE COMMONLY
FOUND AMONG A SPECIFIC
GROUP OF PEOPLE OR REGION

OTHER THAN VIRUSES, MANY
OTHER TYPES OF PATHOGENS
ALSO EXIST.



INFECTIOUS DISEASE MOST LIKELY WILL NEVER BE ERADICATED, AS PATHOGENS CONTINUE TO EVOLVE. THERE ARE ALSO OTHER THINGS WE NEED TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT.



1. FIRST OF ALL, THE GLOBAL INFECTION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE IS NOT DISTRIBUTED EQUALLY

→ THE GROUPS BELOW HAVE HIGHER RATES OF BEING INFECTED & DYING AS A RESULT.

① ELDERLY



LESS ROBUST IMMUNE SYSTEM
→ THYMUS GETS SMALLER AS YOU AGE

② BABIES



SMALLER SURFACE AREA: VOLUME RATIO
LESS TISSUES TO INFECT.

③ PEOPLE IN POVERTY

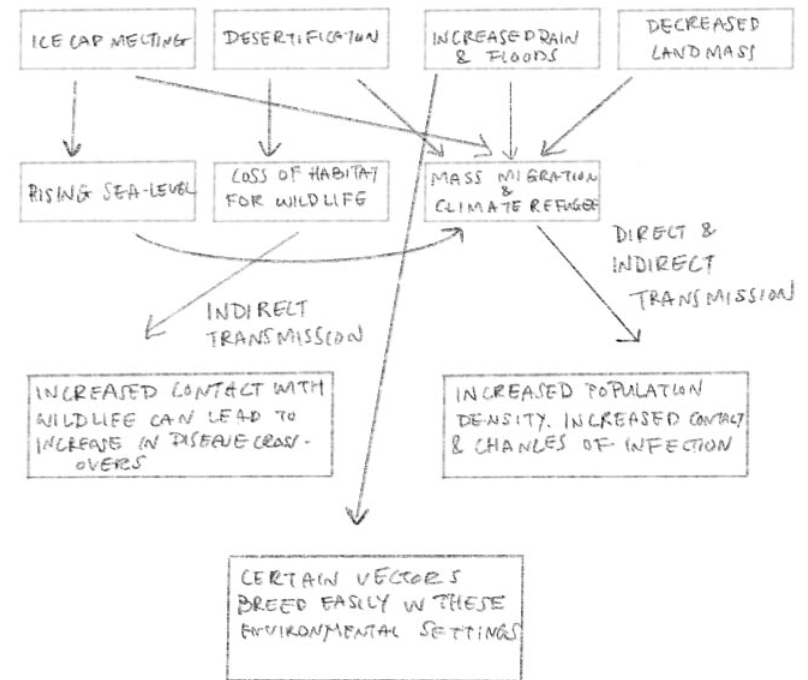


- LACK OF ACCESS TO VACCINES & TREATMENT
- DISEASES WITH NO TREATMENT OR VACCINES
- MALNUTRITION
- LONG TERM STRESS
- HOUSING CONDITION
- POPULATION DENSITY



IN ADDITION, CLIMATE CHANGE CAN ALSO INCREASE RATE OF TRANSMISSIONS

INCREASE IN GLOBAL TEMPERATURE





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Scan the QR code to watch the video!

**HE'S JUST FOLLOWING
DIRECTIONS**

“You’re a Botticelli,” he had whispered on their first encounter.
“Emerging from the clam.”

It was a scallop. She resisted correcting him. He wanted her—wasn’t he supposed to? But she knew he wanted her the way crows want bottle caps and earrings, or the way spiders want company. She was a goddess, and a goddess is only a pearl.

She held his hand in public for the shutters and pens going click-click-click. Standing in contrapposto, he’d run a hand through that oil-spill hair, peel back his red lips to prove he was an American. The smile of a skinned apple. He wore scandal-retardant suits she couldn’t afford. Haloed long enough for boys to pin her to dorm walls, she reveled in applause until the lightning of the wedding photographer’s camera faded. The headline read A Taste of Money. They always liked to do that, some play on words. Had they expected an ascetic? No Honey for her. They were right about that.

Mixed reviews of *Send My Love to Oceana* caused such a crisis within him that for a week or two he took to talking at her again. (His next film was a smash and he rewarded himself with a long-legged distraction.) “War of the ants, that’s what they call T.V. static in Indonesia,” he told her.

A Botticelli. Sheets swelled around her like parachutes, bucking like horses. Audiences stoned her with roses. She felt nothing the first time he hit her and less the next dozen. Bruised merchandise won’t sell, and anyway, nacre blondes now came gift-wrapped, so she left the bottle alone and went brunette. She tried to be a *femme fatale* but found she couldn’t run in heels.

He was virility incarnate. Left her crumpled on the kitchen floor to scrub polka-dot bloodstains, since he had better things to do. She didn’t want children anyway. The next day she saw herself on an ad break. A black-and-white chick was going, “Mmm, eggs!” as she held a carton like a trophy.

A fading star is sad; an imploding one moves tickets. They opened her veins and attached typewriters to them. Two decades later, the feminists would critique her, would shake their heads at her lack of agency. He had married her—but hadn’t she divorced him? She ascended in reverse, as if someone had pressed rewind. Brambles tore at her dress. Their red buds dripped as if painted—hadn’t they just been white? Hadn’t she just been Venus? Hadn’t they just loved her?



Now, she sat spotlighted under a hanging diner lamp. She pinched his printed face between three fingers. There was his leathery hand parting streams of hair. The style was looser now, though, longer, not so much product. “A tour-de-force from modern cinema’s most challenging visionary. . .” She lifted her hand from the page and his smile came off with it, copied onto her thumb. Cheap ink for the leading culture publication.

She used to draw. There were the portraits of friends, and, for a while, imagined illustrations for books she’d read. He had called them trite, she remembered. She’d spend her off-days sketching copies at exhibitions, too, and never had she felt more at home than in a museum. She should have gone to art school. Been a beatnik. Or something. The impulse had wandered off somewhere along the way to Studio City.

“Miss. Your check?”

Her jolt nearly tipped over the coffee. She caught the handle, barely touched it, scared to smother something no one could see. “Keep the change.”

The homogeneity of diners comforted her: once you arrive at purgatory you can catch your breath. A good one was a deranged maestro’s American fever dream. All noxious yellow light and jukeboxes that only played shellac. This one was just O.K. with its color television and deep-throated rock and roll racket in stereo.

She left the paper on the table as she left. But the upholstery sagged next to her in reproach. She pretended her invisibility was a willed one as she re-entered the diner and grabbed it by the corner, unseen by everyone but him as Orcus spit her back out of the den like in one of those old sculptures of the underworld. She tossed the paper in the seat and flicked the map open with a ceremony she’d once reserved for playbills. Brought her thumb and forefinger together in an attempt to rub off the ink from earlier. Its persistence taunted her. Sentimental eyes became tired without the complement of the rubbed off smile, yet she knew he’d have knocked out each tooth himself had it been in vogue.

The *Soirée of the Living Dead* audition was in a couple of hours. She probably wouldn’t make it. Makeup tracing the cracks on her face as she scorched along the interstate, cigarette hanging out of her mouth like a second tongue, she imagined that, to the crawling mass of passersby, she was a banshee. Her rear-view grin was pure Bates. What a drag.

His eyes shone as they tracked her movements. Turning over the paper was of little consolation. If he could see through her, he could see through the pages. They rustled a little in the evening breeze. He was laughing at her.

The sun traded places with the moon, its kaleidoscope light contorted, while trees cast a net of shadows in her wake. She’d tried the radio as she turned off the highway, but the easy-listening station had fizzled into static, leaving her with the weather (Clear. Seventy degrees). Even that was overwhelmed by the old car’s increasing rattle.



Footsteps, the skip-beat waltz of someone with a limp. The reflected light from inside the car paired with the darkness of night so elegantly, obscuring the face of the stranger, that they could have won couple of the year. She never could see much looking through the eyes of a needle. A tap on the window: click-click-click. Gentle. Insistent. Her body jerked then, as if a violent enough spasm could unfetter her soul from the outside in.

“Car break down?” said a muffled voice.

What was she supposed to say? Once, they had placed bouquets of white roses at the foot of her display case. “Oh, I just loved you!” they would say. “Marvelous performance.”

She closed her eyes for a moment. A slow-motion blink.

“Yes,” she said. “It broke down.”

Lidia Colavita

Form VI

Poem

Raptus Proserpina

It's autumn time again and I'm alone.
My Solitude, love goes away, you stay...
And only to you, from this lifeless field
Should I speak now of one eternal lake
That from a tender age took death too soon
Brought down on gods and mortals both a cold
Vicissitude that light emits deluge.
Hear now, that I shall gather strength to speak
despite the poorest limit of my cry.

From witness not, but by the sky's blue light
And thunder ear I come to tell you of
her rising From Averno, lake that makes
the soul again into body, again
finds space for the immense within her form
When the winter's storm subsides into spring.
Some tell me how her bones strong grew again
From emptiness and joy. Others say that
In entering the lake she was unmade.
Oh Jove, let me be guided by truth now
to find my argument, let me know now
If I have found her, and if finding means
That I have lost her, if losing means that
I know her and love her, but punish her.
Oh Jove, these vacant questions I announce
And now that you instill in me a sight
Of that primordial day, from vision I
begin in words to justify myself.

Look, how she lies among the dandelions
So close to soil, so near to earth she lies
And rain comes down on fertile ground; Her mane
As wheat does, imitates the wind so soft.
But nearness to earth, to her what nearness brings?
I could show her such heights as trees can gather
And have the sun spread dusk on her dark eyes.
Then, all would gather, all would say, And this
the daughter, she is the one who brought spring.

But why with her back turned she lies unmanned?
What does she wish to blow onto the flower?

Yes, I remember now, that day at dawn
I walked with nymphs around the flower fields
To gather some bouquets of yellow brooms,
but she was walking barefoot by the shore
Of the Simeto river, drifting off.
Each branch made shade and lacerated parts
Of her green dress, but absent she looked down,
continued looking for white lilies, dreaming
Of something, something almost beautiful
and almost terrible...Her semblance, she saw
Blonde hair, dark eyes reflected in the stream
And almost recognized herself but turned
Again to pick just one small lily from
the bunch. And then, from underground, big clots
Began to open, and the Etna mumbled
in background, barely active, but enough
to act as presage for that last abide
Of spring. The Chthonic god came up the field
And quickly loved her and then took her on
his chariot of gold, where seven strong
Black horses pulled them to the lake of fire.

Now from the lake light mist began to rise
And it took just one dip of heel and foot
And elbow for her body to begin
to be undone by water and by fire.
Nothing of hers that could be grasped remained
And water overtook her blood, flooding
and loosening her veins. There, Pluto watched
And loved her more and took her to the gate.

The soul we think invisible, is green in the
Abode of death and has the shape of body
And only this is its eternal scold:
To imitate forever that which it
will ne'er become again. But Pluto made
Her queen and gave her back her hair and eyes.
But for the rest that's there, the gods kept from
Us all but this: that my young girl ate from
The fruit that sealed her life to him and me
Depraved when I found out what he had done.
I called for her and turned everything cold,
I waited by the lake to find her face.
He took her from me and from her took life,
But then, if worse, I put her back to life—
When she had know the world of death too well—
to find some meaning in the spring that was
born of her rising from the lake again.

I can remember that last spring when she
Came back to gather flowers by the shore
Then, I remember thinking that it had
to be this way and let the seasons rotate.
But right away she was another, she
Went up the mountains, for nights laid by
the poppies and the fireflies would dance
Around the night and silhouette of her.
She cried only at night and took her tears
Over the river where her semblance found
Itself in moonlight staring back at her.
And now she knew that it was truly hers.

Proserpina, were you ever a girl?
Were you ever a daughter or lover?
I saw you crying and wish onto the broom
I will not break what love made me promise
But I will alleviate your prophecy
At night, I will turn down the heat for you
And I will turn my fields to stone, and then
crevice the earth, this clearing into gorge.

Too soon we find ourselves revived by slow
And absolute repose. And so to all
Someone is given to indict us and
To play the part of devil, so that we can
Renounce the whole thing, or fall
In love with it forever...

Ailynn O'Neill
Form V
Analysis

*A Tipping Point:
Sexuality and the
Coming-of-Age Process*

In most coming-of-age stories, there is a moment when the protagonist is confronted with the looming idea of sex. This can manifest itself in many forms of anxiety: body insecurity, fear of sexual violence, worry over lack of sexual experience, the confusion of attempting to “label” one’s own sexuality, or, perhaps most importantly, the anxiety surrounding being *sexualized*. The realization that we have been sexualized by our communities, the people around us, even ourselves, can be one that creeps up on us. It is disorienting when it happens. From what I’ve noticed, sex indicates a shift from childhood to adulthood for many teens, so the act of being sexualized often proves we are no longer able to ignore the fears of becoming an adult and the changes that come with it. Sexualizing ourselves can be part of a need to prove to *others*—such as our parents, or maybe a toxic friend group—that we are mature enough to make our own choices and engage in adult activities. However, this process is terrifying and life changing for anyone. Once we are sexualized, we can never unlearn that understanding of ourselves, which is why I think this experience is so important in coming-of-age literature. The short story “Virgins,” which is part of a collection by Danielle Evans, provides a realistic and unnerving account of the sexualization of teenage girls and the effect it has on them. The story provides insight into the idea that being sexualized at a young age changes one’s view of oneself enormously, and leads to a more rapid coming-of-age process.

One of the biggest aspects of coming to terms with one’s sexuality is the sense of a loss of control. Instead of feeling that we have power over our own bodies and what happens to them, we suddenly feel as though they are everyone else’s property. Erica, the narrator of “Virgins,” recounts her first sexual experience: “The first time a guy had ever touched me—like touched me *there*—I was eleven and he was sixteen and a lifeguard at the city pool. We’d been playing chicken and when he put me down he held me against the cement and put his fingers in me, and I wasn’t scared or anything, just cold and surprised” (5). This is a recurring concept in the short story—the idea of “letting it happen.” (It reappears later when Erica loses her virginity to Ron.) The disturbing image of an older boy taking advantage of a younger girl and sexualizing her is not uncommon in literature or life. What is most striking about this quote is the language used: “cold” and “surprised.” These aren’t words that show rage or shame, they instead show confusion and bewilderment. In my experience, many girls don’t understand the extent to which they’ve been mistreated in a sexual way until much later on. It’s as if we accept it because we know that it’s inevitable; that at some point, a man will take advantage of us, or try

to “teach” us about our sexuality, and we’re supposed to let them do it. By being sexualized at a young age when she could not completely understand what was going on or how to stop it, Erica was forced to confront adult feelings of loss of control, disillusionment, and the breaching of one’s most private places much earlier than was healthy for her.

As teenage girls begin to understand the ways in which the world sexualizes them, they begin to sexualize themselves. This is a natural process, and can have many positive effects—it can evoke feelings of body ownership, confidence, and a more solid sense of self or womanhood—but it can also be incredibly damaging. One specific passage saddened me, because it described the feeling my friends and I have had before: “We weren’t bad-looking, neither one of us, but we weren’t ever going to be beautiful, either, I knew that already. We were the kind of girls who would always be very pretty *if* but *if* never seemed to happen” (10). After being sexualized, our beauty is no longer just defined by us or our parents. This means that the standards we hold our appearances to are much more based in the opinions of others, especially of men, many of whom are not sensitive or self-aware in the ways they provide “criticism” or “compliments” of female bodies. Erica and Jasmine start looking at themselves in “pieces”: their butts, their breasts, their lips, etc., trying to assess their own beauty on society’s grand scale. Their insecurities multiply. Their criticism (both said and unsaid) of each other becomes harsher. In being sexualized and sexualizing themselves, they deal with a new magnifying-glass way of looking at their bodies, which breaks down the natural confidence and security they had as kids. In order to avoid feeling down about this, they start to “perform” for men and give them what they want in order to get validation and feel prettier. This is something I do, too. As Erica says before they leave to go to the club, “...I looked all right, just maybe like I was trying too hard” (10). Despite not appreciating the ways men sexualized her, she still seems to need their validation to feel confident and pretty.

Somewhat due to this dichotomy, teenage girls seem to not always know if being sexualized is a bad thing or not. Is exploring our sexuality and being proud of our bodies something that makes us “sluts,” or something that empowers us? At one point, inside the club, Erica notes: “Up on the metal platforms girls were dancing in shorts and bikini tops...I wondered how you got to be a girl like that. Did you care too much about what other people thought, or did you stop caring?” (18) This demonstrates how it’s confusing to know if sexuality is something that shows strength or weakness, and a large part of the coming-of-age process is grappling with that. Another moment shows a similar internal conflict—whether or not to want or crave male validation. When Erica and Jasmine are in the car with the older guys from the club, the guys sarcastically ask the girls if they’re virgins, and Jasmine replies that they’re obviously not, and the guys believe her. Erica, however, is confused by her own reaction to that: “I didn’t know whether to feel pissed off or pretty” (22). In certain ways, she’s been taught that male validation is a positive thing, and that she should be appreciative of their “compliment” and attention, but at the same time, she’s annoyed that the guys seem so confident and cocky in the ways that they objectify her and Jasmine.

With their increasing awareness of their sexuality comes a heightened suspicion of the intentions of not just those guys from the club, but men, in general. The danger of being assaulted or taken advantage of, even by trusted adults, becomes more real and scary. Erica and Jasmine use Mr. Thompson’s pool, but refuse to go without Michael, worried that Mr. Thompson will try something: “We felt bad for letting Mr. Thompson make us nervous. He was the smartest man either of us knew, and probably was just being nice. We were not stupid, though. We’d had enough nice guys suddenly look at us the wrong way” (5). The last sentence of that quote is powerful. For teenage girls, even with male adults who seem trustworthy and even fatherly, there is a reasonable fear that they will not only sexualize them, but act on it in inappropriate ways. It’s reasonable because there are so many small clues as to how most men look sexually at young girls, especially ones who seem naive or inexperienced. They seem to assess bodies almost immediately, like the club bouncer does before letting Erica in: “He barely looked at [my ID], just glanced at my chest and stamped my hand” (17). It didn’t matter that she was underage, because the bouncer sexualized her right away, labeling her as an “adult” woman in his eyes.

Some teenage girls seem to respond to this fear by wanting to lose their virginities and “get it over with,” so that they will hypothetically feel more in control of their bodies and who gets access to them. For instance, when Erica loses her virginity to Ron, she’s not particularly happy about it, but says: “...I did understand then that there was no such thing as safe, only safer; that this, if it didn’t happen now, would happen later but not better” (25). This is incredibly sad, the idea that she needed to go through something she didn’t actually want to in order to avoid a more painful experience. She knows that there are many more people whom she trusts or knows less who would happily take advantage of her sexuality and make her feel worse about herself, so she chooses what she deems the “lesser of two evils.” Jasmine also tries to take control of her sexuality by flirting and letting herself be seduced by men who just want to use her for her body. She seems to think that in doing so, she is empowering herself and using her sexuality to her advantage, while Erica thinks that she’s just making bad choices and getting herself into dangerous situations.

Finally, one of the hardest parts of the coming-of-sexuality process for teenage girls is how their guy friends act differently toward them. At the end of the short story, Erica needs comforting after giving in to Ron, and goes to cuddle in bed with her best guy friend, Michael. She needs someone to be there for her, but instead he takes her action as a come-on and starts kissing her. “I just wanted to touch him, really, and not wake up alone. But he thought I meant something by it, and I let him” (26). She was feeling uncertain and uncomfortable about being sexualized, and instead of helping, Michael made it worse by also sexualizing her. She let him because she really needed someone to be there for her, and was beginning to think that the only way to achieve that was to give the men in her life what they wanted sexually.

I have had trouble dealing with this, too, because I have a lot of guy friends, and when I started growing into my body, I noticed their stares. I didn't think much of it, but there was this one moment when I was at a friend's house, playing a game of paranoia (which is a bit like truth or dare), and the question was about who you would most like to have sex with, and my guy friends chose me. I had the same response as Erica: do I feel pretty or pissed off? Appreciative or ashamed? Most of all, I just felt disoriented. Since when was I a "girl" to those guys? Since when did they see me for my body? Since when did they sexualize me, the way I thought only men I didn't know did? I trusted them, and I felt like they had betrayed me.

"Virgins" masterfully describes the female experience with the sexuality component of coming-of-age and how it speeds up the process of "growing up" into an adult. It doesn't hold back on the darker parts of how it feels to be sexualized, especially by trusted adults and friends, the metaphorical spiral of body insecurity, anxiety about self-worth related to sexuality, peer pressure about sex, trying to retake one's sexuality, or what it means to sexualize oneself. Erica is a unique character, but her story is not so different from most teenage girls'. It at least has some overlap with me and the emotions I still have about exploring my sexuality and being sexualized by others. I think an important takeaway from this short story is that sex is not always bad and it should not be demonized; sexual awakenings can be beautiful and empowering. However, being sexualized can be scary and traumatizing. It is terrifying to be thrust into adulthood against your wishes. It's so important for teenage girls, especially, to know that they are not alone in this process, and to be able to keep having discussions about how to approach this subject and how to deal with their fears and anxieties about it.

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Marissa Meng
Form VI
Artwork

Untitled



Dear reader,

Welcome! I invite you to make yourself comfortable as you delve into a few of the more... interesting moments that have made up my coming out story. This is a rare insight into the inner turmoil that I like to call, “bisexual panic.”

For me, coming out as bisexual was confounding because I had no idea how anything worked. There was no instruction manual with a step-by-step guide on how to be half-gay so I had to blindly fumble my way through my quest of self-discovery. Everything that I had taken for granted became uncharted and dangerous: listening to certain music, dressing a certain way, liking certain things, et cetera. Anything and everything became a possible indicator of a sexuality that I wanted to keep hidden. Despite the accepting, liberal environment that I grew up in, I was terrified to strain the relationships with my family and friends by telling them that I was bisexual. I had to choose between the closet and the truth, and the uncertainty of both options kept me on the precipice of coming out for a long time. I was scared of the person I would become if I kept myself wedged in the closet, and I was scared of the girl that people would see if I came out. Sure, I wanted to be the woman that others admired for being unapologetically herself, but that is so much harder than it sounds. In the end, what finally convinced me to come out was not only bravery but also the knowledge that staying in the closet would kill me more than abandonment would. To be proud of myself, to love myself, I had to be truthful. I had to come out. And so began my coming out journey.

My coming out stories range from “charmingly clumsy” to “a disaster in every way shape and form.” There are three vignettes in this biomythography, and they each cover a different but very important part of my self-discovery process. The first vignette tries to articulate the stages I went through to acknowledge my sexuality. The second is a poem that shows you the four lovely steps I took to learn to love myself as a bisexual woman. And third is my first painfully awkward and yet endearing coming out story to a good friend. Let it be known that these glimpses don’t fully show the internal conflict I had over coming out to myself and to others. Here, I only share a part of my story with you; the rest is yet to be written. What I can promise you here, dear reader, is that everything written in this biomythography about my coming out story is true. I have done enough lying to myself to last me a lifetime, and I will not afford you the same dishonor. Here I solemnly affirm that what I state shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Vignette 1: To Open the Closet Door

My sexuality presented itself slowly, lying dormant until it became obvious enough for even my clueless radar to pick up. It was something I always knew but for the first part of my life tried to avoid. The process that allowed me to truly acknowledge the fact that I, Catherine Hou, am a bisexual woman was chaotic to say the least.

In 7th grade, the question of my sexuality had been festering in the back of my head for a few weeks before I decided to examine it. My initial reaction to the possibility of me being anything other than straight made me laugh. I thought that the very liberal environment that I grew up in, where being gay was considered unique instead of repulsive, had influenced me to want to be bisexual for brownie points. I convinced myself that I was following a trend, or that maybe I just wanted attention. For a while, this conclusion satisfied my curiosity and I put the question of my sexuality on the backburner again. However, a part of me knew that this was a lie, and the pestering question about my sexuality returned in full force.

I remember how badly my hands were shaking when I took my first, “What is My Sexuality” BuzzFeed quiz. How disappointing honestly, to fill such an obvious cliché. A BuzzFeed quiz, Cat? Seriously? To anyone else who is questioning themselves, I do not recommend this quiz as a tool of self-awakening. The first time I filled out the questions, it took me 2 full hours to complete. When I finally clicked, “check my results,” I waited with baited breath while the cheerful loading bar danced slowly across my screen. You are: Straight. Triumph flashed through my body at that outcome because, just for a second, I thought that by convincing a computer matrix that I had no queerness in my body at all, it would somehow be true. But I took no long-term relief from my outcome because I knew that I had filled the answers out so they would reflect an identity that did not apply to me. As soon as I closed my computer, I reopened it less than a minute later and reloaded the page. I needed to tell the truth. Or type it anyways.

The second time I took the quiz, it took me less than 2 minutes to complete. This time, I knew I filled it out truthfully because I didn’t feel the spark of guilt that always settles in my stomach after I lie. No hesitation. No doubt. Nothing. You are: Bisexual. I would love to say that I simply smiled and accepted this outcome as I already knew it to be true. But no, sadly that is not the case. For a second, I asked myself, “what kind of *insert non-school appropriate words here* creator would construct a quiz to make kids feel this way?” I then blamed the universe at large, asking why they had to put this extra difficulty in my life. And then finally, I blamed myself for thinking about girls in that way too. It is interesting that I still had this deep discomfort with being bisexual, despite the accepting environment I had grown up in. I had nothing against other people who were gay; I thought it was pretty cool actually. But I, myself, did not want to be bisexual. Wait no...that wasn’t it. I just didn’t want to be different.

I started that quiz over for the third time. And then a fourth. I don't know how many times I took that quiz, but I know that it occupied a whole page on my browser history. (I know this because I deleted all evidence of my searches like a good closeted gay.) I also know that I bargained each and every answer I put down. But no matter how many times I took that quiz, none of the outcomes ever satisfied me. They either confirmed a truth that I did not want to exist or displayed a lie that I had put down in my cowardice. Sitting there on my bed, with my body still but my mind racing a million times a minute, trying to rationalize my raging emotions, was one of the most arduous moments of my life. I felt like I was suffocating myself with millions of different tangents that I was trying to string together into a coherent and desirable truth. I wanted it bad enough to lie to myself, and that is one of my biggest mistakes.

I think it took too long to accept myself because my self-induced ignorance hindered me from examining my feelings of attraction for both genders. A very important lesson I had to learn that sexuality is not a choice. Believe me, I can't just pray the gay away. My process of acceptance took the scenic route because I knew that acknowledging my truth would forever change my life. Once I came to terms with who I am, I had to grieve the loss of a more ignorant, and yet, easier version of myself that would never exist again. But in truth, there wasn't another option for me. I wasn't being brave, I was just doing what I needed to. In order to wake up in the morning, in order to be proud of who I am, I can't hide those aspects of me in shame. It was a simple matter of pride.

Overall, yes, the old version of me had it easier, and the overthinking and feeling of estrangement from straight culture will always be a reality in my life. But I am stronger for accepting the fact that I am bisexual. I chose to be the kind of person that my closeted counterpart would look up to. That day marked the point when I fully opened the closet door for the first time. Where I looked at the mirror mounted on that closet door and smiled at the reflection. Where I turned and stepped away from that confining space and closed the door behind me forever. I might have only come out to myself, but it was a start. It was a big start. It was my start.

Vignette 2:

An Ode to the Semi-Gay

Being closeted, being stuck
Of course I'm bi, it's just my luck
Can they tell, if I walk this way?
Does this outfit look too gay?
Would they shudder if they knew?
Or would they laugh and shun me too?
This is silly, get a grip
They can't know, don't let it slip

I don't want the school to know
This fear is still my one true foe
The shame that lives inside my head
Makes this secret feel like lead
Guilt at lying to myself
Affects my arching mental health
Part of me, it still won't budge
Am I scared of being judged?
Being out would a joy
But courage is a fragile toy
I'm still scared to break my bonds
And have my people cut me off
So, I hide from public view
This closet door is shut anew

Ok I'm ready, let's take this slow
I think she deserves to know
Now it is the perfect time
Crap, abort mission, never mind
No, you've done this all before
Breathe. Just do it. And be mature
"So yeah...I might be half gay"
Ok, I told her, what'll she say?

Welp someone knows and it's alright
They didn't laugh, they didn't spite
So it's ok, being bi?
Is this something I should hide?
Is the truth always this hard?
Lying leaves my heart in shards
A person knows, and that's enough
Someday it will be less tough

Almost all my friends, they know
My support only grows
But I don't want to tell the school
That gossip will make me a fool
Will I care, if they found out?
It's not like it will get me clout
No, I think it's best this way
I'm a semi-closeted gay

Within the crowd that knows me best
I can be a bisexual mess
No more hiding, no more lies
I removed my disguise
Around those who know my truth
I feel free to be uncouth
This is all I really need
I can be completely me

It's always fun to make gay jokes
And I can say them with my folks
You know what always makes my day?
Teasing friends for being straight
It is funny how my outlook changed
At first, my fear was of the gay
And now the straight part irks me most
But I'm required to like them both
This is it, I've done my part
I'm a semi-gay at heart

Accepting me has opened doors
For me to appreciate guys and girls
I think each gender has its perks
So being bi for me just works
Accepting that I'm semi-gay
Has made me happier every day
Yes I am closeted from the grade
That choice has still remained the same
But I do that now, not out of fear
I choose discretion, let's make that clear
Because for now, I am just fine
Sitting on that borderline
The difference is my own free will
My identity is not a void to fill
I no longer hide my pride
I love my bisexual side
Now I'm happy and in good health
I have learned to love myself

Vignette 3: The Homo and the Hairbrush

When a thought lives unhindered in your head, it does not exist in the outer world. It remains alive and yet pacified in your thoughts as it affects nobody but you. Once the idea lives in the mind of another, however, it has begun its journey to spread change like a wildfire through your life. You have to ask yourself: are you ready for that change?

Isabella Freedman was a three-day grade trip that we took to a farm in seventh grade. We were broken into small groups and slept in cabins that had varying levels of comfort. It ranged from the Pine Cottage that resembled a 4 or 5-star hotel to the Elm House that looked straight out of those haunted cabin horror movies. Elm 2B was my room, and I shared it with Narissa. That first night, it was beyond creepy with the creaking floorboards, flickering lamps, and shadows that danced along the walls from the small, grimy window set just above her bed. The fluid changes of shape that those shadows made on the wall created a makeshift puppet show that I studied for hours that night, trying to build up the courage to come out to Narissa.

I had accepted the fact that I was bisexual, but I didn't know what to do beyond that. How does coming out even work? Narissa was lying less than four feet away from me, but I was miles away from that room in my panic, listening to a mental war that had turned my mind into a battleground. The thing is that my fear was never of her having a bad reaction; it was of having my sexuality change our friendship in some way. *I need to tell her. I just need her to know the real me. I can't hide it anymore, or I won't survive. I need to tell someone. I need to. Wait. Am I ready for this change? What if she thinks you had a crush on her? ICK. What if she thinks you're a predator? What if she feels uncomfortable rooming with you? What if... -shut up brain.* It was almost 2 a.m.; she had to be asleep by now because we had stopped talking ages ago. *Steady breathing. No words. No movement from her.* She had to be asleep. *Speak, Cat. Just speak.*

"Hey, I know it's late but respond if you can hear me."
Silence. She's sleeping. She can't hear you. Breathe. In and out. Steady breaths. No sign of lucidity. You're safe.

"I think...I don't know. I could be very wrong. But I don't think I am. Maybe I'm not. So I want to tell you something and I promise that it doesn't change anything about me... like I'm still me. It's just that lately, ok well maybe not lately. Sometime in the past, like, year or so? I'm not sure I've probably been this way all my life. So basically it is possible that I might like...again I don't know. It's kind of weird to talk about. Wait...well I'm not talking about this because you're obviously asleep so I guess saying I'm just saying out loud... Now I feel a little guilty because I don't think you'd react badly or anything, it's just that I'm a bit of a coward and you know how it goes. Ok so yeah. Here it goes. I think that...well maybe I am...a tiny bit. Bisexual. Ok, you didn't hear that. Well I mean again, you're asleep so you probably didn't hear it anyways. Never mind, I'm just going to say it again.

I am, or I could not be...bisexual? Why am I saying it like it's a question? I am *bisexual*. Ok, I don't even know why I'm saying it so weirdly. I'm bisexual. Yeah. And sorry for springing this on you at like 2 a.m. in the morning, even though you're asleep. I just wanted you to know. Well, sorta. So yeah. Goodnight."

Silence. *She's sleeping. She can't hear you. Breathe. In and out. Steady breaths. No sign of lucidity. You're safe.* Satisfied with my monologue, one that could have been completed in the single sentence, "I'm bisexual," I rolled over and tried to close my eyes and sleep. *It's ok. You told her. Well, you didn't tell her, but you said it. You're done for the night.* I smiled for the first time in hours. What I DID NOT EXPECT was a movement to come from my right.

A sleepy "Ok. G'night" came from Narissa's bed and she rolled right back over and went to sleep. She was awake. She had heard me. *Crap.*

Paralyzed. I can only describe my moments of absolute shock and panic after that as paralyzed. Because in all of my bravery that night, I had not expected my stumbling monologue to be heard by another person. Whether I liked it or not, Narissa Bonilla-Rosa knew I was bisexual. I could not take it back. *I was out. I was out. I was out.*

The next morning passed in a frenzy of activity, and I only functioned that day under the hope that maybe Narissa did not remember what I had said. I told her at, like, 3 a.m. anyway, and it's not like she would remember one of the most earth-shattering moments of my life. To her, the conversation was probably a mumbo-jumbo of thoughts all slapped together and thrown at her. *Maybe she didn't remember my bumbling ineptitude.* Nothing seemed different. We spoke the same, me being a little tentative, but her being completely normal. It wasn't until the second night that I was actually able to talk to Narissa about what she may or may not have heard.

It was only after we had showered, gathered our towels and clothes, and headed back to our room that Narissa realized her hairbrush was missing. Fun fact, Narissa hates losing things. Therefore, her focus that night was purely on finding her hairbrush. So much so, that our conversation about the previous night's events went something like:

"Hey so ummm...last night kind of late I said something that you may or may not have overheard and I was wondering if you remembered what I said?"

"What? Oh yeah, I do. Have you seen my hairbrush? Can you move over a little bit."

"Yeah sure. So uh, what do you remember?"

"Do you promise you didn't use my hairbrush? My mom will kill me if I don't find it."

"Your hairbrush? No, I brought my own. Narissa, did you hear me?"

"Ok, I put it down here. Then I walked over here and put the towel away. It must have walked away. Hey, Cat, do you think hairbrushes can grow legs?"

"Why is this conversation normal for us, Narissa? And can you answer my question?"

"I can't believe it. It's just gone. What? Oh yeah, what question?"

"Do you remember what I said last night?"

"You talked a lot last night, what specifically are you hinting at?"

"Well it was kind of late so I don't expect you to remember it."

"Oh yeah, I remember now!"

"You do?"

"Yeah of course! I put it on the bed so it might have just fallen. Move over."

Is she avoiding the subject or is she just a clueless idiot?

"Narissa. What. Do. You. Remember."

"One sec, I just need to move the *grunt* ... how is it not under the bed?!"

"Ok so you just don't remember is what you're trying to tell me." *You idiot, stop asking! If she doesn't remember, avoid it and move on.*

"Yeah I know, you're bisexual. Now can you check your bed again? It has a purple handle."

D e a d . S i l e n c e .

"Oh...so you do remember."

Rummaging through suitcase "Yeah, but it's not bad, and it doesn't change anything."

"Wait. So...yeah. Well...you're ok with it? Like...I get that it's kind of weird but—"

"Cat. Yes, it's fine. Stop freaking out. It's ok. Now help me find my hairbrush?"

"Yeah yeah I know. It's just that I wanted to tell you and I thought you were asleep and I PROMISE I've never had a crush on you because ew and yuck. And—"

"Cat. I know. Breathe. Now, where the hell is my hairbrush?"

And so the conversation continued. But two major things happened that night.

The first thing that happened was the relief that came with my first coming out story. It was messy, and it was a little cowardly, but Narissa knew that I was bisexual. I showed my true self to Narissa and it didn't change the way she looked at me. This moment only made our friendship stronger. My first coming out story is a moment that I will never forget because I learned that I wanted to show myself to other people. I had spoken my sexuality into existence, and I accepted the change. No. I didn't accept it. I embraced it.

The second thing that happened was that we never found Narissa's hairbrush. She still gives me grief for it to this day.

Outro:

Why hello, we meet again dear reader!

I hope you enjoyed your preview into my bisexual panic! There were a *lot* of ups and downs. While most of the vignettes you read were written with humor, I'd like to think that I also gave you an idea of the weighted importance that each coming out moment held for me. While being part of the LGBTQ+ community is more accepted today, especially with the gay influences that have taken over Instagram, Tiktok, Snapchat, etc, it is still not normalized to the point where coming out becomes unnecessary. Looking back and laughing at these bumbling scenes right now is so easy because the positive outcomes are solidified in the past along with my reassurances. But in those beating moments between my words and theirs, I did not know if they would embrace my declaration. You never know where the homophobia is, so you have to expect it to be everywhere. Luckily, I have found that the more that I come out, the easier it becomes. The certainty that I am out to, and accepted by, the most important people in my life makes every passing "confession" easier. Regardless of the outcome, I will not be left alone. The more I grow, the more courage I have to be myself, and I utilize that new strength to expand the bubble of people who know the real me. I am not restricted by the fear of abandonment, so I am free to pursue whatever hobby catches my fancy, regardless of its reflection on my sexuality.

As I have become more comfortable being part of the LGTBQ+ community, I have also started learning more about the stereotypes around different sexualities. That being said, when was someone going to tell me that bisexual people are disliked by gays and straights alike for being "cheaters"?? Excuse me, why am I being ostracized by *both* communities? Especially when it isn't true! Like hah, me? A player? I like both genders and I'm still single. I'm not bisexual, I'm bi-myself. (Heh heh, get it? Dad jokes! No? Ok, moving on.) The reason I'm single is that dating/crushes are so confusing. I guess liking a guy is argumentatively easier than liking a girl because society explores boy-girl dating so much more; it's usually easier to discern whether or not someone likes you in a heterosexual relationship. But having a crush on a girl is the epitome of confusion. I am literally a female and I don't understand other females. Firstly, there is a whole hurdle to see if they are even interested in girls themselves, and that can be hard to gauge sometimes. Secondly, if they're friends with you, it can be hard to distinguish between friendly and flirty. It probably does not help that I overthink every possible situation. I.e. *Calm down Cat, it is just a friend thing. You do this all the time to other people. They are just being friendly. Then why—shut up the brain. FRIENDS. You are FRIENDS. Nothing but friends. OH MY GOD SHE LOOKED AT ME. Yes, because you're friends. She said something flirty though. But friends say things like that to each other without meaning it. But she...nO mORE tHInKinG.* Why am I single? WHY AM I SINGLE, YOU ASK? Because everything confuses me, that's why!

As you have clearly seen by now, there exists the inconvenience of being a naturally awkward person. There also exists the case of being bisexual. And then there exists me, who is both. I don't know which chemist was in charge of creating me, but I think they might have ignored the recipe for "human with ability to normally interact with others without making things incredibly awkward" and replaced it with "five-foot-two Asian girl who can't talk about her sexuality without mentally cringing at the sheer embarrassment that is her existence." Maybe they added a cup of "essence-of-overthinking-everything," instead of a teaspoon? Or hell, maybe they just tossed in the whole bottle because that just couldn't go wrong. It is possible that they dumped their entire collection of "confused-about-who-I-am-attracted-to-and-why" into my cauldron and called it a day. Or perhaps their solution of "calm-and-collected-individual" was out of stock so they replaced it with the "raging-bisexual" solvent and did not pay attention to the warning label that clearly stated that overuse could induce "severe awkwardness and a weird obsession with Emma Watson." I honestly don't know what they were thinking, but yes, hi. Hello. It's me. I am ~the product~ of this lovely experiment. That is probably why every coming out scene was awkward as...well. Awkward. Dang, see? I made that moment awkward. And yes, I could delete this portion and write a more dignified sentence instead, one with proper grammar and punctuation, but we are just getting to know each other, my friend, so why should I bother to hide my awkwardness now?

And so encompasses my life as a bisexual and awkward human. I hope you enjoyed this bonus sneak peak. But as I end this outro, I'm going to take a moment to say thank you in a more serious manner. Thank you to my friends and family for supporting me and accepting me for who I am. Thank you to the community that I was raised in, that taught me that being gay is not a bad thing. Thank you to the influencers on social media, who endorse gay culture, and who support the community of people oppressed for loving who they love. Thank you to the allies that hold up other people and give them the love that they deserve for being who they are. And lastly, I want to thank you, dear reader. Thank you for taking the time to read my stories and for letting me be heard.

Every person, no matter their race, gender, sexuality, etc, has to find their own path, and I hope this brief biomythography has given you inspiration in yours. Head up, reader, and remember to be unapologetically yourself because coming out is not only part of gay culture. A wise refrigerator magnet that I saw at a CVS once read: "Until you make peace with who you are, you'll never be content with what you have." So to every person who is on their own path of self-discovery, I commend you for the unending strength that it takes to stand as yourself in a hostile society. The hardest thing to do is to find out who you are. The second hardest thing is to love what you find. That is what coming out is, my friend. And I sincerely hope you move forward in your journey of self-discovery as I do in mine.

Cheers!

Ritvik Bordia
Form V
Poem

The Unholy Soul

At the age of six, the peak of my childhood,
With freedom blossoming from every bone,
I was compressed in a box full of false words from false books
All covered in musty smells placed to evoke ancient knowledge.
I was a child, meant to be free,
Meant to speak my mind.
But my mind was oppressed, shoved down by those I love,
And my individualism was viewed as horrid
For, just as accepting religion kept most trapped,
Locking them in adherence to some holy ethereal being,
Denying religion resulted in rejecting my freedom.

It was during the season of Diwali
When my dadi came to visit,
When my very freedom, the ability to speak up,
A basic human right of every being,
Was revoked,
Replaced with countless hours sitting around false idols,
Hours upon hours of praying to nothing,
Of uselessly sitting, facing East, and trying to achieve nirvana.

My dadi was misguided,
Free to make her own thoughts, but conforming to that of books,
Following the idea that 'gods' existed and had celestial piousness,
That they were wholesome and untarnished,
And even when the 'gods' had taken her husband, dead before his hair greyed,
The man who died from a heart attack on the phone with my dad,
With her grandchild watching his father crumple to the floor,
Dropping the phone with an eerie clatter,
The 'gods' still went untarnished.

Many may admonish,
My innermost thoughts about my dadi,
But they are my thoughts, my holy truth,
And try as I may to display my feelings towards my dadi,
Which fluctuate between love and hate,
No form can convey both the angel and the devil
In one piece, without contradicting itself.
But when it came to religion,
My feelings were always hateful,
Spitting fire and ashes in the direction of idols,
Mimicking the Stygian scenarios where the devil is shown to reside.
And the angel has no place in the devil's homeland.

So it was Diwali,
A celebration of the return of Rama,
A king exiled for fourteen years, thought to be a deity,
The avatar of a four-handed blue god,
A god who sat on a nine-headed serpent that floated on a lake.
In other words, a story full of bull.
But the festival, filled with fire and music and pastries
Appealed to me, and so I celebrated, full of joy --

Until my dadi came and ripped it all away.
Ripped the enthusiasm, the effervescence, the excitement, right from my soul,
And replaced it with the repetitious, forced acceptance of her beliefs,
And as we sat down to pray,
To mutter piffling words towards hallucinatory gods,
A thought struck me.

It was one of autonomy, a blade of blinding light splitting my cage in two,
A fracture in the oblique darkness that had surrounded me for too long,
A thought so ridiculous, so ludicrous
That I just had to act upon it.
I had to speak my mind instead of parroting it away,
Imitating my familial ideals rather than imitating myself.
Living in chains was no way to live,
In captivity, in incarceration, in slavery,
I was bound by the will of my dadi, travailing to hide from my thoughts.
Emerson says, "Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist."
And I was ready to speak my mind.

And so, I confronted my dadi,
I readied my soul and calmed my nerves.
I had to speak my mind, to be free of my ridiculing thoughts,
And I tried and tried, but the words just wouldn't come.
My tongue became dry and rough, like sandpaper,
And my jaws felt nailed together;
The cat got my tongue; she had stolen it from the depths of my mouth,
And my voice, my voice, retracted from my throat
As I conformed to my dadi's will.

And due to that inability,
The Sisyphean task of speaking my mind,
Of putting my thoughts, my very essence, into words,
I grew up far too quickly.
"The Child is the Father of the Man,"
But I would never be the father, shaping the future.
Never the nonconformist, the repeller of societal norms.
"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation"
And I was just another man in society's midst.

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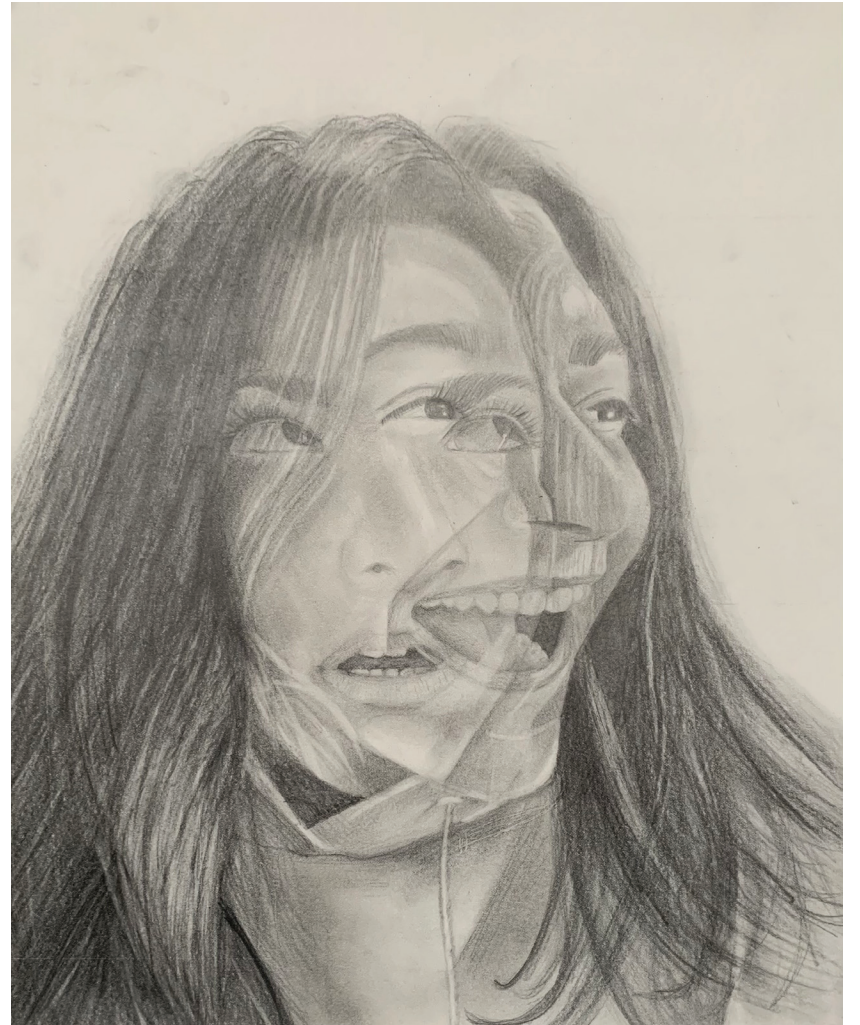
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Carson Lender
Form V
Series of Graphite Drawings

Untitled





***Roots and Rebellions:
Spirituality and Resistance in
I, Tituba and Narrative of the
Life of Frederick Douglass***

In the novel *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, Maryse Condé's heroine communicates with the dead and heals the sick. She frequently conducts rituals of prayer and cleansing. She also attempts to use her abilities in support of two slave rebellions, the second of which leads to her death. This ending may seem simply like a sad conclusion to Condé's magical realist and historically relevant novel, but it is so much more. When we compare the circumstances of Tituba's two rebellions to Frederick Douglass's description of his own personal rebellion against slavery in *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, we see that both Frederick Douglass and Maryse Condé demonstrate relationships among spirituality, slave revolts and resistance. However, while Douglass is forced to self-censor by purposefully downplaying this relationship, Condé's novel embraces it and uses it to empower Tituba.

In Douglass's *Narrative*, the link between Douglass's resistance to slavery and the spiritual or religious beliefs of another slave, Sandy Jenkins, is clearly drawn but immediately shut down. Douglass brings up what seems to be an alternative spiritual practice to Christianity only once: in the context of his successful first attempt at physical resistance to slavery. Before facing a slave overseer who he believes will beat him, Douglass encounters Sandy Jenkins, another slave. Douglass recounts this part of the story very carefully and methodically. Sandy takes him into the forest to find a specific root, which he says will "render it impossible for Mr. Covey, or any other white man, to whip [Douglass]" (42). Throughout the story, Douglass italicizes the word root, visibly distinguishing it from the other words on the page. We will assume here that this is meant to tell us that the root represents something—namely, a specific realm of spirituality. With the root in his pocket, Douglass faces Mr. Covey, decides to fight back against him, and triumphs over him. In fact, Douglass writes that "the truth was, he had not whipped me at all," signaling the fulfillment of Sandy's prophetic words (43). He also marks this moment as "the turning-point in [his] career as a slave," saying that in the four more years that he was enslaved, no slave-owner or overseer was ever able to whip him. But Douglass entirely discounts the influence of the root, seemingly contradicting himself. After telling about his victory, Douglass mentions that Sandy Jenkins claimed that it was because of the root, but that this is only a "superstition" that is "very common

among the more ignorant slaves" (47). Because of the nature of Douglass's book as both a personal narrative and an extremely intentional and strategic argument against slavery, we can only conclude that he treats the story of the root in this way in order to not alienate white Christian readers who would find sacrilegious the kind of beliefs that the root represents. However, Douglass chooses not to omit the root from the story completely, and it serves to illustrate a connection between Sandy's spirituality and Douglass's fighting back as a slave.

However, after linking Sandy's spirituality to resistance to slavery, Douglass links Christianity to the perpetuation of slavery, quietly juxtaposing the two. For instance, when Mr. Covey does not immediately attack Douglass upon seeing him, he writes, "...had it been on any other day than Sunday, I could have attributed the conduct to no other cause than the influence of that root" (42). On the surface, Douglass seems to be implying that all Christians, even slave-owners, might abstain from violence on Sunday, traditionally a religious day. However, later in the book, Douglass "[asserts] most unhesitatingly, that the religion of the south is a mere covering for the most horrid crimes... and a dark shelter under which the darkest, foulest, grossest, and most infernal deeds of slaveholders find the strongest protection" (46). Here, he condemns the form of Christianity that lends protection to slave-owners, showing his distrust and disgust for this fraudulent approach to religion. If we read the first quote through the lens of our knowledge of the second, it's hard to believe that Douglass would truly think that the Christianity of slave-owners would prevent any violence—he seems to say the opposite (46). Instead, we can interpret this choice on Douglass's part as a way of subtly introducing the root (and the broader spiritual practice connected to it) as contrary to or different from Christianity. Then we see that they are contrasting ideas especially in the context of their relationship to slavery—the root is paired with rebellion, while Christianity goes hand in hand with slavery.

Similarly to Douglass's famous slave narrative, Condé's neo-slave narrative links spirituality to slave revolts through Tituba's relationship to the maroons and particularly their leader, Christopher. But Condé's presentation of this connection is less censored and more matter-of-fact. When Tituba arrives back in Barbados after her time in America, she encounters the maroons. She tells them about her abilities and later their unofficial leader, Christopher, asks her to make him invincible. He cites an old adage about Ti-Noel, one of the earlier maroons remembered among slaves as a hero: "Oh, Papa Ti-Noel, the white man's gun cannot kill him. The white man's bullets cannot kill him. They bounce off his skin. Tituba, I want you to make me invincible" (146). Here, we see a direct parallel to Douglass's work in that Christopher wants Tituba to do for him what Sandy did for Douglass—make him immune to the attacks of white slave-owners so that he can be successful in executing a rebellion against them. But Condé's work is different from Douglass's because her book is not censored the way Douglass's is. Unlike Douglass, she does not try to undermine the power of the spirituality/spiritual reality that makes an appearance in her protagonist's story. Instead, from the beginning of the book, Condé presents this spirituality, and the real manifestations of it, as simply a natu-

ral part of Tituba's world. Condé does not justify it or explain it, she simply trusts the reader to accept it. This spirituality or belief system is Tituba's reality and therefore the book's reality, first introduced as early as in chapter 1. In the context of Christopher's question, Condé expands on this attitude towards Tituba's spiritual reality, cementing the position of her powers as part of the factual world by setting a limit on them. Tituba sets out to see if she can make Christopher invincible, consulting others with similar abilities and finally concluding that it is impossible. In this way, Condé presents her powers as scientific and methodical rather than vague and uncertain.

But Condé takes the connection we are examining even further. It is not just a side note in *I, Tituba*, but in fact central to the story and to how Condé accomplishes her goal of "[giving Tituba] a reality that was denied to her" (204). Through Tituba's abilities, the hierarchy of race and gender is reversed. Tituba's powers give her some power over Christopher, and if she chooses to use them on his behalf they could give him power over white slave-owners. This is true to the extent that Christopher feels the need to compensate for this new dynamic by saying that he will "give [her] everything a woman desires" in return for her making him invincible, wielding his masculinity as a source of power. Furthermore, later Tituba says of the slave overseers she encounters, "On seeing me they cracked their whips as if they were eager to use them on me. But none of them dared do so" (151). This illustrates how Condé uses supernatural powers as an empowering device for Tituba—even those at the top of the perverted hierarchy want to quell her power but fear *her* too much. In this way, Tituba becomes relevant to the broader fate of the black residents of her country. In the context of rebellion and her abilities, she becomes important. Her first night back in Barbados, Tituba notices that "the island is alive with a soft murmur. 'She is back. She is here, the daughter of Abena, the daughter of Mama Yaya. She will never leave us again'" (147). Here, citing Tituba's strong female heritage, Condé further emphasizes Tituba's empowered position as even the island itself rejoices at her return.

The notion of Tituba's empowerment through her involvement in rebellion permeates the remainder of the book as well. Condé's ending gives Tituba a unique martyrdom and a continued legacy of activism after her so-called death. None of this would be possible without Tituba's abilities in connection to her spiritual world—her *powers* are the source of her *power*. Tituba lends the power of her prayer to the rebellion, directly wielding her connection to a spiritual world to support the rebels' efforts. Although her and Iphigene's efforts are not successful, we continue to see Tituba step into her role as "an epic heroine, like the legendary 'Nanny of the Maroons'" as Maryse Condé explains in an interview (201). Even as Tituba is taken to her death for instigating a slave revolt as well as for her previous "crimes" (172), we see her ascending not only the stairs to the gallows but the path to a particular kind of martyrdom. Tituba says in what seems like a cruel ending but is actually emblematic of the sacred position Condé has given her, "I was the last to be led to the gallows, for I was to be given special treatment" (172). Finally, Tituba's role in the epilogue cements her position. Tituba may not be meaningfully

remembered in history books, but she is remembered by her people. She rejoices from the world of Mama Yaya and Abena and Yao, "...there *is* a song about Tituba!" (175). And in fact, she is not only remembered. This is what makes Tituba's martyrdom different from a classic one—she does not die. She continues to live in a different form, but not one very far removed from the world she left. She survives not only in memory but also in reality. After her death, Tituba says, "I have been behind every revolt. Every insurrection. Every act of disobedience" (175). Through her spiritual reality, one that transcends death, Tituba lives on and becomes more than a victim. Condé gives her a second life, or rather a lengthened life, as an activist.

In both Douglass's and Condé's texts, spirituality is directly linked to resistance against slavery. But Douglass dismisses Sandy Jenkins' beliefs due to censorship while Condé uses Tituba's spiritual reality to write her back into history. Interestingly, neither text directly names these beliefs, or even what cultural background or tradition they originate from, though we do know that Mama Yaya is a Nago woman by birth. However, it is clear that there are some similarities, especially in terms of their connection to slave rebellions. Comparing the two books helps us see that neither the similarities nor the differences are coincidental. Through Tituba's abilities, Condé provides a source of power for Tituba in a world that did not allow her any. In this way, Condé takes the story of a persecuted and abused slave woman and turns it into the story of an empowered and influential warrior of justice.

Morium Begum
Form V
Satire

A Modest Proposal
To Provide All the Refugees in the World
with a Home Because What is a Person
without a Home?

(After Jonathan Swift)

No matter who you are or what you are, you deserve a home. Everyone deserves a place where they are accepted for being themselves, where they are not made to feel like a burden, where they have no fear of being persecuted, and where they are not worried about becoming a remnant of a war zone. Unfortunately, there are many people in the world who do have to worry about these things. In fact, as reported by the United Nations, there are over 20 million people in the world who have left their homes, fearing for their lives. Formally known as refugees, these people are setting up camps in other countries as a means of escape. However, for how long can these refugees settle in camps? Is that any way to live your life? Can you imagine living life like that? Can you imagine living without a proper home?

As a global citizen, I am deeply concerned and enraged by the lack of action toward the refugee pandemic. After doing extensive research in which I collected various numbers and statistics, I have stumbled upon a solution that may in fact work. This solution will successfully relocate the refugees and provide them with a home that they can call their own. No longer will they find themselves in the midst of violent wars. No longer will they find themselves oppressed. No longer will they deal with the struggles of a refugee camp. Instead, they will be in a place that will be fully their own.

My research also revealed that a major component of the struggle of refugees is the mental guilt they carry for being burdensome to their host countries. The extensiveness of their guilt has driven many of them to strenuous psychological issues, such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and more. In fact, it has been revealed that suicide among refugees is alarmingly common. No one deserves to commit suicide, not even a refugee. My solution significantly improves the mental health of all refugees. By allocating them to their own home, my solution will free them from the cages of their guilt, allowing them to live normal and healthy lives.

In addition, this solution is extremely cost-effective. Dealing with over 20 million people can become expensive quite fast and can cause many people to revoke their support. While I acknowledge that my solution may need some money in the beginning, I've designed it to be fairly cheap, effective, and fast. The refugees have taken plenty of money and resources from the generous international commu-

nity. It's time that we stop them from taking even more.

But how can we do so? How can we give the refugees a home of their own? Well, after completing extensive research on the matter, I suggest the MODEST proposal. M=move the refugees to Antarctica. O=offer them a warm blanket. D=design a few homes. E=encourage self-sufficiency. S=save some money. T=tada, problem solved!

The first step of the MODEST proposal is to gather all the refugees in the world onto ships and transport them to Antarctica. There are large ships that are extremely spacious and comfortable. In fact, many of these ships have been used to carry animals and PETA hasn't complained about them, proof that they are safe and reliable. Additionally, many refugees have never had the chance to experience the finer things in life, so they may be scared of planes. It's best to export them in ships. These ships will drop the refugees off in one of the few places on Earth not inhabited by humans. Due to this, the refugees will not be infringing on someone else's property and they can start fresh. They can create their own rules, systems, and liberate themselves from the horrors of their pasts.

The second step of the MODEST proposal offers every refugee a nice, thick blanket. My research has shown that Antarctica can get extremely cold sometimes, especially at night. Apparently, that's why people haven't moved there. Anyways, a lot of the refugees are fragile and even unvaccinated, so we don't want them to get pneumonia from the cold. It'll be a hassle to take care of since there aren't many hospitals out in Antarctica. In fact, I don't think there are any. The third step of the MODEST proposal helps house the 20 million refugees. We should show them how to design their own igloos. Ice is free in Antarctica, and they can even get creative with home design. Many of the refugees haven't had a chance to pursue education so I'm not sure whether they know that every house needs a structure and supports. By showing them how they can build their own homes, we are also fulfilling step four, which is encouraging self-sufficiency. Once we show them how to build an igloo or two, they can take over and build their own homes. Many refugees have been controlled for a long time, so I'm sure they'll appreciate the freedom and agency to build their own things. We must always support independent thinking!

Overall, these three steps will save the international community a lot of money. Rather than constantly dealing with refugees, we are dealing with them realistically, effectively, and humanely. Most of the money will be spent exporting them and giving them warm blankets. We can even get the blankets from China or Bangladesh or something. My research has revealed that the citizens there are extremely kind and enjoying making things cheap and affordable for the world. Is there any solution that can be possibly more effective than this? I suppose more countries can host refugees and even allow them to become citizens, but why should other countries have to take on the responsibility of saving countless lives? Did the United States tell Myanmar to kill their own people? No! So why should the United States feel compelled to help out? And I suppose everyone can donate a portion of their money to UNHCR or other organizations. These organizations

supposedly help make the conditions of refugee camps a little bit better. If everyone donated a meager \$5, that has the ability to make a big difference. But that sounds a lot like communism, or was it socialism, or was it utilitarianism? Who knows? My favorite “ism” is capitalism. At the end of the day, it’s the only one that’s been successful and effective.

I humbly ask you to consider my MODEST proposal as a way to provide refugees with homes. My research has really opened my eyes to the pain and suffering that every refugee goes through. It’s like I can almost feel what they feel. Sometimes, I log onto Instagram from the comfort of my heated home while drinking warm tea, and I see pictures of malnourished refugee kids crossing rivers. It makes my heart crumple. I can’t stand the sight of their pain, so I have no choice but to scroll past the post. Do you feel the same? Does your heart also crumple and so you scroll past the post? Or maybe you’re braver than me and you have the strength to repost it on your story. In that case, congratulations because you’re a true hero. You’re fighting for the refugees. Let’s continue this fight and move them to Antarctica. It’s time for all the refugees in the world to get a home of their own.

Lucienne Troy
Form V
Observations

Walden Pond

I chose to sit on a bench just at the entrance of the woods. Perhaps I could have been more creative with my choice, choosing sand instead of plastic to support me, but my legs were tired, so I figured I might as well sit on the bench. That’s what Thoreau must have found interesting about living in a place like Walden; you must use what you are given, and what you are given should be enough. If that bench hadn’t been there, I would have sat on the cobblestone wall. If the cobblestone wall hadn’t been there, I would have sat on the sand. Either way, I would have made do with what was given to me. In a place as beautiful as Walden, it is easy to be fascinated from almost any perspective, so sitting on the bench wasn’t much of a disadvantage, other than the fact that the cold plastic would keep me from being fully immersed in nature.

First, the pond. With the pond taking up most of my paracentral and peripheral vision, it is the first thing I see. Walden Pond is quite big compared to some of the other ponds I have encountered in my life. Not big enough to be a lake but almost too big to be a pond, I just think of it as a body of water. The shallow end of the pond is transparent, becoming increasingly darker and seemingly opaque toward the deep end. If you stood more to the right of where I was sitting, the pond would appear as a bluish color. From my perspective, it looks like a very dark blue, or even an inky black with tones of olive green. Where the water hits the shore, it collides with the sand that seems to disappear as the pond gets deeper. Because I am near the transparent shallow end, I can see the small rocks lying beneath the water. Brown maple leaves and pine needles carpet the ground beneath me, acting as indicators of the autumn season. Clumps of white foam gather in small colonies, scattered along the shoreline. The water flows infinitely toward me, creating creases in the pond. It is almost like a small ocean, minus the huge waves. Despite the pond’s splendor, I cannot help but focus all my attention on a half-eaten apple by the shore. This apple caught my eye from afar, as it is one of the reddest, most vibrant apples I have ever seen. As it is half-eaten, it is a bit gross to look at up close, but from afar it seems like a ruby gem. The water splashes it again and again, and I wonder how long it will stay there for: days, months, years? This apple didn’t just grow from the ground; someone left it there. It acts as a reminder that there are other people here, too, probably for the same purpose I am: to explore the famous Walden Pond as described by the famous Henry David Thoreau. I assume that no one at Walden Pond on this lovely day just happened to stumble upon it. Indeed, we are too busy, caught up in our heads, to go out and find a secluded beauty like

Walden. However, as unnatural as it was for the apple to be lying there, I appreciated it and decided I would add it to the beauty of Walden Pond. If no one throws it out, it will eventually decay or be eaten by bugs, becoming one with Walden forever.

Second, the trees. The trees surround the perimeter of Walden Pond, each one reflecting some of its colors onto the pond. As it is the middle of Autumn, each tree has been dipped in tones of crimson, maroon, yellow, and brown. Every few moments I see another leaf swiftly and gracefully making its descent to the ground. I have never appreciated Autumn so much as I do at this moment; I've never seen a season tell such a story. I now understand that Autumn is a season that progresses almost like a slow dance. I love when the trees are full with cherry blossoms or leaves. But at least Autumn does us the justice of letting the leaves part with us in the most poised fashion. First, the leaves beautifully change color. Then they slowly begin to fall off the trees, letting us say our goodbyes to each and every one. Winter comes slowly, and it takes months until the trees are barren. Even if Autumn's purpose on this Earth is just to be a transition month from the sweltering summer to the brutally icy winter, it fulfills its purpose with the greatest intention and effort than any other season. It makes what we consider to be insignificant, significant, which is causing me to stop and notice its beauty. One tree is so vibrantly red that I wonder if its sole purpose is to grasp my attention and have me appreciate the way the Autumn season is executed.

Third, the sound. It is quiet in the sense that I can hear everything that is going on. In the city, I am conditioned to tune out the honking cars and street sounds. In Walden, I don't have to ignore anything. I can accept every sound I hear because the lack of sound gives me the liberty to do so. Some of the sounds I hear do not come from nature. I hear people talking, walking, and the sounds of cars on the road in the distance. But it is quiet enough that I can hear the wind pick up and gently shake the leaves. I can hear the water quietly splashing on the sand. I hear the birds making conversation with each other. All of the sounds of nature are unfazed by my presence. As much as I wish to think I have an impact on all that surrounds me, I don't. Walden taught me that there is peace in not having control. To know that nature here simply exists, and will continue to do so whether I'm here or not, silences the part of me anxiously nagging for control. It is nice to just sit here, and appreciate the sounds, rather than question them.

Finally, the sun. As I get up from the bench, the pond changes from an inky pool of wonder to a sparkling show for all to see. The sun strikes it and causes the water to glisten in a way that is so flamboyant, yet so gentle. The sparkles nearly blind me. Why must the pond put on such a show? But it isn't the pond at all. It is the sun making its mark, and that mark is but a reflection. The sun makes the same mark on me as it warms my back, compensating for the chilly breeze. Walden lives under the sun just as I and all of Earth's creatures do. The sun shines on me in New York City just as it shines on me here. Why is it that Walden Pond sparkles, yet the city streets don't? Why is it that life can seem so different depending on where you are, even if the same source is giving me the light with which to see it?

Vivian Lee
Form V
Analysis

Why Did Things Fall Apart?

The longevity of a society's culture is contingent on how effectively a society can preserve and maintain said culture. As each citizen is exposed to its different values and traditions, they are faced with the decision to support and maintain that culture, make adaptations, or abandon it and adopt another. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* narrates the phases of pre-colonial and colonial order in Igbo society within the villages of Umuofia and Mbanta. Achebe brings this culture to life in a way that no author before him has, describing both its richness as well as the deep-rooted complexities that anticipate its downfall. Things fall apart as a result of the society's inability to reconcile the ideological differences between the levels of social hierarchy. Igbo culture encompasses polytheistic religion, father-son inheritance, farming traditions, belief in spirits, and a very rigid social hierarchy, in which the only ways to advance are through backbreaking labor or marriage. Only a small percentage of the society is considered to be upper class, men and families of title, while the majority are more common, low to middle class citizens. The lack of unity and kinship between the two causes the downfall of Igbo culture.

Things Fall Apart focuses greatly on the tragic downfall of the protagonist Okonkwo, who is portrayed as the ideal man of Igbo culture. Within Igbo society, social status is determined by one's accomplishments that benefit the society as a whole, as Achebe explains, "Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered" (8). Okonkwo, a well-respected member of the Umuofia clan, has a prominent social position within Igbo society. He is the son of Unoka, who was considered by his community to be a failure due to his effeminate nature and unreliability. But Okonkwo is a self-made man. In contrast, Okonkwo strives to uphold Igbo values to the best of his ability. After gaining fame by defeating an Umuofian wrestler nicknamed "Amalinze the Cat," Okonkwo goes on to marry three women and have several children (18). He uses his vast land to plant and harvest yams, which are well known as a status symbol within his society, as they represent wealth, masculinity, and a capacity for intensive labor. Okonkwo's physical vigor, wealth, and great courage allow him to achieve social and financial success. He eventually comes to symbolize the embodiment and the internal problems of Igbo ideals.

Okonkwo's obsession with Igbo ideals and his deep-rooted fear of becoming his father leads him to become a menacing and violent man, as Achebe describes, "when he walked, his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to

walk on springs as if he was going to pounce on somebody. And he did pounce on people quite often” (4). Okonkwo’s physical tendencies border on being socially unacceptable. In addition, he often has trouble communicating with others around him and chooses to act out of frustration when he is unable to find the words to express himself. Even before the missionaries come to Umuofia, Okonkwo already finds himself in situations where his fire-like personality drives him to perform several acts of violence that often hurt him in the end. For example, when he realizes his wife Ojiugo forgets to cook his evening meal, he beats her in such anger that he refuses to stop: “even his other two wives remind him that his violence breaks the peace of the sacred week, yet Okonkwo was not the man to stop beating somebody half-way through, not even for fear of a goddess” (30). Okonkwo’s anger issues are very visible during festivals such as these, in which he feels unable to rest when there is no work for him to do.

Okonkwo’s flawed personality becomes increasingly problematic as *Things Fall Apart* progresses. His volatility particularly impacts his son Nwoye, whom Okonkwo sees as a reflection of Unoka. Nwoye’s dominant characteristic is his ability to feel and sympathize. He often feels baffled by the cruelties of his society and is one of the only people that will question the morals and ethics of those around him. Similar to his father, Nwoye is unable to express his feelings in exact words, though, Achebe offers readers a look into his mind through descriptions of Nwoye’s unspoken truths. An example of this is the way Nwoye responds to Ikemefuna’s sudden death: “As soon as his father walked in, that night, Nwoye knew that Ikemefuna had been killed, and something seemed to give way inside him, like the snapping of a tightened bow. He did not cry. He just hung limp” (61). He remembers that he similarly felt as if “something had given away inside him” when he had heard the cries of two abandoned twins in the forest (61). Because Nwoye shares similarities with Unoka instead of his father, in an attempt to fix his son Okonkwo resorts to verbal and physical violence, which in the end only serves to alienate and depress Nwoye rather than motivate him. One element of human nature is the need to be seen for who we truly are, especially by those we love. Recognition makes us feel validated; it encourages us to engage, respond, and contribute, and provides us with a sense of belonging and human connection. Nwoye is unable to receive this from Okonkwo, who sees his son’s traits as undesirable.

Obierika is another example of an Igbo citizen who doubts Igbo customs. Like Nwoye, he is unable to find a rational explanation for the customs of his society. Regarding the seven-year exile of Okonkwo, he ponders, “Why should a man suffer so grievously for an offense he had committed inadvertently?” and remembers the forced abandonment of his wife’s twin children, asking, “What crime had they committed?” (125). Nwoye and Obierika come to represent the members of Igbo society who disagree with the social norms yet are afraid to act otherwise in fear of being punished.

The way we perceive ourselves is heavily influenced by our environment. In a society where a person’s value and success appears to stem from extreme expectations with little to no room for self-expression and creativity, many people are

bound to seek out a culture that does support them. Thus, Igbo society is already deeply divided even before the arrival of the missionaries. On one hand, part of the society consists of strong believers in Igbo culture who will often go to extremes to uphold these standards and values, to the point where they can not explain the reasoning behind their actions other than for religion. On the other hand, many citizens, especially the great population of the lower class, feel uneasy about these values yet do not have the platform to speak up for themselves without facing severe punishment. These unstable circumstances provide an easy opportunity for the Christian missionaries to spread their ideals and take over.

The thing that falls apart is the citizens’ commitment to Igbo culture. A deep religiosity permeates all aspects of this society. Social, cultural, and political actions are widely performed to service the many gods that they believe in. While these beliefs demonstrate the depth of Igbo culture, the lack of explanation and basis makes it easy for the missionaries to disprove their beliefs. For example, the survival of the missionaries and their church in the Evil Forest (believed to be inhabited by evil spirits that will kill social outcasts, diseased villagers, and other people that are deemed unacceptable by this society) turns many citizens against Igbo culture, especially those who have sacrificed much to serve their religion. The number of converts gradually increases over time as the citizens watch more of their beliefs be disproved. Another aspect of Christian culture that appeals to many citizens is forgiveness, a trait that isn’t taken lightly in Igbo culture, as demonstrated by Okonkwo’s exile. Joining the Christian missionaries is, in a way, a victory for outcasts, especially Nwoye, as they are finally able to find peace and acceptance. In an argument about whether or not the society’s outcasts can be invited to the church’s congregation, the missionaries’ interpreter Mr. Kiaga stresses, “we are all children of God and we must accept these our brothers” (156). Initially, the clan views the church’s admission of the unworthy as weak and desperate. In reality, it only exposes how the clan is incapable of integrating all its members into its society. As one of the oldest members of the Igbo Umuofia warns the younger generation, “[...] I fear for you young people because you do not understand how strong is the bond of kinship. You do not know what it is to speak with one voice. And what is the result? An abominable religion has settled among you. A man can now leave his father and his brothers” (167). As the Christian missionaries gain power, the citizens watch their traditional beliefs be disproved and grow outdated. By taking advantage of these members, the missionaries are able to start their foundation for cultural sanitization.

The nationalist ideological crises and the dismissal of Igbo culture are what causes the eventual downfall of the Igbo society. As stated in a proverb by Igbo elders, “[...] if one finger brought oil it soiled the others” (125). This proverb, though stated very early on in *Things Fall Apart*, serves as an ominous foreshadowing of the contamination of Igbo society by the incoming missionaries. The literal meaning of the proverb refers to the way that oil tends to spread immediately. If it is brought by one finger, it will likely spread to the rest of the hand unless it is blocked or cleaned off. In another sense, it refers to how the turning of one citizen

will eventually lead to the turning of the whole society. As a society very divided by members like Okonkwo, who strongly uphold Igbo values no matter what, and members like Nwoye and Obierika, who strongly disagree with these values, Igbo society was already at great risk of falling apart. The Christian missionaries only speed up the process by providing refuge to those who are outcasts, and later absorbing the whole community. As Obierika explains to Okonkwo, “[The white man] has won over our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart” (176).

Vale McCaffrey
Form VI
Pastel Pencil on Paper

Hands



Cade-Mehretu-Rankin
Form IV
Memorandum

*From the Desk of Nucli
O'Lus*

From the Desk of Nucli O'Lus
Chief Executive Officer, Upper Arm Cell 48245BC
The Ribosome Introductory Handbook

To whom it may concern,

If you're receiving this letter, it means you're finally of age to begin your work as a Ribosome. Whether you live in segregated bondage on the Rough ER or luxuriate in the freedom of the Cytoplasm, we assure you, we regard you each with equal expendability— you can be replaced if you don't work hard enough. In this monopolized world of unpaid labor and euthanasia, all organelles serve a higher purpose than themselves: we serve the eukaryote that we make up, a homo-sapien named Fred. Everything we do, from synthesizing proteins to engaging in cellular respiration, is to ensure the survival of Fred. If you fail to serve your purpose as a Ribosome, it may mean the death of Fred, and, if Fred's religion is to be believed, the consigning of Fred to perdition until the end of time. To minimize the chances of Fred's death, you have several responsibilities you're expected to take care of. Read on and indulge us if you'd like to avoid painful death at the hands of a Lysosome!

One of your main responsibilities as a Ribosome is handling sensitive genetic information in the form of Messenger RNA strands. The mRNA strands are arguably more valuable employees than you, as they will be the ones who guide you through the construction of proteins. They will do this by providing you with a nucleotide sequence, which they've copied down from the DNA. It's your job to take these sequences and follow them to synthesize a protein.

Once you locate an mRNA Sequence, clamp it between your two subunits on it to prevent its escape. Scan for the START codon in the sequence by moving along it. Once you find the START codon, begin to read the subsequent codons in order and call over the tRNA employees with the corresponding anticodons. Command each tRNA employee to contribute their amino acid to the developing polypeptide chain. Each amino acid deposited will make the chain grow longer. It's your job to keep hold of the growing chain and ensure that it doesn't float away. Continue this process until you encounter a STOP codon, which indicates that you should stop reading the mRNA Sequence. By this point, you should be left with a polypeptide

chain composed of the amino acids collected from tRNA employees. The proteins you synthesize will continue to undergo various modifications before being put to work. Your role in assembling proteins—the translation process—has been concluded.

As the Nucleus of this cell, I understand that synthesizing a protein is hard work and that proteins may not always come out perfect. Know that, should a protein come out deformed, it isn't your fault. Often, our DNA-transcribing employees, various Enzyme workers, will mistranscribe the nucleotide sequences provided to them. Sometimes an overworked Enzyme employee will substitute nucleotides when copying them down, or even forget to include some nucleotides in their transcription. This can lead to catastrophically malformed proteins, which can cause physical deficiencies with Fred's body, which makes them a liability to the cell. To minimize the risk of genetic mutations to Fred, all malformed proteins will be euthanized by the Lysosome. We know it's never fun to watch your child be euthanized. It's advised that you look away during the lysing process, as mental unrest can severely impede your concentration while working.

This concludes the amount of help we are legally obligated to give. Now suit up, and get synthesizing! Let's make a difference.

*With love,
Nucli O'Lus.*

48245BC, "You hold no sentimental value to us."

Andrej Obradovic
Form VI
Poem + Addendum

Burning Fire

The wood to fuel the fire
Was no longer there.
Sap spews from the rubber tree
And coats his cracked skin,
But in the church,
The fire was roaring,
Scorching the songs of the past.

She goes to school to learn her writing
But when weekly visits from the officer become daily
and the hen doesn't lay,
Writing becomes reading and weeping.

"He is always right," the mother says to her son,
"Always listen to the man with the gun."
Knowing that by abandoning the past,
Her loved ones may last,

The lasting hands are hands to work with,
Hands to touch with,
And hands to carry with,
but they become hands to pray with,
And nothing else.

The burden he carries will break his back,
But the burden they carry erases black.
The smoke from the fire dissipates
As the pain of the past is vindicated.

Standing on the scarred backs of the people
Who cry out in despair,
A new empire is expanding
What was once home now lives on a prayer.

One man is stronger, destined to survive,
The other treated simply as spawn.
The right to live is now a privilege
Earned through submission to the king.

How will the wood to fuel the fire fulfill its destiny?
Will it burn?
Will it stand tall?
Just ask the king!

Addendum

For my final, I decided to explicate Rudyard Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" along with a letter King Leopold II of Belgium sent to colonial missionaries in the Congo Free State in 1883. Leopold II took control of the Congo during a wave of widespread European colonization, establishing it as his personal possession. As absolute ruler, Leopold II had total control over the native Congolese and their resources. After forming a militant force known as the Force Publique and sending missionaries to the Congo Free State, King Leopold had full control over the natives. Forcing evangelization and Westernization onto the Congolese enabled Belgian rule, quashing ideas of revolt, and eroded cultural and historical ties the Congolese had with each other, supposedly civilizing the native population. This process included demonizing African gods and deities and Anglicizing their names, all because it is the moral obligation of the white man to take up the "White Man's Burden." King Leopold encouraged his missionaries to "interpret" the Bible, manipulating the word of God to better fit the needs of the Belgian empire. Leopold II's manipulation of the Bible aided him in gaining control over millions of Congolese: he played the role of God. Designed to keep the colonized in submission, Leopold II's Biblical dogma, if questioned, could lead to capital punishment. The Force Publique expected families to provide livestock and fresh produce, among other things, under the threat of severe consequences. The Congolese toiled under the hot sun, peeling away at rubber trees and collecting sap as the booming bicycle and automobile industries demanded tires. The Force Publique were known for their punishments of mutilation, particularly of the hands. By the time Leopold II was forced to annex the Congo Free State, approximately ten million Congolese natives had died.

*The CIA:
Policy Through Politics, Or Sixty
Reasons Why the Dulles Brothers
Are The Worst*

Death squads, assassinations, torture, destruction of democracy, human experimentation, and recruitment of Nazis. All of these are scathing indictments, and if most Americans were asked about them in the abstract, they would agree that these might be the actions of a terrorist group, or perhaps a government in the Middle East or Latin America. In reality, these are all things done by our very own Central Intelligence Agency, which has committed countless human rights violations and war crimes at the behest of the US government, largely without the knowledge of the American people. By all rights, the CIA should be dismantled before it has the chance to ruin more lives. But with the president and Congress accustomed to having this branch of government do their dirty work, more likely than not, if dismantled, the CIA would still exist in some capacity. There would be even fewer checks and balances on this theoretical entity than there would be on the current CIA because it would exist in secret. So the solution is not to dismantle the CIA completely because without regulations what will take its place will likely be as immoral, if not worse. The more pertinent question would be to ask: what is the genesis of the CIA's problems?

All of the horrible things the CIA has done—murder of political dissidents, overthrow of democracy, and so much more—linked to the CIA's connection to politics. Politicians' influence on the CIA creates a system where personal agendas affect national security and international policy. The CIA should do what it was designed to do—collect intelligence in the interest of national security, interfering only when a proven threat to America arises. The CIA's unethical conduct has been due to its inappropriate relationships to politics and politicians.

Nepotism can be one of the most damaging characteristics of any modern company or group, including, of course, the CIA. Nepotism ensures that the most qualified people do not receive the positions they should and gives members of government undue influence over the CIA's actions. Political leaders have long placed their own family or friends into influential positions in the CIA, giving them control and inside knowledge of the agency. An obvious example was the tenure of Kermit Roosevelt, the grandson of Theodore Roosevelt, president from 1901 to 1909. Kermit Roosevelt lived a privileged life and was offered a position in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the precursor to the CIA, in 1950, at the age of 34 (likely having been put on their radar because he was a Roosevelt). President Eisenhower was extremely worried about international Soviet influence, and thus, Kermit Roosevelt's primary job in the OSS (and later in the CIA) was to find op-

portunities to damage the reputation of the Soviet Union and its allies. He quickly became the reigning Middle East 'expert' in the OSS and CIA, even though his only qualifications were his charm and visiting Iran once.

In 1953, when MI5 asked for the CIA's help to overthrow a so-called communist government in Iran, Roosevelt was the natural leader of the operation. Of course, Americans were perfectly aware that Britain's stated reasons for their actions in Iran were not true, but the U.S. wanted access to Iranian oil (as did Britain) so gave no objections. Roosevelt headed the spies on the ground who circulated propaganda and met with the political opponents of the prime minister, the alleged communist. When they had secured enough support, Roosevelt's operatives attempted to intercept the prime minister's car in the middle of the night but were unsuccessful. The CIA immediately ordered all actions in Iran to stop lest the international community find out about the U.S. involvement. But Kermit Roosevelt disobeyed the direct orders from the Director of the CIA, Allen Dulles, and continued with their plan for a second coup, which was successful. If he had not been a Roosevelt, a hugely influential name in Republican politics, his disobedience would have led to him being fired from the CIA, ruining his future career prospects. Instead, he was widely lauded for his quick thinking and diplomatic skills. Eisenhower awarded him the National Security Medal in 1954 for his 'achievements' in Iran. Roosevelt then went on to have an illustrious career working for American oil and defense firms, maintaining relationships with his former operatives and boss.

Roosevelt was fully aware of the power of his name and used it in negotiations with foreign and domestic leaders whenever possible. And, as historian Ervand Abrahamian says, "[they] believed Roosevelt. Why? He was a Roosevelt." This is likely part of the reason Roosevelt was hired by the CIA in the first place: to strengthen Eisenhower's presidency by having a Roosevelt in his defense agency, showing the world that the Republicans were united. The CIA understood the sway of Roosevelt's name and family and used it to their advantage. He may not have been the right person for the role, and had he not been hired, democracy in Iran could have continued. But this example shows the cycle of nepotism within the CIA. If your orders are not followed, place a trusted friend or family member (who will always act in your interests, whether or not that corresponds to the interests of the country and the CIA) in the agency. Thus the CIA becomes politicized—people must pander to partisan politics and be close friends with the president in order to serve in the CIA.

Likely the most appalling example of nepotism in the CIA, arguably with greater consequences than Kermit Roosevelt's tenure, is the CIA careers of the Dulles brothers. John Foster Dulles and Allen Dulles have left behind a complicated legacy that has warped American international policy for generations. They both lived privileged lives as young men, destined to go into law and politics. Both their uncle and grandfather were Secretaries of State under Presidents Wilson and Harrison, respectively. John Foster Dulles, the elder of the two brothers, began his career at a law firm and slowly expanded his expertise to become a legal counsel representing US interests at various UN conferences. By then, he had caught a few

presidents' eyes during his legal work and made his transition to politics, serving as a senator (of what state?) for four months. He was then appointed Secretary of State by President Eisenhower, a position Dulles viewed as an endorsement of his foreign policy stances. He enjoyed the complete confidence of President Eisenhower, and under his leadership the State Department shaped American foreign policy. A large part of his job was also to oversee the OSS, and later the CIA.

John's younger brother, Allen, benefited from his brother's political position. He had an early career similar to his brother's, working at a law firm and serving as the legal counsel to a foreign US delegation. At the beginning of World War II, Allen Dulles became an analyst for the OSS. It is, of course, almost certain that his brother recommended him to the OSS in the first place; he had no prior experience in intelligence. In 1948, he was put on a three-person committee to oversee the restructuring of the United States intelligence systems, including the creation of the CIA. He served as deputy director of the CIA from 1951 to 1953, when he was made Director of the CIA. Allen Dulles was the mastermind behind coups in Iran and Guatemala, setting a precedent for the later work of the CIA. Of course, Allen vehemently denied that his brother's position as Secretary of State helped him secure the position of director, but David Talbot, in his book on the Dulles brothers, completely disagrees. He doesn't even frame John Foster Dulles's help as a question, saying that "the truth is that Foster did exert his influence on his brother's behalf, and Eisenhower never felt close to the younger Dulles, regarding him as a necessary evil in his shadow war with world Communism." Since Eisenhower, as the president, had the final say on CIA nomination, this statement proves that Allen Dulles would have never gotten the job without his brother, the very definition of nepotism. The Dulles brothers, of course, show exactly how damaging politics is to the CIA, intertwined from the organization's inception. Not only did they affect the later structure of the CIA in setting the precedent for nepotism, they also ruined the lives of many people in Guatemala, Iran, Cuba, and even the United States.

That the CIA operates outside the checks and balances of the conscience of the American people is worrisome, but when presidents and other prominent political figures collude with the CIA without the knowledge of Congress, their actions border on unconstitutional. The most memorable incident was the Iran-Contra affair under Reagan. Congress had refused to supply more funds or weapons to the Contras, the political opponents of the democratic Sandinistas in Nicaragua, so Reagan had to find a way around this. During Reagan's second term as president, he authorized a secret mission to sell arms to Iran in exchange for American hostages, diverting that money to fund the US-backed overthrow of Nicaragua's government. All of Reagan's popular policies, including not cooperating with the Soviet Union and its allies, and not negotiating with terrorists or terrorist-sympathetic governments. His actions also violated a law passed by Congress in 1984 called the Boland Amendment, which limited CIA action in Nicaragua by stating that the United States would not help the Contras directly or indirectly, with money, guns, personnel, or any other aid. Obviously, Reagan's decision would not have been sanctioned

by Congress. Instead, he colluded with the CIA without Congress's knowledge.

Exposing this affair was made all the more difficult by the fact that Reagan administration officials withheld and impeded access to the Iran-Contra files. Reagan eventually admitted to knowledge of the deal, but he and most of the people involved were never indicted by Congress. Essentially, the Reagan administration got away with destroying Nicaragua's democracy. The Iran-Contra affair creates a dangerous loophole for other presidents or high-ranking lawmakers. It undermines the very idea of democratic processes and eliminates the checks and balances the US has in place to limit the power of the president. If the president is allowed to execute secret agendas through the CIA, their power becomes unregulated. Reagan's collusion with the CIA in the Iran-Contra affair shows the dangers of the CIA's involvement in partisan politics; presidents can push through their own agenda using the CIA without the knowledge or approval of Congress and without consequences. If the CIA is so closely intertwined with the government, it must also operate under the rules and regulations of the government. Collusion with the CIA without Congressional knowledge should be a guaranteed impeachable offense.

But just as importantly, corporate interests should be divorced from the CIA, whether in individuals or policy decisions, because it's impossible to ensure there are no conflicts of interest. Under a capitalist system, it is unimaginable that no private interests are represented in governmental policy. Because politicians rely on donations and endorsements from wealthy private corporations and individuals to get elected (and reelected), they are motivated to keep these companies happy, usually financially. Because the CIA has become so intertwined with politics, these private interests become represented in the international policy and action of the United States. The United Fruit Company (UFC), infamous for its role in the creation of banana republics in Latin America (e.g., Honduras and Guatemala) is one of the most visible examples of capitalist imperialism linked to the CIA. Guatemala was headed towards a democracy that valued its workers and compensated them fairly for their labor, which hurt the UFC's exploitative labor and business practices in the country. The UFC lobbied the U.S. government to overthrow the Guatemalan government, and the U.S. acquiesced. Sam Zemurray, the head of the UFC, was never shy about his belief that all of the company's PR problems because of their actions in Guatemala "could be readily solved with a word from the Department of State."

There was such a significant overlap between personnel of the UFC and the CIA that no public statements were needed when they could convey their apologies privately. The Dulles brothers, who did legal work for the UFC, were on the company's payroll for years and had personal friends at the highest levels of the company. Allen Dulles even sat on the UFC board of directors, predisposing him to take action in Guatemala if only to preserve his own financial interests. This is a blatant conflict of interest, as his only job as CIA Director should have been to collect information and act on it if and only if national security was threatened. This conflict of interest ran so far that it was said that "whenever people read the name

'United Fruit' [...] they mentally substituted 'the United States.'" It is clear that in this case, not only was the conduct of the CIA inappropriate, so was the U.S. government's. The fact that multiple members of the government and the CIA benefited financially from is unconscionable. The CIA's self-stated mission statement is to "preempt threats and further U.S. national security objectives by: collecting foreign intelligence that matters; producing objective all-source analysis; conducting effective covert action as directed by the president; and safeguarding the secrets that help keep our Nation safe." According to this mission statement, no one except the president and members of congress should have insider access to the actions of the CIA, especially not corporations and individuals who might financially benefit. But more importantly, the CIA's job is to collect intelligence to protect the national security of the United States. Here, instead of worrying about the security of the nation, CIA and government officials were preoccupied with their wallets. Corporate influence on government is one of the most reprehensible things about the United States, and the system must be changed to ensure the government (and by extension, the CIA) works to protect all of its citizens.

So the million-dollar question here is how can the CIA be fixed? If these problems are so deeply ingrained in the culture and structure of the CIA, how can such an entity be successful? The first step is removing the links to politics and thus remedy conflicts of interests. First of all, the Director of the CIA should not be nominated by the president. The nomination of directors by a president makes them beholden to the whims and wishes of that president. Instead, the nomination should come from within the CIA, with input from the former director and the public servants within the agency. Congress would then confirm this choice, with the president having a veto. Including more people in the nominating process will eliminate some of the nepotism and corruption in the current system. Next, no one with personal stakes or interests (this may be determined by Congress, but will include financial interests as well as family ties) will be allowed to serve as the director of the CIA. The job description of the director (50 US Code Section 3036) must be modified to reflect these changes, especially subsection D4, which specifies that the director of the CIA may "perform other duties or functions related to intelligence affecting the national security as the President or the Director of National Intelligence may direct." This aspect of the job description must be amended and specified to limit the duties of the CIA Director to truly ensure disobeying this aspect of federal law will have very real consequences for both the Director of the CIA as well as the president and Director of National Intelligence. Obviously, these consequences must also extend to people in lower levels of the CIA as well.

Presidential collusion must be an impeachable offense, and the CIA must be beholden to the laws of our nation as well as international law. The CIA must exist inside the law as it was intended, not take away the rights and lives of innocent people. Additionally, of course, there must be consequences for corporations who influence the CIA in inappropriate ways. Either economic sanctions or fines might be most useful. Obviously, these suggestions might not fix the CIA completely, but they might put the CIA on the right track to gaining the morality to

make the right decisions. But in case they don't, an oversight committee should be created to supervise the CIA's actions. This committee should have people from all backgrounds (government, CIA, experts in national security, ethics professors) and include diverse people, in order to best advise the CIA. Of course, the Directors of National Security and Intelligence would sit on this committee as well. Ideally, by having the American public aware of the CIA's actions, this committee would serve as an ethics check of the CIA's actions without threatening national security. These guidelines might help the CIA find the ethics and morality it has lacked for so long and turn it into a system that we, as the American people, can be genuinely proud of.

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Race Relations in Singapore

Modern-day Singapore is sometimes viewed as a utopian haven of multiculturalism. In his op-ed “Singapore and Racism: A Journey into History and Policy,” Ethan Ho writes that “ordering coffee [in Singapore] requires 3 languages: ‘uncle, one Kopi O kosong with ice please!’ (Kopi O = Chinese dialect meaning coffee with no milk, kosong = Malay meaning ‘nothing’ i.e. no sugar).” While this perception of unity may feel like a reality for some privileged Singaporeans, the truth lies in Singapore’s deep history of racism that has been carried to the present day. While the government has taken significant, successful steps to reduce racial divides, Singapore is still not a post-racial society.

Why

Malays are native to Singapore, but during British colonialism in the 1800s, an influx of migrants from China, India, and other parts of the world overwhelmed the Malay population. By the 1870s, Chinese people comprised the majority of the population. After over a century of British rule, Singapore finally obtained its independence in 1959 and joined the Federation of Malaysia shortly thereafter in 1963. However, this partnership resulted in turmoil due to political differences: Singapore believed in a fairly equal system of governance in which all people could be given equal opportunity, whereas Malaysia supported a political system that favored Malays and held the sentiment that as natives, Malays deserved political dominance. Moreover, Malaysians feared that the Chinese would hold economic dominance over them. In 1964, there were a series of deadly race riots between Chinese and Malays that broke out in Singapore. The communal tensions ultimately led to Singapore’s separation from Malaysia in 1965 (Bloomberg Quicktake). But even after these horrific racial wars, the Singaporean government did not become ethnically neutral. Under the Speak Mandarin campaign of 1979, the Ministry of Education launched a program to promote the learning of Chinese language and culture, while no programs were created to promote the learning of other cultures in Singapore.

Remnants of Singapore’s racially tumultuous history can still be observed in modern Singaporean culture. For example, common phrases such as, “let’s go Lepak” (Lepak is Malay for lazing around), which comes from the lazy stereotype associated with Malays, are rooted in racial prejudice. Malays specifically face a long history of bigoted stereotypes. In 1986, sociologist Charles Hirschman propagated

the notion that Malays have no incentive to work because they are selfish. As Chinese and Indian workers migrated to Singapore, colonial masters saw little need for Malay labor and forced Chinese and Indian workers to partake in grueling, deadly labor. Hirschman claimed that Malays chose to refrain from this work because they were more concerned with their wellbeing, hence stereotyping them as lazy and self-centered (Ho).

How

While not perfect, Singapore has managed to build a fairly harmonious society. Upon gaining independence, the first major political party, the People’s Action Party [PAP], was formed to create a sense of nationality among Singaporeans while anchoring them to their respective ethnic groups. To do this, the PAP categorized Singapore into four ethnic groups: Chinese, Malay, Indian, and other (Ho). In response to the racial riots of the 1900s, the Singaporean government enshrined multi-racialism in their constitution and “implemented three initiatives to promote social integration: (a) public housing, (b) education, and (c) national service” (Chew). Due to racial segregation dating back to British colonial times, the Singaporean government relocated all races to new public housing estates in the 1960s and 70s. Today, 80% of Singapore’s population live in public housing, in which racial quotas are enforced to prevent racial enclaves. Another one of the first initiatives Singapore pursued was breaking down the language barrier among ethnic groups (English, Chinese, Malay, Tamil), with English designated as the common language. School children were required to take English so that they were socialized to speak English fluently. The government also created policies to ensure multi-racial representation, such as the Group Representation Constituency, enacted in 1988 to require political parties to field at least one minority candidate. To further ensure equal representation, reserved elections were created in 2016 for certain racial groups if no one from their group had been elected president in the last thirty years (Bloomberg Quicktake). The Sedition Act of Singapore and the Penal Code Chapter 224 are two laws that to protect against racism, with the former penalizing speech that promotes feelings of hostility among racial groups, and the latter making it an offense to “intentionally wound the religious or racial feelings of any person.” Offenders may face a fine of up to three years in prison. Thanks to these policies, there have been no racial riots since 1969, although it is unclear if that is due to a “reduction of prejudice or to the penalties imposed by the laws of Singapore” (Chew).

External Motivations

These efforts to reduce racial tensions cannot be fully accredited to the benevolence of the Singaporean government though. A major motivation behind Singapore’s strong stance against racism, despite its overwhelmingly Chinese majority, was its relationships with Indonesia and Malaysia. If Malays and Indonesians

were treated poorly in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia could apply pressure by interfering with Singapore's seaport, which they could easily access. But to further understand why Singapore developed its anti-racist politics, it is important to understand Indonesia and Malaysia's respective histories with regards to anti-Chinese politics.

Chinese people have contributed greatly to Indonesia's economy and culture, although they make up just 3% of its population and have been discriminated against throughout Indonesia's history. Chinese migrants started settling on Indonesia's main island, Java, in the late 13th century and built a thriving community alongside local Indonesians. But under Dutch colonial rule, the population was split into classes by race, and the Chinese were used as middlemen to collect crops and taxes from native Indonesians, resulting in resentment and discrimination toward the Chinese. After Indonesia gained independence in 1945, its president prevented the Chinese from doing business outside of the city, and opportunities for Chinese people to hold government and military posts were limited. The practice of Chinese traditions was also prohibited. However, the government still relied on the Chinese to build their economy. When the economy collapsed during the Asian financial crisis, rich Chinese people were blamed. In May 1998, violent, deadly anti-Chinese riots took place in an area where many Chinese people lived. The government subsequently banned the laws prohibiting Chinese cultural practices and made them more welcome in society. Nonetheless, discrimination against Chinese people still exists, especially as they're used as political leverage, seen as dominating the economy, and sometimes prohibited from owning land. More recently in 2016, ethnic Chinese fled to Malaysia and Singapore from their homes in North Sumatra, Indonesia, following brutal attacks on viharas [Buddhist monasteries] and pagodas. The attacks were scarily reminiscent of the 1998 riots (South China Morning Post).

On the other hand, politics in Malaysia have been seen largely through the prism of race although minority groups are critical of Malaysia's race-based policies. Economic opportunities are given disproportionately to Malays and other indigenous people to Malaysia, as they hold a sense of superiority as natives to the country. Today, the ruling Barisan Nasional is banking its hopes on Malay support, but young voters oppose the inequality it promotes. In fact, many Malays believe they can stand on their own without the political upper hand (CNA Insider). In his article "A rise in anti-Chinese rhetoric," researcher Hew Wai Weng argues that Malaysia and Indonesia have experienced similar trends in anti-Chinese politics, with political contestation, economic disparity, and religious differences underpinning their similarities. Indeed, both countries share similar demographics, each with a Muslim majority and a mostly non-Muslim Chinese minority (Hew). It is because of Indonesia and Malaysia's shared anti-Chinese stance that Singapore has had to level the playing field for its Chinese majority and other ethnic groups to keep the peace among the nations.

Analysis

Singapore has come a long way, and its policies have been largely effective in reducing racial tensions. However, covert and overt discrimination, the income and opportunity gaps, extremism, and racially charged stereotypes and discourse are still large issues plaguing the nation. Furthermore, the country lacks a comprehensive plan with specific goals to tackle these issues. While initiatives such as The Sedition Act and the public housing racial quotas have managed to reduce acts of overt racism, they have failed to address covert racism and the educational and economic disparities among racial groups. According to the Singapore Department of Statistics latest Population Census, "only 5.1% of Malays obtained a university qualification compared to 22.6% of Chinese and 35% of Indians," and, "the median monthly household income for Malays was \$3,844 compared to \$5,100 for Chinese and \$5,370 for Indians." Additionally, a recent survey conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies found that, of a group of 2,000 Singaporeans, 53% believe racism is no longer an important issue, 64-66% believe discussions surrounding race create unnecessary tension, 46-70% are not supportive of race-based information that could reveal racial disparities, and 89% endorse meritocracy. These results demonstrate a clear lack of understanding among Singaporeans regarding the wealth and opportunity gaps and the ongoing racial stereotypes that continue to divide their society (Chew).

Racial stereotypes continue to play a role in Singapore's culture, despite the government's attempts to unify ethnic groups and rule out bigotry. Many Singaporeans have experienced some form of non-systemic discrimination, whether that be hearing the age-old stereotype that "Malays are lazy," having school kids segregate sports teams by race, or witnessing children make fun of Chinese people's eyes. Interviewees from the video "Experiencing Racism In Singapore" agreed that racism is an issue in Singapore, citing that "it's not blatant but institutionalized" and that it "is not addressed" (Real Talk). Another issue with Singapore's policies lies within the People's Action Party. Singapore held a general election in 2020, in which the ruling People's Action Party won by more than 61% of the vote. However, Journalist Cherian George, a critic of PAP rule, argues that "last year's election shows the extent to which the party has become entrapped by its past success, and limited by its own mythologies." In his interview with The Diplomat's Sebastian Strangio, George cited that in this past election, Singaporeans showed an increasing willingness to criticize and put certain checks and balances on the ruling party, while main opposition parties continued to improve. The PAP has especially fallen short in its management of ethnic relations, seeing such relations through the oversimplified lens of order—a lens inherited from British colonizers. George believes that a reformed PAP more open to political competition and social justice is in the best interest of Singapore. To reform the PAP, he suggests that independent election bodies should be installed, press licensing should end, the PAP should join the global movement for open government, and civil society organizing should be less restricted (Strangio).

While covert and blatant racism in Singapore is relatively uncommon, it certainly has not been eradicated. This issue has come to light within the past week, as reports came out about a sixteen-year-old Christian Singaporean student detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) for planning a deadly attack on two mosques in Singapore inspired by the Christchurch terrorist attacks in New Zealand (Lim Min). According to Home Affairs and Law Minister K. Shanmugam, this attack is indicative of the larger issue of rising right-wing extremism in Singapore. He noted that “seven young people under the age of 20 have been arrested under the ISA since 2015 after getting radicalized through the Internet” (Koh). He recognized that although the attack wasn’t carried out, it was still an example of what could happen when people are influenced by hate. When asked if there was still racism in Singapore, Education Minister Lawrence Wong responded yes and said that “it is a big issue. Let’s acknowledge it... But is the situation today better than it was 10 years ago, 20 years ago? I would say it is too. But is it perfect? No. So our aim must be to continue trying to reduce the imperfections, year after year after year” (Koh). He also alluded that identity politics are not the solution and that modern-day ideas propagated through social media, while informative, come with the cost of division. Finally, there is disagreement surrounding racist and hateful discourse, which is convoluted under the Singaporean principle of freedom of speech. In his article “Forum: Correct solution to racism is not a legal one,” Brent Lim Zi Jian discusses freedom of speech, and how branding racist speech as “violent” is unconstitutional. He argues that branding such speech as violent is akin to saying it should be illegal (violent speech is prohibited by the Constitution), which would justify illegalizing actions solely on the basis of hurt feelings. He goes further to claim that “this would be the first step into eroding what’s left of the right to freedom of speech” (Jian). In response to Jian’s article, several public officials wrote an article entitled “Forum: Laws prevent escalation of discourse on racism into violence,” in which they argued that while dialogue is necessary to deal with racism, offensive speech can result in violence. They cited the attack on the US Capitol as an example of “how thin the veneer of civil discourse is, and how quickly it can degenerate” (Goh). Because of this, Singapore must have laws to prevent the escalation of violent discourse, such as the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act that safeguards against hate speech.

Much like our own nation, Singapore still has work to do in improving racial tensions and bigoted notions regarding its ethnic groups. It has implemented exemplary policies and has demonstrated a strong will to build a unified nation, but it must continue to evolve its policies as forms of hate, such as internet violence, continue to evolve. One of the biggest barriers Singaporeans will have to overcome in their quest for a harmonious, anti-racist society will be their discomfort with dialogue surrounding issues of race. People of privilege must step down from their pedestals to have conversations about the real issues facing minority groups in Singapore. By getting to the root of the racial divide, Singaporeans can enact real change, and future Singaporeans may be anti-racist by choice rather than by fear of the law.

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Tasha Finkelstein

Form VI

Report

A False Belonging

Nativism, the belief that natives of a country are superior to non-natives, is at the very forefront of our nation’s history around immigration. The nativist sentiment and policies that arose around the Muslim Ban, and in the years leading up to it, are clear indicators that nativism is alive and well in the United States today. And nothing about it has changed all that much in the past two centuries: the nativist policies and rhetoric behind Muslim immigration in the twenty-first century can be traced directly back to both the Chinese immigration and the Irish and German Catholic immigration of the nineteenth century. While the immigrant group being targeted changes through the centuries, it is clear that the core pillars of nativism—race, religion and gender ideals—and the way nativism presents itself have not changed at all.

The Chinese Exclusion Act is evidence of the central role race plays in nativist sentiment. In 1882, The Chinese Exclusion Act became the first U.S. law to explicitly exclude a group of immigrants based on their race, nationality, and class, suspending all immigration of Chinese laborers into the United States. In order to understand the underlying sentiment behind the Chinese Exclusion Act, it is essential to look at the precursor to the Chinese Exclusion Act: the Page Law of 1875. The Page Law doesn’t explicitly refer to the Chinese in its language but instead aims to keep out any immigrants who enter the United States on “lewd” or “immoral” grounds. Though the law didn’t exclude Chinese by name, the demographics of immigrants affected by the Page Law demonstrate that the law was clearly targeting Chinese women immigrating to the United States. The political climate in the years leading up to The Page Law also emphasized the demonization of Chinese women; in 1870, Chinese prostitutes in California were already being targeted on the basis that they threatened the American domestic ideal, corrupted pre-existing racial and class lines, and were believed to carry a strain of disease that would “poison Anglo-Saxon blood” (Lee). Seven years after the Page Act was enacted, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed. The Act was not shy about who it was referring to, this time referring to Chinese immigrants in its very name. The development of the language going from “lewd” and “immoral” to “Chinese” is a clear indication of how Chinese immigrants were thought of as a threat to American values in the 19th century.

In the twenty-first century, the same nativist conception of immigrants as dangerous can be understood through looking at Executive Order 13769, also known as the Muslim Ban. Just like the Chinese Exclusion Act, Donald Trump’s 2017 Executive Order also targets immigrants based on their nationality. The original version of the order bans foreign nationals from seven majority-Muslim coun-

tries from visiting the United States for 90 days. Similar to the transition from the Page Act to the Chinese Exclusion Act, a change that indicates explicit prejudice against Chinese immigrants in the 19th century, the language behind the Muslim Ban is evidence of the perceived threat nativists feel against Muslim immigrants in the twenty-first century. The fact that the now coined “Muslim Ban” comes from the original title “Executive Order Protecting The Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into The United States” is a clear indicator that the United States equates “Muslim” with “terrorist.” Furthermore, the purpose behind the Muslim Ban calls for “detecting individuals with terrorist ties and stopping them from entering the United States.” Immigrants coming to destroy America is not a new fear: in 1882, congressman Edward K. Valentine of Nebraska, indicated that, “In order to protect our laboring classes, the gate must be closed.” While the underlying reasons for threat may be different, the message behind the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Muslim Ban is the same: Muslim and Chinese immigrants have to be excluded from the United States because of the perceived danger they pose.

Although it is evident that nationality and race were key factors in the nativism surrounding the Muslim Ban and the Chinese Exclusion Act, the two policies were inherently different. While the Chinese Exclusion Act was predominantly based on race, the anti-Muslim is not. Despite the mislabeling of all Arabs as Muslim and all Muslims as Arab, “Muslim” refers to a religion, not a race. This distinction reveals another key aspect behind nativism: religion. The history of anti-Muslim beliefs behind the Muslim Ban can best be understood by comparing anti-Muslim sentiment today with the anti-Catholic sentiment of Irish and German immigration in the 19th century. With the influx of Irish and German Catholic immigration in the 1820s, Catholicism soon began to be viewed by nativists as an internal threat to the United States. From the nativist perspective, Protestantism was at the core of American values and any other set of beliefs that went against Protestantism was “subversive to the republic itself.” In Eastern cities of the U.S. anti-Catholic sentiment turned violent, with churches and convents being burned down frequently, and priests being the victims of public assault, with one priest even writing, “I have not considered myself safe to walk the streets after sunset.”

Similar hate crimes erupted in the twenty-first century against Muslim immigrants, as well as people who were perceived to be Muslim, after the September 11th attacks. While Catholics were perceived to be disloyal because of their allegiance to the pope, Muslim hate crimes existed upon the notion that Muslims had allegiance to terrorist organizations. Balbir Singh Sodh, who was not Muslim and wore a turban as part of his Sikh faith, was shot to death outside of the gas station he owned just four days after 9/11. When his killer was arrested, he shouted in pride, “I stand for America all the way.” This violent display of xenophobia in the name of patriotism echoes the belief nativists had against Catholic immigration: that any other religion would ultimately undermine American democracy. Additionally, in the years leading up to the 2017 Muslim Ban, President Trump clearly showed that he perceived Muslims as an extreme threat to the United States. After the Paris attacks in 2015, Trump declared that there was no choice but to

close down mosques in the U.S. Similar to how nativists saw churches in the 19th century, Trump described mosques as places where “some really bad things are happening.” Trump continued on with the fear that Muslims were going to threaten the country, saying, “large segments of the Muslim population” have “great hatred towards Americans.”

The similarities between the 21st century Muslim Ban and the 19th century Catholic and Chinese immigration do not just end with perceived threats based on race and religion. The method for how the U.S. generates fear around Muslim, Catholic, and Chinese immigrants is also similar. Trump’s second version of the executive order calls for a log of “honor killings,” which the order defines as “gender-based violence against women ... in the United States by foreign nationals.” While anti-refugee groups have used these “honor killings” as a way to oppose U.S. refugee programs, in reality, there is lacking evidence of a correlation between violence against women and Syrian refugees. This false sentiment surrounding refugees is more closely tied with the demonization of Muslims than anything else. When former U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions was told that there was no evidence that there were any honor killings among the refugee population in the U.S., he responded, “Well, it’s from the same cultural background.”

This language associating the culture of Muslims with mistreatment of women is eerily similar to the nativist view of the 19th century that Catholic women were victims of sexual abuse at the hands of the Catholic Church. Much like the realities of the refugees of the twenty-first century, these rumors were nothing but fear mongering and a way to spew anti-Catholic rhetoric. There were even instances of people who falsely claimed to be nuns publishing false stories about abuse in the church in order to widely generate the belief that Catholic men mistreated women. Additionally, nativists also used the gender relations of Chinese immigrant populations as a way to point out that any differences from American values around gender should automatically be perceived as a threat. They argued that Chinese men mistreated Chinese women on two fronts: first, by exploiting Chinese women in support of the Chinese trade in prostitution and secondly, by abandoning female members of their family when leaving for the United States. Similar to how nativists use the narrative of mistreatment of women as a way to discourage Muslim-refugee immigration, nineteenth century exclusionists used gender-based arguments to assert that immigrants were not suited to be in the United States.

How can a country that has no clear ancestry to cling onto also cling so tightly to white, Protestant, gendered values? This dilemma seems to be at the very heart of nativism. Because of America’s multicultural origins, there is no way to define who is more “American” than others. Thus, the need to cling to a false notion of belonging and identity will always haunt American society. Through policies, rhetoric, and beliefs passed down, nativists have built up an unattainable version of the “ideal” American that is inherently anti-immigrant, to give them a greater sense of belonging while in turn making all newcomers appear to be a threat to American democracy based on their specific identities.

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Saya Kim-Suzuki
Form VI
Personal Narrative

Nice

Saya was the Asian girl in the third-grade invited to all the birthday parties. She was just so *nice*! During PE, she would sit on the sidelines with her friend. Secretly, she wanted to play basketball, but her friend didn't want to. If she left her, that would be mean.

I was invisible not only in the eyes of others but also in my own.

In *Invisibility is an Unnatural Disaster: Reflections of an Asian American Woman*, Mitsuye Yamada reflects upon her intersectional female and Asian identity and how it contributed to her "underground culture of survival," which in turn caused her to "[become] in the eyes of others the person [she] was trying not to be" (37). The seemingly harmless stereotype that Asian women are passive and apolitical had a direct impact on the way she acted. This stereotype threat made it difficult to differentiate the line between her true identity and the identity society assigned to her.

When I was in elementary school, I decided that my new hobbies would be knitting and cooking. I began to take art classes where my wobbly fingers struggled to stitch the fraying yarn through the needles. And I knew how to heat leftovers in the microwave, so I considered myself a chef. I soon realized how much I hated knitting, but to this day, I enjoy cooking (now I promise I can actually cook), but I still can't help but wonder if this is truly who I am, or just the residue of the female stereotype that plagued my childhood.

The word "nice" was used as a superficial personality trait to describe me at that time. I was proud of it because I thought it was a good thing; something we were all trying to achieve. Even from that young age, I was told this behavior would help me get married. So I continued on my way, saying "yes" to every favor asked of me. I gave all my free time to others, and I didn't understand how valuable my own time was. I didn't realize how harmful this would be to my self-confidence and self-understanding.

In *A Litany for Survival*, Lorde says, "When we speak we are afraid/our words will not be heard/nor welcomed/but when we are silent/we are still afraid." I was afraid to speak up because I was not someone who was typically outspoken. That's what I and everyone around me believed. Did I truly believe that or was my perception of myself blinded by others? If I spoke up, I was worried nobody would listen. As if I was possessed, a ghost, invisible. But when I was silent, I was fearful that if others thought I was lost, then I truly was lost. I was clutching onto my perception of identity for fear that it could be snatched away at any moment.

During the fall of my junior year, I went to a semester school in the mountains of Colorado. Within the first week, someone I had never talked to before came up to me and asked me to do his math homework for him because I was a “human calculator.” I was deeply troubled and walked away without a word. It was my first step towards saying “no.” Reflecting upon this moment during our three-hour solo walk in the woods, I realized that I was contributing to my invisibility by staying silent, perpetuating a constant cycle of fear. After this incident, I began to acknowledge my foreign identity laced with society’s pre-defined traits. Because of the nature of invisibility, identifying it was the most challenging step. In Audre Lorde’s *Transformation of Silence Into Language and Action*, she articulates that “we have been socialized to respect fear more than our own needs for language and definition, and while we wait in silence for that final luxury of fearlessness, the weight of silence will choke us” (44). Silence is procrastination, the constant habit of putting off action. It’s dangerous because it’s compounding, and grows more dangerous with every passing day.

Soon we were off on our first eighteen-day backpacking expedition. In the deep backcountry, for my physical survival, I was forced to advocate for myself. I had to speak up when I was hungry, thirsty, or had to use the restroom. I had to say “no” when I was asked to go fetch water from the river when I was injured or too tired. Our distance from society threw stereotypes out the window, for all we cared about was what we were going to eat for dinner that day. It was certainly refreshing, being released to a certain extent from the strain of expectations. But most importantly, I got to see for myself who I really was.

I learned to be honest and listen—not only with others but with myself. I spoke up, I confronted, I sang, and most importantly, I reflected. “Transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation” (Lorde 42). When I returned home, I felt anew: more certain of who I truly was. I was no longer invited to everyone’s birthday parties, but that was fine. I didn’t feel the need to satisfy everybody, and I realized that I can be selfish sometimes.

I was privileged to have this opportunity to physically run away from society to untangle myself from expectations. I am sharing my experience to raise this question: what parts of your identity are defined by you? There is no simple answer but it is a question I wish someone had asked me all those years ago.

I was once told you are the average of the five people you spend the most time with. I was always tied with a “sisterly” bond to people I have known since I was a baby. And although these long-standing relationships are valuable, I need to acknowledge my evolution as a person. I should choose to whom I give my time to because those are the people that will impact how I grow. I still hate the word “nice.” It reminds me of my past accumulation of my artificial female & Asian identity. It’s giving in; it’s smiling even when you’re sad. Letting others define me as quiet and indifferent affected how I saw myself. So I urge you now to step back, and ask yourself, “who am I?” Ask the question and reflect, but don’t feel pressured to answer it because we will never be able to pinpoint it exactly since we are constantly changing.

My experience is not unique. Yamada, Lorde, and many of us have gone through the tug-of-war between true identity and society’s expectations of our identity. Whether it’s your race, gender, sexuality, religion, etc, humans tend to label and judge. We must not only fight those preconceived notions internally but also work on not boxing others in as well.

Marissa Meng
Form VI
Artwork

Untitled



Vivian Lee
Form V
Analysis

*Identity in
“Bilingual Sestina”
and “In Plaster”*

Identity is both fluid and multifaceted. Each of us is composed of a portfolio of individual identities and aspirations that come together to inform our decisions, relationships, and thoughts. As humans, we live in a highly social environment. We crave the need to be seen and accepted by others around us, yet we also fear judgment and prejudice that may come as a result of self-expression. We feel pressured by societal norms and expectations to polarize our identities. Rather than taking a holistic approach to how we choose to define ourselves, we often suppress the less accepted side of ourselves to give license to the side that is generally accepted. In many cases, identity polarization becomes a way to sabotage ourselves. Being at the margins of multiple groups can make us feel as though we are perpetual outsiders. The poems “Bilingual Sestina,” by Julia Alvarez, and “In Plaster,” by Sylvia Plath, address and explain the struggles of identity navigation.

Language is the medium through which we express ourselves and maintain cultures. It is a vital part of human connection, both to others and to our identities. “Bilingual Sestina” is about Alvarez’s search for identity while living between two cultures and languages. Alvarez narrates this struggle in a way that conjures feelings of intimacy and longing. “Bilingual Sestina” is written in sestina form, a fixed form of poetry with six stanzas of six lines each, followed by a three-line stanza. Each line ends with one of six key words in a standard repetition. The obsession, repetition, and affirmation of these key words gives the reader a chance to mull over the themes expressed. Alvarez begins “Bilingual Sestina” with an exclamation—“Some things I have to say aren’t getting said”—and then resumes the first stanza by explaining the limitations of expression as a result of the complex nature of languages. Here, Alvarez raises the question of what can get lost in translation. Phrases, words, syntactic structures, and concepts of certain cultures do not exist in other cultures, and as a result, many meanings are lost in the process of translation. She writes, “Even Spanish failed us then when we realized how frail a word is when faced with the thing it names.” If the true meanings of words can get lost in translation, then so can emotions, ideas, and identity. Alvarez continues the next four

stanzas describing the role of language in discovering the world around her. She describes the relationship between herself and Rosario as the relationship between Adam and God, in that to a certain extent, Rosario creates parts of Alvarez's world. She calls to Rosario, saying, "Rosario, muse of el patio, sing in me and through me, say, that world again, begin with those first words you put in my mouth as you pointed to the world." By giving names to the things around Alvarez, Rosario introduces them into Alvarez's life. The tone in the final three stanzas changes to a feeling of confusion and exhaustion. To Alvarez, language is alive. Each language takes on unique characteristics that reflect specific cultures and environments, and consequently, evoke feelings of warmth and belonging. Alvarez does not feel at home with English, and longs for her mother tongue. "Bilingual Sestina" is written in both English and Spanish. In doing so, Alvarez illustrates her thought process to her readers, demonstrates cultural disconnects, and explores her identity as a bilingual writer. Alvarez's sestina takes a different approach to the conventional style of a sestina. After the fourth stanza, she stops repeating key words at the end and start of adjacent stanzas. Assuming the conventional style, the key words of this sestina are Spanish, closed, *nombre*, words, world, English, saying, and *en ingles*. By taking a different approach, Alvarez exerts greater influence on the emotions and leaves a stronger impression on the reader. "Bilingual Sestina" clearly communicates the feeling of being caught between two worlds in a place where words are crucial to self-expression and identity.

In contrast to "Bilingual Sestina," "In Plaster" recounts the struggle of two dueling personas, in which one is significantly overpowering the other to the point of suffocation. To illustrate this, Plath juxtaposes two conflicting identities: one of personal creativity and expression, and one of a facade that strictly abides by societal norms. She narrates "In Plaster" in nine seven-line stanzas. Plath begins by introducing her two sides in a rush of anxiousness and desperation. She establishes two personas, whom she names white person and the old yellow one, or her new self and old self, then proceeds to explain how the former persona came to be. In the next two stanzas, Plath explains how her old self nurtured her new side and how the two sides became co-dependent. In the fourth and fifth stanzas, these two personas begin to split. Her old self begins to fall apart as a result of neglect by her new self, who "thought she was immortal." The tone of the poem turns to emptiness, dislocation, and horror as the personas continue to split further in the following two stanzas. Plath's old self desperately tries to resolve differences with her new side, in fear that this new persona will take over completely. Plath writes, "She'd supported me for so long I was quite limp [...] Living with her was like living with my own coffin." The final stanza ends in a hopeful tone: "Now I see that it must be one or either of us [...] I'm collecting my strength; one day I shall manage without her, and she'll perish with emptiness then, and begin to miss me." In the end, Plath recognizes that her new self has to exist in order for her to be accepted by society. However, abiding by society is nothing without substance or passion, or what her old self represents. Though they are opposites, Plath must embrace both sides to find balance within herself and to survive.

Everyone has their own perception of a narrative about themselves that defines who they are. Inevitably, we will come across inherent paradoxes in the search for self. In accordance with our human nature, we will split ourselves into parts with easy definitions that can often conflict, leading us to think that becoming one takes away our role as another. In the end, identities cannot be turned on and off. "Bilingual Sestina" and "In Plaster" emphasize the importance of the pursuit of individual autonomy, or the idea that we should live our lives according to our own reasons and not as a result of societal manipulation or other external forces. By embracing the reality of our multiple identities, we can identify connections among our identities that we can use to make ourselves stronger.

Racism and Intersecting Issues in Hurston and Hughes

While authors Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston discuss race and colorism in their writing (Hughes' 1926 essay, *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*, and Hurston's 1937 novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*), they are both raising related subtler issues such as gender and class. These complementary points of gender and class exacerbate race and its effect. Hurston's character Mrs. Turner has views that represent colorism while simultaneously addressing larger unspoken gender issues. Langston Hughes's essay comments on not only racism but class within the Black community. Hurston's Janie has an "advantage" because she is light skinned. But how did she attain that "advantage"? Both writers recognize and explore how racism is amplified when it is intertwined with other issues such as class and colorism. Though Hurston's and Hughes's comments mostly surround racism at first glance, underlying meanings showcase ambiguity in the texts.

Hughes discusses racism by African Americans on their own race, mentioning that mothers of the "negro middle class" would often tell their children to "not be like n-words" (1). He argued that the middle class was trying too hard to be like white people and that hampered the culture and artistic potential of his race. Using negative descriptions of one's own race or dismissing one's own culture exemplifies internalized racism. As he later said, it proved to be "a very high mountain indeed for the would-be racial artist to climb in order to discover himself and his people" (1). This culture of idolizing "the white man" and degrading people of their own race was clearly damaging and prevented young Black people from creating authentic Black art. Consequently, it made it harder for young Black people to embrace and acknowledge African American culture.

Looking deeper into this issue, there is a social class difference as well. It seems that Hughes thought that society ranked poor African Americans, middle class African Americans, upper class African Americans and then white people regardless of their socio-economic status. This hierarchical idea is a "pecking order"

in the sense that everyone is below or above certain social groups. Why did middle and upper class African Americans reject their poor African American counterparts? Their prejudice was not only based on race but socioeconomic status as well. When Hughes says "there will perhaps be more aping of things white than in a...less wealthy home," in reality, middle class African Americans wanting to live like "the White man" is very much like to a poor white person wanting to achieve economic mobility. In principle, they both are interested in living like people one step up in this metaphorical "pecking order," which doesn't only pertain to race. Similar to how middle and upper class African Americans made fun of and degraded poorer people, white people in the same financial position often make jokes or degrading comments about "rednecks" or poorer white people. Obviously the word "redneck" doesn't carry the same weight as the n-word because of the different historical context, yet there is still a comparison to be made. Hughes was commenting on the fact that middle class African Americans try to separate themselves from lower class African Americans because they want to think of themselves as having a higher social status, not only because they want to appear more white (by acting in a stereotypical white manner). Hughes addresses this when he writes that middle class Black people "themselves draw a color line" (1).

Comparatively, Hurston is making a critique about gender along with racism and colorism. Mrs. Turner has incredibly racist ideologies that offer an interesting contrast to what one may expect. Her ideas stem from the fact that white people treat Black people as inferior. As a result, the lightest skinned Black people should be superior to darker skinned Black people. At one point, Mrs. Turner mentions that "anyone who looked more white folkish than herself was better than she was in her criteria, therefore it was right they should be cruel to her at times.... Like the pecking order in a chicken yard" (144). This is clearly a similarity to Hughes' assessment. "The pecking order" is exactly like how Hughes seems to make a ranking of lower class Black people, middle to upper class Black people, and finally white people. This seems like a fairly straightforward idea put forth by Hurston to offer a radical opinion as thought provoking as it was.

In the world of Mrs. Turner, people become better than other people by having lighter skin. She is fond of Janie because Janie has even lighter skin than she has. Yet even with this part of Janie's identity being seen as a plus, Janie achieved this level of social status through a history of rape and violence in her family. Actions taken by her grandmother to arrange for an early marriage before she passed were guided by the trauma she and her daughter both faced. She wanted Janie to not have to go through a similar experience and instead be in a successful relationship. In the end, it most likely prevented Janie from having a truly happy relationship for an extended period of time because of her rocky start with Logan Killicks and Joe Starks. This situation is extremely complicated; in any case, on the surface, Janie is benefitting from having lighter skin.

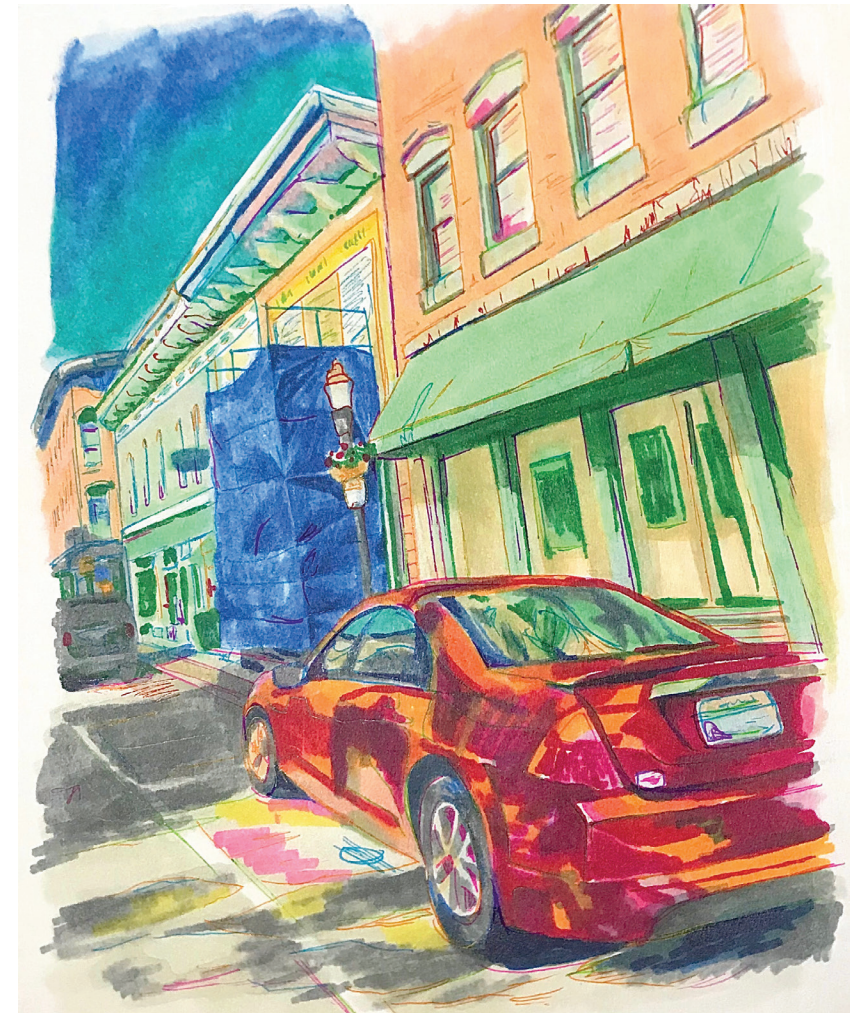
Janie's benefitting from lighter skin connects to Hughes's essay when he talks about an average Black middle class family, saying that the "father is often dark but he has usually married the lightest woman he could find" (1). This shows a clear

advantage that Janie would be more sought after than other darker-skinned Black women when men were looking for a wife. This would most likely lead to her being in a better situation financially because she would have a lot of people interested in her. Out of these suitors, there is a higher chance someone would have money. However, the way she got this “advantage” due to her light skin is through a history of sexual violence with her mother and grandmother both being brutalized and raped by white men. This incredibly painful irony is so intense that it is very hard to really understand whether or not light skin really was an advantage for Janie.

In both texts the theme of the two scenarios are clear. According to both of the authors, having dark skin is a disadvantage. Hughes wrote that middle and upper class Black families wanted to become as white as possible, leaving their culture behind; Hurston showed that having lighter skin was an advantage at first glance, but it was more complicated than that. Even when racism is shown with a different backdrop such as class or gender, it is still the catalyst that leads to prejudice.

Marissa Meng
Form VI
Artwork

Untitled



Enlightenment

As we left the cramped elevator, which had slowly crept its way up to the twenty-third floor, we turned down the hallway and began walking towards the apartment. The building, part of a housing project built in the sixties, was left in a state of disrepair, with cockroaches skittering across the peeling vinyl tiling. The dimly lit hallway only intensified my anxiety as drops of sweat rolled down my neck onto my stethoscope. Approaching the apartment, we heard yelling and banging coming from inside. I looked at my partner, who was also hesitant to continue. Suddenly, the elevator opened and two cops came to clear the scene. I breathed a sigh of relief.

Two hours before, I had stepped onto the cramped ambulance at Brooklyn Hospital and met the EMT who would guide me throughout the rotation. His tired eyes and limp posture were evidence of the toll the job took on him. Nonetheless, he introduced me to the various bandages, oxygen tanks, and backboards, and we set off for the twelve-hour overnight shift. This was my first time responding to 911 calls as an EMT student. I was filled with nervous excitement, eager to use the skills I had been practicing for months, oblivious of what to expect in the night ahead. The evening was spent responding to multiple routine calls: a man with chest pain, a woman suffering from an infection, and a mugging victim. But as my time on the ambulance increased, so did the severity and intensity of calls.

Around 3 a.m., we were called to a housing project for a possible domestic violence situation that became physical. Domestic violence calls are some of the most common but also some of the most dangerous situations a first responder can encounter. You could find yourself entering a stranger's home, unaware of your surroundings, making yourself completely vulnerable to the actions of the people inside. You could interact with the victims, many of whom are in a state of excited delirium, making them extremely unpredictable, irrational, and combative. When the police arrived to assist, they were able to secure the situation. A man had accused his girlfriend of stealing from him, which led to an argument in which he hit her multiple times. Luckily, her injuries were minor, but the police, who ensured our protection, allowed us to assist her without the fear of being attacked as we took our focus off our surroundings and onto the patient.



I have lived in New York City for my entire life, nearly two decades. In that time, I have explored every nook and corner of the city, whether by foot, bike, or subway. I could tell you which train goes where, which bike path offers the best views of the skyline, or direct myself across the boroughs without the use of maps. I knew the place like the back of my hand and had experienced so much of what the city had to offer.

The twelve hours I spent on the ambulance put this confidence in what I thought I knew about New York into check. Like any city, I knew that it had its fair share of violent crime, poverty, and homelessness. However, seeing it in person and treating the victims affected by these issues made me realize how much of the city I had no exposure to. Multiple times throughout the night, I found myself in a state of shock, unable to think or move, finally witnessing these horrific events firsthand.

As the night went on, I began to realize a shocking trend: the patients—victims of violence, drug abuse, poverty, and mental illness—were nearly all black. This aspect of the black experience is exactly what Baldwin describes in his essay, *The Fire Next Time*. When you grow up, surrounded by these horrible occurrences, they become normalized, fixated into your sense of reality. You believe that your paths in life have narrowed to these few outcomes, locking yourself and your offspring into these sets of truths. The people I had helped were more than just victims of their ailments. They were victims of the circumstances and systems they lived under.

To live your life to the fullest, you must have a sense of security. For me, the police provided that, allowing me and my fellow EMT's to do our job without feeling distracted by the dangerous situations we were put in. For that, I respect them, putting their lives on the line to protect others. However, some officers have played a role in the subjugation of the very victims I worked to help. Living under that perceived image that police are there not to protect, but purely there to persecute, pushes one into that dangerous cycle, where you feel trapped—in drug abuse, violence, poverty, or mental illness.



In 1610, Galileo Galilei began to observe the movement of Venus around the sun. Peering through his telescope, he noticed that the planet exhibited a full set of phases, similar to how the moon appeared differently every night. He realized that his observations directly contradicted Ptolemy's geocentric model, which, based on ideas from the Bible, placed the Earth at the center of the universe with the sun and other heavenly bodies slowly rotating around it. This caused problems because the Christian world, which represented the Western world's accepted philosophies, still believed in this geocentric model. But this was just one of the first empirically based observations that began to break down the church's power. While Galileo would eventually be placed under house arrest by the church for heresy, his observations would spark a whole new era of scientific achievement and natural philosophy that would tear away the authenticity of the church, piece

by piece. This era would eventually be called the Enlightenment, marking a new shift in how people perceived the importance of the church, especially in government. People were no longer accepting statements from the Bible and assuming its truthfulness when these observations, backed by scientific evidence, said differently. As the great psychologist Freud states, “Humanity has in the course of time had to endure from the hands of science two great outrages upon its naive self-love.” No longer was the Earth the center of everything. And with Darwin’s discoveries on evolution, no longer were humans a pure being created by God but instead a descendant of animals.

In many ways, Baldwin underwent his own enlightenment with his experiences growing up with religion. Baldwin saw from an early age that staying on the street could lead to drug abuse and poverty and so, like many others, he saw that religion, more specifically the church, provided a home, safe from any of the vices he would have been influenced by. He became a youth minister, giving him the unique opportunity to see what really went on behind the curtain that concealed the truths about the church. He trusted in the supposed safety from the world that the church provided, but realized that it just was another hierarchy, with people battling for the control of the minds and thoughts of the common churchgoer. It was no different from the social and racial hierarchy that America had built up ever since its inception.



Part of what makes me look up to the great philosophers and scientists of the Enlightenment like Locke, Montesquieu, and Voltaire was their undying motivation to resist the chains and boundaries that society tried to impose. Directly in the face of a multi-century old, multi-national institution, they continued to speak their mind and research theories that contradicted the thousand-year-old philosophy that had been established as The Truth. And while unlike them I have not produced theories that radically changed the course of history, I can say that I have found the importance of fighting what I thought I knew was true.

I believe that, during at least one point in everyone’s lives, we experience our own enlightenment or realization that redefines what we thought was true. For Baldwin, it was peering behind the curtain that concealed the truths about the church. For me, it was the night spent on that ambulance that exposed me to the harsh realities of people’s lives in the city I called home. People are shaped by their experiences, and the effect these experiences have on them can either be positive or negative. What matters is that we take advantage of these moments to grow and make us competently perceive the world around us.

Dylan Jackson
Form V
Personal Narrative

The Core of the Big Apple

Early in my childhood, whenever anyone would ask me if I wanted to move to the suburbs, my response was, “I am a city girl.” Even in the wilds of Montana for five months during the pandemic, I got bored with the moose and the elk. If I saw one mountain, I had seen them all. I longed for my city home: the bustle of New York, walking its gritty streets, and riding its crowded subways. I moved to the Financial District when I was eight years old and began to take the subway to school every day instead of walking. On the first day of third grade, my mother took my brother and me to school by subway for the first time. As I walked down the steep steps, I became repulsed by the mysterious, disgusting smells coming from the tracks and the platform. Graffiti covered every surface. Being new to the Fulton Street subway herself, my mom asked my brother, Luke, and me which train to take. I insisted on riding the train to the right, labeled uptown, but despite her asking for my advice, she took Luke and me to Brooklyn on the train labeled downtown. We were late that day, and ever since my dad has taken Luke and me to school. I never felt the need to rely on my parents’ directions, though, not only because they might be incorrect (as I have experienced) but because I quickly became acquainted with the routes of the subways.

My dad, brother, and I developed a set routine. We left the house at the same time, walked the same streets, saw the same people, and rode the same trains. When I was eight, I didn’t internalize how this routine would become an important part of my life and how the lives of the people around me were intertwined with mine. Every morning we left the house at exactly 7:40 a.m.; however, there were a few exceptions in the years Luke had lace-up shoes and hadn’t yet mastered the skill of tying them. We walked to Fulton Street, made a right, and walked to the end of the block for the subway entrance. We invariably saw the same homeless couple, always arguing, in front of the Burger King on our way. In the station, I would notice the homeless man lying on a piece of cardboard, most of the time sleeping. I saw the same MTA worker every day in his booth and marveled at the MetroCard house he built on his desk. But I couldn’t dwell on any of my observations because I was always racing Luke to the turnstile, competing to see who could swipe their MetroCard the fastest. But on some level, I cared about these individuals I saw every day. Although I never talked to them, they had become almost a larger family. And as I moved on from my elementary and middle school routine, I was sad to leave them behind.

When I came to Fieldston in eighth grade, I was provided with a school bus. Living all the way downtown, the trip to my house took more than an hour. I was finally allowed to take the subway by myself, so I changed my route to riding the school bus to 72nd street and taking the express train to my house, which shortened my commute by 15 minutes. Riding the subway by myself, I finally felt like a true New Yorker. I was confident in my knowledge of the subway; I knew where I was going, and I was in control. I was independent, but not alone. Even though we did not know each other, we somehow formed a community in the time we were packed together in a subway car. I now think one of the most important, but often overlooked, qualities of a New Yorker is caring about strangers. Not only are passengers tolerant of others by not caring who they sit next to, but they support each other in the smallest of ways. They give up seats and hold doors for people who don't look, act, or sound like them. They make room for pregnant women, seniors, people with disabilities, and even students carrying heavy backpacks like me.

The subway has always been a point of unity for New Yorkers. The rich and famous ride with the poor and unwashed. The train cars are filled with businessmen to construction workers, babies, toddlers, teens, parents, and grandparents, people who are black, brown, and white. "Even though they might not share the same space as far as where they live or where they're going, for this brief moment, they're all in it together." Underground, the social structures don't seem so prominent.

However, this past year, with Covid-19, the above-ground seeped underground and interrupted this point of unity of New York City. When I came back from Montana, New York City was not the utopia I was imagining through my rose-colored glasses. The subway became a dangerous place to be during the pandemic. Distinctions were made when the white and wealthy abandoned the subways to take Ubers or drive their own cars. People of color were dying at a disproportionate rate because of their likelihood to be poor, have essential jobs, and need to take public transit, further exposing them to people with the virus. The homeless were left with no protection and fled to the subways, especially during this past winter, but were turned away because the subway shut down overnight to disinfect the cars.

I was among the privileged able to escape the subway and its dangers. I didn't have to experience the fear of being in a hotspot of the city or in the city at all. I will never have the perspective of a person of color or a person of a lower socioeconomic status and the struggles they went through during the pandemic. Although it has made a difference in my everyday life, not riding the subway has only altered the transportation I take. To others, the subway is a home. My adjustment of leaving the subway hasn't made the same impact on me as it has on homeless people or others with more at stake. Deciding to stop taking public transit hasn't taken a toll on my family like it would for a family of lower socioeconomic status.

I haven't been allowed to ride the subway since I returned from Montana in August, but I made one trip from my house to 81st Street in late August. I walked down the stairs that I knew so well before, but didn't recognize the scene on

the platform. People were apart from each other, social distancing, and were scared to touch or be near one another. The unity and community I felt had disappeared. I couldn't smell the mysterious urine-like stench through my mask. I didn't want to sit and relax on the empty benches that previously, before the pandemic, would have been like finding a taxi on a rainy day because I was afraid of catching the virus from someone who sat in the seat before me. What once was a tunnel full of chatter echoing, phones ringing, and babies crying was now filled with silence. It was a relief when the train finally arrived with its familiar loud and screechy manner to break the quiet.

The Fulton Street subway station is where I grew up, where I learned to be independent, and where I became a real New Yorker. It is also the place where I saw humanity in the city and witnessed how New Yorkers depend on each other. I don't think the subway is "my slice" of New York because only I know about it; it is special because it doesn't belong to me—it is shared by everyone. The subway may be gross, smell like urine, and filled with litter, but it is the soul of New York City. It holds a special place in the city because, on the subway, individuals come together in a different way than they interact above the tunnels. In a subway car, even though they are alone, together they form a community of tolerance despite the density and diversity. On the subway, I become a part of a larger group, even if our only goal is to get to the next stop. Life underground should serve as a model for the above-ground because no matter our class or color of our skin, we are united by a common journey.

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Marissa Meng
Form VI
Artwork

Untitled



Izzy Roth-Dishy
Form VI
Epic Poem

Jimmy's World

Around the corner there it lies in wait
The windows shuttered where there once was kept
an aged spirit spry inside its walls
Now empty, filled with trace of tenants past.
The Cracking concrete crumbles from the weight
Of funds now fading, fixtures to be lost.

O sing through me ye wise smith of the lock
Who mends those soles of rubber with trained hand
who mends those souls of earth with wisdom learned.
Sing of those times beyond the scope of mind
Ere lords of land hath greed succumbed to yet.
In dulcet notes sing of thine neighbors fine
The counter of good Jimmy with the cane.

Thus the spectre's summoned words commence.

Where orange juice does flow through glasses clear
Where caps are tartan plaid with ears exposed
lenses thick and draped over the nose
He sits with heavy head and rested gaze.
The world around him lets now out to ring
A symphony of sighs and grunts and days
Gone by to fill the silent air with life.
His cane is built of wood and tipped with gold
Or maybe just some plastic veiled with paint—
He used to need it not when bones were hard
To break. But now no time for pond'ring does
There leave as orders are not met and tips
Of fingers balance steaming dishes placed
Upon those shiny slabs of coated pulp
Where eager child reaches for the salt
And mother swats its hand swiftly away.

Wednesday afternoon brings crowds so slight
O'er to the side sits Marty with his aide,
A tired nurse who comes at breaking morn.
She takes the Two from Flatbush Ave to here
And holds the old man's coffee as he sips
While thinking were his digits not so frail
An independent creature he would be.
The nurse too holds a spoon below his beak
To catch the falling droplets dribbling down,
For Marty's jaw strength had seen better days
Days when his love Irene had been alive.
This Jimmy watches and he tells his son
If I get like that please just pull the plug.
He takes their order down and walks away—
Two omelets: one is French and one is Greek.

A little younger is the man called Steve
That Steve of tote bags splashed with letters bold
Which read of publications full of words
The carrier wants you to know that he knows.
Inside Steve's head lie earnest monologues
From plays that he has written long ago.
He longs to tell the waitress of his tomes
As such to her he would his story share:
My wife left but six months ago this week
She used to be a looker now no more.
Well really that's not true— I shouldn't say.
Perhaps it's just the lonely inside me
That brings resentment to the words I speak.
My lines they never made it to bright lights
Of theaters, stages in front of plush seats
Where great minds sit and think about the world.
But Shannon, that's my wife—well now my ex
She said that I had genius hidden well
That maybe one day'd get to see some praise.
Well now she says my talent was not there
A bitter way to end our married life.
Perhaps in grad school's when I really peaked
And from then on a downward slope I've lived.
Alas this story does not his lips leave.
To such a Steve in crisis Jimmy comes,
He takes his order down and walks away—
Two scrambled eggs done well on whole wheat toast.

By the window sit now the two fates
Coats come off and onto hooks they go
the collars lined with fur from hides so old
From back when the two friends first met in school.
Instead of scissors, pens the women wield
To fill in tiles black or white and bare
With letters clued by writers far away
Who work all but some thirty blocks downtown.
The three across reads Milton's tale of sin
And faith and god. It's Par'dise Lost, speaks Jill
who writes it in with knowing glance displayed.
Suzanne, the one whose laugh sounds like a seal
She taps the menu with her nails so long,
as sounds of falling rain begin to breach
The sanctum of the diner from the street.
The ladies know our good man Jimmy well,
Like Steve and Marty they've come here for years.
They say to him the usual they'll have.
He takes their order down and walks away—
A bowl of cottage cheese and grapefruit, sliced.

He goes behind the counter to prepare
The women's food that comes together quick.
In bowls of cottage cheese he sees his life—
The lumps and bumps of curdled milk that pave
No solid path from one place to the next
The aimless, wand'ring nature of it all.
The sourness of grapefruit makes its case
It's flavor, choices Jimmy never made.
As sharpness cuts through wasteland bleached white
It taunts the lumps with brightness long forgot.
But acid wears down teeth and hurts the throat
And wishful dreams don't mix well with real life.
That bowl of mush, a mirror he wants not
And ev'rytime the fates come in they force
Him to contend with meaning through their lunch—
Or breakfast, he's not sure for days are blurs
And patrons slowly all morph into one.
But that bowl he delivers with a smile
The smile is what brings the patrons back.

Now down into the kitchen he descends
To check up on the omelets he sent in.
On down the stairs past posters that do show

In color how to help someone who's choked.
The kitchen's a metallic cave of fire
With smells that waft upstairs and fill the space.
Some pancakes bubble, bread is being sliced.
Now comes the time where Jimmy has to face
The riddle of the griddle splashing grease.
He deftly dodges flying flecks of oil,
His cane clicks on the tile of the floor.
The cook hands him one plate awash with steam
And takes the other two to hold himself—
Plate one's for Steve, plate two's for Marty and
plate three will be the one brought to his aide.
Up now they rise out of the sweaty depths
As Jimmy tries to keep pace with the cook.

Above their heads the ceiling's painted green
A dark and muted green that reads as teal
And from this ceiling hang two dozen flags
Of nations far and near, across the seas.
Why they are there's a question unexplained.
And hanging too's a golden chandelier
Whose presence in a diner questions raise.
Antique and dripping crystals over head
Reflecting outside light and raindrops grey
It lends the room a certain royal charm.
The food goes out and Jimmy takes a rest
He places down his cane, catches his breath.

Upstairs now to his desk does Jimmy go
Where bills to pay sit labeled Iakobos.
O Iakobos, the name he left in Greece
When to New York he came so long ago.
New York that's changed as Jimmy's gotten old
That's changed as children he'd give Tootsie Pops
Grow up and move away. Their faces now
Are leaner, they no longer come to eat.
And locals too are dying off, afraid
To leave the house, to sit inside and feast.
He knows the diner is on its last days.
The rent is rising, crowds are thinning out
And by the time November comes to pass
The diner's doors will have to close for good.
So once again fate plays its hand so harsh
And Jimmy's world deteriorates with grace.

Around the corner there it lies in wait
The windows shuttered where there once was kept
an aged spirit spry inside its walls
Now empty, filled with trace of tenants past.
The Cracking concrete crumbles from the weight
Of funds now fading, fixtures to be lost.

Jason Nash
Form VI
Recommendation

Letter of Recommendation:
*Why the New York Rangers Are
the Only Tri-State Area Hockey
Team Worth Supporting*

Buried within a concrete jungle of eight million people lies a rowdy group of twenty men getting ready for battle. Their opponents seek revenge for the bloody disaster that was their last meeting. It's a scene out of ancient Rome. The two sides shall enter a modern-day colosseum, where 18,000 onlookers will witness the bloody scene. The gladiators are nervous for the battle ahead as they wait in silence. They've gone to battle many times before, but their pregame nerves never dissipate. This silence marks their transition from reality to the battle ahead. The firm "click" made by the buckle on their helmets completes their journey. Once heard, the sound acts as a switch to begin deploying all energy and focus in the battle. Inside the colosseum, onlookers are equally nervous, but the atmosphere is buzzing. All 18,000 sit with their sweaty palms chanting, screaming the name of their favorite group of gladiators. "LET'S GO RANGERS, LET'S GO RANGERS!" Then, as the lights go down, spotlights flurry all around the Garden to the tune of "Baba O'Riley." At the first sound of the secondary piano, the spotlights land on the locker room door, and everyone rises to their feet. Seconds later, legendary fighter Henrik Lundqvist steps out of the locker room with his battle-ready team following closely behind. A deep roar rumbles as goosebumps simultaneously emerge on the skin of all 18,000 fans. The atmosphere leaves many wondering if there is a hurricane approaching the arena.

This scene happens forty-one times a season on 33rd Street in Manhattan at Madison Square Garden. I had grown up hearing my dad reminisce about how rockin' the Garden used to be. He was in the building in 1994 when the Rangers clinched their first Stanley Cup Championship in fifty-four years over the Vancouver Canucks. Over the last decade, as the Rangers have gotten good again, I've been able to experience for myself just how rockin' the Garden can be.

Nothing rivals the excitement I feel when the Rangers score. The crowd erupts. Everyone rises to their feet, hugging their neighbors, kissing strangers, and even accidentally dropping beers from the upper deck. But there's a deeper significance to the celebrations that ensue. People need this kind of release. Greg the teller can't throw his coffee mug around the bank. Larry the accountant isn't able to scream his heart out. Brenda the stay-at-home mom would never dream of taking out her exhaustion on the family. People show up to the Garden to release the energy they have bottled up after a long day at work. The Rangers bring them together, it's something that connects strangers to one another.

The experience of being at a New York Rangers game is very different from going to another hockey game in the tri state area. Take a New Jersey Devils game. Their arena is always at a steady 60% capacity, the food isn't very good, and neither is the hockey, and don't even get me started on the traffic. There's no sense of unity at Devils games, and you won't see strangers hugging and kissing in celebration there. Legend has it that when the Devils are getting beaten, which is more often than not, the arena is so quiet that you can hear crickets from the wasteland outside!

Just as the Brooklyn Nets will never be New York's basketball team, the Islanders will never be New York's hockey team. Perhaps a subway ride to Brooklyn is slightly more enjoyable than a trek to New Jersey (and the quality of play doesn't suck) but the Islanders arena is palatial compared to that of their rivals in New Jersey. Although you might actually see the home team win, Islanders games are even emptier than Devils games, and the lack of energy and poor lighting is enough to make anybody fall asleep. Don't believe me? Seats in the infamous Section 201 of the Barclays Center were recently awarded by Business Insiders as "the worst in American professional sports." The food is okay, better than in Jersey, but nothing compares to the Daily Burger or Chicken & Things at the Garden.

In the eyes of a young hockey player, a rockin' Garden is Heaven on Earth. I used to show up hours before puck drop to see my favorite players stretch, tap their sticks, and engage in their pre-game rituals. My favorite part was when both teams would take practice shots and skate around the ice as loud music played overhead. How could it not be? The warmup is when players shine the brightest, all eyes on them, hair flowing, joking around, getting ready for what is to come. Warmups must be experienced live to see how much talent players really have. In an average NHL game, a player only has the puck on their stick for fractions of a second at a time. During warmups, they have unlimited, unguarded time. As a result, you get to see, really see, just how hard their shots are, just how fast they can stickhandle, and just how explosive they are on their skates. The visual sensations aren't what really make the experience so special, however; it's the sounds. The crisp clack the puck makes as it hits the glass on shots gone wide, the thump of constant contact between stick and puck while stickhandling, and the sharp crunch of the ice under a pair of skate blades make the experience all the more worthwhile.

I wanted to be just like them. I could not wait until it was my chance to represent Fieldston at the Poly Game. This would be my opportunity to do what I had always dreamed of. It was my opportunity to skate around to loud music with all the eyes on me as I did my best impersonation of Chris Kreider's signature snapshot. I knew I would never be a professional hockey player but was excited to act like one for one night.

My career as a hockey player was robbed from me when I got my fourth concussion. In the process, I lost a part of myself, unable to be like my favorite hockey players any longer. Now, I wasn't able to express myself just like they did. I was no longer a 'hockey player.' Yet the Rangers and the Garden impacted me more than they had previously. All of a sudden, games meant even more to me. I

prepared for their games just as I had prepared for mine. Now, I watch the game from a coach's perspective. I critique positioning and decision-making now instead of style or camaraderie. I get the same transcendent feeling watching the game as I did playing it. Still, after sixty minutes and three periods of pure euphoria, the experience is over. It's not that I don't think about the Rangers game once it ends, it's that it doesn't provide an opportunity for growth. While the Garden experience is uplifting, it's temporary. Nothing can substitute playing the game.

Unlike the reflective mindset I had when feeling the cool breeze exiting Chelsea Piers after playing the Poly Game, stress quickly sets back in for the professionals. They return to reality immediately, thinking about what they have on their schedules the next day. Their return can be delayed, however, by the sea of blue jerseys chanting "LET'S GO RANGERS!" after a victory. The game, the Garden, the Rangers, provide people with not just a physical experience but a spiritual one. When you're at the game, it's the only thing you're thinking about. That's why being a Rangers fan is so special: it demands very little of you, yet it provides you with so much. Whether it gives you a second family, aspirations, or memories, once you witness those gladiators go to battle in their Madison Square Garden colosseum, you're bound to be a fan for life.

Jeffrey Nass
Form V
Opinion

*It's Time to Pay
Student-Athletes*

In 2017, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) found out that University of Central Florida's (UCF) Donald De la Haye was profiting from YouTube videos he made about football and his life as a student-athlete. De la Haye was sending this money to his struggling family back home. Forced to choose between football and making money, he ultimately quit football in order to continue making videos for YouTube. For about a century, the NCAA, the organization that oversees college sports, has not allowed its players to be compensated in any way, arguing that they are considered "student-athletes," rather than professionals or employees. This needs to change. Public sentiment supports this, as two-thirds of Americans believe that college athletes should be paid. In September 2019, California passed a law that would allow student-athletes to get compensated through endorsements and hire sports agents. This law will take effect in 2023. Although the NCAA's governing board voted unanimously to allow this, it has stated that California's law is "likely unconstitutional." Instead of holding college athletes hostage to an unfair rule, it is time for the NCAA to allow them to be compensated for playing in their sport.

One of the main reasons college athletes should be compensated is their enormous financial impact. The Department of Education said that college sports programs made \$14 billion in revenue in 2018. Around 2014, the NCAA and CBS signed a fourteen-year television contract worth \$10.8 billion. The schools themselves make millions through advertising, ticket sales, merchandising, and concessions at the games. In 2014, the NCAA reported an annual income of approximately \$11 billion, which was more than what the NBA and NHL made combined. In 2013, the University of Alabama alone made about \$143 million in athletic revenues, more than all NHL franchises and the majority of NHL franchises. The same year, Alabama's head football coach, Nick Saban, had a then record-setting salary of \$7 million. His salary was significantly larger than the already large \$2.05 million average salary for the rest of Division I football coaches. NCAA executives also reported high salaries. In 2018, Mark Emmert, President of the NCAA, made \$2.5 million. On the other hand, college athletes, who are the most important contributors to this multi-billion dollar industry, receive only their athletic scholarship, which only amounts to \$22,000 per year on average for about 45,000 students.

The NCAA's position has always been that the college athletes are students first and should not be treated as paid employees. The NCAA states that "maintaining amateurism is crucial to preserving an academic environment in which acquiring a quality education is the first priority." The NCAA home page lists "academics" as one of its priorities. In reality, however, this emphasis on academics appears to be untrue as there have been multiple academic scandals involving member schools. In one case, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill created "paper classes," which did not require attendance, specifically for student-athletes to maintain eligibility. Professors were often not even present in the classroom. Students enrolled in the class got higher than average grades. In addition, the amount of time that college athletes spend in practice/games/travel makes it nearly impossible for them to put in any quality academic time. Although the NCAA claims that education is the most important component for the students, the college tournament schedules force these students to miss classes for nationally televised games. Furthermore, the typical Division I college football player spends an average of 43.5 hours a week playing football, 3.3 hours more than the amount of time a typical American works. It is hard to imagine that they can go to their classes and excel academically while on such a schedule. In addition, the NCAA reported that 88% of Division I athletes graduated in 2018. This would have been a record. However, these numbers do not include a lot of students who transferred between programs. In reality, the graduation rates are astoundingly low, especially among Black student-athletes. The real graduation rates in 2015 of three March Madness teams were 8% for University of Cincinnati, 8% for Indiana University, and 9% for Oklahoma State.

Another issue with NCAA's emphasis on the "student-athlete, not employee" argument is the reality that the majority of normal college students are both students and paid employees. Over 60% of college students have paying jobs. About 20% of them work between one and twenty hours a week and over 40% of them work over twenty hours a week. For those students who work at the school, some jobs may be volunteer-based such as being a tour guide, but the majority of jobs are paid positions in food service, administration, and the library. One can argue that college athletes are working, not only in their sports, but also in the PR/marketing departments of their schools. When Boston College's Doug Flutie won the Heisman Trophy, the school's applicant pool climbed by 25% and its average SAT scores improved by 110 points. This is known as the "Flutie Effect" —when excellent athletic performance enhances the school's reputation and image. Another example of the "Flutie Effect" is when Patrick Ewing played for Georgetown in 1982-1983. The school saw a 47% jump in undergraduate applications and a 40-point increase for average SAT scores among the incoming freshman. Given the value the athletes add to the schools combined with the value they bring to the college sports industry, they should be entitled to some form of pay.

Some argue that the schools simply cannot afford to pay their athletes. The NCAA states that its Division I schools saw their expenses exceed their revenues by \$23 million. However, the NCAA can easily allow students to make money from other paying sources through endorsements and merchandising. They have allowed student-athletes in California to do this, but it should be implemented fully on a national level. In addition, the schools can pay all college athletes minimum wage for their hours spent in their sports. This would avoid situations in which schools have to pay millions of dollars to attract top talents or get into bidding wars. This would also distinguish college sports from professional sports. Finally, given that the coach salaries seem to be sky high, there are probably ways to cut wasteful spending so that payments could be made to the athletes.

In reality, although most student-athletes devote the majority of their time in college to their sports, most do not become professionals nor do they become superstars. In fact, only 2% of them turn professional. Many college athletes, especially in football and basketball, are people of color who may come from underprivileged backgrounds, and getting a salary can relieve the financial burden on their families. Some critics say college students don't have the maturity to manage their money well, but schools can easily provide them with money management classes and training. Students who are not top stars may not receive any endorsements and may not get paid that much anyways, if the NCAA allowed pay, so whatever they receive would just be pocket money. Given the time and effort they put into their sports and the billions of dollars that they bring to the industry, it seems only fair that college athletes be compensated directly by the schools as well as through endorsements. It is time for the NCAA to change its rules.

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Brooke Abeles
Form VI
Opinion

The Rise of the Fear of Ideas in Educational Institutions

When I first heard that Fieldston had canceled a scheduled speaker for an assembly on civil discourse because he had been branded as "too controversial" by administrators, I thought it was nothing short of irony. The juxtaposition between the subject of the speech—a critique of the recent movement towards "safe spaces"—and the assembly's cancellation reads more like a satirical take on many recent controversies encompassing college campuses that had canceled speakers than an actual occurrence.

According to the administration, the speaker was canceled because students were not "ready" to hear the speaker's ideas. It seems more likely that Fieldston was reluctant to hear them. Putting aside whether there is value in preventing speech or speakers that make people feel unsafe, it is unclear what value there is in preventing a speaker from presenting his thoughts about the potential dangers of safe spaces. Can someone feel "unsafe" simply because the concept of a safe space is questioned? Was Fieldston protecting its students or was it protecting itself as a defender of safe spaces? I believe it was the latter.

But what is a safe space? Merriam Webster defines it as "a place (as on a college campus) intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations." Thus, safety is not limited to physical safety, but also encompasses emotional safety. A safe space, therefore, prevents emotional discomfort. In the context of safe spaces, safety and comfort are practically the same concepts.

The contested space between the comfort of students and the furtherance of intellectual debate appears on college campuses through the cancellation of scheduled speakers. Public universities and colleges cannot censor speech because it is equivalent to government censorship which violates the Constitution. Private universities, however, find themselves in the middle of the controversy on the restriction of speech. The values of private universities can be separate from those of the Constitution because they are not affiliated with the government.

One infamous instance of a speaker being silenced took place at Middlebury College. There, students shut down a speech by Charles Murray, a conservative author best known for *The Bell Curve*, in which he linked socioeconomic status with race and intelligence. Mr. Murray's decidedly bigoted and offensive views made some Middlebury students feel unsafe. They believed Murray's ideas

suggested people of certain races were inferior. As a result, some of the students resorted to violence to stop Murray from speaking. Although this speaker represents an extreme example of offensive thinking, the situation highlights the question of whether or not it's right for students to stifle speech because it makes them feel uncomfortable and/or unsafe. Do students always have to feel comfortable and safe to listen to ideas? Although in this example, student action resulted in the cancellation of a speaker, this does not mean the university is free of fault. The school should have taken extra safety measures to ensure that the speaker would be able to speak.

Feelings of unsafety have not been the only rationale behind canceled speakers on college campuses. Colleges have also canceled speakers due to the fear that the speakers would elicit tension on the campus, thus creating the appearance of an unsafe environment. Virginia Tech disinvited Jason Riley—a speaker known for arguing that affirmative action hurts people of color—on the grounds that his presence would spark racial tensions on campus.

Restricting speakers is not a quick fix to preexisting campus tensions. Censoring discourse ignores the true problems underlying the tensions; it is like slapping flex-tape on a broken dam. Although it might create the appearance of safety, it neglects the bigger problem. It is not Jason Riley who created the campus tension, but the failure of Virginia Tech to address the racism on its campus. Shouldn't schools be modeling ways to repair something broken that last and are not just quick fixes?

Shutting down different views is not beneficial to anyone. If a speaker's views make students uncomfortable, the students should make it known. Speech that is disagreed with should be debated, and speech that is offensive or bigoted should be protested — but never silenced. The decision to silence hurtful speech derives from the incorrect assumption that if it is silenced, the sentiment behind it will be as well. It is spurious to think that people won't continue to hold vile beliefs just because they are outwardly prevented from speaking them. It is much easier to scapegoat and silence one speaker than it is to grapple and struggle with ideas face-to-face through conversation. When students limit themselves to topics that make them feel safe, they make hard subjects like systemic racism unspoken about in diverse groups. Shouldn't students hear all points of view and then discuss how to dismantle the system's inequities instead of focusing on their emotions and discomfort?

Soon after the cancellation of the civil discourse assembly speaker, a speaker was invited to present on the topic of apartheid. However, he made arguably antisemitic comments that Jewish people who were once oppressed, specifically Holocaust victims, had become the perpetrators of oppression against Palestinians. Weeks after the incident, Fieldston emailed its community to disassociate itself from his comments and to condemn a whole host of "isms."

Even though many people found the speaker's comment problematic, nobody said anything at the time. I wanted to say something to the speaker, but I couldn't quite figure out how to articulate what was wrong with his statement.

This is because the problems with what the speaker had to say are varied and subtle. Part of the reason I had difficulty figuring out how to counter them was that the situation in the Middle East and the issues between the Israelis and the Palestinians are extremely complex and there is a lot of misinformation and hyperbole on both sides.

The email condemning "isms" did not add anything to the dialogue. In fact, what struck me was the lack of any type of dialogue. The email did not specifically address why the statement was problematic, hurtful, and against the values of Fieldston. It would have been much more helpful if some education, history, and context were provided to clarify to the members (students and faculty alike) of the Fieldston community why the statement was problematic. It is disappointing that such a valuable educational opportunity was wasted.

Maybe if these difficult issues were tackled head-on, someone would have confronted what the speaker said. What is discomfort if not a means for debate?

To teach students to live in discomfort, it is imperative to show them what debate looks like.

Sophie David
Form V
Personal Narrative

I'm a Kid

I'm a kid—when I see stuffed animals, I'm hooked. It is a strangely warm Wednesday in January in a pandemic and I spot a pile of teddy bears and I am hooked. They are pink and green and three times my size, the kind you win from aiming a squirt gun precisely at a target. They lie in a pile of prizes at the foot of a roller coaster, royal blue unlike the sky.

I am walking back from the boardwalk on Coney Island with our tour guide and I want one of these teddy bears. He is dressed in a hoodie and black Vans with loose shoelaces. With the eagerness of a kindergartener, I ask to take one home. He is smiling underneath his black mask, and with a directness typically reserved for an adult, he replies, do you want bed bugs?

I do not want bed bugs; I want a teddy bear that I can take home. Like every other teenager in America in a pandemic I spend most Wednesdays staring at a pixelated version of my head, readjusting the strands of my hair until they appear just the right amount of effortless. This Wednesday is different, and I wish I could tell that to our tour guide, but the words do not come. I have lost my Wednesdays and he has lost his income so the words do not come.

We meander down the street. My classmates trip over each other's shoes and interrupt each other's sentences in front of me. The train I no longer ride screeches to a halt. An empty rollercoaster looms large over my head. I'm a kid, so our tour guide begins to tell me a story about the Cyclone. This summer, he says, there were no children riding the roller coasters, so we strapped the teddy bears to the ride and gave it a go. Wouldn't they fly off, I ask? Oh no, he replies, we strapped them in with seatbelts.

The certainty in his voice shakes me. I follow the tour guide inside to the gift shop where he gives me a bobblehead instead. I am eyeing the vintage postcards in the corner so he hands me a stack for free. I know he needs the money like Coney Island needs kids, but my wallet is on the bus and his hands are in his pockets. Instead I thank him profusely and accept the postcards. He locks up the shop and waves goodbye without taking his hands out of his pockets. He is joyfully bitter, I decide, and I am unapologetically joyful.

I am an unapologetically joyful kid, so I tell everyone that I won a bobblehead, I won a bobblehead for free, but when I get home to my bedroom on the Upper West Side I keep hearing him saying, do you want bed bugs? Do you want bed bugs? I was never a fan of sarcasm. I take off my Patagonia sweater and my Canada Goose jacket and my thermal underwear even though it wasn't so cold a day after all. I hang up the postcards above my bed, next to my stuffed animals, sitting in a row. They look small and clean. I am a kid, so I smile. I am unapologetically joyful. I go to sleep in my pink and blue bed on the Upper West Side on a warm Wednesday in January and I will wake up here, safe, again, tomorrow.



My Friend, Edward

Through the doors of a second-grade classroom stumbled a timid and rather small girl. She had curly brown hair that was swept up onto the sides of her head by two pigtails that brushed the shoulders of her blue and purple polka-dotted long sleeve shirt. Her shoes, likely sneakers, drenched from the puddles on her rainy walk to school, squeaked as they graced the wooden floor. Nevertheless, she greeted her teacher, Jo-Ann, with a quirky, toothless smile to show off that the tooth fairy had paid a visit the night before. Believe it or not, this fashionably challenged, front-toothless-looking, little human being happened to be me. Yours truly. Standing there in all her glory. Now it would be a stretch to say that I was eager to learn that day, but as soon as Jo-Ann announced that we would have a rainy day read-aloud, the morning got slightly better. As Jo-Ann stood on her tip-toes reaching for a “special book,” or so she called it, the class congregated on a rug near the window. And “special” was certainly the word for it. Down from the shelf came Kate DiCamillo’s *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*. Who could’ve guessed that this 198-page journey of a pretentious, self-obsessed, china rabbit would alter the life of my second-grade self and continue to do so forever.

For those of you who aren’t yet fortunate enough to know my friend Edward Tulane, please allow me to inspire you to cozy up in a nook of your choice and get a hold of this epic novel. Or rather, let Edward. Your heart will go on a long and winding journey with this three-foot-tall, china rabbit who is unable to physically move or speak. You will be there with him when he is loved by a little girl, your heart will sink down to the bottom of the ocean floor when he is flung off of a ship, and it will be brought back up to shore when he is rescued by a fisherman. You will feel buried under heavy piles of trash just as Edward was, and a dog will sniff her way through, to fetch you out. Your heart will stop beating when he falls out of the arms of a little girl who dies, and it will resume when you’re ready to carry on with his journey. But why is this so important, you ask? Because inevitably, just as both Edward and I did, you will learn that sometimes, your heart must break in order to love.

Once, in a house on Egypt Street, there lived a rabbit who was made almost entirely of china. “Oh, good,” thought my seven-year-old self. “A book about an inanimate object. Surely Jo-Ann must know that I’m more mature than this silly book.” I wondered why I was still reading foolish literature. I was certainly a skeptical child and quite possibly lacked interest. But the story that followed, written on delicate, tinted paper and held together in a melancholic, faintly brown binding, was anything but uninteresting.

Edward Tulane cared nothing for love. In fact, he loathed it. Our selfish, arrogant, china rabbit had everything he could dream of. A lavish house, “an extraordinary wardrobe composed of handmade silk suits,... custom shoes fashioned from the finest leather,... a wide array of hats equipped with holes so that they could easily fit over Edward’s large and expressive ears,” and to top it all off, his gold pocket watch. And how could I forget about his ten-year-old caregiver and companion: Abilene Tulane, the little girl “who thought almost as highly of Edward as Edward thought of himself.” He had it all. But something was missing. As he was perched peering out a window in the dining room of the Tulane household, he saw his reflection in the glass. “Edward never ceased to be amazed at his own fineness.” But he wasn’t looking deep enough. Who was he inside? My second-grade self had this all figured out. *Obviously, he was a hollow, china rabbit. There wasn’t anything inside.* But I knew that stating the obvious wasn’t the answer. I had just been showing early signs of having a sarcastic sense of humor. But if DiCamillo had sat down with me and asked me these very questions, like Edward, she would have told me to look deeper.

Even with the love and affection little Abilene unconditionally offered, our friend Edward still didn’t care about anything other than himself. One night as he lay in bed, irritated by Abilene’s warm embrace, her grandmother, Pelegrina, promised a bedtime story; a story about magic, a princess, and a witch. What was there not to love? Even with a passionate disgust for princesses, I found myself intrigued. But DiCamillo’s underlying messages flowed right off of Pelegrina’s tongue as she articulated such a story. A beautiful princess had everything she could possibly dream of. “But what difference did it make that she was beautiful? None. No difference.” And as Abilene questioned this, I did too. Pelegrina explained that it was because “she was a princess who loved no one and cared nothing for love, even though there were many who loved her.” Edward sat there while Pelegrina stared deep into his eyes. She continued telling the story to her granddaughter. Edward lay there, still annoyed by the embrace of the ten-year-old who loved him. Abilene listened, squeezing Edward. And I sank deep into the pages, immersing myself in every one of DiCamillo’s words.

I partially understood what Pelegrina was getting at, but it wasn’t until I recently revisited the text and recognized a portent. This story narrates Edward’s journey, and my heart had thrown itself onto the pages, following him. I won’t bother spoiling his adventure, as I hope you will learn about his travels on your own, but it was his emotional growth that had echoed through me. If Edward felt content, I felt content. If Edward felt warm, I could feel my muscles relaxing and

sinking into my bed under the weight of my covers. If Edward felt lost, I, too, was wandering. And if Edward felt crestfallen, my eyes filled with tears, blurring the pages. Goosebumps scattering across my skin. I felt this way then, I feel this way now, so if you are still left wondering, ask me in thirty years and I am confident I will feel the same way.

Growing up in the hustle and bustle of New York City has its strengths and weaknesses. I often find myself drowning in all of the commotion. No longer seven, but seventeen, rainy day read-alouds are nothing but a distant memory and instead, I am bombarded with tests, quizzes, papers, and deadlines. So here I am, an anxious eleventh-grader navigating my way through the ups and downs of a competitive, frankly difficult, high school with immature teens and unpleasant scents that flood the hallways. This constant circling routine can get lonely. In simple terms, I can confidently conclude that high school does not equal the comfort of my second-grade classroom. So why does Edward's journey continue to resonate with me?

I'm not sure that I have an answer. I know that I am no longer sitting on a rug listening to a story. But somehow, returning to the exact text that once gave me comfort as a seven-year-old has provided the same, if not more, comfort than it did the first time. Is it possible that all of the craziness in my world drives me to pick up something as simple as a story about a china rabbit? For me, life as a second grader was simple. Like Edward, upon first starting out, I had everything I could ever dream of. I was who I was and there was no pressure to be anything else. Now, however, it's not quite as simple. High school is its own world; everyone walks around with the itching desire to fit in. But Edward continues to teach me that knowledge is power, and as a second grader, everything I knew was simple. Since then, I have undergone a journey of my own. Each year that passes, like Edward, I gain new knowledge and new perspective. I take or push away what life throws at me and I learn what it is to feel rejected or accepted. Like Edward, I now know: I want to be wanted; I love being loved.

Nearing the end of his journey, Edward sits, displayed on a shelf, shattered and heartbroken for the world to see. He "[had] already been loved and he [had] known love." And he certainly felt "done with being loved" because "it is too painful." However, as days passed by and Edward sat on the shelf, his journey playing through his mind like a broken record, he realized that his heart was opening up again. He longed to be loved again. He had become familiar with such a feeling like no other and he wanted more.

Even though years have passed since the moment I sat on that rug, his miraculous journey resurfaced one night at our conversational family dinner. I watched the corners of my dad's lips slide up the sides of his face, erupting into a warm smile as he said, "Look, Hannah," and held out his arms showing a display of goosebumps that had gently arisen. And in this moment, memories came flooding back. I remembered saying goodbye to Jo-Ann on that rainy afternoon. I had marched home with a purpose. I stormed in through the door and begged my

parents to read the journey of my friend, Edward. They knew it had struck me. So perhaps I continue to carry this book because it reminds me to open my heart and mind as I continue to navigate my own journey of love, knowledge and experience. And for that, I thank my friend, Edward.

Breathe In

Breathe in. Close your eyes. Listen to your friends on the bench figuring out where to eat. Breathe out. Keep your eyes closed. Smell that familiar sea air. Breathe in. Open your eyes? No, not yet. Just feel your back against the ridges of the boardwalk. Feel it as much as you can, through the layers of all your clothes. Breathe out. Open your eyes. Follow the distant bird as it flies across your sky—a sky that feels like it's only yours since you can't see anything else but the light, smoky blue. Maybe it can only see you, too: a 5'8", approaching 5'9", girl with pink hair, doing anything to stop the pounding in her head and the waves of nausea in her stomach. Oh migraine, could you have picked a better day?

Orient yourself, push the migraine out. You are two hundred paces from "Coney's Cones: Fresh Homemade Artisanal Gelato & Sorbet." *Fiorello Laguardia would love that* you think. You recall the photo you just took of it, almost like a gift for him. Hmm... it's being stubborn. Focus in more, be more specific. You are two hundred fifty paces from the intersection of Polar Bear Club Walk and Riegelmann Boardwalk. Ms. Cooper-Leary said that the Polar Bear Club was a group of people that ran into the water during the winter. Why on Earth would they do that? Maybe you'll never know, maybe you'll be one of them. You are seventy-five paces from the bright yellow "Nathan's Famous" with "QAnon" spray painted on the side. *I am a part-Black part-White Democrat from a show-biz, social activist family. Whoever sprayed that would definitely think I am in the cabal* you think. *Oh well.*

Let your thoughts float with the waves. Keep looking at the sky. Listen to the kids running around at the playground. You don't need to look to identify that joyous, familiar sound of children laughing. You miss it. You are it. You'll always be it. Feel the footsteps of the passersby walking behind you beat in your chest. Fifty beats per minute. Maybe they are an elderly couple? One hundred twenty beats per minute. A mother chasing her child? Eighty beats per minute. It's Dylan coming up asking if you want any food. You say yes; maybe you won't be nauseous then. "Then." For the first time in a while, you forget that word. You forget the future. The past. Just remembering the present. The precious present.

I am a stress-ball. I'm always worrying. Did I do well enough on that assignment? Did I accidentally say something with a harsh tone to my little brother this morning? Where do I have to be in five minutes? I struggle to live in the moment; it's something I have been working on. But in this moment—head pounding, heart racing, stomach churning—I could only focus on right "then" and there. Maybe I was meant to have this migraine. To just stop and smell the roses. Or the

ocean. Or the scent of the wood my head was lying against. But when I started to feel the world unpause, I couldn't help but ask:

Who is a Boardwalk for? Is it for the elderly couple on a stroll? The mother and child playing? The migraine-ridden seventeen-year-old girl lying on the floor? Maybe none, maybe all. Maybe it's for the outsiders: the tourists and eighteen City Sem students going on a trip. Maybe it's for the insiders: the third-generation Coney-Islander going on her daily walk to get out of the house. Maybe, just maybe, it is the intersection for both, where the insider and outsider meet, exchange a smile, or walk a little more east when passing someone without a mask. Is it for the store and restaurant owners with their little spaces lining the perimeter? The Polar Bear Club? The bird in the sky? The memory of Edward J. Riegelmann? I would like to think it is for us all.

This stretch of the beach was originally for the Lenape. Then the Dutch. Then the rich who "needed to get away" by partying. Then the "crooks." Then it was for the poor to "no longer have to stand with their faces pressed against wired fences looking at the ocean" (1). It was for the "freaks" to entertain and the ticket holders to be entertained. Who the insiders and who the outsiders are has always been changing, an ebb and flow. But in this moment—the precious present—it felt like it was for all of us.

But I couldn't forget "then." If we had walked just a bit farther, we would see the high rises being built on Surf Avenue. The gentrification after the reverse gentrification. Who will this boardwalk be for? The rich? The economically powerful who "need to get away" again? Are we restarting the cycle? In a hundred years will there be another girl like me lying on the boardwalk asking these questions? Will the boardwalk even still be there?

Will it be this empty? A lack of people due to another pandemic? Is this empty? Or is it me just assuming because I am an outsider? How unFieldston of me. Will the restaurants be unboarded up? Will there be different restaurants? Will those murals reminding us to protect the ocean still be there? Reminding us to battle the same problems? Or will they be gone? Did we find a way to fix it?

And who am I in this picture? I am an outsider visiting. I am a tourist in my own city. I am a strange, racially ambiguous girl, wearing gold gloves, a pink mask, and a lime green hat, casually resting on the boardwalk. I'm part Russian but can't speak Russian with all those who walked past me. I am not Latina but saw the three women by the Puerto Rican flag looking at me, trying to figure out if I was. But I am not disappointed or upset that I am an outsider. It is almost as if Coney Island is made for the outsider: the immigrants, the "freaks," the poor. That's what gives it its charm. So the boardwalk is for all of us, bringing the outsiders in. Mosim Hamid puts it best in *Exit West*: "In this group, everyone was foreign, and so, in a sense, no one was."

Tanveer Singh Chabba
Form V
Poem

The Letter A

After all earth's adventures
A human cannot take a blank canvas
And disregard all past mistakes.
Painting another anecdote
Leaving many flaws breathing.

Underneath a clean, glaring coat
Aquamarine and apricot
Wrap around a dark black
Launched across canvas

Another challenge appears.
A mistake humans cannot erase

Aquamarine and apricot cannot wrap around all mistakes.
A Band-aid maybe...

Lidia Colavita
Form VI
Sestina

*Cheating Sestina:
Envoi Escapes Time*

Only in dreams, in visions free of wakeful consequence
I am I certain that at some point in time
we were alive and moved within the world.
Yet when I wake, there is only rain, nothing more;
I cannot prove my dream or my childhood....
The rain is endless—there must be something that remains.

I will never know if it is New York or me, if it all remains
and weighs on me because these are the leaden days of consequence,
of meaning, of fear and doubt—the days our childhoods
are tested....Or maybe it really is the livid sky that finds time

to follow me down Fifth Avenue towards the Met. Every morning
that the city finds itself in these conditions, I immerse myself in the world

with inconsolable melancholy. It is as if everything in the world
has been taken away from me and there are only remains
of my dream. There is nothing to do; I cannot work or write any more
than I can reason, so I walk the street without destination, hence
carrying on my indecision, extinguishing the limbo space and time
left to my disposal. I think of my dream, I think of my childhood....

And I need silence; the silence of that childhood,
The silence of Rome, of words and worlds
restored. I need to go back to the calendar, to a time
of Latin alphabets. I need my footsteps on the street to remain
the only sound, the only consequence
of the moment and life. I need nothing more

than the silence of Michelangelo's sky, of more
lapis drawn across the ceiling in contrapposto: the stoic figure, childhood
of Christ, Madonna holding him beside her, maybe a consequence
of a Last Judgment. I need the silence of Michelangelo's world
and Caravaggio's slit throats: The intersection between the two impulses that
remain:

impulse of the mind and impulse of the flesh. Time

is rendered clear and infinite. For the world of the eyes is perfect, the timing of the eyes obliterates all clocks, but the artist has no more than I in Rome; Beyond the eyes, the real eternal city remains: It is the one less glorious and brave, the one ignored, it is the invisible childhood we have turned away from. Rome is the mirror capable of reflecting this world, impossible to know—revealing itself in time, but, consequently,

never completely. And the little angel, the boy we had envisioned when we had permission to dream,

[remains

with lustrous, consequent eyes, smoking a cigarette and leaning against the murette of the world.

Rome comes like childhood memories as I walk—I do not know if I am here, there, or awake anymore.

Jack DiCola
Form V
Analysis

Malaise in Death In Venice

From the beginning of *Death In Venice*, Gustave von Aschenbach's experience epitomizes malaise. The word "malaise" is only used once, yet its meaning permeates throughout the story. The implicit ubiquity of the theme of malaise is fitting; the word refers to a general discomfort whose origin is difficult to ascertain. Often, malaise creates far more than discomfort. Aschenbach's malaise catalyzes and perpetuates his alienation from his previous self, his estrangement from society, and his feelings of depression and loneliness, crowned by feeling disconnected and disembodied. Mann writes the story such that the reader experiences the underlying, crippling malaise alongside Aschenbach. In other words, we know it when he knows it. The malaise that plagues Aschenbach parallels the progression of his deterioration. Despite numerous attempts, Aschenbach is never able to escape his malaise, and eventually, it consumes him.

There are four main stages of malaise in the novella: Stage One—Closed-Fist; Stage Two—Internal Conflict; Stage Three—Infatuation; Stage Four—Dissolution in Euphoria.

At the onset of the novella, it becomes evident that Aschenbach has been plagued by an unknown stressor for years if not decades. The reader first is introduced to Aschenbach when he is already deteriorating—he is being pushed to his breaking point after a life of success in the European literary spotlight. As we, the readers, are introduced to Aschenbach and his malaise, so too, are we introduced to Europe's malaise at that time, "It was a spring afternoon in that year of grace 19—when Europe sat upon the anxious seat beneath a menace that hung over its head for months" (1). Mann's beautiful illustration of the ominous menace that lurks over "its head" foreshadows the dark times Europe will soon face and sets the stage for Aschenbach's internal deterioration.

The year is 1911, the future is bleak for Europe, and WWI is right around the corner. Shortly thereafter, international communism, international Nazism, international socialism, and WWII will follow. Additionally, with the turn of the century, Freud pioneered a new way of thinking with his revolutionary concept of

psychoanalysis—a system of psychological theory and therapy that aims to treat mental disorders by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the mind. It aims to bring repressed fears and conflicts into the conscious mind by techniques such as dream interpretation and free association that brought with it the first conscious experiences of the “mid-life crisis.”

Aschenbach certainly struggles with his mid-life crisis as his rigid and unforgiving lifestyle begins to catch up with him, and his well of passion and energy runs dry. As the legendary professor and literary genius Robert Montera once said, “The crisis of a man is sometimes the crisis of a civilization.” However, Aschenbach’s predicament and malaise are not purely dictated by his societal environment. The malaise infects the culture as well as the man.

Stage 1 - Closed-Fist

The first stage of Aschenbach’s malaise in *Death In Venice* can be characterized as the “closed-fist stage.” Near the beginning of the book, we see Aschenbach’s essence captured quite aptly by a friend: “‘You see, Aschenbach has always lived like this’—here the speaker closed the fingers of his left hand to a fist—‘never like this’—and he let his open hand hang relaxed ... this attitude was the more morally valiant in that Aschenbach was not by nature robust—he was only called to the constant tension of his career, not actually born to it” (9). The closed-fist analogy embodies the first form of malaise the reader shares with Aschenbach. As a homeschooled child prodigy, Aschenbach grew up with work and self-discipline at the core of his existence. He always had to produce more and more to fuel his need for exponential success.

Aschenbach’s family, specifically the extensive lineage of typical German civil servants to which his father belonged, forged Aschenbach and his psyche in the fire of traditional German, male influence. Aschenbach’s mother was quite a juxtaposition of his father. She is described as a “wanton,” a person who is sexually unrestrained and has many casual sexual relationships, and who falls short of societal expectations when faced with strong emotions and feelings of passion and infatuation. His paternal lineage directly opposes his maternal lineage, laying the foundation for imminent internal conflict and a crisis of identity. Aschenbach represses his untamed maternal traits—wantonness—which wreaks havoc on his socially inexperienced psyche. Aschenbach’s repressed self lurks ominously beneath the surface of his consciousness, waiting for the right moment to challenge his self-concept.

The unconscious toll of battling one’s own identity drives Aschenbach to sacrifice physical, social, and personal ability for extraordinary intellectual capacity to continue to meet the growing pressure he faces at the hands of his environment and himself. Work, stress, and unwavering rigidity have dominated Aschenbach’s being for his whole life. “Gustave Aschenbach was the poet-spokesman of all those who labor at the edge of exhaustion; of the overburdened, of those who are already worn out but still hold themselves upright; of all our modern moralizers of accomplishment, with stunted growth and scanty resources, who yet contrive

by skilful husbanding and prodigious spasms of will to produce ... the effect of greatness” (11). Now, long past his ripe years, he can’t sleep, he can’t work, and there is underlying chaos that seems to be, in a similar manner to his malaise, slowly creeping up on him. Aschenbach tirelessly attempts to push on, but he soon reaches his breaking point.

Despite his best efforts, Aschenbach reaches a point at which he can no longer ignore his malaise. The knowledge that something central to one’s identity and self-concept is amiss is impossible to repress permanently. In an effort to regain some motivation, Aschenbach decides to go for a walk which, at this point in the story, is his version of a vacation. He runs into a stranger in the mortuary who catches Aschenbach’s tactless stare and turns to him with the early 20th-century version of “whatchulookinat?!” Fleeing from certain social humiliation, Aschenbach is seized by a chaotic and rebellious course of thought: “he felt the most surprising consciousness of a widening of inward barriers, a kind of vaulting unrest...” (5). Aschenbach is frozen in place as he visualizes, in a hallucinatory fashion, an exotic, tropical marshland that possesses an overwhelming depth and diversity of life: “[B]eneath a reeking sky, steaming, monstrous, rank—a kind of primeval wilderness—world of islands, morasses, and alluvial channels” (5). He imagines staring down a tiger, gripped by a feeling of fear and adrenaline: “... [H]e felt his heart throb with terror, yet with a longing inexplicable” (6). Aschenbach is directly rebelling against his repressive and rigid life, the general malaise he feels, when he experiences “a longing inexplicable” (6). He identifies the lack of a break in his work-filled life as the catalyst for said malaise, and thus concludes that a vacation is in order.

Stage 2 - Internal Conflict

Aschenbach ventures into unknown territory by leaving Munich and going to Venice. We see Aschenbach’s internal conflict through the lens of his chronic indecisiveness and his vacillating thought processes, both of which misguide him like a broken compass. Immediately, Aschenbach flees his original island vacation destination in the Adriatic Sea to the city of Venice. Upon his arrival in Venice, Aschenbach has a brief period of relief as he imagines a beautiful gondola ride. However, he concludes that solitude may provide beauty, but it also “gives birth to the opposite: to the perverse, the illicit, the absurd” (24). Aschenbach’s malaise pushes him to dwell “with disquiet on the episodes of his journey hither: on the horrible old fop with his drivell about a mistress, on the outlaw boatman and his lost tip” (24). Before he gets to the hotel or the city itself, Aschenbach’s malaise resumes its poisoning of everything he sees; “There was a hateful sultriness in the narrow streets. The air was so heavy that all the manifold smells wafted out ... hung low, like exhalations, not dissipating. Cigarette smoke seemed to stand in the air ... the crowd ... oppressed the stroller ... The longer he walked, the more was he in tortures under that state” (34). Aschenbach’s internal conflict yields physical effects: being sweaty, sickly, and uneasy. By the time a quiet square at the city’s heart presents itself, he “admitted to himself that he must be gone” (34).

What Aschenbach has yet to reckon with is his newfound infatuation with a fourteen-year-old Polish boy named Tadzio, staying at the same hotel. The “solitary,” as referred to frequently by Mann, is incapable of recognizing the fact that his homo-erotic feelings for Tadzio are the driving forces behind his need to leave. Additionally, Aschenbach has become well aware of a disease plaguing the city and killing its residents. The disease symbolizes a turning point for Aschenbach where he has to decide whether to follow his rational or rebellious self in the face of circumstances he can no longer control or ignore.

After an arduous consideration of the current circumstance, Aschenbach vacillates his way to the conclusion that he must depart. Aschenbach takes in his last looks of Venice on his way to the port with an agonizing reluctance: “What ... had been slight regret ... turned now to grief, to actual wretchedness, a mental agony so sharp that it repeatedly brought tears to his eyes...” (37). Upon arrival at the port, Aschenbach scrambles to get on the steamer and leave before it is too late and he loses his wavering grip. The hotel porter finds Aschenbach to inform him that sadly, his bags had been lost, put onto the wrong ship, and already left the port. With his bags lost, Aschenbach’s fragile state of equilibrium shatters. He finds himself struggling to mask his unbecoming emotions. Where he should have exhibited distress, “a reckless joy, a deep incredible mirthfulness shook him almost as with a spasm” (38).

The loss of Aschenbach’s bags marks the beginning of his end. He abandons the script by which he lived religiously all his life—a script that yielded all his previous experiences, successes, and failures. Aschenbach’s repressive methods of self-management have catalyzed his metamorphosis into an individual who embraces irrational passion and thought, without consideration of consequences; he finally embraces his maternal wantonness. Consequently, Aschenbach is no longer in denial of his feelings for Tadzio. He leans into them, venturing back into unknown territory. It is as though Aschenbach has conquered his malaise by rebelling against his limiting nature; yet this brief period of freedom from his malaise is just that—brief.

Stage 3 - Infatuation

Aschenbach’s decision to stay in Venice for Tadzio—despite the disease—is the complete antithesis of his previous character. Despite the euphoria he feels, Aschenbach still does not rid himself of the malaise—he merely ignores it instead of trying to logically alleviate it. He becomes voluntarily ignorant of his faults and immoral behavior. Despite his infatuation with Tadzio, the malaise continues to haunt Aschenbach. Seeing Tadzio by chance is no longer enough to satiate the “solitary,” who begins to stalk and waylay the young boy and his family. In one such instance, Aschenbach waits outside the hotel for Tadzio, who—upon arriving in Aschenbach’s periphery—smiles “unabashed and friendly” at his secret admirer (50). The boy’s affectionate gesture flusters Aschenbach, causing him to react with tender reproach. Emotionally undressed by Tadzio’s smile, Aschenbach “... leaned back, with hanging arms, quivering from head to foot, and quite unmanned he

whispered the hackneyed phrase of love and longing—impossible in these circumstances, absurd, abject, ridiculous enough, yet sacred too, and not unworthy of honor even here: ‘I love you!’” (51). Aschenbach’s infatuation with Tadzio does nothing to ease his conscience; it does quite the opposite. The more Aschenbach indulges himself and his infatuation, the greater the anguish and the psychological burden become. Hence, the malaise during this period of infatuation is raw, untamed, and convoluted.

Aschenbach has crossed the line of moral reprehension—a line that, once crossed, is very difficult to return from. Mann’s imagery and diction possess a disconcerting undertone that taints the description of characters, their actions, and their environment. Aschenbach slinks around, lurking in the shadows of the Venice streets as he stalks his prey: “when they were a few paces on, he followed—he stole behind them on their walk through the city. When they paused, he did so too; when they turned round, he fled into inns and courtyards to let them pass. Once he lost them from view, hunted feverishly over bridges and in filthy culs-de-sacs ... Mind and heart were drunk with passion, his footsteps guided by the dæmonic power whose pastime it is to trample on human reason and dignity” (53-54). Diction such as “stole,” “fled,” “filthy,” and “hunted feverishly” are indicative of Aschenbach’s malaise. Despite his best efforts to shake it, the malaise merely evolves again into a stronger, unbridled entity that continues to consume Aschenbach.

Stage 4 - Dissolution in Euphoria

By the end of the novella, Aschenbach’s descent into madness is all but complete. The malaise has grown so strong that it has forced Aschenbach to depart from his previous self and confront the chaos he wrought upon himself. He is officially beyond hope of recovery. Aschenbach embraces irrational passion while leaving reason, logic, and maturity behind. He dissolves—both figuratively and literally—in his euphoric infatuation with Tadzio and his internal conflict. He sacrifices everything to be near Tadzio; “[t]hese things that were going on in the unclean alleys of Venice, under cover of an official hushing-up policy—they gave Aschenbach a dark satisfaction. The city’s evil secret mingled with the one in the depths of his heart—and he would have staked all he possessed to keep it, since in his infatuation he cared for nothing but to keep Tadzio here, and owned to himself not without horror, that he could not exist were the lad to pass from his sight” (53). The final evolution of Aschenbach’s malaise is at hand. What was once an infatuation has become an addiction and a dependency on Tadzio.

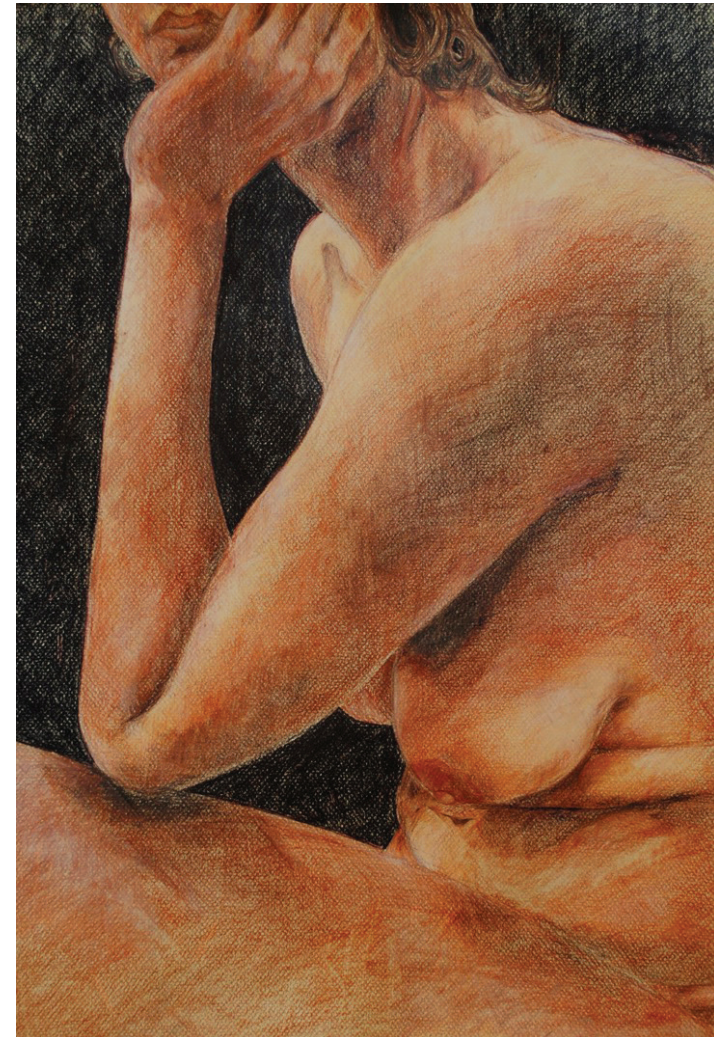
Aschenbach’s drug-like dependency on Tadzio results in his dissolution in a euphoric malaise. Something characteristic of an addict, not Gustave Von Aschenbach, literary genius and intellectual revolutionary. It is especially evident that Aschenbach is truly lost when we see the final step of his deterioration: the breach of his intellectual stronghold. In the closing scenes of the story, Aschenbach has a dream that connects back to the original hallucination that inspired him to take a vacation in the first place. However, this dream is different from his past vision. Whereas in the previous vision he was overwhelmed by the chaos of the

jungle, in this dream, Aschenbach is the perpetrator of the chaos. He finds himself amid a tribe of human figures donning loincloths. He imagines the women holding their breasts and wailing savagely. The barbarian hollering accompanies the preparations for the primitive and savage worship of a “stranger god.” The whole scene is an orgy of hormones, cult faith, and debauchery that make scenes from *The Wolf of Wall Street* look tame. At the center of everything is Aschenbach, “a blind rage seized him, a whirling lust, he craved with all his soul to join the ring that formed about the obscene symbol of the godhead...the stranger god was his own ... it was he who was flinging himself upon the animals, who bit and tore and swallowed smoking gobbets of flesh ... an orgy of promiscuous embraces—and in his very soul he tasted the bestial degradation of his fall. The unhappy man woke from this dream shattered, unhinged, powerless in the demon’s grip. He no longer avoided men’s eyes nor cared whether he exposed himself to suspicion” (66-67). The jungle dream epitomizes Aschenbach’s current state. Mann’s imagery and diction speak for themselves.

The utter chaos and savage debauchery that comprises the dream is a product of Aschenbach’s rebellion against the structures that governed his life from his youth until his first vacation to Venice. Those thought processes include his tendency to refuse to acknowledge his internal conflict, stress, and identity, no matter the cost. The extreme nature of the dream is a reflection of the toll that a lifetime of internal conflict, stress, and questions of emotional and social identity takes on an individual. When Aschenbach finally considers those questions and thoughts, the pressure has built up to such an extreme that he is unable to resolve his inner conflict; the malaise runs its course and literally consumes Aschenbach.

Vale McCaffrey
Form VI
Coloured Pencil on Paper

Nude



Muck Versus Eatonville

In Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, language is a key way that the author chooses to resist hegemonic white standards. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, partly written in a Black dialect originating from Florida and partly in "Standard" English, focuses on Janie, a young Black woman and her trials and tribulations in her search for love. This book, written during the Harlem Renaissance, mirrors themes recorded by thinkers and writers like Langston Hughes and W.E.B. DuBois. Janie, who marries three times throughout the novel, lives in Eatonville (right outside of Maitland, Florida) with her second husband Joe (or Jody) Starks, and on the muck (in the Everglades) with her last husband, Tea Cake. Language, through the names of these two places, is extremely vital in understanding what each location represents for Janie. The muck, whose name is not even capitalized, is an area full of poor farm workers where the mud will "itch yuh lak ants" if you don't "[get] uh chance tuh git uh room...where dey got uh bath tub" (Hurston 129). On the other hand, Eatonville is a "proper" town with a store, mayor, and post office, all thanks to Janie's late husband Jody. Jody, throughout the novel, unfolds into a complicated and possessive character who believes only he can help Eatonville become a fully fledged "American" town. These traits meld and create a longing within Jody to live the way white people have for years: through dominance and abuse of power. While Eatonville symbolizes Jody's unattainable desire to create a town that functions and revolves around white standards and systems, the muck represents the pure human joy that comes from letting go of norms and connecting to one's humanity in a way that white standards condemn.

In a speech given in June of 1926, W.E.B. DuBois at an event hosted by the NAACP describes the white standards that many Americans strive to live up to. W.E.B. DuBois relays the sentiments of those "who believe white blood divine, infallible and holy," setting up a Biblical and unattainable version of life for white individuals (DuBois 8). Seeing as "divine" is the an antonym of human, white standards are inherently set up for failure, resulting in a miserable life of never truly being content or joyous. In contrast, W.E.B. DuBois describes "black blood [as] human, lovable, and inspired with new ideals for the world" (DuBois 8). The evident metonymy through the use of the word "blood" to represent "race" reminds the reader that whether you are Black or white, you are still a human being. Here, divine is pitted against human, infallible to lovable, and holy to inspired, showing the difference between the way that DuBois sees Black standards, as human and "down-to-earth," vs. white standards, as unattainable and dangerous antonyms of each core feature of humanity.

Unfortunately, Jody, a Black man, believed that these unattainable goals written all throughout white standards and culture were something both he and his town, Eatonville, must strive for. On the train to Maitland, Florida, Jody treats Janie like royalty. Jody buys her "the best things the butcher had like apples and a glass lantern full of candies" (Hurston 34). Zora Neale Hurston, in the third person limited, reflects on how Janie "was proud of what she saw [in Jody]. Kind of portly like rich white folks" (Hurston 34). Joe's persona, of the "dignified" white man caring for his wife, proves Jody's desire, however impractical, to be white. In addition, Jody, when speaking to Janie about how he wants to go to Eatonville, says that he "had always wanted to be a big voice, but de white folks had all de sayso where he come from and everywhere else, exception' dis place dat colored folks was buildin' themselves. Dat was right too. De man dat built things oughta boss it" (Hurston 28). This shows Jody's attachment to whiteness as he is unable to see the flaws in what he is saying; while trying to rebel against the racist systems that have oppressed him his whole life, he chooses to play into the same problematic image that white people have been using for years—hoarders of power that belongs to one person and one person alone.

In Eatonville, the Black town Jody and Janie settle, Jody cultivates and broadens his aspirational whiteness, exemplified by the recognizable artificial authority of a white man. Jody's aspirational whiteness comes from his delusional image of himself as the only person who can bring stability and security to Eatonville, hoarding power for himself by stripping others of their potential. Jody does not simply want to set Eatonville up for success, for example only building a store and a street lamp, but he also aspires to have all the power for himself. Jody's bid for power begins at the start of the lovers' stay in Eatonville when they realize that what they thought was going to be a town is actually a run-down village. In conversation with two residents of Eatonville, Lee Coker and Amos Hicks, Jody is astonished to find that the village has no mayor: "Ain't got no Mayor! Well, who tells y'all what to do," Jody asks, "Nobody" Coker replies, "Everybody's grown" (Hurston 35). Seeing as Coker thinks first of age as the meaning behind Jody's question instead of race and the accompanying image of a white person telling a Black person what to do, shows the sense of security that the town, as an all Black community, feels against the intrusion of white people. The town does not think that a Black person could come and try to preside over them the way a white person would for, as Hurston points out, "it [is] bad enough for white people, but when one of your own color could be so different it put you on a wonder" (Hurston 48). Clearly, Hurston saw whiteness as the idea of hoarding power and shoving others away, two characteristics of Jody, who takes over Eatonville. Jody comes into Eatonville with the intention of taking total control, in a similar fashion to a white man entering a town hoping to claim it as his own. This only shows how, time after time, Jody, on his quest to fulfill his "aspirational whiteness" (power for him and only him), chooses to actively exploit the weaknesses of Eatonville and its residents. Jody brings to Eatonville his seriousness, lack of joy, and lack of humor—all of which change the town, causing its residents to live by rigid and formal standards

instead of leading carefree and natural lives. Written as a dialogue, the scene where Jody, Hicks, and Coker speak about Eatonville is ultimately upsetting as it is evident that Jody feels disgusted to learn that the town he thought was going to be a “civilized” community of Black people is nothing but a couple of homes. This passage ends when Jody states, “...us mensfolk got to call people together and form a committee,” marking the beginning of Jody’s air of white dominance as he concludes only he can turn this town into what it has the potential to be (Hurston 35). Along with showing white dominance and an abuse of power and privilege, Jody also plays into themes of patriarchy by using the words “us mensfolk,” which further alienates the female residents of Eatonville (Hurston 35). When Hicks states, in a playful manner, that he “did think about [having a mayor] one day...but then [he] forgot it and ain’t thought about it since then,” Jody replies, “No wonder things ain’t no better” (Hurston 35). Here, Jody instantly situates himself as a white person might, above Hicks and Coker, inherently passing them off as worthless beings whose thoughts deserve no serious contemplation. In addition, Jody completely brushes over the joke in Hicks’ words, breeding an unnatural and inhuman seriousness within the town. In the end, Jody implements, into a Black community, systems, like a mayoral position, and tactics such as “forming a committee,” historically used to suppress Black people, in order to take all of the spontaneity and originality out of the town (Hurston 35).

As Jody’s wife, Janie’s life in Eatonville is also built around white standards. Janie and Jody live in a two-story house “with porches, with bannisters and such things” (Hurston 47). Hurston, in the third person omniscient, actually goes so far as to christen Janie and Jody’s house as “the ‘big house’” surrounded by “the servants’ quarters” (Hurston, 47). This passage is an allusion to how Jody and his white ideals hold the town and Janie captive. Lastly, using imagery and personification, Hurston tells her readers that Jody chooses to paint his house “[a] gloaty, sparkly white,” further teasing out the image of Jody as a white man proud of his good fortune and wealth. As W.E.B. DuBois points out, white standards revolve around the want to be “divine” and “holy” (DuBois 32). As no town can be either of these things, Jody, by making the town and himself live by formal and “proper” white standards, inadvertently sets up the town for failure and himself up for disappointment. Additionally, Janie, as the wife of the mayor of this aspirational town, “sleeps with authority” and often feels the “impact of awe and envy against her sensibilities” (Hurston 46). Along with her celebrity, Janie also experiences Jody’s possessiveness, resulting from his toxic masculinity, as he forces her to tend to him as any “good” wife should. Janie, who is helpless against Jody, is obliged, at Jody’s request, to cover up her hair in public, as a “civilized” woman would. After some time, she begins to feel like “a rut in the road. Plenty of life beneath the surface but it was kept beaten down by the wheels” (Hurston 76).

Mrs. Turner, Janie’s Black friend on the muck, is quite similar to Jody in the respect that both constantly try to live up to white standards, keeping up a facade of self-satisfaction while actually worshipping the concept of self-hate, and

taking advantage of Janie. Jody’s air of white dominance takes over Janie’s life in its attempt for total control, constantly shoving Janie over or pushing her back. He takes advantage of Janie and her kindness at every turn, slapping her when the dinner she makes is not perfect or not letting her take part in silly and joyous town ceremonies. On the other hand, Mrs. Turner’s air of white dominance takes advantage of Janie as it sticks doubtful and hateful ideas in her head. When talking about Janie marrying Tea Cake, Janie’s last husband, Mrs. Turner notes, “You got mo’ nerve than me. Ah jus’ column’t see mahself married to no black man” (Hurston 140). Mrs. Turner, in her evident attempt to pit all Black people against one another, instills doubt in Janie’s head about the one marriage that makes her happy. Every statement Mrs. Turner makes proves that she does not believe “black blood human [or] lovable” (DuBois 8), and she constantly explains to Janie how she does not “blame de white folks from hatin’ [Black folks] cause [she] can’t stand ‘em [herself]” (Hurston 141). Written in dialogue, Mrs. Turner outlines why she hates Black people in an almost sarcastic statement: “Who wants to be mixed up wid uh rusty black man, and uh black woman goin’ down de street in all dem loud colors, and whoopin’ and hollerin’ and laughin’ over nothing?” (Hurston 141). On the contrary, the Black life she describes actually sounds carefree and natural, unlike the white life that Jody had forced on Janie. Mrs. Turner, in this extended passage, also uses the n-word two times, adding aggression and superiority to her words. Mrs. Turner’s persona of “the Black person above all other Black people,” is similar to Jody’s persona, ironically speaking of her supremacy in a Black southern dialect shared by her Black friends and Black family. Both Mrs. Turner and Jody are constantly unhappy as they judge those around them and hate themselves. Unfortunately, Janie was forced to live as they lived in Eatonville, leading a life of constant unhappiness and anger. Thankfully, Janie and the love of her life, Tea Cake, soon go to live in the Everglades in an area they call the “muck,” where, “to Janie’s strange eyes, everything...was big and new” (Hurston 129).

While Mrs. Turner’s and Jody’s forced whiteness attempts to convert Janie into another self-hating and unhappy machine, it ends up only strengthening Janie as she finds her own way to her happy place: the muck. The muck, an area populated by mostly people of color, becomes a place for Janie to embrace pure human joy and live unencumbered by white standards. Janie and Tea Cake “hold dances night after night in the quarters, usually behind [their] house” (Hurston 154). The two lovers “stay up so late at the fire dances that Tea Cake would not let [Janie] go with him to the field. He wanted her to get her rest” (Hurston 154). Seeing as fire can both be all consuming and playful, the use of the term “fire dances” creates an image of vibrancy, gaiety, freedom, and danger. The muck, for Janie, does, in fact, represent all of these feelings, causing her body to go into a happiness override as she processes her luck in finding the place where she truly belongs.

Janie’s life in Eatonville was a time of imprisonment as she was held captive by the ideals of those around her. On the other hand, Janie’s stay on the muck was a time for freedom as she finally found what she, herself, stood for and wanted. Janie’s move to the muck, accompanied with so much joy, also notes her demotion

in class, going from a large home and having money to being a laborer. While this demotion inevitably brings difficulties, it also allows Janie to leave the “posh” and “inhuman” standards of the upper classes behind. On the muck, Janie lets go of class-standards as well as the white-standards that she had been forced to accept in Eatonville. Here, she can wear “blue overalls and heavy shoes” and she can “listen and laugh” when the men “[hold] big arguments” and she can “even talk some herself if she [wants] to” (Hurston 134). Seeing as Eatonville represented a darker time in Janie’s life, she “would think of the old days in the big white house and the store and laugh to herself...What if Eatonville could see her now...[with] a dice game on her floor?” (Hurston 134). Janie, by saying she feels “sorry for her friends back [in Eatonville] and scornful for the others,” orients herself above Eatonville and its residents (Hurston 134). However, unlike Jody, Janie does not do this in a malicious way, but with love and compassion as she glimpses a beautiful and true way to live. Although she used to live in “[a] big house,” Janie is happy where she is; material things never pleased her. And, although a “dice game on her floor” might not be a “proper” or “civilized” way to live, it is a fun way to live and, quite simply, life is too short to waste priceless time doing what doesn’t bring joy. These passages, written in the third person limited, reveal the muck as a place where Janie can be “human, lovable, and inspired,” just as W.E.B. DuBois promised “black blood” could be (DuBois 8).

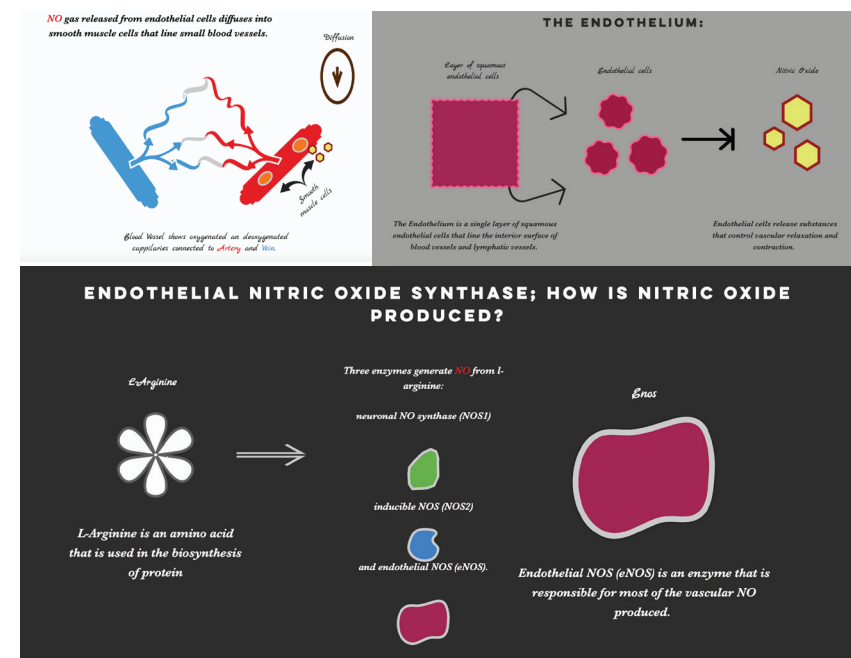
While Eatonville represents the stage of Janie’s life when she lived as a submissive wife attempting to live up to her husband’s impossible and impractical standards, the muck is where Janie truly becomes herself; the muck is where Janie can be human. Langston Hughes, in an essay titled “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” wrote, “One of the most promising of the young Negro poets said to me once, ‘I want to be a poet—not a Negro poet...and I was sorry the young man said that, for no great poet has ever been afraid of being himself’” (Hughes 1). Janie, with her metaphors, ambiguous visions about nature and its references to love, and her notable emotional depth, has been a poet for her whole life. The muck allowed her to become “a great poet,” and who does not want to be great? And so, if one needs to be a little covered with muck in order to be human, let go of white norms, and become great at just being themselves, Janie, with all her eloquence, poise, and inner power, shows the way.

Patrick Schechtman-Taylor
Form V
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*The Conscience of the
Unconscious*

Macbeth is undoubtedly guilt-ridden after killing King Duncan. The murder has completely consumed and contaminated his once clean conscience. Macbeth took the life of an honorable, unconscious man. Consequently, he has disrupted his own life as well. In his own words, he has “murder[ed] sleep” (2.2.48)—a common recreation he describes as “sore labor’s bath” (2.2.50) and the “balm of hurt minds” (2.2.51). Sleep is a luxury and privilege; it is a soothing “balm” that subdues our inner battles and a “bath” that rinses our emotional and physical wounds. By these terms, Macbeth is outstandingly in need of slumber. He has just murdered his highest-ranked supporter in order to effect the vision of three fantastical witches. This is the greatest example of a person who requires sleep’s consolation. However, his immoral act has made him incapable or undeserving of it; Macbeth is no longer “innocent” (2.2.48).

Sleep is rejuvenating. It “knits up the raveled sleeve of care” (2.2.49), Macbeth says as he contemplates the murder he has just committed. A sleeve, or knotted thread, can be a metaphor for his current state of mind. The tangled mess is his loyalties, his ethics, and his influences. It is whether he exhibits restraint or submits to a prophecy that satisfies his aspiration to be king. It is the twisted situation he gets himself into and his uncertainty of how to break free. In a broader sense, the sleeve is a representation of life’s confusions and hardships that we inevitably experience. The challenge is how to persevere and recover. This is why we *need* sleep. Just as defunct thread can be knit into a sweater, sleep can make sense of disorder. Macbeth longs for this revitalization.

Thinking in the context of time, Macbeth states that sleep is the “death of each day’s life” (2.2.50). He considers each day to be a lifecycle. This makes what he does in his conscious hours especially significant and uniquely haunting, as those hours feel finite—just as life does. But rather than being faintly aware of an arbitrary date in the future, Macbeth is reminded of death constantly. It comes at the end of each day, in an anomalous form: sleep. Thus, it is like a daily deadline: one that is necessary to making his often unworldly actions feel more real and impactful.

Macbeth describes sleep as the “chief nourisher in life’s feast” (2.2.52). This feast encapsulates everything. Joy, sorrow, and remorse are all included and all indulged. They can be shared or kept to ourselves—just as a meal can. Macbeth acknowledges the importance of sleep as a “nourisher” because he does not receive adequate care in his conscious form. While solace and comfort are existent when we are awake, they are not promised. They rely on other people’s empathy. Macbeth cannot depend on his peers; his wife and the witches do not treat him with tact, but with malice.

In this feast, sleep is also “great nature’s,” or human nature’s, “second course” (2.2.51). Macbeth is distinctly mindful of the effect of sleep because he is deprived of it—and he has deprived King Duncan of it. He wants rest to interrupt his acute awareness of everything he has done; his crimes torment him. The main course, the peak of dinner, is fulfilling. It is enriching and rewarding, though there might be nothing to reward. This is why Macbeth craves sleep; it is his escape from reality and the “balm” for his remorseful conscience. Knowing he can not “ravel” the past, Macbeth yearns to enter the future with a sound mind (2.2.49).

I remember the night was young and the sky was aflame as it donned a slate-blue that became increasingly orange the closer you looked to the setting sun. The distant sound of a barking dog rang through the quiet streets, streets that left space for the rhythm of the swaying trees, resulting in this unfinished outdoor symphony that flowed into the open window of my first-floor apartment.

Panasonic said, "Wheels up in thirty," and I began to fret. "Your lotuses are alluring," I reply. "But I have to go."

I run outside, leaving the cool air trapped in my apartment and am instead greeted with a blast of hot, humid air. I hate it but I love it. It's this duality, hot and cold, left and right, yes and no, that seems to suit me best. Never too much of one, never too much of the other. I had been inside listening to Panasonic all day, listening to its technicolor lore, never being given the space to create my own. It was too much of one and not enough of the other. I left in search of space. I feel my phone vibrating and look at the screen.

"Hello Tiny."

"In the neighborhood, want me to pick you up?"

"Sure."

Maybe Tiny had space.

Waiting for Tiny to arrive, I pace on the meaningless patch of grass that sits in an ocean of concrete. I imagine my size 13 Chucks from the perspective of an ant. Do I cause an earthquake with every step I take? The blades of grass, which are not longer than my ring finger, are red oaks—have you ever imagined the world from up above? Will you ever see what lies up and beyond your forest? Looking up at the worn rubber soles, what story would an ant deduce from my Chucks? Am I scary? Do I pose a threat? I stop my meaningless pacing.

I open Tiny's car door, sit down, and buckle my seatbelt. Tiny tells me to play music so I connect to the speakers and I shuffle "burnin' my quads." We sit in silence. Tiny drives and I stare out the window while "Soundtrack 2 My Life" plays: "I've got some issues that nobody can see." Tiny rolls down the window and things feel okay. Some things aren't meant to last forever.

You remember it differently. The barking, the muffled chatter that echoes off the buildings like a tiny black ball getting launched against a wall in a game of squash. The rustling trees invade your space. They don't meld together into a natural symphony, no, they pollute the air you breathe. You are the only one that can pollute. You can tell me what to do, how I spend my time hour by hour, you can rule my life, you can ruin it. But I need you all the same. Hello Bubble Wrap. Bubble Wrap is used to cushion and protect yet we love to break it. Some things aren't meant to last forever. You see me leave the cold apartment, with the temperature set to make leaving as hard as possible and staying all the more alluring.

"You'll be back," you say. Sitting on the sofa, staring at the egg shell-white walls that often provoke feelings of claustrophobia. The walls have seen things, they've felt the bounce of every whisper and scream that has dribbled and blasted out of our naïve mouths. The walls make you do things like fold your laundry and grow up. And so, in this egg-shell apartment, you've made me grow.

I was once an embryo. The walls have seen my tissue develop, my eyes pigment, my knees and elbows grow (and then break), and my beak develop. You've kept me for too long. You don't want me to relapse, there'd be nothing worse for me than to fall back in ranks and become a yolk. I leave the apartment, and I break out of my egg-shell white apartment.

"You'll be back."

Prologue

I have processed life and eventually the end of it in many different ways. For smaller beings like birds, life and death have no significance. It just happens. What stops us from living just to live and facing whatever fate is presented to us? To be fair, we have evolved plenty, and the world has changed drastically. I always contemplate the Meaning of Life and what it means to be. It is difficult to live how my parents tell me to, how I want to, and how people already are simultaneously. But isn't that how birds live? They hatch out of their shell; their mother pushes them out the nest, forcing them to fly; they group with other birds, following their patterns; mate; do the same their mothers did for them; and then die.

As a child, I feared death or, rather, what comes after, immensely. Was it how my mother and Catholicism taught me—heaven or hell (or purgatory? I never really understood that one)? Or was it all just nothing? And how would anyone even process nothing? These questions rattled in my brain for hours, and eventually I would get a headache. My final question before my brain couldn't take it would always be: then what's the point? I still do not have the answer to this question, probably because I am not old enough to. According to many adults and elderly, my life has only just begun. According to people who have survived a near-death experience, your life flashes in a blink of an eye and your teenage years for only an eighth of a second. Have I even lived long enough to process the Meaning of Life? Most of society has ignored the Meaning of Life and chooses to live the way others before them have, with some slight improvements maybe. I call these people the bird people. But others have come to understand their own Meaning of Life, and that is to make future societies live in a world different from the current one. I wish to be one of these people. Don't we all? The only problem with this Meaning of Life is that the more time goes on, the more powerful the current world will become. Maybe it is better to live like a bird. I feel I have lived like a bird—not like the city pigeons in my school, but rather like a hawk, a solitary bird, with keen observational skills. Being birdlike means many different things, and many things affect what kind of bird you are.

1.

It was late at night and my family just arrived at Quito, Ecuador. My brother was nine and I was ten. I was still drowsy from the long flight and we were all waiting for my dad's family to pick us up. Almost every year we would visit my grandparents and other relatives I had never heard of before. Even worse, I could not speak or understand Spanish. It was good to have my brother there—someone to talk to who wasn't my parents. My dad immigrated to America when he was twenty-one, so I was the product of the supposed "American dream."

When we settled in my grandparents' house, I knew it was going to be exactly the same as our last visit: avoiding relatives and staying close to my brother. When I was younger, my brother was the outspoken and extroverted one while I was the quiet one. To all of my family members, both on my mom and dad's side, I was shy, boring, and seen as rude to my largely extroverted relatives. Now, I realize that I am the black sheep of my family, whether I like it or not.

"Go to sleep, we're going to see my Tía Letí in the morning," my dad says as he turns off our light. Even though my father was born and raised in Ecuador, he is about as American as a plate of eggs with a side of bacon and toast. He loves classic rock, Star Trek and Star Wars, and was in the Air Force for four years. My dad never was one to show us his heritage and never taught my brother and me Spanish. It seemed like these trips were trying to make up for it.

When I went to visit my Tía and other relatives, it usually went like this. My mom and dad would greet them in Spanish, my brother and I would sit down and talk with each other, and when I was called into the conversation, I would look to my parents and hope they would translate for me. Most of the time, I was just nodding and laughing, hoping at least one of them was an appropriate response. I always felt like I was being talked about, and that made me really uncomfortable. I felt helpless.

Regardless of my childhood trauma, Ecuador is a beautiful country. The landscape, people, and culture surely make up for the economy and crime. It is no secret that Ecuador is a poor country poisoned by capitalism, but it is rich in heritage and lifestyle. With my mom's love for tourist traps and my uncle who lived with my grandparents acting as our guide, we were always guaranteed to have a good time. I remember watching these women dancing with their beautiful, colorful dresses and feeling so happy to be from this country. Walking through the streets of Quito is an exhilarating experience and is much different from the streets of New York City. There is more energy, more culture, more fun.

I come from Ecuador and I am proud to say that. To many people, Ecuador is just the country named after the equator, but to me it is the home of the valley, the home of my ancestors, and the home of my family. I have not been too informed of my history, but every day I am learning more and more. My identity as a daughter of an immigrant has impacted me in many ways. When I hear people expressing their opinions about immigrants at the border, they do not understand that those are people with feelings and emotions, people who look like me. They are dying—my people are dying.

We look at ourselves and think, “How did we get here?” Too often we look at the past and think those were other people’s problems. But problems do not just go away with the signing of a document or the fight other generations have fought. They go away when we continually fight. They go away when we completely abolish the systems that have created the problem. They go away when we think about how our problems have not changed, they have simply evolved. I propose the question: “How do we leave?”

2.

My younger brother is the person I depend on the most. We are close in age, a year and eight months to be exact, and have been friends since he could start to talk. We played games with each other, dragged by our mom to museums, and could spend hours with each other and not be bored. My brother was more outgoing than I was when we were kids. My parents always complained when my brother talked too much or when I talked too little. But when I was with my brother, I could be myself. We would have dance parties to Kidz-Bop or my father’s rock music and play video games on our older brother’s Xbox when he wasn’t looking. My relationship with my brother is the longest one I have ever had with someone who didn’t birth or raise me.

As an older sibling, I feel responsible for the man my brother becomes. When I hear him say something problematic, I always tell him why what he says is wrong and that it can be seen as offensive. I try to do my part in educating him on women’s issues and, even though we argue about them sometimes, he still tries to understand. Once when my family was discussing abortion and women’s rights, my brother actually had the most to say about it to my mother.

“I am a guy so I have no control over what a woman decides to do with her baby. It’s her choice and although I would like to discuss it with her first, in the end, she gets to decide,” he said. I looked at him and said, “Yes! Preach, king.” In an age when young men can be really misogynistic, it was refreshing to hear my brother say these words, and actually be educated by me. Even though he still has plenty to learn, it makes me happy to know he is on the right track.

To some people, having your sibling go to your school is not an option. But, for me, I was excited to have my brother join me in my high school experience. To know that he would have teachers I’ve had, a relatively similar freshman experience, and be on the same campus as I, reassured me that he would be safe, and it

comforted me. To be honest, when I go off to college, I do not know what I will do without him. It makes me sad to think about that. We had been attached to each other for so long, and if we were to cut that thread, as most siblings do when they become adults, it would be torture. My parents and their siblings barely talk to each other. And when they come together for family reunions and holidays, they fight. I always tell myself that my brother and I would never be like that. But who knows what the future will hold.

The poison of adulthood. It creeps up on you in your teens and before you know it, you’re in college, drowning in debt. In due course, you’ll end up working at a job you hate, stop spending time with your family, and start looking for a spouse. As kids, we look at the world and see color, see the light, see the joy of living. Eventually the rainbow is shrouded by darkness, and a storm appears. Until you start a family of your own and relive that feeling through your own kids, you never experience it again. Do not waste your time staying cooped up in your room, doing schoolwork. Hang out with friends, go on car rides with your siblings, make it count. You never know how long it will last.

3.

I was a couple of months into my first year of high school. It was world history class. We didn’t do much in that class, and on that day the topic of settler-colonialism came up. One kid (whom I will call George for anonymity) decided to say to my face, “Without Columbus, you wouldn’t be here.” George rolled his eyes, and the teacher didn’t notice and went on with the lesson. I was dumbfounded, shocked, and didn’t really know how to feel. All I knew was that what he said did not sit right with me.

My mom’s side of the family is from Puerto Rico. Yup, the very island that Christopher Columbus had first landed on when he sailed the ocean blue in 1492. On the island of the Taínos, my ancestors were robbed, murdered, and taken advantage of by the man George had decided I owed my life to. Obviously, George did not know I was Puerto Rican, but he did know who Columbus was. My mom’s side is mostly white passing, meaning our ancestors are European as well as Taíno. So I guess in a way I did owe my life to Columbus and the Spaniards that raped my ancestors.

What shocked me the most about this moment in my history class was that this white boy, George, all of a sudden defined my existence right then and there, in front of me, without any background. He decided that we should thank Columbus for our presence in America. That is completely false. We should thank the thousands of Taínos and other Indigenous people of the Americas for their sacrifice and their helping of the Europeans who would later kill and enslave them. Contrary to popular belief, supposed “discovery” of land does not excuse genocide. A whole culture was erased and struggled to be brought back. The island of Hispaniola suffered, and George expected me to look past that and glorify the man that “discovered” America.

This was the first time I had experienced a microaggression. People of color face them all the time and mostly have gotten used to it. But as a scared freshman, I was confused about how to feel. I did not know of anyone who could help me, and it took me a long time to process what had happened. I was hungry for answers, and it was agonizing to search for them within myself. At a predominantly white institution, this kind of experience is normal for students of color. I looked for support in my affinity groups and found some. People helped me understand what had happened and how I could reflect on it. White Boy George (new name) looked at me, a woman of color, and told me that I would not be here because of a man who caused the murder and rape of my ancestors. To defend Columbus was one thing, but to tell ME why my own existence depended on him was another. This experience helped me understand my racial identity better. I am Latina. I come from an immigrant family. My grandmother immigrated from Puerto Rico, the island of the Taínos, whose genocide was caused by Christopher Columbus. Without Christopher Columbus, I would not be here. White Boy George is right about that. But in place of me would be my ancestors, living peacefully on La Isla, and I would give my life for that.

Being quiet does not make you weak. It leaves you more time to think about what you should've said and what you should've done. So that next time, you're prepared.

Epilogue

In this world you need two things to fly. One, control over your mind and body. Two, the understanding that you may not fly. To understand that there are things in this world that will not allow you to fly, be it people or your circumstance. I dream of flying. Flying like the birds in the sky. Flying so high, I can't even see the world below me. The world that has given me life and will also take it away. Wherever we go when we die, I hope I will fly.

Isabella Audi
Form V
Report

Art as an Expression of the Mexican American Experience

By the 1960s, inspired by the expanding civil rights movements, Mexican-Americans who had grown tired of being treated as second-class citizens with restricted economic, political, and societal rights, launched their own campaign for social justice through the Chicano Movement. An important step was embracing the term Chicano with pride which had been used by whites as a derogatory term for Mexican-Americans. This activism led to the birth of the Chicano Art Movement that, rather than allow whites to dictate their narratives, gave Mexican-Americans a voice in a white-dominated country. Often, it was white American artists who portrayed Mexican immigrants in art, depicting them as dispensable, criminal, or helpless. A powerful form of visual rebellion, the Chicano Art movement created a new category of art as a vital way to fight oppression and stereotyping, convey personal narratives, publicly reclaim and embrace Mexican national heritage, and strengthen the sense of pride and belonging in American communities.

A common tactic used by Chicano artists to combat institutional repression and stereotyping involves directly confronting white America by addressing the many twisted lies and assumptions that lead to the normalization of xenophobia, and in the process turning an accusatory eye on the white perpetrators themselves. The painting titled, "Who's the illegal alien, PILGRIM?" (Figure 1), by Chicana artist Yolanda López, rebukes the common assumption that all Mexican-Americans are intruders or illegal aliens. The image harks back to the very roots of Europe's colonization of North America, and challenges the dominant narrative that Europeans were the only legitimate settlers by asserting that they were in fact the unwelcome invaders. Furthermore, the word "pilgrim" emphasizes how they too were originally migrants, fleeing various forms of oppression, poverty, or religious persecution and should not forget their humble beginnings. Laura E. Pérez, a Chicana Professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, interprets López' painting as addressing the fact that Mexican migration "is a continuation of ... ancient and humanly natural activities" and "racist or cultural intolerance toward poor Mexican Americans and...immigrants in particular, expressed in the xenophobic, "Go back where you came from," is particularly ironic..." This painting, with text written in English, is deliberately directed towards whites and urges them to reevaluate their toxic majority white culture, as well as their principles and values. The man in the image crushes papers that read "immigration plans," illustrating that the Europeans did not themselves have documented authorization to colonize America, implying that Mexicans have as much right as they did to immigrate to the US and should not be refused entry by the government. The man points

directly at the viewer in a posture akin to Uncle Sam, an emblem of American nationality and pride, conveying a sense of power, coupled with rage. This work of art contradicts the stereotypes that Mexican-Americans are submissive, weak, and easily oppressed, as the man's muscles strain with pent up anger, and the black and white style results in a harsh assault on the viewers' senses, adding to the figure's indignation.

Chicano artists also employ personal narratives as a tool to both communicate the diverse experiences and struggles of a race that is exploited and abused, as well as to educate the ignorant American who is unaware of the arduous realities of his compatriot. The mural "Read Between the Lines" (Figure 2), by Chicano artist David Botello, intertwines divergent narratives into a complex painting that, as the title suggests, challenges the viewer to uncover the multiple layers of meaning behind each character portrayed. On the left side of the painting a Chicano man, most likely a father, is bound in metal shackles as if a formidable animal - a threat that must be restrained and isolated. Behind him stand a pair of scientists studying him intently, trying to understand his "otherness" and what motivates him. The machine he is handcuffed to represents how American businesses are manipulating and objectifying Mexican-Americans for their own selfish economic benefit, and discarding them when they are no longer profitable and advantageous; they are a means to an end. The scroll to the man's left reads, "Contract", suggesting that Chicanos are only worth as much as their labor agreement which metaphorically constrains them to this narrow role of labor unit. The words "cuidense amigos" or "take care friends" are a grim warning to fellow Chicanos and a rebuke to the US government that is intentionally blind to their plight.

On the right of the painting the man's presumed wife and children appear torn between US culture and patriotism, and honoring and celebrating their Mexican roots. Elena Avilés, a writer and Chicana who grew up in the barrio where this mural was painted reflects on how, "Walking by this mural every day...I stared at the mural absorbing consciously and unconsciously the ideologies of Chicano public and home life." While the mother and two children are eating a classic snack of American popcorn and being "brainwashed" by American movies and values, another boy is sitting in the center of the painting, reading a book titled "The History of Mexico." He seems constrained to exploring and celebrating his ancestry behind closed doors as he may feel ashamed to do so in school or in public. Another sign of the toxic neighborhood culture this family endures is visible on the boy's shirt which reads "End Barrio Wars," which refers to the dangers facing young Mexican-American children living in economically deprived areas plagued by the Chicano gang violence of the 1970s.

One of the most empowering aspects of the Chicano Art Movement is the acknowledgment and memorialization of Mexican-Americans' indigenous heritage. Ester Hernández's "Libertad" (Figure 4) uses the most powerful symbol of American freedom to embrace Chicano culture and America's Mexican origins. The Statue of Liberty stands on Aztlán, Mexico's mythical homeland, revealing how America emerged from a land that used to belong to Mexico before the Treaty

of Guadalupe. The image inspires Chicanos to feel proud of their homeland and ancestry, as it was the foundation for what became Southwestern America. Amalia Mesa-Bains, a Chicana artist, explains that "Aztlán as a site of origin...addressed issues of political and social justice... The concept of Aztlán...continues to shape current understandings of social space and human geography." The sculptor who is held up by a God's hand, has chiseled away at the surface of the statue and uncovered an intricate carving of traditional Mayan symbols and Gods, in the process stripping away the misleading facade and idea of America as a land of Liberty since freedom is not in fact a reality for all. One observes that the sculptor has not completed her transformation, leading the viewer to deduce that there is still much work to be done to acknowledge the contributions and legal rights of Chicanos and other immigrants who are an integral part of America's story.

Murals have played an outsized role in strengthening the sense of belonging within Chicano and Latino communities and cementing their important contributions through the co-creation of public street art. Murals, often painted on old buildings in central locations, not only serve as a way to generate pride through their high visibility, but also as a means of educating the majority white population who were not exposed to their artwork in traditional galleries and museums. The mural titled "La Ofrenda" (Figure 4), or "The Offering," is dedicated to the Chicano community by the lead artist Yreina Cervantes. The mural was originally painted in 1989 with the help of other residents and functions as a "bridge of solidarity between the Chicano Chicana community and the Central American Latin American community" and recognizes their shared experiences of marginalization and social injustice. Carlos Rogel, an artist who grew up in the neighborhood explains that, "It was really an iconic mural in the neighborhood because it spoke to the stories of Central American families." This act of unity was especially important as there were an escalating number of wars in Central and South America during the late 1900s, including the Colombian drug wars and the El Salvador Civil War, which led to increased immigration to America. The mural's location ensures that countless residents in barrios surrounding the mural walk past it every day, allowing for wide dissemination of cultural, economic, and political messages to counter what Chicano essayist, Harry Gamboa Jr, refers to as "dominant cultures, values, icons and media." A restoration of the mural began in 2016 and Cervante once again used the 30-year old mural to engage young Chicano and Latino artists in the process as a way to foster an appreciation for, and acknowledgment of, their diverse history and most importantly to strengthen community bonds.

The Chicano Art movement was a new and transformational form of artistic expression that served an essential role in reclaiming and memorializing the authentic life experiences and stories of the Chicano community at a time when Latino art was predominantly created to reflect the preferences and narratives of the white community. Not only is it educational and an influential form of protest that continues to this day, but it is an homage to a rich Mexican culture and heritage that has served to strengthen Chicano's sense of identity, community and belonging in America.

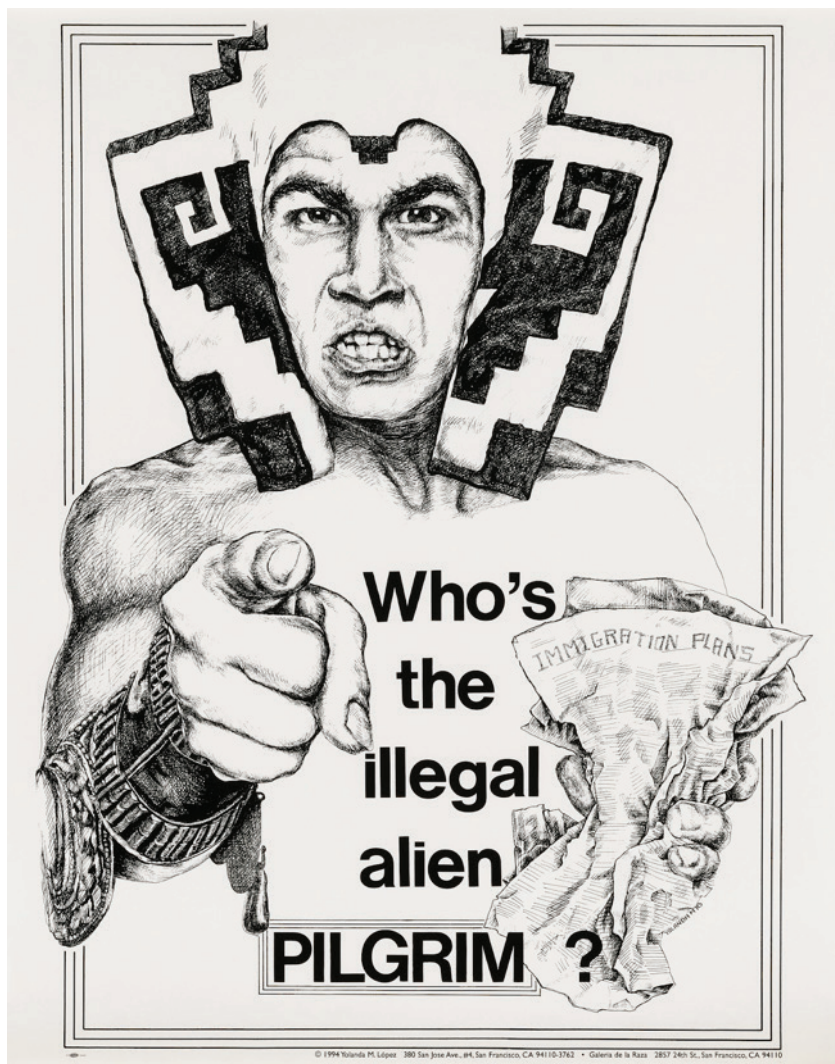


Figure 1. Yolanda López, *Who's the Illegal Alien, Pilgrim?*, 1981, offset lithograph on paper, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the Samuel and Blanche Koffler Acquisition Fund, 2020.43.1, © 1978, Yolanda Lopez



Figure 2. David Botello, *Read between the lines (Cuidense Amigos)*, East Los Angeles, 1975, University of Southern California Libraries.

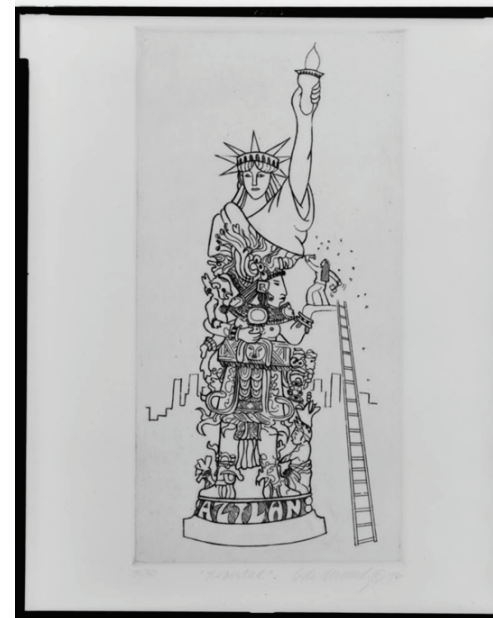


Figure 3. Ester Hernández, *Libertad*. Etching, copyright © 1976. Fine Prints Collection (unprocessed). Prints and Photographs Division. LC-USZ62-127167. Courtesy of the artist.



Figure 4. Yreina Cervantes, *La Ofrenda*, 1989, restored 2016.

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Full Caption: Ester Hernández. *Libertad*. Etching, Copyright © 1976. Fine Prints Collection (unprocessed). Prints and Photographs Division. LC-USZ62-127167. Courtesy of the Artist. Accessed January 15, 2021. <https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/awas12/d43.html>.

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"Read between the Lines (Cuidense Amigos), East Los Angeles, 1975 :: Robin Dunitz Slides of Los Angeles Murals, 1925-2002." *Read between the Lines (Cuidense Amigos), East Los Angeles, 1975 :: Robin Dunitz Slides of Los Angeles Murals, 1925-2002*. Accessed January 15, 2021. <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15799coll15/id/1159>.

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Bernard Waldman
Form IV
Reflection

On Culture and Colonization:
A White Jazz Musician's Reflections on
a Complicated Past

What is jazz, really? It may seem simple at first—maybe you thought of improvisation, specific rhythms, or certain instrumentations. But if you took the time, you could find jazz without improv, with any and all rhythms, and just about any instrument under the sun. So what is this thing we call jazz? The real answer is that it's an umbrella category: one that encompasses tens if not hundreds or thousands of subcategories that are all distinct. But, to the average person (who, let's face it, never listens to jazz of their own free will), jazz is one giant, seemingly uniform mess of music.

My first encounter with jazz wasn't with the music but with the complicated word itself. Jazz was a great word for hangman; who would ever guess J or Z? With just four letters it seemed so simple, and yet just below the surface it held so much complexity. It would take me years to rediscover jazz, this time as a genre of music, and to realize that its name shared qualities with its identity and history. In the first chapter of her book, *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz argues that the "origin myth" (4) of the United States is a false narrative created to conceal the problematic nature of the nation's founding. More specifically, she says, "According to the origin narrative, the United States was born of rebellion against oppression—against empire..." (12). A similar origin narrative has been created for jazz, although it obscures the rebellious nature of the music as opposed to highlighting it.

I think at this point it's well recognized that Black people made jazz—it would be nearly impossible to argue otherwise. What can sometimes be lost is that early jazz was a music born of struggle and oppression. The origins of jazz come directly from field hollers and work songs sung by enslaved people, often to vent about their mistreatment. Jazz's origin story may be less forged than erased or concealed, but I'd still like to pose a question analogous to Dunbar-Ortiz's regarding the United States: "How might acknowledging the reality of US history work to transform society?" (2). In this case, how might acknowledging the reality of jazz history work to transform how we see, play, and listen to the music.

As a white person playing jazz, learning the history of the music has raised a lot of questions. For example, what does it mean to be white and play jazz? Is it okay to be white and play jazz? Am I benefitting from the suffering and pain of an oppressed people? To delve into these questions let's look at some history. One way people justified slavery in this country was by the use of widespread stereotypes that Black people were unintelligent, without religion, and altogether lacking in culture—the very same ways that Europeans justified stealing land from its native inhabitants. During jazz's inception, many people believed jazz was the devil's music. It was so different from the mainstream music of the time that it was feared, shunned, and those who played it were persecuted.

The condemnation of jazz continued as the style evolved, until the early 1900s when it was popularized. By the 1930s, jazz was the music to listen to, both for white people and for black people. This is also when white jazz musicians, such as Benny Goodman and Chet Baker, start finding their way into the spotlight. So, after all that oppression, hate, and fear, after believing that Black people were uncultured and unintelligent, suddenly everyone wants in on this music—suddenly it's for anyone to listen to, for anyone to play. One of the main things Dunbar-Ortiz points out in her book is that the US was founded as a settler-colonialist state, where everything was based on land. She says: "Everything in US history is about the land...who invaded and stole it; how it became a commodity ("real estate") broken into pieces to be bought and sold on the market" (1). This attitude continues past land and bleeds into the realm of popular culture. How different was the process of appropriating land from that of appropriating culture? When white people saw something they could benefit from, whether it be land or music, they took it, completely without regard to its original owners or creators. Just as they commodified land, they later commodified culture, made it into something to be "bought and sold on the market" (1).

Now, some people would say that culture doesn't belong to anyone; it can't be bought or sold, it just exists for everyone to see and appreciate if they want to. And WOW do I wish it was that simple. I think there *is* a difference between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation, but the line that separates them is quite blurred. It's not necessarily harmful to see something in another culture and want to copy it. This behavior becomes problematic when the people of that culture have been oppressed and mistreated and then aren't credited when the oppressors decide that their traditions are actually cool. Don't get me wrong, there have been many incredible white jazz musicians who have devoted their lives to the music, and they didn't have any malicious intent, but I think many haven't taken quite enough time to address these issues (at least in public).

So, should I keep playing jazz? I really don't know. Should everyone who's not descended from the native peoples of North and South America just... leave? Well, maybe, but I don't think that is the argument Dunbar-Ortiz makes. Given all the evidence she presents, there might be an argument there, but she knows that's not feasible. She's saying that given what's already been done, the very least we can do now is acknowledge the past, face it, and accept it without creating origin myths

to obscure our ancestors' wrongdoings. She says, "The absence of even the slightest note of regret or tragedy in the annual celebration of the US independence betrays a deep disconnect in the consciousness of US Americans" (9). To put it simply, the problem doesn't lie in the celebration of our country, it comes from the lack of acknowledgment of the mistakes we have made. As non-native Americans we cannot justify our presence here, but we can accept learning our country's history as our duty and responsibility. The same goes for jazz, and I have only just begun to fulfill that responsibility.

Lidia Colavita
Form VI
Personal Narrative

After
Crime and Punishment

“**B**ut to be stopped on the stairs, to be forced to listen to her trivial, irrelevant gossip, to pestering demands for payment, threats and complaints, and to rack his brains for excuses, to prevaricate, to lie — no, rather than that, he would creep down the stairs like a cat and slip out unseen” (1).

This summer, everything was going relatively well in my life — I was in Italy, I had decided to go to college there, and I had finally seen my friends and family after nearly a year — except for this one little fact: I had not written in almost two months, not even a poem, not even a line, not even a noun. Only one sentence had been repeating in my head: *Memory does not go where the body goes*. It came to me one day while I was on a walk, once again avoiding my journal and all the unfinished poems. I contemplated how much my life would change in the next year and was I making the right decision in going to Italy? Should I have applied to school in New York? In other words, all those senior year presages you can't avoid. Anyway, when the sentence popped into my head, I thought, wow that's a pretty interesting line. *Memory does not go where the body goes*.

All day, as I went around with my friends, as I ate lunch or dinner, or went on a hike, the sentence lingered, and I repeated it. *Memory does not go where the body goes*. It became a sort of routine and at some point I even created a little melody for it and had some chords in mind for the guitar. The line had become so ingrained in my head that I had no need to write it down. It just came back to mind again and again as if it was in control of me and not I of it. I had no idea how it came to me or where it came from, but I did know that I wanted to write a poem with it. But then again, there was the tiny problem that I just could not write, I could not get myself to write or at least drag myself to the table and sit there for a couple of hours. At first, I tried to convince myself that it was a short poem, you know, like those one-line poems, but of course, that was just an excuse. Then, I thought, this must be a sign that I shouldn't write anymore. But no, I corrected myself, if anything, this was a sign that I still had potential and hope left in me. Needless to say, I never really came to a conclusion. Instead, I would start my day with a walk and with the idea that after a while, I would come home to write “...

since there are times when one must absolutely go somewhere” (11). However, I sought anything — signs and even people I knew — that could stall me and prolong my walk. Once, I even chased my friend on the street just to get a conversation going. I did everything in my power not to go home. If I went home, I knew I would just bite my nails and think about not writing, but I also couldn't bring myself to sit in front of my notebook and face the page because I was too afraid of what might happen if I did. And still, the sentence kept repeating in my head: *Memory does not go where the body goes. Memory does not go where the body goes...* I tried to locate the origin of my desire to write and thought of all those times I had felt such an urge to put things down on a page. I thought of the works and writers I had always consulted. I did not want to read Lorca anymore or recite Rimbaud, their perfection mocked me, their purity irritated me. I was sure they would laugh at me if they knew at what lengths I would be willing to go to only to escape poetry, they who had died in its name — Lorca with a bullet, Rimbaud by disease. I vaguely remembered what it was like to have a flush of ideas, but conjuring up those feelings is always like that. It's like trying to remember a particular flower: you can remember what it looked like, but it's impossible to recall its smell.

The funny thing is that the entire time I thought, “I drink so that I may suffer twice as much!” (12); the more time I don't write, the greater the poem must come out in the end. One day it will come to me just like that, I thought. But nothing happened, and then nothing happened again; and the line that had been repeating in my head became more and more like the elapsing of a clock, like the monotones of a voice turning more vigorous and severe.

Then one day, I was looking through my books to see if I could find one to gift my friend for her birthday. After considering both Bolaño and Cortázar, I settled on Bolaño's *Distant Star* since he was my favorite writer. I had not read the novel, but his other work, *The Savage Detectives*, was one of those books I carried and still carry around with me everywhere I go. I re-read it at least once a year, and just shuffling through it from time to time puts me in a better mood. *Distant Star* was new to me, but I had only heard good things about it. With the book in my hands, I sat at the table. And despite everything that had been going on in my head, I wrote an inscription.

The day before it, August 10th, was St. Lawrence's day, the night of the shooting stars. I walked out of town with my friends and went near the woods to see the sky more clearly. We found a quiet place and stood there. And for the whole night, we watched the sky with our heads raised and necks cramping. It was breathtaking, and everything else escaped my mind. I did not think of anything, not of writing, not of the future, only of the moment. Then a star, the biggest one I've ever seen, came down like a fireball, and for a moment, I thought I would be able to touch it, but just as quickly as it blazed, it also died. I did not have time to react, only to witness. I was not even sure if I had seen it — if it was nothing or everything. The only realities we can truly access are those that last a second, those only partially revealed to us, those that could have easily been a dream, therefore, the ones we can never prove.

My friend's birthday was also on August 10th, so I wrote the inscription to her thinking of Saint Lawrence's shooting star. The star was so perfect that even an attempt to represent it would be an automatic failure. I stared for a long time at the blank page before beginning to write. But without realizing it, the words came out in the form of a poem. I copied it to my notebook before giving away the book. I could see there was something half hidden and in waiting, but there was something still missing, at least if it was going to become a real poem. As an inscription, it was pretty good.

Only a couple of days later did I come back to what I had written and realize that my poem was not about the star. It was not about the star at all, but about me, and I found it funny that I had not realized until then. I was not writing about a star: there is a difference between the word and the thing itself. Poems are about words, not things. Things are too perfect, and human beings are imprecise. We must always extend one hand towards the sky and keep the other wringing the land and its soils. Language, too, is perfect, but it is words that test us at both our thresholds and our dead ends. I realized in the moment that we must neither write on impulse nor cease to write waiting for it. In other words, we must cease before our thresholds and simply live on the verge of an idea, or should I say, on the verge of the ideal. We must redirect the energy of the page, cease before the curtain slyly opening, before the light of the page, stop and face the moment that is an expression of childhood, surprise before the world and life. In some ways, we can only face life trusting that new and agreeable surprises will come our way. And when the show ends and we open our notebooks to what seems like a dead-end, there is always something, there is always a door at the back of the theatre from which to escape slyly: it is a word. The best things come out of those escapes because those things are the essentials, the revelatory words that even our dead-ends cannot not take away.

Words are the biggest means of consultation within a poem. You can choose between thousands and listen only to the ones preferred. I finally consulted the star and finished my poem thinking of it. The poem was really about poetry, all poems are, and in the end, like an impulse, I wrote the last line: *Memory does not go where the body goes.*

Take a second to consider it—what is this obscure concept? Visualize yourself in relation to the space around you. Done? Okay. Now, multiply that space by a billion. And then multiply that by a trillion. And that by a quadrillion. And then by a septillion. And that by another number larger than a septillion—a number so incohesive that, if written in size 0.0000001 font, the zeroes would still completely cover the page. What you are picturing now is an infinitesimally small portion of infinity’s true size. Even if you attempted to zoom out from your current image until even galaxies were no larger than grains of sand, the size in your mind would truly be quite shrimpy in comparison to infinity.

Be glad that you cannot picture infinity. Perhaps the reason our minds evolved such creative limitations was to prevent imagination from exceeding boundaries. To imagine such grandeur, such flabbergasting space, would render even our omnipotent minds to the severest of seizures as the Infinium of infinity slowly consumes it like an insatiable parasite.

Infinity is, simply put, bigger than the biggest thing ever. It is larger than the time you said, “wow, that is really elephantine, a totally stunning size, a real holy friggin’ crap, that thing is big.” Infinity is so big that, by comparison, bigness itself looks itty-bitty. Gigantic to the power of colossal to the power of exorbitantly gargantuan doesn’t even do it justice.

Using our truly scientific definition of infinity, we can explore some stunning ideas that are perhaps as inconceivable as infinity itself. Mathematically speaking, we denote infinity as an oddly shaped loop derived from the geometric figure known solely to Wikipedia, and a select few geometry aficionados, as a lemniscate. For those who have forgotten more than just their high school math, this symbol is represented by an eight turned on its side. Now, why mathematicians are such fanatics over this horizontal eight, one can only guess. However, it is through mathematics, and this symbol, that we are able to prove something absurd. And I know, you forgot your high school math for a reason, but just bear with me.

Let us say the population of the multiverse is a value x . We will include, in this population, all beings of sentience. This shall include arboreal and botanical subjects alongside our common perceptions of mammals, reptilians, amphibians, aves, fish, crustaceans, chondrichthyes, and aliens. We can estimate the average population of the multiverse by dividing x by infinity, with infinity being the total space of the multiverse. Since x is a finite value and infinity is, well, an infinite value, we can say, through an algebraic definition, that the average population of the

multiverse is so atomic, so microminiature, so utterly Lilliputian, that it is zero. From this, we can derive that all actions do not exist and therefore have no consequence, that life is a hoax, and that all visualizations of sentience are no more than illusionary holograms created by non-existing senile minds that may well be a part of a computer program. To further our astute analysis, we may safely assume that the Matrix truly exists and that all those who deny it and attempt to retaliate are solely programs of a computer actively reacting to the powerful intuition of a teenager the way our falsified minds and bodies react to malevolent, potentially cataclysmic non-extant substances. However, this also means that removing ourselves from the matrix may well result in removing one’s sentience, as formally, one exists solely as a series of binary codes discovered when infinity was a finite value.

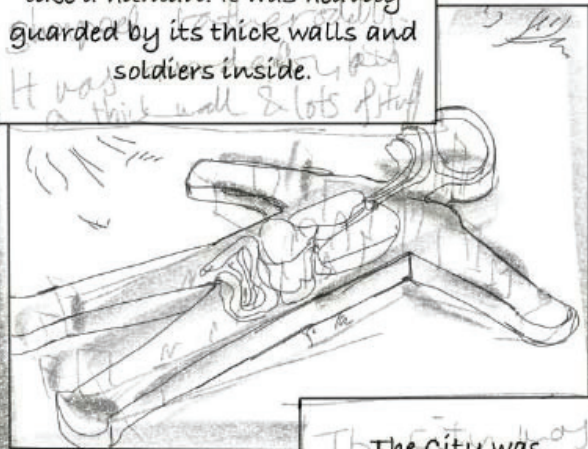
If you have some semblance of calculus, you may realize there is a slight issue with our derivation. Perhaps you see that instead of the population truly being zero, it limits to zero; in other words, it gets very, very, very, very close to zero, but never actually equals it. This brings us to a troubling question—is it true that we exist? For if not, we may as well embrace our inert chaos and derive happiness from destruction. But if we do, then our actions matter, forcing us to abide by the social constructs developed by people that consider themselves ‘civilized.’

To clarify comes Aristotle in his omniscience, preaching like a perfervid pastor. Our dear friend Aristotle profoundly proclaimed that infinity exists solely as being potential and not actual—meaning that a value has the potential of being infinity but can never truly achieve infinity. This somewhat emulates our understanding of the universe: it is forever expanding, and therefore limiting to infinity, but in a given moment in time, it still consists of a finite value.

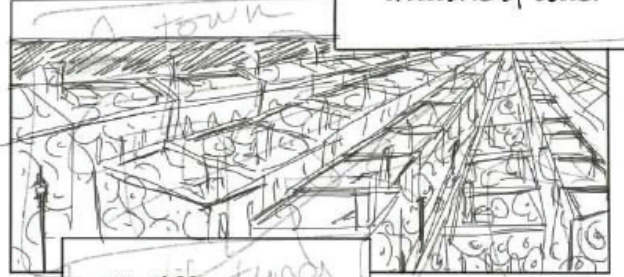
We can see then that instead of sentience, infinity is non-extant, a bygone, defunct, obsolete concept formed by speculating mathematicians and zealous theorists to confuse the public mind far more than necessary. We also see that the only accurate statement—or rather the only logical statement—that appears within this text comes in the concluding sentence (and that sentence is as follows, one with such a delightful quod erat demonstrandum, you shall either laugh or produce a dreadful grimace): that if any mathematician or theorist is requested to produce a definition upon infinity, they may spew forth an incomprehensible rigmarole, a hokum spiel as seen above, but would most certainly not compose a definition with any meaning at all.

Final Project

Once upon a time, there was a city, shaped rather oddly, almost like a human. It was heavily guarded by its thick walls and soldiers inside.

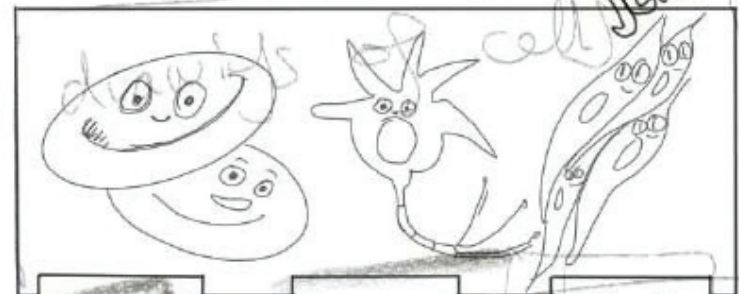


The city was inhabited by trillions and trillions of cells.



All different types of cells live in the city.

Just a few ex.s




There are red blood cells

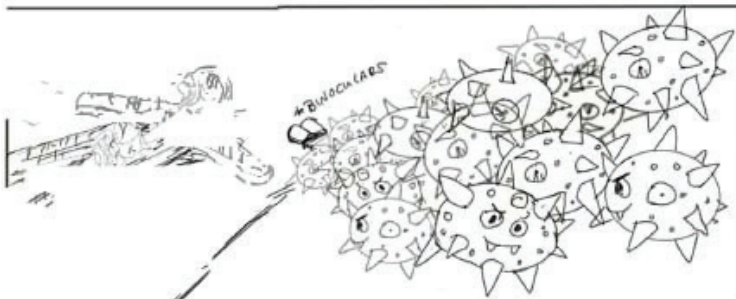
Neurons

Smooth Muscle Cells

The city is well protected in case of pathogens invasions. Pathogens can infect and bring disaster upon the city

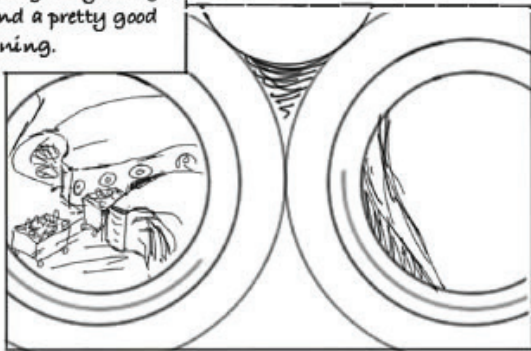


Okay, now let's begin the story of a pathogen invasion!

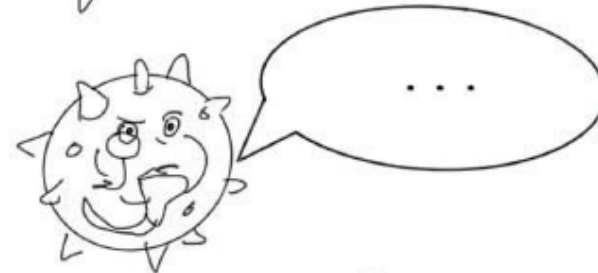
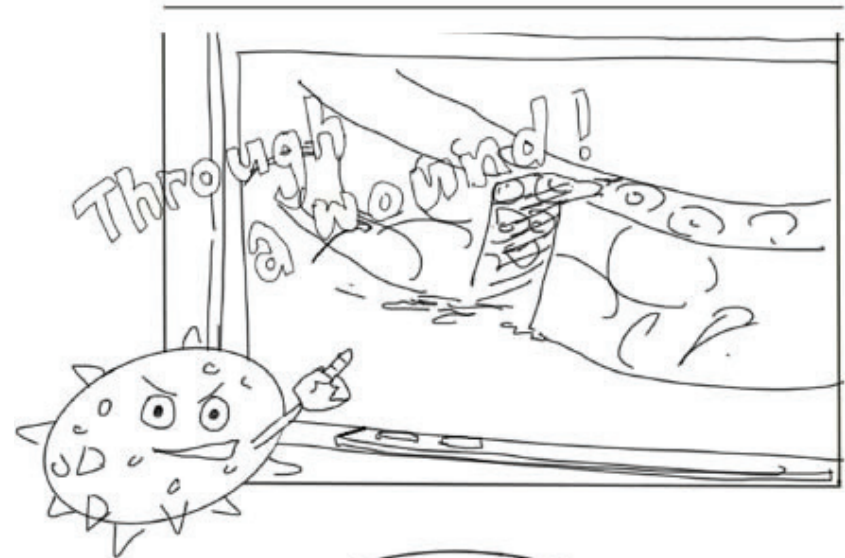


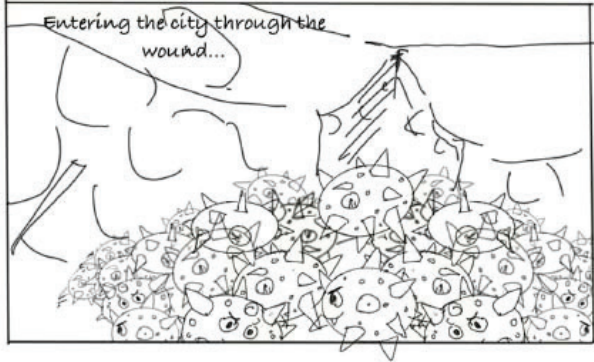
The pathogens are on their daily screening of the city, trying to find an opening for invasions.

As they are looking, they thought that they found a pretty good opening.



Plan B
Time!

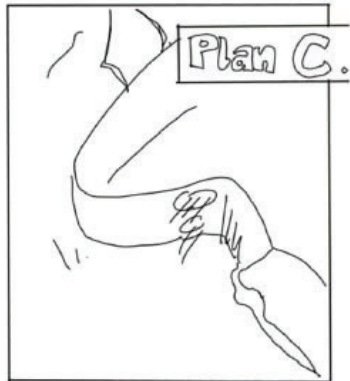




Trying to actually get through... AHHHH Inflammation...



FAIL!

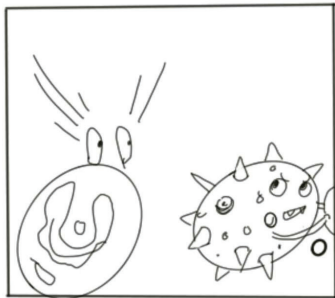


We are going through the nose this time!!!

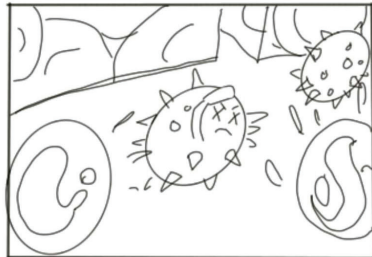
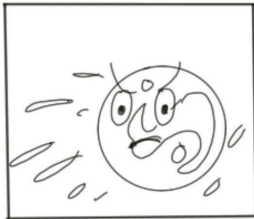




OMG we actually made it through. Phew, that was a journey!!

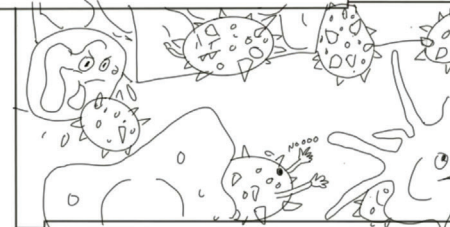


Oops, they saw us.

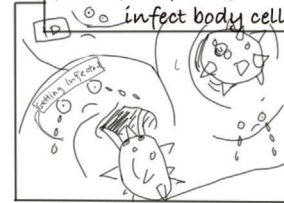


The neutrophils were the first to detect the invasion of the pathogens. They immediately start killing them as well as making other immune cells join.

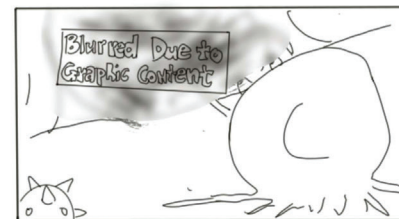
An intense battle has now begun...

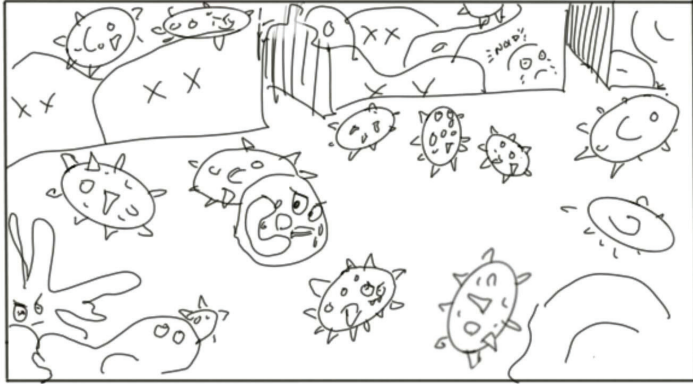


All sorts of immune cells have gathered to fend off the pathogens while they relentlessly infect body cells and replicate.



Natural Killer cells have identified the infected cells and killed them.

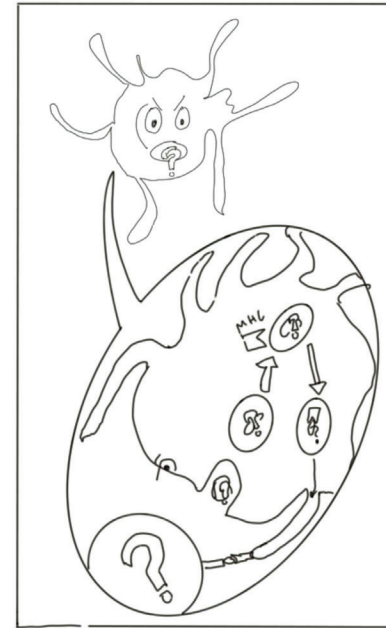




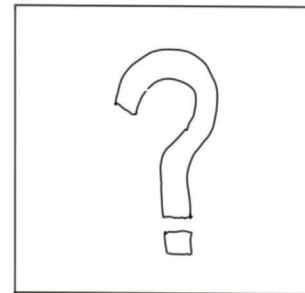
As the battle continues, the body and innate immune cells lost the upper hand and the pathogens begin beating them in numbers. Victory seems to be theirs.



But, little did they know, a secret force was developing away from the action...



This force will determine the outcome of this battle. We will see more from it very soon....



Dear Teachers

Dear Teachers,

You have an immense amount of influence over younger generations. Because of that, you have a responsibility to provide them with as unbiased an education as you can. You need to represent all sides of a story in a way that does justice to each. You need to accurately depict history instead of sugarcoating it and making students feel comfortable. I should not have to minimize my own trauma to make you feel better about yourself. Many times, I hear teachers say “lean into discomfort” but immediately back off as soon as a student doesn’t engage in a conversation. This makes it much more difficult to talk about race than it should be.

America needs to do a better job acknowledging its past. If we don’t, we can’t learn from it. We can already see where that gets us. During the pandemic of COVID-19, racial violence has risen by a considerable margin. From George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and many more, the Black community still doesn’t enjoy all the liberties the law should provide us. We can’t wait for a friend in a Starbucks without our integrity being questioned. We can’t have Skittles in our pocket without our integrity being questioned. We can’t even sleep in our own homes without fearing that the white man decided we don’t get to live anymore.

It’s so bad that the Black youth is trained on how to deal with the police by their parents. I remember when I first started my training. My mom asked me what I would do if a cop stopped me. I then underwent a forty-five minute breakdown of how to comply and seem as non-threatening as possible. This continued for several years until I could be randomly stopped by my mom pretending to be an officer and get by without being harassed, arrested, or shot. I’m worried about my brother because he’s reluctant to discuss almost anything race-related. I think he’s scared, but we need to teach him. While parents and family need to teach the practical side, teachers need to teach the historical side.

When I was growing up, in elementary school we only talked about Black people for a week in February. It was the Carter G. Woodson version. We got a week of the same figureheads: MLK, Harriet Tubman, Jackie Robinson. Malcolm X if we were extra lucky. And some of my peers who don’t go to Fieldston don’t even know who those people are. Germany has a very rich program that teaches the Holocaust in school specifically so students can understand the mistakes made in their past. They teach it so history doesn’t repeat itself and they can move away

from the bigotry perpetuated by past generations. America refuses to do this. We get a romanticized version where it boils down to “slavery bad, Abe Lincoln saved the slaves, civil rights movement, peace among all men.” This mentality helps nobody and it is the educator’s job to fix the curriculum delivered to our youth. Teach the kids how after the Civil War ended, Andrew Johnson shot us right back to where we started, and said he wanted to get “as close to slavery as possible.” Teach kids about the mass incarceration of the Black population and how it’s modern-day slavery.

Teachers have an obligation to educate children. But how can you do that when you refuse to even mention how this country was built. The literal foundation of this country barely gets two words each year, and then is forgotten about until the next February. I’ve heard many of my peers complain about “having to learn about Black people during February.” It should never be like this. Students should feel like they get to and want to learn about Black people, not that they have to. Many of my peers have made snide remarks about Bridge-to-Bridge, a program allowing older students of color to connect to younger ones in an attempt to grow a sense of community in a predominantly white environment. They say, “why isn’t there a white Bridge to Bridge? Why don’t we get a white history month?” and this ignorance is a direct result of America’s inability to explain why our story needs to be emphasized. They don’t understand that the rest of the school is their Bridge-to-Bridge, that the rest of the year is their white history month. This entitlement needs to stop, and educators need to spearhead the change in curriculum to make sure the next generation doesn’t fall prey to a mentality that only benefits the oppressors.

All the best,
Taj Papino-Wood

Dear Future Self

Dear future self,

I bet your knees hurt or maybe your neck. I hope not, though. I hope you stopped cracking your neck long ago. Time must've caught up somehow.

I've never loved reading the letters I write to myself. They feel empty and uneventful. Hopefully, I can entertain you with this letter. It will be a good break from your taxes, or whatever else you are up to these days.

I am not writing to waste your time (that would be the worst, right?). I am writing to remind you of the gift you can give: yourself. More specifically, you are the gift you can give to our children (do you still want three?). It feels silly to describe myself in writing since there's nothing I can write that you don't already know, but in case you need a reminder—we've never known a father. You will be the first.

I don't know if that is a gift or a curse; I think it would depend on our experience. If we had a great father, I'd tell you to do for your children what he did for us. If we had an absent father, I'd tell you to do for your children what he didn't do for us. I want some sort of reference point. Unfortunately, I haven't found a "Fatherhood for Dummies" manual to offer you. Instead, my advice comes from a source with mysterious origins. I feel like I am looking at a piece of blank paper as if it were a map. No offense, but if you're looking for advice from me, you must be pretty lost. Out of self-interest, and the interest of our kids (I'm still torn on how to refer to your/our life), I'll get a pencil and start drawing.

When we were young, I remember the idea of a father was so alluring. Our young mind envisioned the dream father we hoped for in the flesh: a fun, athletic dad who was always happy to throw around a football. Something about a mom with arthritis didn't quite fit that criteria. When I told Mom and Mamá what I wanted in a father, they asked me why I thought my dad would like sports and not something completely different, like gardening. While equally possible, burying a seed in the dirt was not exactly the father-son bonding I was looking for.

I wish I could tell you that Rule #1 is "Don't Garden," but there's more to it. They are your children, but more importantly, you are their father. I know that it's two sides of the same coin, but you have an obligation to them, not the other

way around. If our son loves to garden, then start shoveling. If our daughter loves horses, then saddle up. If they like something enough, you must go all-in. You need to let them experiment and bring out their passion. Passion teaches what can't be taught—it teaches commitment, initiative, mastery, and happiness. I can't know what our children will fall in love with, but to be honest, it's not important to me. Your joy will not come from the activities themselves but from doing them with our children. Just make sure they give basketball a shot. Get it? :)

Sigh. That felt heavy. Next, I'll talk about shaving. Our first razor was a weird electric one that Mom bought. (She tries hard, but what does she know about shaving faces?) In case you can't remember, it had two wheels that looked like the wheels on a cement roller, but with a larger length-to-diameter ratio, which fed into another mechanism between the wheels that did the shaving. You pressed a button, the razor buzzed, and then you'd roll it up and down your face. It did a decent job, yet it never felt like the "real thing." Eventually, we got a traditional razor. I watched a YouTube video, proceeded to shave, and immediately, slit the skin near the right-most part of my jaw. Gillette won't be making a commercial out of it anytime soon. I don't blame the YouTube video because it actually taught me everything I needed to know. However, if we have a son, I think you should teach him yourself. It is a rite of passage, one that we never quite had. I can't recall a particular moment in my life where I felt like I became a "man," but you owe that feeling to our son one day.

I've always been private, including with our parents. It's nothing they should be worried about because we're naturally quiet that way. I'd like to think we would be more forthcoming with a dad, but I guess that's something we'll never know. I just hope you can be friends with our children. "Friend" will just be one of the many hats you wear as a father, and it will be one of the most important. I don't believe that a child can be permanently steered in one direction; one day, when you let go of the wheel, they'll make the choices they have been waiting their entire lives to make. They need to experience freedom or they'll live with a gnawing sadness. They will not give you total control just because you are their friend, but maybe they'll ask you for directions when they need help.

If you can't be their friend, try to be admired—like a role model. Role models come from all sorts of places. For several years Derrick Rose was our number one role model; I still have a life-sized poster of him in my room. You can't tell too much about a person by how they play basketball, so I could only idolize the way he changed direction in mid-air like an acrobat. I tried to emulate his style (or as much of it as I could considering it was fifth-grade recess). Our second role model was our Grandpa. Grandpa was our role model because of his principles, not his basketball skills. For the small piece of my life wherein I have been able to think about what my future profession might be, a lawyer (like our grandfather) has never been at the top of my list. Instead, I admire our Grandpa's character and unselfish priorities. If I get a say, "Arthur," our grandfather's first name, should be our son's middle name. You can be an example for our children. I have always looked beyond my own home for male role models. Our kids should not have the same burden.

Remember, you can always ask Mom and Mamá for advice. After all, being a mom and being a dad are really not so different. Our parents are caring, supportive, and veterans of parenting, twice over. They don't know anything more about being a father than you do, but they do know parenting. Television presents mothers and fathers as different, but that doesn't matter to me. Being a father undoubtedly requires most of the same skills that our parents possess. I have been the only man in my house for my entire life, but I am okay with that and it has become a part of my identity. I've thought about who I would be if I grew up with a father. The answer? Not myself. The truth is our children will not need a father; father is just a title. Any man can call himself that. The importance lies in what "father" will mean to our children. I want them to know, and to remember, that their father put their happiness above everything else as if it were his own.

See you soon,
Noah

Amani Creamer
Form V
Braided Essay

I Pledge Allegiance

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Why should we mention God while pledging allegiance to our country? This question has plagued me for a long time since I've always been fascinated by religion and politics. My mom and I are culturally (not very religiously) Muslim. We celebrate Eid, don't eat pork, and occasionally fast for Ramadan. But I have never been to a mosque in a religious context, and I'm not even sure that a God exists. (When I was younger, I prayed to the Greek gods at night because I thought they were cool.) However, I believe that there must be some sort of higher power in the universe because I refuse to believe that everything we are and know is created by randomized chaos. If everything in the world is random, nothing we do as human beings matters. Call me narcissistic, but I like to think at least some things I do can make a difference. I believe some things are meant to be and some people are born to do certain things or set certain events into motion. I believe in platonic, not romantic, soulmates. And to quote Ariana Grande, I do believe God is a woman. Whether these are religious beliefs or simply personal ones, I do not know.

Regardless of my relationship to religion, larger religious philosophical questions have always interested me. If Jews or Muslims were in power in this country would their religious views be used to dictate laws as Christianity does? Might we have replaced the word God in the Pledge of Allegiance with Allah? I have grappled with these questions and many more for the last five years, even going so far as to read the Bible and the Torah in their entirety, searching for answers. But they were just books, and like any book, there is no one interpretation of the words written on its pages. People allow outside influences and preexisting beliefs to guide their reading of religious texts, rather than approaching the process vice versa. For example, how do people pick and choose which lines to follow from the Bible? It says that two men cannot lie with each other, but also says not to wear clothes with mixed fabrics. Where is the line drawn?

But I admit that I have never understood the pull that religion has on people, so I asked people more connected to religion than myself how they drew the line between guidance and nonsense or outdated material. Most answers didn't surprise me. Most of these people said that they drew on the Bible, Torah, or Qur'an for spiritual guidance. But when it came to the treatment of other human beings and their rights, most turned to their own moral compass. Even Baldwin seems to agree with this, saying that "neither civilized reason nor Christian love

would cause any [white people] to treat you as they presumably wanted to be treated” (21). If a person’s morals tell them that you are inferior, so-called ‘Christian morality’ won’t change their mind. This is why I firmly believe that religious beliefs say something about a person. Maybe mine say that I have a bit of a selfish side, wanting to feel important in the world, or wanting to be predestined for something great. Maybe I want to believe that the people in my life right now will change my life for the better, or that I’ve already met my soulmate.

104 out of 114 Supreme Court Justices in the United States have been Christian.

“Religion is the third rail of Supreme Court politics” (Lithwick 2014). As much as judges and justices like to say that they don’t allow personal faith into their judicial decision-making, how does one separate that integral part of their identity from judicial rulings? Justice Antonin Scalia, who served on the U.S. Supreme Court from 1986 to 2016, had strong personal views on many of the cases the Supreme Court saw and even argued that the Supreme Court should not rule on “matters of morality.” Justice Scalia was an extremely devout Roman Catholic who vehemently opposed abortion, gay marriage, and physician-assisted suicide. Many people have speculated that his religious views affected his judicial decisions, but in response to this, he said that “there is no such thing as a Catholic judge,” just as there is no such thing as “a Catholic way to cook a hamburger.” With all due respect to Judge Scalia, comparing hamburgers to judges is nonsensical at best. He may argue that his faith doesn’t affect his rulings until he’s blue in the face, yet I personally have not heard an argument opposing abortion and gay marriage that doesn’t somehow, at least covertly, refer to “Christian values.” What is the legal reason for opposing gay marriage and abortion? Judge Scalia was almost as devout a Republican as he was a Catholic, but Republicans generally believe that the government should not interfere with citizens’ private concerns. So why is this exception made for abortion and gay marriage? Criminalizing abortion and the doctors who perform it isn’t productive to our society. The demand for abortion will not decrease simply because the federal government has deemed it illegal. For years, the federal government deemed marital rape and domestic abuse a personal problem, yet gay marriage is somehow within the purview of the government? There are simply no justifications for these ideals other than the fact that it is against Christianity.

So, some may ask, why do justices’ personal views matter? It is perfectly within any person’s (including a Supreme Court Justice’s) rights to believe what they wish. This begins to be problematic when it affects federal law and judicial precedent and rulings, and therefore the lives of people who don’t hold those same beliefs. Of course, it’s very difficult to prove that rulings are decided based on religious beliefs rather than legal interpretation. In his 2007 blog post, UChicago law professor Geoffrey Stone argues that in the Supreme Court case *Gonzales v. Carhart*, the five Catholic justices who voted to uphold a law were influenced by their Catholic beliefs. The case concerned the legality of an anti-abortion law that didn’t include an exception in cases of danger to the mother’s health. All five

Christian justices went against precedent and found this law constitutional. Stone notes that they “fell back on a common argument to justify their position. There is, they say, a compelling moral reason for the result... by making this judgment these justices have failed to respect the fundamental difference between religious belief and morality.” In this instant, these justices allowed their personal faith and idea of morality to influence them into going against legal precedent, something that is simply unconstitutional. However, because it is so hard to prove, this problem hasn’t been addressed for the last two hundred years. As James Baldwin notes, even in the most religious phase of his life, he believed that “[people] ought to love the Lord because they loved Him, and not because they were afraid of going to Hell” (35). The sentiment of this quote is that people should become involved in a religion because they believe in its values, not because someone has scared them or forced them into belief. With rulings like *Gonzales v. Carhart*, Christian judges are forcing their beliefs on the American people in a subtler but perhaps a more dangerous way than Baldwin notes.

In God We Trust

Although religion can be criticized for its undue influence on the U.S. government, I must admit that religion can move people in ways few other things can. The problem with religion doesn’t lie in faith itself; it lies in the ways people twist their faith to suit their bigotry. The Bible instructs Christians to accept others, even those who don’t share their faith. In Peter 3:8, Jesus instructs his followers to be “like-minded, [...] sympathetic, love one another, [and be] compassionate and humble.” This verse represents an overarching theme of the Bible; Jesus teaches his disciples that they must love everyone, regardless of faith, identity, or social status. Many people apply these ideals in their everyday lives, helping them form communities and further healing.

Even Baldwin, who readily admits the faults of the Christian church, admits that there is “[nothing] equal [to] the fire and excitement that sometimes, without warning, [fills] a church” (33). He describes the church as a place where he could go to escape his abusive father and earn the respect of his community. Religion can offer young people a path to a future where they have the respect of their peers and community members and a belief system that teaches them to respect everyone around them, regardless of religion, beliefs, or identity. Although there are many Christians who use their religion to make moral arguments or judgments on things they believe are sinful, many Christians believe that verses such as Matthew 22:36, which says “thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” are more important than Bible verses that are used to condemn homosexuality and abortion. In my view of religion and God, it’s not my place to judge others’ morality. After death, wherever we go, or whatever happens to us, I believe that people who lived good lives will be rewarded, and those who didn’t will be punished. I can’t make a judgment on others’ morality while they’re alive —that is for a higher power to decide. Because of this, I truly believe that there is no bad religion, only bad people.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. (1st Amendment)

No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States. (Article VI)

If the Establishment Clause is to be believed at face value, it would be illegal for the U.S. government to show preference to any religion. Preference, as defined by Merriam Webster, is the principle of giving advantages to some over others. If the Establishment Clause was actually followed by the U.S. government, we would have had a non-Christian president by now. Although we pride ourselves on our separation of church and state, it is abundantly clear that our laws favor Christianity. When the president is sworn into the highest office in the nation, he usually swears on the Bible, and most presidents choose to add the words “so help me God” at the end of their oath. Now, technically, neither of these things are written into law, so they aren’t blatantly unconstitutional. However, it speaks volumes that only two U.S. presidents have flouted precedent and not been sworn in on a Bible (despite the fact that they were both Christian). The first was Theodore Roosevelt, the former Vice President who had to be inaugurated as fast as possible after the death of the previous president. The only president to be sworn in on a book other than the Bible was John Quincy Adams. He was sworn in on a book of law because he believed it was symbolic that, as president, he would uphold the tenets of the Constitution. In my opinion, every U.S. president should be sworn in on a copy of the Constitution; they are swearing themselves to our country and our laws, not to God.

Regardless of religious bias in laws, it’s deeply harmful to have a government that isn’t representative of its citizens. Even if every president or Supreme Court justice didn’t allow their faith to affect their jobs (which is clearly not the case), a government representative of the people is a core tenet of democracy. If the presidents of the United States had been representative of the current U.S. population, we would have had five Black presidents, twenty-three female presidents, nine atheist presidents, two gay presidents, and two Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu presidents. Instead, we have had forty-four white, Christian, straight men lead our country. But this doesn’t represent the beliefs and wishes of the American people, who are becoming increasingly diverse and liberal. The time for white men to be in power is coming to an end. If our government doesn’t diversify and separate itself from Christianity, it will be (and already is) laughable to call ourselves the world’s beacon of democracy.

Forty-two out of forty-four U.S. Presidents were sworn into the presidency using a Bible.

Balancing the corruption of religion with personal identity can be a difficult task. But I ask everyone to look within themselves. What are your morals, and which of your morals do you attribute to religion? Even I have some morals that stem from my religious beliefs and upbringing. My morals and religious identity have been created by the dichotomy between my parents. A father who grew up in the church, only to convert to Islam to marry my mother. An unconventional mother who was forced into Islam as a child and promptly left it behind when she came to the U.S. A father who read the Bible with me as a child, and a mother who taught me about Islam in response. But I draw strong lines between my religious and moral beliefs. I personally have no problem if you don’t want to get an abortion, or wouldn’t want to be in a relationship with someone of the same gender. But I also have no problem if you do want to get an abortion, or are gay, because it isn’t my place to decide what is right or wrong for you. My beliefs should not dictate what you can or cannot do.

Although religion can be a powerful force for good, it can also be a motivator behind hate and bigotry. In America, we have freedom of speech and religion, no matter who that speech or religion discriminates against. But when religious values permeate the government, it becomes much harder to distinguish the law of the nation from the law of the church. Bringing religion into law is firmly unconstitutional, but it’s done in such a subtle way that most people don’t even realize the extent to which Christianity is embedded into the law. There is no one solution, but, for example, the confirmation of Amy Coney Barrett would be the end of the meager separation of church and state. Although she has said that Christian judges should recuse themselves from death penalty cases because of their faith, she will happily vote to overturn *Roe v. Wade* (I can smell the hypocrisy). The infusion of Christian faith into the government can only be ended by voting for candidates who bring different perspectives and will challenge the stranglehold religion has on the government. In order to save the secular future of our country, we must elect diversity and grow up to create substantive change.

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Ines Menendez
Form V
Internal Monologue

Safety

In my mind

This past Monday, November 2nd—the day before election day—a day when stress and tension about the future of our country felt suffocatingly intense, I joined a video call with some teachers who were leading workshops on healing and reflection. One exercise in particular was really fun for me—drawing a map of my neighborhood. I started with my building, followed by Fort Tryon Park, and then my favorite spot in the park. Although my map is made up of real places in my neighborhood, nobody other than I could understand it, because the geography and scale are all off. The playground, my apartment building, 187th street, and the park are the biggest, and the park has no real boundary or limit, because these are the places I find myself most; while a bit smaller than those are the supermarket, the pizza place, and the Indian place; and even smaller, I drew the schoolyard, the Ginkgo Tree on Fort Washington, the pharmacy, and a grilled cheese in place of the diner.

I heard somewhere that space is physical, and place is space with a meaning, whether it be the purpose of that space, or just a memory. Without the passage of time, and everything in my life happening the way it has, I wonder: would I have drawn a heart next to the park on my map? Would I have put a star next to the playground? Would I have included Vicky’s Diner even though it’s now closed down?

At risk

A few months ago, I was in the Fieldston fall drama, a play called Safer. The story takes place in present-day New York City and follows students doing schoolwork over Zoom calls. It explores the issue of safety at home from the perspective of three students who suspect that a peer is the victim of domestic abuse. They never find out if there is any truth to their speculation, but they do everything in their power to protect her, even buying a plane ticket and arranging for her to live with one of them. When the cast spoke to the playwright, Alison Flom, for the first time, we wanted to know what the show was really about. She said it was about how different people define safety in the modern world. In the show, this theme manifested itself on different scales, from individual to universal. Flom references one’s immediate physical environment (a potentially abusive household) as well as global pandemonium (the COVID pandemic). I have learned that neither holds more importance than the other.

Over the past year we have each had to redefine our concepts of “safety.” My physical safety now entails protecting myself by wearing a mask and keeping distance—maintaining a minimum six feet of space between myself and other people. For me, my health has become not only consequential to my safety but to that of my parents as well, who are at higher risk of being infected. So what does “safer” really mean? What spaces are “safe” now? Even going to school, a space designed for nurturing, growth, and safety, has become a health hazard.

I find that there are not many places I’m comfortable anymore after the past few months. I have become used to maneuvering around people in such a way that allows me to create a significant distance between us, even crossing the street when there are too many people on the sidewalk I’m walking on. I stay away from crowds, go into the next subway car when there are too many people on mine, and try to walk instead of taking the bus if I can. Things I could do without a second thought before feel unpredictable and risky. I truly have had to rethink my safety in every aspect of my life. My first thought when I’m leaving the house is how will I protect myself, and in turn, my family and friends. The first thing my parents tell me if I make a plan with a friend is to remember to keep my mask on and not stand too close.

Safety at home

My mental wellbeing is another aspect of my safety that has been recently threatened. The idea of a “safe space” has been something looming large over me during this time. I now attend classes for school, afterschool, and other extracurriculars in my bedroom, and have the ability to join calls to anywhere and at any time. This newfound formality of a space where I regularly sleep, dress, and live—routines that are personal and that require privacy—has forced me to find another space where I can be alone. It can be uncomfortable to feel like every day, people are looking into my room, into my space—seeing all of the books on my shelves, the posters on my walls, my messy desk, and my unmade bed.

Honestly, it feels weird to be uncomfortable in my own bedroom. I always have some sense that I have something to do—a class to join, an assignment to finish. I am constantly anxious that my parents will come in and bombard me with things that I have to do or give me a lecture.

Recently I have been trying to make my room more comfortable and functional, so it becomes a space for productivity but also rest and stillness. Even though I have decluttered, even though I repainted the walls from a somewhat chaotic shade of orange to a more peaceful blue, even though I rearranged everything so that half of my room is my desk and books, and the other half is my bed and window, and even though I have done everything I can to convince myself that this setup helps me at all, sometimes I feel like I can’t be inside of this room anymore or I’ll go crazy. There is only so much to do, only so many things I can bear to look at for hours on end.

In the past few months, this feeling has been the most prominent, more than anything physically threatening. In the past few months, my room has gone from the refuge from the chaos to both the refuge and the chaos—a totally disorderly mix of both. I write this as I lay sprawled out on my bed, the least effective way for me to get any work done.

On my playlist

Earlier in the year in French class we had to write poems. My group wrote about things we miss, and then things that we have been able to do thanks to quarantine. One was “écouter de la musique et mes chansons préférées pour me sentir heureux,” which means that we listen to music and our favorite songs to feel happy. I have found a new appreciation for music in the past few months, and I have begun to understand how healing it can be.

I create strong associations between music, place, people, and time. Sometimes when I listen to a song I can feel the same way I felt a year ago, or I am able to picture a friend well, usually the person who shared the song with me. I associate some songs with rides on the school bus, because I used to have a playlist that I only listened to on the way to school.

I have music that I associate with March, a few songs that I played on repeat for hours on end one night. I have songs that I associate with journaling, because when I was really interested in it, this past summer, I would come up with ideas, paint, and create, all to the soundtrack of a certain four or five songs. I also have music that I associate with the park—some songs with working out, some with the Cloisters, and some for watching the sunset. All of these songs echo the same effortless feeling as that of the summer air on your face. They’re calm and peaceful and wonderful.

In the park

After the initial month or two of only going out to the supermarket, the first family outings we were able to have during “quarantine” were to Fort Tryon Park. I don’t think I’ve ever spent so much time there before, but it has become somewhere I routinely go to hang out, exercise, read, or simply sit and breathe. My space for months on end was my bedroom, and when I was able to go out, anywhere else. The park just happened to be the most accessible. I could be alone and be released from the confines of my walls, a freedom I craved since mid-March. Early on, I discovered a spot that has been my favorite place to go, no matter how I’m feeling. Tucked just behind the Cloisters, there sits a rock that overlooks a parking lot and further below, the Hudson River. I watch people and cars pass like a timelapse. My music makes this spot some days, and some days I prefer to just listen to the wind and the birds. Last time I went, strings and acoustic guitar from my maximum-volume headphones filled the air around my head.

I have spent hours there with friends, the sun on our faces, playing music or having a picnic. Instead of us changing when we enter the space, the space changes us. We are allowed to feel as far as we want from any tension in our lives. A few months ago I was there alone, and took everything in through writing. *Nobody bothers me, I don't bother anybody. This place is safe, I scribbled as I looked down to the ground 12 feet away. The only danger is dangling my feet over the edge. This place is safe, I don't have to worry. I am present here. The cool air brushes my knees, my shoulders, then my cheeks. I'm wearing a tank top and shorts on an oddly warm November day. I'm listening to Nightmares, by Easy Life, and the harps sound nice. I like this spot because I get the longest light, being higher up than those driving or walking below me. Golden plays. "Golden, as I open my eyes..." I notice how the branches on the trees seem to reach outward towards the sun, who is ducking down faster than the trees or I would like. I'm still listening to my own music, but I feel the bass thump from a passing car. It feels as if I am eternal and everyone around me is just passing by. My spot is this rock, this part of the sky and river and air. Everything I can see is my spot and my comfort.*