

Volume IX

# HEAR HERE!

Spring 2019



**Student Editors**

Liana Branscome  
Marie Fujimoto  
Alexander Garde  
Adrian Liao  
Yi-Mei Templeman

**Layout Production**

Bosba Panh

**Faculty Advisor/Editor**

Daphne Strassmann

**Assistant Faculty Editors**

Suzanne Hegland  
Patrick Keppel  
Tracy Strauss  
Jacob Vance

**Managing Editor**

Daphne Strassmann

**Administrative Liaison**

Ashley Shea

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Back cover image by Sunwei Li

**Hear Here!**  
**Volume IX**

# TRANSITION

Liberal Arts Student Journal  
New England Conservatory

Spring 2019

# From the editors

We practice, we train, we study, and we practice some more. For years, we the students of New England Conservatory have been working tirelessly to perfect our musical craft. We have committed ourselves to lives of discipline and critical analysis of our playing since we were young beginners. Practicing is a mechanical process. Correct notes, accurate rhythm, and perfect technique are the standards that we strive for as we spend hours alone in practice rooms. We take solace in our individual work, finding peace with the fact that the life we chose is one of self-reflection.

To make it as a musician, excruciating attention to technical detail is paramount. However, to make it as a musician, experience of the human condition is also paramount.

We must have something to say with our music. We have to spend time away from our instrument and outside of the practice room in order to give context to what we do. Technical prowess is important, but without experiencing life, how else can we expect to give our music meaning?

NEC is a uniquely collaborative environment that offers us the benefit of exploring our world and ourselves through classes in literature, current events, and creative expression outside of music. We are educated not only as musicians but as informed citizens of today's society. Although we dedicate our lives to such a specified skill, we are multifaceted individuals with a great deal to say about the world around us, and we are able to express our ideas through our writing as well as our music.

Countless musicians have come before us, bringing their individual perspectives to the very same music we are playing. In a changing world, it is essential that we, the next generation of musicians, keep this music alive by infusing it with our own experiences and setting it in a relevant social context for

audiences today. There is no purpose for music if there is nothing to be said through it.

Hear, Here! is a celebration of individual perspectives on the world as seen through the eyes of NEC's great young artists. Presented here is a collection of our thoughts on social justice, literature, personal growth, and other issues that are important to us today. We are pleased to share this snapshot of our views as a community with you.

*Alexander Garde*

*Yi-Mei Templeman*

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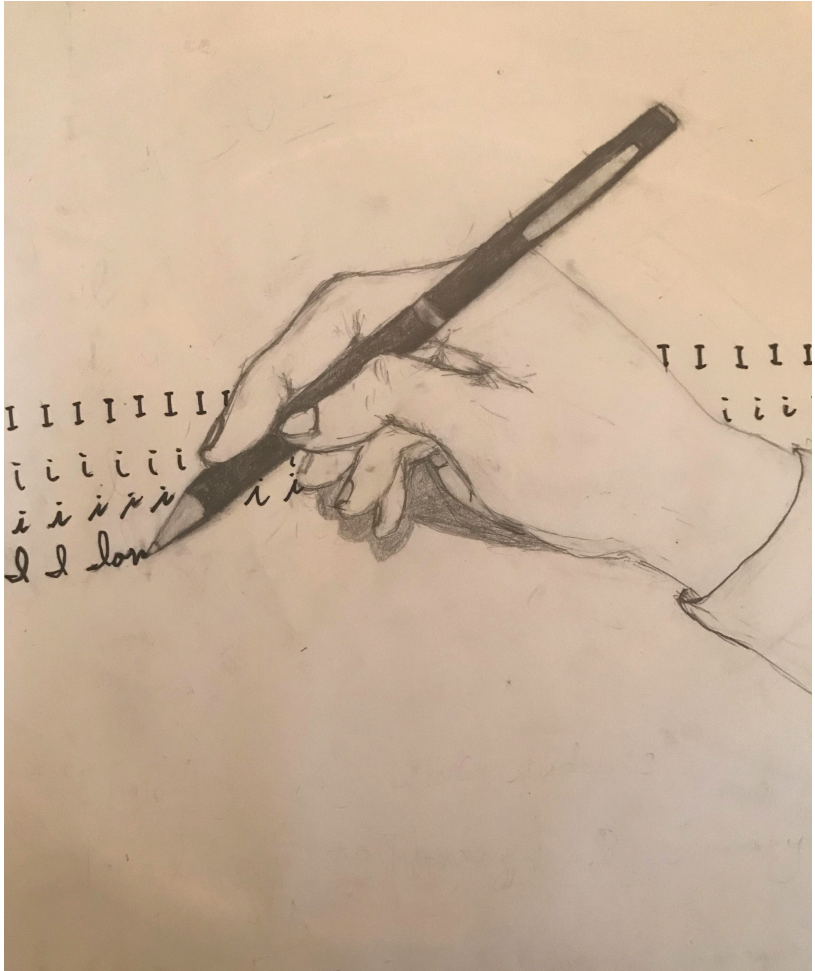
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Handwriting, Boston, MA

Marie Fujimoto

David Grant Helder

# An Essay

To write An Essay - an assignment; a chore; a work of art -.

An Essay is what you make it.

An Essay is an expression of one's mind, whether forced in the case of some academic scenarios, or a free forum for the mind to query some important questions and topics.

The mind, might you ask, cannot figure out some of these mysteries on its own? Are we not human? Are we not intelligent?

Intelligence is not defined by the ability to quickly produce answers to thoughtful questions, it is defined by producing answers to thoughtful questions thoughtfully.

Therefore, before one writes An Essay, consider this: Am I being thoughtful? Your intelligence is not in question, only your thoughtfulness, and thoughtfulness can be taught.



*Cello Duet*, Boston, MA

Daisy Chesler

*Hear Here! 2019*

Liana Branscome

# Untitled

i:The Gigolo

His widow doesn't grieve.

"Mitya's died in his sleep!"

I was there when Mr. Skunk strode inside,  
demanding him.

We try to eject Mr. Skunk.

The foulness has  
diffused through the town  
and the  
townspeople gratefully  
inhale  
that sultry smog.

Mitya, red in the eyes with  
soaked palms

wanted  
by the lonely old ladies and men of the town  
Mr. Skunk, their glorious supplier  
his product

growing gaunt but still  
so heavily desired.

Mitya with bloated debts  
his body is his livelihood  
Mr. Skunk, his beloved  
pimp

Who smiles, kisses, sells him  
and capitalizes on him

the congealed eyelids of forty-year-old ladies  
flitting, fluttering,  
fawning and destroying the tatters that are Mitya.

Insolent grins, "The inamorato's for sale!"  
Mitya begging and snorting,  
anything to keep his brain ladled  
in the stuff, caked in the white power.

A booming business

until he is dead, the supply expired.

The papers are kind  
and blame a weak heart  
congenitally so.

His widow  
knows his heart was fine.

He died from that town,  
from Mr. Skunk,  
from the white powder,  
from the old ladies and the old men

together.

ii: The Husband

The base weirdness  
of nakedness —

Prim's old shower.

She was also naked in here,  
towels which she rubbed herself dry with.

I'm glad Prim had hair. The husband's bald and  
I forgot my shampoo.

I wonder if he shampoos his new beard.

Then there were the painted plates, all happy things,  
periwinkle smiles and hearts with a P.

Peculiar the husband keeps these things,  
says he hardly sees the designs any more.

I call them the sacred plates and suggest he sell  
or smash them.

It's 4 in the morning and the silhouette of the husband is  
gesticulating still, the cigarette in his hand  
a feeble orange sigh.

"My neighbors ruined the view," he says again.  
"You see? They cut down the trees and ruined the view."

iii: The Deviant

I was cutting vegetables when you slunk close and I sank  
gratefully into the dream  
the illusion  
of a domestic scene.

I once told you I was a child, a little child.

"In these eyes only," you said and smiled.



iv: Wedding Day

I can't sleep for the noise of a hammer.

Red nails followed by wide blue sleeve.

A red spot of blood on the egg yoke and the yellow mess  
tastes sweet.

You wake up in a sweaty sweet mess  
of blankets.

You wake up sweating because it's your wedding day  
and you're afraid.

I sweat when I hold a knife.

The wedding cake cracks when you put a knife to it.

You close your eyes  
and hum  
and tell me  
not to wear lipstick anymore.

v: First Anniversary

It was only the reflection of my table lamp in the window.  
I pretended it was a real moon.  
It was good enough for me.

The cold spring air smelled like you.  
Or maybe I just wanted it to.  
I wondered if you were looking at the moon right then.  
Last year it was warm enough to wear a short skirt.

Last night I dreamt you kissed me.  
It was as good as when you were still here.  
I open the window and the moon disappears but the low  
clouds are still beautiful.

Alexander Garde

## Warming Up to Climate Change Adaptation: *How Northeastern Farmers Must Adapt to Save Their Crops*

Climate change is happening. This fact, widely accepted by scientists around the world, will prove to have an immense impact on nearly all aspects of day-to-day life and activities for everyone in the world. While this phenomenon is occurring on a global scale, there are countless examples of how it is affecting people on a smaller scale. In the northeastern United States, agriculture plays a critical economic and cultural role for many citizens. This, however, may not be the case in the future as climate change continues to impact the agricultural practices of this region. As temperatures rise, farmers will soon be unable to continue to do their work as usual, and so they must find a way to adapt to the changing climate. While there are many options to choose from, the optimal adaptation strategy for maintaining agriculture in the northeast is to change the use of the land. By changing what gets planted, farmers will be able to maintain their economic impact and crop yield with minimal consequences.

Agriculture is a great contributor to the economy in the northeastern region of the United States. According to Farm Credit East, the combination of agriculture, commercial fishing, and forestry accounted for an economic impact of \$103.4 billion and supported 483,375 jobs across eight northeastern states in 2015. These eight states, consisting of New England's six along with New York and New Jersey, contain a diverse range of agricultural products, including dairy, forest products, fruits, vegetables, and commercial fishing. There are nearly 80,000 farms and over 12 million acres of farmland across the region. In addition to their clear economic benefits, family-run farms have been a cultural staple of the area for hundreds of years. There is

little that is more picturesque than rolling hills of farmland with red barns and silos littering the New England countryside. These farms serve an important role in the region's tourism department. Carlson Orchards, for example, is an apple orchard located in rural Harvard, Massachusetts. The orchard has been around since 1936 when it was founded by Walter and Eleanor Carlson, and since then, the orchard has grown to 140 acres of land, producing 60,000 bushels of apples yearly in addition to other fruits and products. Carlson Orchards provides produce to major supermarket chains including Whole Foods and Star Market, and the orchard is a beloved local attraction where tourists and school groups flock in autumn to go apple picking. Carlson's is just one example of countless family farms in the northeast, and together they provide a monumental economic and cultural contribution to the region.

All of these beneficial impacts from northeast farms are at risk because of climate change. As various aspects of Earth's environment continue to evolve, there will be many ways that agricultural practices in the northeast will be altered. The largest and most obvious impact will be the increasing temperature. Certain types of crops, including corn, oats, and wheat, are more productive in cooler temperatures and will suffer if the summer heat becomes too intense. Additionally, "increases in the frequency of hot daytime or nighttime temperatures during spring and summer [...] can negatively affect flowering, fruit set, seed production, or fruit quality." This means that produce such as snap beans, cabbage, potatoes, and apples are at risk if the temperature continues to rise. Additionally, according to Climate Central, "the warming that has resulted from the increase in greenhouse gases has led to spring coming earlier across the country." This is bad news for agriculture, especially for crops such as apples, blueberries, raspberries, grapes, cranberries, and other fruits that require roughly 1,000 hours below 45 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter to generate a good yield the following summer. As spring comes and temperatures

warm earlier in the year, there will be less cold winter time for these plants to achieve their required chilling requirements. Though it is a very important issue, Earth's rising temperature is not the only negative impact climate change will have on agriculture in the northeast.

Annual precipitation amounts are also subject to change as Earth's climate evolves. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, "climate change is expected to bring about [...] more frequent extreme precipitation events that will likely have detrimental impacts to agricultural production through flooding, crop damage, soil erosion, and delayed plantings and harvests." Even though no single disastrous event, such as a hurricane, can be attributed to a changing climate, it has been shown that a trend of increasingly frequent and intense storms can. If major storms become more frequent in the region, the results will be disastrous and lead to unwanted conditions for farming. On the other end of the spectrum, more severe and frequent periods of drought will also be detrimental to agriculture. As temperatures rise, emissions scenarios forecast the frequency of severe droughts could increase from one every few years to once per year. This will cause an increase in irrigation costs for farmers, as well as a reduction in the quality of the soil suitable for growing crops. It is apparent that both increased and reduced rainfall will produce a negative impact on agriculture.

The combination of increased temperatures and altered precipitation due to climate change in the northeast clearly spells trouble for the future of farming. It is imperative that farmers find a suitable adaptation strategy to continue their work and to protect its economic and cultural impact on the region. There are many potential strategies that could be employed, so which would be the most successful in this scenario? One option would be to do nothing and bear the losses. The result of this strategy would likely be the long term deterioration of current agricultural practices, as discussed before. Doing nothing to change how current crops react to the

increasing heat and altering precipitation patterns will likely not end up in the plants' favor. While putting this strategy into place will cost nothing to the farmers immediately, the eventual decrease in crop yield will prove detrimental. Another option would be to modify and control the threat of climate change. A way to enact this strategy would be to establish a type of refugium for the crops by constructing greenhouses to protect them from the changing climate. This strategy could, in theory, protect crop yield by providing a way for them to grow in optimal conditions, but this may not be an option for smaller family farms as it would be very costly to construct and maintain new facilities. A third option would be the opposite of bearing losses, and it would be to accept that current methods of farming will not be sensible in the future and look for new methods of income. By abandoning farming altogether and managing for a new climate, people in the area could proactively turn towards different industries more suitable to a changing environment for work. While this strategy could be successful, it is not likely that farmers, who have done their work for generations, would so willingly and easily give up their way of life in order to transition to a completely new line of work. The cultural impact of these farms is easily shown in the region and is something that should be protected. Additionally, making the investment to move into a new business is not going to be an accessible option for everyone. How then, will farmers adapt to this issue? The best solution for maintaining agriculture in the northeast is to change the way the land is used.

Changing land use provides farmers a way to continue farming, and therefore protect their income and cultural impact while adapting to rising temperatures and changing weather patterns. A simple way to change the way the land is used is to grow different plants. If the plants that are currently thriving in the region will not adapt well to climate change, then farmers could switch to growing crops that will. As mentioned earlier, certain produce, such as snap beans, cabbage, potatoes, and

apples, fare better in cooler climates. The northeast has historically been and is currently more temperate, but if this should change, farmers could instead choose to plant produce that is more suited to warmer climates, such as tomatoes, peppers, or summer squash. By changing the plants they grow, farmers will continue to enjoy good crop yield even as the climate changes. There are also different varieties of crops that have less of a chilling requirement in the off-season, such as blueberries and raspberries, which will fare better in a climate that is warmer during all seasons. Authors from the Northeast Climate Impacts Assessment recommend that “growers across much of the region may need to switch to varieties with lower chilling requirements -where such options exist.” Switching crops is a great place to start in the adaptation to a changing climate, but there is more that can be done.

One of the concerns brought on by more frequent powerful rainstorms is their effect on soil. Flooding can disperse key nutrients from the soil and can cause severe erosion. Farmers in the area should consider adapting to this change by growing cover crops to protect the soil. Cover crops are mixtures of various plants that help to promote healthy soil. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, cover crops can “prevent erosion, improve soil’s physical and biological properties, supply nutrients, suppress weeds, improve the availability of soil water, and break pest cycles along with other benefits.” Cover crops are currently used to reap all these benefits, but they can be increasingly useful in the future as climate change progresses. Cover cropping is also not a lavish expense; studies have shown that the strategy is “both economically and environmentally beneficial.” All of this combines to show the great benefit of cover cropping.

Changing land use is clearly a fantastic climate change adaptation strategy. However, this, like all strategies, is not without certain downsides. The first thing to consider is the economic impact these changes will have on the farmers.

Switching crops requires an economic investment in seeds, field equipment, and other related needs that some smaller family farms may not be able to afford. In situations such as this, sitting back and bearing the losses may be a more beneficial short-term solution. Even if the decision to switch crops is made, however, it will not be an instant fix. This is because "switching perennial crop varieties such as grapes or apples involves a transition of several years in which the farmer can expect no or low productivity." As the new crop is introduced, it will take time before the yield can match what the farmer had been getting out of other crops. This transition period could cause economic hardship until production matches what it was before. Above all this, there simply might not be a market in the area for new crops. Many New Englanders may be expecting delicious apples in the fall because that is what they have come to know, and they will not be inclined to buy more tomatoes or peppers. Culturally speaking, it could be difficult for farmers to earn as much from the new crops they produce. All this said, the potential benefits of this adaptation strategy are clear and necessary. All strategies are going to have downsides; the most successful option is that which has the fewest and that is the easiest to overcome.

Agriculture in the northeastern United States as we know it cannot continue to exist in the future. Climate change is occurring such that current practices will not stand up to the environmental shift in temperature, rainfall, and related issues. The best way for farmers to adapt to these changes is by changing the way they use their land. They should grow different varieties of plants that will thrive better in warmer climates and should plant cover crops to maintain healthy soil. This strategy keeps farmers working on farms, unlike the abandoning farming strategy, requires less of an economic investment than modifying the threat and building numerous greenhouses, and will in time produce a high crop yield, unlike bearing losses and sticking with current techniques. No one can



truly know what path the climate will end up taking in the future, but everyone should have an adaptation strategy ready. Proactive planning is the best way to tackle every challenge brought on by this changing climate.

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*Seal*, Galapagos Islands  
Alexander Garde

Diego Sepulveda

## Charles River

I walk towards the river,  
I walk without chains,  
without brain,  
without pen, nor paper.  
But I still feel the weight  
of my face, pushing against the wind.  
It hits me like the sun sinking into the earth,  
so I look down,  
as I walk over restless grey.

Wherever I step, there is cold,  
Sterile concrete:

*Sterile like the night sky,  
when all of the stars have been swallowed  
by the lights of the city.*

*Sterile like the faces of the people,  
that rush against the weight  
of their being.*

But all of it is dissolved  
by the immensity of the river.  
waves don't rush,  
they know

all of it  
will end at the sea,  
where the lights of the city  
will slowly diminish  
into a single  
Glint,  
that will not look any different  
than the stars  
hovering in the horizon.

David Grant Helder

## Tears of Ink

Playwright and novelist Edward Bulwer-Lytton coined the phrase “the pen is mightier than the sword” in 1839 in his play *Cardinal Richelieu*. After learning that there is an ongoing plot to kill him, Richelieu says “Take away the sword; States can be saved without it!” One could argue certainly that this is true, that the pen may have caused more damage than the sword itself ever did; it has signed the declaration of wars, the eviction notices on the doors of the poor, and the rejection of refugees from far off lands full of turmoil. The pen, one certainly could argue, is a deadly weapon indeed.

This pen, however, is mine, and is a beautiful object to me. It was my father’s pen, and it now belongs to me. He, and his clients, have signed many contracts with it, examined many documents of law and such. I imagine that the pen has seen some interesting things—secrets it will take to its grave.

Looking externally upon it, it possesses a gray body and cap, accented at both top and bottom with gold. The pocket clip on the cap is also gold, engraved with a brand name: Cross. This engraving also occurs on the fountain writing tip, and again on the cap, but located slightly above the pocket clip, with the abbreviation *USA* juxtaposed on each side with dashes. Upon further examination one finds that the pen is well worn, admitting scratches and small gashes upon its tip and body. It is hard to say whether this pen used to be black or if it has always had this black chrome appearance, as I am unable to find this particular grey version in production for this particular model of fountain pen. When unsheathing the pen from its cap, the first detail that one may notice is the gold tip, also engraved with several ornate looking designs. It is unashamedly dirty with smeared ink upon its head. The indigo mixed ink that it has used in the past has left its residue on the underside of the pen,

giving a purple-like sheen to its underbelly, as if unafraid to show its years of service to man and man's expressions. My hands have become filthy with ink, handling this pen. Unscrewing the body from the tip reveals stamped embossments that fit into the machined ridges inside the body of the pen, allowing it all to hold together during writing. The machinery on the inside of the body of the pen, interestingly, is also gold. The sheathing also reveals the ink source—the cartridge, which is now empty. Last night at a coffee shop it devoted itself to writing out my emotions on a piece of paper; it poured itself out onto the paper, as I did.

The pen, therefore, serves a purpose more than just that, a pen. To most people a pen is an instrument for marking ink on objects, usually paper, generally for the purpose of writing words or drawing pictures. It is an iconic yet invisible object—an object of paramount importance, yet in plain sight. When pens are given to The People, writers who came from nothing can overcome insurmountable adversities with the power of their words. A pen is not just a pen, but a door, a vessel, through which the classes of society can collide. A pen inherently just serves certain notable use values, such as writing and drawing, but might it possess more use values unrecognized than that just purely? Socrates said that “the unexamined life is not worth living,” and therefore I argue that the unexamined pen isn't worth possessing. To break down the idea of use value, we must break it down into its chronological stages:

*1st Stage: First applications* (the object possesses a level of novelty because of newness). This is the stage that Susan Strasser discusses indirectly in *Waste and Want*. Synonyms for this stage would be “hype,” “cutting edge,” or “up to date.”

*2nd Stage: Practical applications* (when costs have gone down to where the object can be economically feasible for everyone to use—this is also known as “standard use”). This is the stage which Susan Willis refers to in *Unwrapping Use Value*.

*3rd Stage: Antique, luxury item* (the object returns to novelty because of its antiquity, and price again goes up, this stage and past in considered extended use.) This stage is not referred to by either author. The fountain pen lies here.

*4th Stage: Collectors item/pure antiquity* (all use value for the object is entirely diminished aside from its financial, historical, sentimental, or aesthetic value).

*5th and Ultimate Stage: Garbage, space filler.* Often not considered use value because the public doesn't directly consume or use it, but I am including it because it is being used indirectly.

All of these stages affect the pen in one time period or another, being an ancient and truly important object. This defies the common notion that Strasser, Willis, or even Marx might ascribe to objects that when defining them we only observe their use value or perceived use value as it may relate to the consumer. These stages, defined here, examine more closely society's total use of an object, start to finish, on a macro scale.

While the writing implement is an ancient idea, there are new examples of writing implements that demonstrate the concept of novelty. When I was in high school, I had the privilege of having a bookstore on campus from which I could purchase pens, and pens I purchased indeed. I enjoyed the pens and the variety of pens available, and this was much to my mother's chagrin. See, I could simply bill her for the pens. A novel concept indeed; but I digress. A new example of novelty in the market of pens is the Apple Pencil, which allows users to draw, write, and design in an entirely new way. This Pencil, however, does not dispense ink, but just interacts with Apple's software interfaces in new and complicated ways. This, from what I can observe among many of my colleagues and in the media, is a commercial success. This is the First Stage of Use, where objects are prized for their newness, the novelty of the



brand new. Additionally this pencil is not cheap, either. On the Apple website, it's listed at 99 dollars.

The practical applications, however, are more simple to list; in earnest, a typical pen probably has three real inherent use values— to write, to draw, and to stab. Surprisingly, a pen is indeed an effective weapon, with its pointy metal trip, to injure foes. Today pens in general are often constructed with plastic or metal and are a commonplace object. In regards to value, Willis points out that “use value is inside the system of value because there would be no possibility of exchange value without it” (21). It, as she states, “Baudrillard’s account of use value as an alibi of exchange value,” also implies that our whole economy and our concept of value in the marketplace is substantiated (is an “alibi”) by use value, which only can come into place when the true economic value becomes relatively proportional to that between, to some margin, the legitimate and perceived use values of an object. The second stage, therefore, is a stage of economic reckoning when the object is not so new that it commands extreme and disproportionate value, but value that is either reified beyond its actual exchange/use value proportion, or is sitting at that actual exchange/use value itself.

Extended use, or the third stage, occurs when the object has value that transcends just utilitarian usefulness. Like the first stage, this occurs when the object has some sort of prestige, where the use is not purely that of the physical, but of the social and the sensory (i.e., luxury items.) For example, my pen has only the standard use value (second stage), that of a normal pen, when in reality it possesses much more value in use than standard use value because of its gold accenting and antiquated design made in such a way as to enhance the writing experience. Additionally this is the value of prestige and influence: “How will I look writing with this pen, or influencing someone to sign a contract?” for example. These considerations are not included in traditional ideas of standard use value; but they are significant reasons that a consumer may choose to

purchase such an item and therefore contribute to its "extended" use value. It is not just only perceived use value, as what Willis describes when she describes the consumers' expectations in regards to packaging because the consumer does legitimately find that use within the object, as I have with my pen (4-5).

When an object is put in the collector's item category, its use value is totally diminished. This is the fourth stage of the life of an object. Its use value as an object has diminished entirely because it's considered either too valuable, too precious, or antique to the extent that it can't be used anymore. The object in this stage does, however, still possess useful value, both in the way that it could perhaps be used for its original intention, but also in the way that it is being held for financial, historical, sentimental or aesthetic value, such as an antique firearm that may be placed above the mantle but is unsafe to fire. In these particular ways the object is not itself being used, but rather action is being thrust upon it. This, however, could be said about any object from stages 1 through 4. Since it does create an idea of use in the mind of the user, it is still veritable use.

Now, additionally, there is "use" value past our penultimate stage (or what we commonly consider to be the ultimate stage), the fifth stage of use: trash, throwaway, garbage, rubbish. It is, in a less direct way, still being used in a societal way by occupying landfills and garbage receptacles. Garbage has also served use throughout history, occupying space and actually defining landscape. Landfills have been capped to produce parks, and whole land masses have been created as a result. Trash has also been burned for heat, and in new forms of eco-power is being burnt for electrical power production. If for nothing also, it just occupies space, and that is "use" as well. Additionally, as the societal shift to clean and green technologies becomes more prevalent, we may see the use of recycled objects in the commonplace (more so than we already do with recycled paper and the like) arise.

The stages of use just described are not prescribed for all objects, but only dependent on certain factors determined by chance. Some of these factors could be popularity of the object, historical significance, and as far as longevity is concerned, quality of materials, and what kind of object it is and how it will be used. All of these different factors affect the stages of these objects (for example, we don't prize or treat 20th century tampons or diapers as relics), but this simply outlines the most possible stages for an object to fill.

From what I'm able to look up online (this particular color of pen is not made anymore, so I'm substituting a black lacquer version instead), the gold accenting the pen is 23k gold, and the nib of the pen (the tip) is made from 18k gold. Cross recently moved their production facilities to China, and since I can't identify when the pen was made, I'm going to assume for these purposes that it was made in China. The gold is extracted by drilling and then is processed using cyanide, a powerful toxin, which is leached into the environment. According to an article in the Library of National Health, "cyanide extraction of gold through milling of high-grade ores and heap leaching of low-grade ores requires cycling of millions of liters of alkaline water containing high concentrations of potentially toxic sodium cyanide (NaCN), free cyanide, and metal-cyanide complexes." The article also states that the mining process damages local ecosystems and introduces the poison of cyanide into the environment, further doing damage ([www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15369321](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15369321)).

Pen inks have hundreds and hundreds of years of history, but have always been a dye with water. The body of the pen is steel. Steel of course, stems from iron, and the production of iron has many environmental impacts, as the book *The Secret Life of Everyday Things* tells us. The production of iron starts in a crater, as miners remove material and place it outside the crater so that it can be shipped on barges to a refinement site, causing fossil fuels to be burned in the process. During smelting, some

of the byproducts are carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide, two potent greenhouse gasses. While my pen only uses a small amount of steel in its body, the larger environmental implications of heavy industry are frightening to the longevity of our environment.

My search of articles mentioning the fountain pen show that it is not often written about, but a narrative by J.D Mc Clatchy describes his relation to his fountain pen in his article *My Fountain Pen*. "As I said, for me it was simply a fact: at about the same time I discovered my penis, I started writing with a fountain pen. It was the most sensual thing I had ever held or used. Just to touch it excited me. It was an "Esterbrook"" (Mc Clatchy).

The first paragraph has elements of Willis' claims to sexualization of objects in the anticipation of the object. The "sensual" nature of the "thing," while a direct parallel in regards to the phallus, is a representation of the object when it transcends its standard use. It could be assumed that most people don't compare their genitalia to practical objects, such as a clothing iron. The fountain pen, then, while having transcended typical (or standard) use to the third stage, also represents something unexamined— which is when objects have a clear subconscious distinction to our own anatomy. Bullets, pens, cooking thermometers, even, all have association physically in the way that they certainly all have a "point," but also in the way that they are ascribed to the interference in another object, the way one might say "penetrate." In this way, these objects that we would purchase in the marketplace may have additionally transcended standard use value in the subconscious mind to stages of novelty and desire. In regards to Willis claim regarding the undressing of an object being a pseudo sexual experience in and of itself, the same could be ascribed to the idea of objects we may desire to purchase, not for the anticipation of the owning of the object, but for the anticipated use of the object in a pseudo sexual nature.

Therefore, in regards to our current ideas of use value, this defies common notions of standard use being the only use by the extension of this object in the subconscious to include sexual desire.

The fountain pen, therefore, like most things created in our modern hyper-industrious world, has an environmental impact. It, however, unlike plastic disposable pens, is reusable, and one could say that it is actually an eco friendly product. But beyond environmental impacts, pens tell a story, both literally by our hands, and by its finish and color. Whose hands have they seen? What secrets do they tell? The pen is deprived of the ability of self-expression, only able to assist me in my goals of mine. It cries tears of ink, while I cry tears of salt. The pen then, perhaps isn't only a weapon as Bulwer-Lytton said, but a vessel of emotion as well.

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*Lava Rock*, Galapagos Islands

Alexander Garde

*Hear Here! 2019*

Ariel Mo

## Sunrise No.8

first day wandering

free of eyes

down musty halls

giant glass enclave

suddenly loud, green, lit

by good-byes

cloudless sky picks me up

in a city cut loose from you

at last.





*Temple of Heaven, Beijing China*

Bosba Panh

Angela Wang

# Modern Chinese Orchestra and the Connection with Cultural Westernization

Although I was born and raised in Taiwan, I have always received a Western musical education instead of an education in traditional Chinese music. I started learning violin when I was six years old, and I joined the school's classical orchestra in elementary school. I remember that there was an annual school event in which every school club and band had to perform a piece or two at the end of the year. Our school also had a Chinese Orchestra Club in addition to the symphony orchestra. In my memory, the Chinese Orchestra Club had less students than the symphony orchestra, and the stage crew didn't really have to move the chairs for them after our orchestra's performance, because they were sitting just like us. The only difference was that they used traditional Chinese instruments. It took me some time to learn that the Chinese orchestra I saw was actually not following the traditional folk ensemble setting, but applying a modernized and westernized musical practice. In this essay, I will not only introduce the structure and historical development of the modern Chinese orchestra, but also discuss the challenges that Chinese music has faced in the integration process with Western music. In addition, I will discuss the conflict and competition that Western music has brought to Asian culture, using the modern Chinese orchestra as a magnifier, to scrutinize the Western influences in Chinese music.

Most Chinese orchestras we see on stage today are not the traditional, small-sized Chinese ensembles, called sizhu, from the words for silk ("si") and bamboo ("zhu") instruments. The biggest difference between a traditional Chinese ensemble and a modern Chinese orchestra is not only the size of the group, but also their purpose and the occasions for which they perform.

According to the journal *Chinese Music*, a traditional folk ensemble is usually gathered by several friends with the same musical interests, and they usually perform in various ceremonies such as weddings, funerals, and seasonal activities (14). However, the modern Chinese orchestra's function is mainly for concert performance, just like its counterpart, the Western symphony orchestra. So how did such traditional music take on the path of innovation and revolution? The earliest musical westernization can be recognized in the 1840s when the Qing Dynasty was defeated by the Westerners—the British—for the first time in the Opium War. From then on, educators and musicians started to imitate some Western-musical practices and gradually developed an integrated musical form. As Yingfai Tsui explains in *The Modern Chinese Folk Orchestra: A Brief History*:

In 1919, the Peking University Music Society, which was the center of the Chinese musical development, was founded, and the involved educators continued putting the Western influences and Chinese tradition together, such as applying violin techniques to erhu performance and constructing the modern Chinese orchestra. In the 1940s, the modern Chinese orchestra was thoroughly formulated (22).

The genre that the Chinese orchestra plays is called "Guoyue," which literary means national, or Chinese ("guo"), music ("yue"). Although small changes are still currently being made for adaption, the form of the modern Chinese orchestra was established and has been strengthened from then on.

Since the modern Chinese orchestra is a product of combining the Western symphony orchestra's system and Chinese instruments, there are many similarities between the two, including their performing manner and corresponding instruments' functions. First, both modern Chinese orchestra and Western symphony orchestra musicians sit in sections and form a half-circle shape on the stage. As Tsui describes in his article, "in performance, they sat in a fan-shape facing the

audience, with music stands in front of them, and followed a conductor using a baton. This westernization also led to the extension of the orchestral range and the standardization of instruments” (23). Different from the Western symphony orchestra, the modern Chinese orchestra is divided into four sections, including bowed strings (gao-hu-higher violins, erhu-lower violin), plucked strings (pipa-pear-shaped lute, yangqing-Chinese piano/dulcimer, zheng-zither), woodwind (di-flute, xiao-vertical flute, sheng-mouth organ, suona-oboe), and percussion (luogu-big drums). However, in order to achieve better balance, intonation, and volume, some Western instruments such as cello, double bass, timpani, and harp are included in the modern Chinese orchestra today. The Chinese orchestra also emulates the Western orchestra in terms of temperament and composition techniques. In other words, their music is composed with reference to Western classical music theory and tuning by using cipher notations (number notation) or Western staff notations.

The major differences between modern Chinese orchestra and Western orchestra, include the range, volume, and performance practice. Chinese composers have also faced difficulties when symphonizing Chinese-styled music. First, the range of several Guoyue instruments is different from Western instruments, and this challenges the composer’s instrumentation in order to approach the balance of the ensemble. For example, in the Chinese woodwind section, instruments such as di, sheng, and suona are mostly an octave higher than those Western woodwind instruments, and there is no instrument which plays the role of lower brass such as the tuba. Therefore, it is common to hear a gap of emptiness between the big range of intervals in some guoyue pieces or transcriptions from Western classical music. The composer’s challenge here is to utilize each instrument’s advantage and different performing method to fill up the hollowness between sections. Second, balancing the volume of Chinese orchestral music is another tough issue to

solve. Based on my observation, although erhu replaces the violin sections, it works oppositely from violin playing, which sounds brighter and louder when playing in the higher register, yet erhu's sound gets softer in higher position. If we say Western orchestral instrumentation from low to high register takes the shape of a pyramid, then the Chinese orchestra's register would be the shape of an inverted pyramid that is lacking the grounded, lower register's support. Lastly, the difficulty of performing some Chinese instruments challenges Chinese composers' goal and their task to make each part easy and playable. For instance, some wind instruments such as suona and zhudi are extremely hard to play in terms of intonation. Thus, considering the practical performing skills in the composition technique is an essential lesson to learn for both composers and performers.

In conclusion, due to the young age of modern Chinese orchestra's development, there is not only space for more progress and exploration, but also an enormous potential to adapt both Western and Chinese musical advantages, and create a balance between westernization and tradition. A question raised in my mind while I was researching this topic was why most Asian students, including me, are actually more familiar with Western classical music and less familiar with their own traditional music? In my opinion, while making an effort to improve modern Chinese orchestral music, we should also work harder to preserve and understand our own traditions. Modern Chinese orchestra is already an example of traditional music finding ways to survive, and if we keep losing and forgetting it, there is going to be less and less musical identity for Chinese music. It is our task and responsibility to keep supporting and making breakthroughs, instead of just imitating the Western influence, so that we can speak out our own musical vocabulary.

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*Chess, Boston, MA*

Daisy Chesler

Barbara Matthews

## The Lottery and The Story of Jesús

When I was in high school, I was a teaching assistant for the general music classes, one of which was beginning guitar. At the beginning of the year, the music teacher asked me to choose four of the most promising students and form a guitar ensemble. One of the students I selected had no prior experience with guitar; however, during his audition, I was impressed with his passion, potential, and love of learning. His name was Jesús. He was born in Mexico. He and his mother had moved to America when he was just a baby. His mother had left her abusive husband and crossed the border illegally with Jesús in the year 2000. She was able to get a job working as a dishwasher at the 24-hour local diner in our town.

Throughout the year, I got to know Jesús's story. Although we came from different backgrounds, we had many similarities. During one class, I asked him about his practicing, thinking that if he put in a little extra time each day it would make a big difference in his playing. He told me that he lived in a very small apartment and that his mother worked graveyard shifts at the diner. He could never practice at home because his mother had to sleep during the day. I felt an immediate connection when he shared his story. I too had a single mother who worked graveyard shifts, and we also lived in a small apartment. I told him that I practiced my guitar in the bathroom with the fan on and a towel under the door, to drown out the noise. He decided to do the same.

After only a few weeks, I saw a dramatic improvement in his playing. Jesús was not only learning the guitar ensemble pieces at the same rate as the more experienced members, but his reading skills and musicality were greatly improved. I gave him piece after piece, each one more difficult than the last, and he excelled at playing every one. I felt guilty for not having the time



to give him more. Jesús's passion for the guitar and his dedication to the instrument was inspiring. I continued to work with and coach Jesús in the ensemble, which went on to earn superior ratings at the regional and state competitions that year. Jesús's mother came to our final concert; it was the first time he had ever performed. She met me in the hall after the performance, overwhelmed with emotion, and expressed her gratitude.

On the last day of school, I talked to the ensemble members about plans for the following year. We tossed around different ideas and arrangements for songs. Jesús didn't participate in the discussion and was completely silent throughout the meeting. This was unusual for him, as he was always the one who was the most passionate about the music. After the meeting I asked him if he was all right. He told me he had just found out that his mother was being deported and that he would be moving back to Mexico with her in the coming month.

Jesús was a popular student, and he got along well with the other members of the ensemble. The school's music teacher loved him and often called on him during class. The students at the high school were inspired by his story. When Jesús told the ensemble members his mother was being deported, their reaction was puzzling to me. I assumed they would be devastated, as I was. Two of them were silent and seemed almost apathetic, and one texted on her cellphone. The music teacher passed it off as if it were unimportant; when I expressed my horror to him, instead of mirroring my feelings he merely asked me whom I was going to replace Jesús with in the ensemble the following year. I went home and contacted a friend's mother who occasionally did pro-bono work as a lawyer and asked her if there was anything she could do. Instead of giving me a legal or rational reason why she wouldn't take the case, she simply said, "This is just what happens." The lack of outrage was chilling to me.

When I finished reading Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" for the first time, Jesús' story immediately came to mind. After reading "The Lottery" again, I was haunted by the similarity of the two stories. In the beginning of "The Lottery," Jackson sets the scene: "The morning of June 27th was clear and sunny, with the fresh warmth of a full-summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green" (556). Although it may sound insignificant, this sentence is extremely powerful. The reader expects peace and joy from the coming story. The setting is so vivid the reader can feel the warmth of the sun and smell the blossoming flowers. This sentence is disturbingly similar to the last day of school that year. There was a feeling of happiness, freedom, and joy. In the meeting with the members of guitar ensemble, there was a sense of hope and excitement as we made plans for the coming year.

One of the main themes in "The Lottery" is the random and unjust punishment of innocent people. Tessie Hutchinson is an innocent victim of a random act of violence. The only offense the "winner" of the lottery is guilty of is drawing the wrong paper from the black box. Similarly, the only thing Jesús was guilty of was being the child of a parent who happened to break a law many years before. Jesús' random association to his mother's action parallels Tessie's random drawing of the paper. Arguably, Jesús' mother's deportation was in fact just as random of an occurrence; there are thousands of immigrants who cross the border illegally and are granted asylum or even released. This too was a random occurrence, just as Jesús' mother was now at the wrong place at the wrong time. Jesús and his mother were innocent victims of a cruel immigration system in the country, just as Tessie is an innocent victim of the barbaric lottery in her town.

When Tessie Hutchinson pulls out the slip of paper, the first words anyone speaks are uttered by Mr. Summers: "All right, folks. Let's finish quickly" (564). The way in which the events unfold is disturbing and surreal. The villagers start blindly

picking up stones and go on to quickly kill Tessie. None of her friends stand up for her. Similarly, when people learned that Jesús was being deported, he went from being the popular student to being forgotten and replaced. This experience was also surreal. The one person who could have potentially done something simply dismissed his situation as “something that happens.” No one was outraged, and no one thought to do or to say anything about it.

After reading “The Lottery,” I thought back on the similarities between my life and Jesus’: our mothers, both single and working graveyard shifts, our conditions in small apartments, and our great love of music. It scared me when something so terrible happened to him; I could not imagine being taken away from the country in which I had grown up and loved. His situation showed me that this could happen to anyone. It happened to Jesús because of an unfortunate random occurrence brought on by a broken system.

The symbolism of the black box is prevalent throughout “The Lottery.” The narrator coolly notes that “The black box grew shabbier each year: by now it was no longer completely black but splintered badly along one side to show the original wood color, and in some places faded or stained” (558). The box symbolized an old, outdated, and “faded” ritual. Even though the villagers had lost the original black box, they still remembered to throw stones. This symbolized the mass mentality of conforming to the norm and forgetting to question if it was wrong. There have been so many instances of mass deportation, not only in America’s history, but in the history of the world. The masses have become so accustomed to this practice that there is not as much outrage as there should be over the treatment of innocent people. Just like the black box, this system has become old and outdated, and just like the village, even though the barbaric act is outdated, we still remember to throw stones. These deportations still happen and are blindly carried out every year.

Jesús was living his life with the promise of the American dream when his reality took a turn for the worse because of a random occurrence that happens too frequently to innocent people. The last time I saw Jesús, it was the last day of school. I gave him a stack of flamenco guitar music, his favorite genre, on which I had written charts for building chords that I hadn't had time to teach him that year. I watched as he boarded the school bus for the last time. That was the last time I ever saw him. Looking back at that moment, I think to myself the same words Tessie Hutchinson said at the end of her life: "It isn't fair, it isn't right" (565).

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*Cactus Desert*, Galapagos Islands

Alexander Garde

Ariel Mo

## The Museum

Old iron, steel plates, red rust  
glimmering in a dusty cavern; I squint  
stare at the bleeding sunset  
orange light scorching the  
captured water (still) the air (still)  
all of us (still)—but  
she—in motion—possessed  
or enraptured—a dark voice  
that keeps spinning out of her cello  
deep strands of black colour  
bursting out of her,  
a black soup of screams  
swarming the air—I drank it in—  
silk cloth slides off the bench,  
fingers dig deeper than  
thoughts whispered into a trembling ear  
words thrown into the night  
now caught—held close—by  
strangers' hands, their heat  
pressed into her skin  
grasping for air.

I thought,  
    *hold tight, take me*  
    *into darkness*  
    *pressed into bricks*  
    *or cold metal*  
    *on warm skin*  
    *endless strings flying*  
old walls shivering  
quivering under the force of  
her unforgiving light.

I dreamed I rose  
and swallowed a sun  
and it coursed through  
my blood; but in my chest  
it became an orange light  
again and again and again.

Bosba Panh

## Program Notes: *Dialogue Des Carmélites*

Francis Poulenc was born in Paris on January 7, 1899 and died in Paris on 30 January 1963. Known for a wide variety of works including but not limited to piano, chamber music, songs, ballets, operas, and religious music (Grove Music Online), Poulenc penned his opera *Dialogue des Carmélites* in 1953. The opera is set in Northeastern France and tells a fictionalized form of the story of the Martyrs of Compiègne. The nuns of the Carmelite order were guillotined in 1794 in Paris for refusing to renounce the vow of the religion, as the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution was coming to an end.

Inspired by the unproduced screenplay by Georges Bernanos (1888–1948), *Dialogue des Carmélites* combines Catholic mysticism with French sensibility. Bernanos, an independent Roman Catholic French author, based his work on *Die Letzte am Schafott* ("The Song at the Scaffold") by the German Catholic writer Baroness Gertrud von Le Fort (1876–1971). The storyline revolves around a young member of an order of Carmelite nuns, Blanche de la Force, who must overcome a pathological timidity to answer her calling to God. Poulenc wrote the music and the libretto for *Dialogue des Carmélites*.

The genesis of the opera began in 1953. Margarita Wallmann, the wife of the president of Ricordi, Poulenc's publishing firm, took her husband to see Bernanos' play in Vienna. Ricordi formally asked Poulenc to adapt the subject as a considerable scale work and commissioned him to write an oratorio for his wife, which then developed into the opera *Dialogue des Carmélites*. Wallmann eventually became the producer of the La Scala premiere (Blumer). Poulenc had seen the play on a separate occasion, but only began to work on the



commission during the spring and summer of 1953 (Blumer). Because of the cost of the royalties to the literary publishing company, Poulenc curtailed the work in the spring of 1954 and secured its rights in April of 1954. During the post-war time, Poulenc had reconnected spiritually with Roman Catholicism, even though he was openly gay.

*Dialogue des Carmélites* premiered at the Teatro Alla Scala, Milan on January 26, 1957. The French premiere took place at the Opéra de Paris on June 21, 1957. Poulenc expressed the general wish that his opera be performed in the language of the local audience (Garry). Thus, the premiere was conducted in an Italian translation at La Scala. The Paris cast included Denise Duval (Blanche de la Force), Régine Crespin (Madame Lidoine), Rita Gorr (Mother Marie), and Liliane Berton (Sister Constance). The United States premiere took place three months later, on September 20, 1954, in English at the San Francisco Opera, featuring the stage debut of Leontyne Price as Madame Lidoine. The opera subsequently had its New York City premiere on 3 March 1966 at the New York City Opera.

The opera is scored for two flutes, one piccolo, two oboes, one English horn, two clarinets in B flat, one bass clarinet in B flat, three bassoons with the third bassoon doubling on contrabassoon, four French horns, three trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, one set of timbales, two harps, one piano, one drums and a string quintet. The opera is in three acts, and the cast consists of sixteen characters. The subject and scoring of the opera reflect critical aspects of Poulenc's personality. Poulenc was an urbane Parisian who grew up in rural France in a Catholic household (Grove Music Online). He was interested in mysticism, and the opera addresses both Blanche de la Force and Francis Poulenc's private lives and external realities. The opera is set mainly recitative style, to reflect the intimacy of religion and uses smaller groupings of the orchestra to support this vocal writing style. In the score, Poulenc dedicates his opera to the "memory of [Poulenc's] mother who revealed to [him] the

music of Debussy who gave him the taste to write his own, and to the memory of Claudio Monteverdi, Giuseppe Verdi and Modest Mussorgsky who have served as models for [him].”

Poulenc’s vocal setting of Bernanos’ play closely follows speech patterns. While there are many adventurous harmonies, the score is tonal. The most moving combination of the spiritual and musical worlds of Poulenc occur in the final tableau where the sound of the guillotine’s blade is heard repeatedly over the orchestra and the “Salve Regina” of the nuns until only Soeur Constance and Blanche de la Force remain. The music is hymn-like, tonal and austere, yet haunting. The nuns were guillotined at the Place du Trône Renversé (now Place de la Nation) in Paris on July 17, 1794, and beatified on May 27, 1906. Before their execution, it is said that the nuns knelt and chanted the “Veni Creator,” after which they all renewed aloud their baptismal vows. The novices were guillotined first, ending with the prioress. The heads and bodies were interred in a cemetery at Picpus, their remains lying along with the other 1298 victims of the Revolution (Wainewright).

Although Poulenc had to condense the original dialogues, he chose to retain the spiritual dimension and themes. In an article published in the 1961 issue of the Cahiers de l’Herne devoted to Bernanos, Poulenc recalled,

*In writing my opera I steeped myself so entirely in that admirable text that it became almost my own by the process of osmosis which is inherent in all collaboration coming from the heart. It was not so much the true history of the Carmelites, overwhelming as it is, that made me decide to undertake this work, as the magnificent prose of Bernanos in its most spiritual and serious dimension... What for me counted just as much as “Blanche’s fear” was the utterly Bernanosian idea of the Communion of the Saints and of the transfer of grace. That is why I tried to give so much importance to the scene where Constance, that*

*adorable handmaiden of God, explains: "We do not die for ourselves alone, but for, or instead of, each other (qtd. in Correspondance).*

Musically, the opera is loaded with repeated motivic material. Over thirty musical motives maintain the musical coherence of the opera and contribute to the drama. Although not consistent in its use like the concept of the Wagnerian leitmotif (the development and transformation of a motive throughout an opera) the use of the motives in *Dialogue des Carmélites* have emotional connotations and are used to evoke an emotional state. The motives are not associated with a specific character or group of characters, in the way a leitmotif would be. The most prominent motives in *Dialogue des Carmélites* are those associated with fear which musicologist and philosopher Jean de Solliers identified and labelled "la Peur" (Fear), l'Anxiété (Anxiety) and "la Crainte" (Panic). These three motives are used to express distress and are used in the music through harmonic cross-relationships and contrary pitch motion (Solliers). The false relationship that appears between the chords gives a lack of direction in the tonal progression of the opera, which parallels the instability of the French society in which Blanche de la Force lives, as well as her emotional state (Solliers).

The "Peur" motive is used in numerous contexts to underline the feelings of fear and doubt as well as the tensions between the world of the Carmelites and the Revolution and the naive-like faith of Blanche as opposed to her elders' lack thereof. The Peur motive is made of a sequence of two major chords, a minor third apart, which is then repeated sequentially one-half step lower (Lowther). This motive appears in Act I when Blanche is first introduced to the audience through her father, the Chevalier and the Marquis.

The first time the "Anxiété" motive appears is immediately following an iteration of the "Peur" motive in Act I and, very

much like the "Peur" motive, also consists of a sequence of tonally unrelated chords (Lowther). The "Anxiété" motive is made of two sequential seventh chords, a major-minor seventh chord and a minor seventh chord, that follow each other in a nonfunctional tritonic relationship (Lowther). This motive, in contrast to the "Peur" motive, appears with passive or submissive portrayals of Blanche's fear. Although it appears first in Act I, the most significant use of the "Anxiété" motive is in Act III when Mother Marie proposes the vow of martyrdom. As Mother Marie proposes that a single vote from the sisters would be enough to abandon the idea of martyrdom, she then reveals the results of the vote: there is one vote in opposition. The "Anxiété" motive throughout this scene forms the musical backdrop to Mother Marie's death sentence proposition. The "Crainte" motive is a chromatic descent in the soprano line accompanied by the contrary chromatic motion in the bass (Lowther). Poulenc uses this motive with limited groups of instruments and reserves the motive for double reeds, horns and trombone. The atonal character formed by the contrary chromatic lines creates an ominous feeling and evoke the sharpness of Blanche's fear (Lowther). It is Blanche's signature motive of timidity. The "Crainte" motive dominates Blanche's final meeting with Mother Marie in Act III. Following a fight between the two of them in Act II, Mother Marie tries to convince Blanche to come under her protection to which Blanche refuses.

The Blanche of Act III is more rebellious and articulate than the Blanche of Act I. This may be due to the fact that Blanche lost her father and had to hide from riotous mobs after she was demoted from her aristocratic roots to a low-level servant. As Act III opens, Blanche's moral conflicts are analogous to the increasing violence of the French revolution, which is shown by the use of diminished chords and the dotted rhythms. The "Crainte" motive reflects her intense feelings of shame and abandonment to her fears. Although the "Peur," "Anxiété", and

“Crainte” motives are prevalent throughout the opera – understandingly so because of the subject matter – Poulenc also uses motives associated with grace, the gracefulness of mysticism, faith and honor and the transfer of these divine values. The mythical connection between Blanche and the Prioress, united through fear, the motives of fear and their exchange of deaths for one another is the most touching instance of the “gift of life for another” (Lowther).

In Act I, the “Gift” motive first appears when Constance affirms the powers of grace and throughout the opera; the motive reinforces the theme of sacrifice: when Constance proposes that she and Blanche offer their lives in exchange for that of the dying Prioress at the end of Act I, when mother Marie says that society needs martyrs for the preservation of the Church and France, and when the priest instructs Mother Marie to accept the will of the Lord and sacrifice her idea of martyrdom (Lowther).

Poulenc composed *Dialogue des Carmélites* as a highly personal, internal drama, which he imbued with his private suffering. Poulenc portrays the transformation of Blanche de la Force in three acts with themes of fear and the transfer of grace. His other two completed operas, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* (1944) and *La Voix Humaine* (1958) also deal with themes of introspection and psychological evolution. Poulenc, in a letter to Rose Dercourt-Plaut in 1959, described the setting of Jean Cocteau’s *La Voix Humaine* (1930) as a “musical confession.” The opera, essentially a musical monologue, is a one-sided conversation between a young demoiselle, “Elle” (She), and a lover who has just left her. While composing *La Voix Humaine*, Poulenc struggled with self-doubt and the fear of abandonment because of the death of his partner, Lucien Roubert. Even though Poulenc did meet a new partner, Louis Gautier, Poulenc continued to feel hopeless. In a letter to the Director of l’Opéra Comique Hervé Dugardin in 1959, Poulenc said: “Just as Blanche was myself, so Elle is again myself, in relation to Louis,

because life will no doubt deprive me, in one way or another, of this angel." (qtd. in Selected Correspondence) In another letter dated from 1959 to French poet Louis Aragon, Poulenc writes "I think I needed the experience of the spiritual and metaphysical anguish of Les Carmélites to avoid betraying the terribly human anguish of Jean Cocteau's superb text. I hope I have succeeded in my task." (qtd. in Selected Correspondence).

Consequently, when considering the personal and religious circumstances of Poulenc's life and the timeline of the writing of *Dialogue des Carmélites*, Poulenc's fascination with Catholic mysticism as well as elements of introspection, search for inner peace, sacrifice and psychological neuroticism are justified. The opera follows another trend in the writing of late twentieth-century operas: the portrayal of a protagonist as a saint searching for spiritual truth. The German musicologist Siglind Bruhn explains that "saintly persons began to appear as operatic protagonists within years after the end of World War II and continued to feature in unabated intensity and frequency as the second millennium drew to a close. [It is] an epoch marked by widespread lack of interest in conventional religiosity and a deliberate pluralism of values, a time that shuns the idea of universal moral exemplars" (Bruhn 586). Bruhn hypothesizes that composers of the late twentieth century used the persona of saintly protagonists to represent their quest for spiritual transcendence. For Poulenc, Blanche's journey was to him a symbol of hope, and she represented the transcendent power of Divine Grace. In *Dialogue des Carmélites*, this transcendence is made all-powerful when Blanche comes to realize it herself and understand the truth of her words to the Prioress at the beginning of the opera, in Act I, scene 2:

The Prioress: Great trials await you, my daughter.

Blanche: What does it matter, if God will grant me the strength.

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Lauren Whitaker

## The Fluidity of Identities: *How they are Established and Molded*

Everyone has an identity; everyone is known or recognized for certain roles, traits, characteristics, or patterns of behavior, but how do these identities develop? Can we create our own identities, or do others create our identities for us? Who determines how we are viewed by other people? When someone enters a new city, college campus, or a new musical environment, they have yet to form an identity among their peers. When meeting new students on NEC's campus, first impressions occur consciously and/or subconsciously, and they can matter a great deal. Seeing new students on campus, one may quickly assess them based on their clothing, the instrument they play, their posture or attitude, or other visible characteristics. Before one even says, "hello," a story or judgement, knowingly or unknowingly, may have already been created. This first impression begins to shape one's identity. Once a conversation begins, the identity may be altered based on vocabulary used, topics discussed or general disposition. How do these quick and ongoing interactions develop someone's identity, and how does one know if the true identity of a person is being revealed?

Ian Belknap and Alex Tizon explore the concept of identity and the struggle to find one's true self. Belknap's essay, "Skinning the Wildcat," describes the struggles his son faces as a transgender person trying to live in alignment with his true sexual identity while simultaneously being accepted by society. Belknap points out the challenges and dangers that his son, "who-was-not-born-his-son," faces by choosing to live as the gender he identifies with. In *My Family's Slave*, Tizon tells the story of his family's secret slave, Lola, a poor Filipino woman who worked as an unpaid housekeeper. Lola was a gift from

Tizon's grandfather to his twelve-year-old daughter, Tizon's mother. After finishing college and getting married, Tizon's mother moved to America and brought Lola with her to clean and care for her children, again living as a slave without a personal identity. Throughout both works, Belknap and Tizon urge their audiences to see their subject's identity and recognize their existence. Tizon's goal is to preserve Lola's memory and give her an identity, while Belknap wants readers to understand the struggles transgender people undergo in seeking their true identity. Belknap and Tizon effectively portray the identity struggle of two oppressed individuals and show how identities can be inadvertently created or shaped by people who may have a very limited understanding of one's life, values, characteristics, and or behaviors. Reflecting on their works, one may begin to question the formation of identities here at NEC, in Boston, or in the general musical community.

Belknap portrays the discomfort and alienated feelings transgender people may experience living in an unaccepting society. He uses an analogy of a wildcat mascot costume to represent his son's frustrations. In *Skinning the Wildcat*, Belknap states, "Imagine going through your day in a giant mascot costume—a garish wildcat, say, that you could not remove. Imagine yourself—your real self—inside a ridiculous and bulbous-headed wildcat, every day, all the time" (Belknap). Belknap demonstrates how a transgender person's identity is hidden under the skin of the opposite gender. He also infers how humiliating it must be to be trapped in the wrong body by using the terms "garish," "ridiculous," and "bulbous-headed." His son, like every other teenager, wants nothing more than to be accepted and to fit in, but society frowns upon an anomaly in the algorithm. Furthermore, Belknap points out that living as a transgender person is like walking "down the aisles of a store, a store made to human scale, and you paw, with bulbous foam hands the size of toaster ovens, at merchandise that does not fit you, because it was not made with you in mind" (Belknap).

Here, Belknap depicts the exclusion and rejection transgender people may feel. Items such as gender-specific clothing and accessories are not made to accommodate their wants and needs. Belknap continues explaining the suffering some may experience while attempting to conform to society. He notes that because onlookers cannot see the discomfort transgender people feel, they “should probably go ahead and keep wearing this giant falsehood...no matter how hot and itchy and oppressive it feels” (Belknap). Belknap reminds us no matter how much people may try, they still see a transgender person as their “factory-issued” birth gender, so why not keep the costume on and allow society to stay comfortable? Is it more important for society to remain comfortable rather than to let individuals feel happy and accepted? People like Belknap’s son may feel extreme discomfort, social exclusion, and rejection from being placed in the wrong outer shell; this may be why some transgender people may choose to keep wearing the clumsy, hot, itchy costume. So what kind of environment exists at NEC? Is it accepting and non-judgmental? What can be done to ensure everyone feels comfortable and accepted so their true identity can shine?

In addition to the issue of being trapped in the wrong outer shell, Belknap shows the severity of the struggles, threats, and dangers a transgender person experiences while finding and living their true identity. Belknap does not sugarcoat his concern about his son’s safety: “my son who was not born my son lives under threat of being beaten comatose, of being truck-dragged, of getting gunned down. By strangers who feel the Jenga tower of their certainties starting to lean” (Belknap). In this passage, Belknap directly states the perilous dangers his son could experience while trying to live his truth. Belknap furthers his explanation: “I fear that the wrong footfall will spring the trap, that the wrong word will trigger his fall...[o]r worse, that he will remain unfailingly discreet and careful...but that threatened men will come hunting for him anyway” (Belknap). This type of

belligerent inclination may be experienced daily by transgender people in their schools, community or workplace. For example, in the article "Transgender Nurses Tell of Workplace Discrimination," Christian Duffin tells of a recently transitioned nurse, Ms. Morgan, who has experienced harassment from co-workers. Duffin reports that Ms. Morgan's fellow employees feel "disgusted and threatened" by her gender switch. Duffin describes Ms. Morgan's unfair work conditions: "[the] managers... do not let [Morgan] catheterize female patients and that she is harassed by other nursing staff... she has been prevented from using some women's toilets and changing rooms" (Duffin). The message is clear: her hostile co-workers disagree with Ms. Morgan's decision to transition. Belknap and Duffin are able to paint a vivid, perilous picture of society's wrongdoings and the risks to those who do not conform to societal norms. They show the seriousness of the situation and how gravely they view the difficult lifestyle of the transgender community. As its own, somewhat isolated society, how can NEC serve as a role model for other communities, work places, and for the city of Boston, and promote the acceptance of all people?

Tizon presents a different concept than Belknap; he describes how identities can be created. Tizon discusses, describes, and defines his family's slave, Lola, from his memories or stories he has heard. In the beginning of his work, he describes Lola with empathy: "Her name was Eudocia Tomas Pulido. We called her Lola. She was 4 foot 11, with mocha-brown skin and almond eyes that I can still see looking into mine" (Tizon). Here, Tizon begins to craft Lola's identity by sharing her traits in a caring way, making her appear more human than a slave. He first tells her full name, rather than the short nickname she was given as a slave. He also describes her features in a tender way, pointing out her "mocha-brown" skin and almond eyes he can still see "looking into mine." With these carefully chosen words, he describes Lola as a warm and

caring human being, rather than as the slave his parents saw. Tizon also gives Lola an identity when he remembers her as a caretaker for him and his siblings: “[t]he woman who used to hum Tagalog melodies as she rocked me to sleep, and when I got older would dress and feed me and walk me to school in the mornings and pick me up in the afternoons. Once, when I was sick for a long time and too weak to eat, she chewed my food for me and put the small pieces in my mouth to swallow” (Tizon). Tizon depicts that Lola has emotions and cares for Tizon and his siblings; she is tender and loving. She helped Tizon eat when he was too sick to chew. Tizon’s emotional descriptions of Lola gives her the identity she never had; he wants his audience to know her in a way that no one ever did. Lola’s identity is shaped by the way others view her, whether that is being seen solely as a slave or as a loving and caring human being. Tizon decides to take his opportunity and define Lola for the world to appreciate and understand. He is creating her identity through the telling of his story.

Tizon creates an identity that is very different from the identity Lola had for decades. The Tizon family kept Lola oppressed as a slave. Typically, as an immigrant to the United States, she would have better opportunities; the Tizons even promised her a salary, and this arrangement looked very promising. However, the Tizons did not keep their end of the bargain. Tizon writes about Lola’s unfortunate situation and his parent’s lack of care towards her struggling Filipino family; he states, “[Lola’s] mother had fallen ill, and her family couldn’t afford the medicine she needed. ‘*Pwede ba?*’ she said to my parents. *Is it possible?* Mom let out a sigh. ‘How could you even ask [for money]?,’ Dad responded in Tagalog. ‘You see how hard up we are. Don’t you have any shame?’” (Tizon). In this passage, Tizon shows how Lola’s identity was always tied to her inferior position as a slave. Tizon’s family revoked Lola’s right to live as a free citizen of the United States. As a slave, she had no American resources and Tizon presents this conundrum: “She

had no contacts in America, and no facility for getting around. Phones puzzled her. Mechanical things—ATMs, intercoms, vending machines, anything with a keyboard—made her panic. Fast-talking people left her speechless, and her own broken English did the same to them. She couldn't make an appointment, arrange a trip, fill out a form, or order a meal without help" (Tizon). Here, Tizon paints Lola's helpless state; Lola did not have basic skills to independently survive in America. This lack of resourcefulness was all a result of how the Tizons viewed and treated their "slave," Lola. What one shares about another person creates and shapes their identity. Tizon's family only saw Lola as a slave and didn't bother to see the side of Lola that Tizon shared: warm, loving and caring. It serves as a reminder that when someone speaks of another individual or introduces another person, our words immediately start to create an identity for that individual. Words have the power to promote acceptance, so why not present empowering characteristics that allow others to see value and different facets of a person?

Identities can be freely established, or they can be falsely molded under oppressive situations. When formed under oppression or in an unaccepting, judgmental environment, one's identity may lack any resemblance of their true self. Education and open discussions within our society may allow people more freedom and security to express themselves with confidence, staying genuine to their own feelings and beliefs. Identities can be transformed, good or bad, but improvements in self-expression can only happen when societal acceptance is felt. Belknap and Tizon provoke reflection and cause one to question how they may be inadvertently shaping the identity of others around them, for better or worse.

When I am reading these articles by Belknap, Tizon, and Duffin, I was forced to pause and think about my interactions with my fellow students here at NEC. Belknap's story is a reminder that that everyone faces difficulties. These difficulties

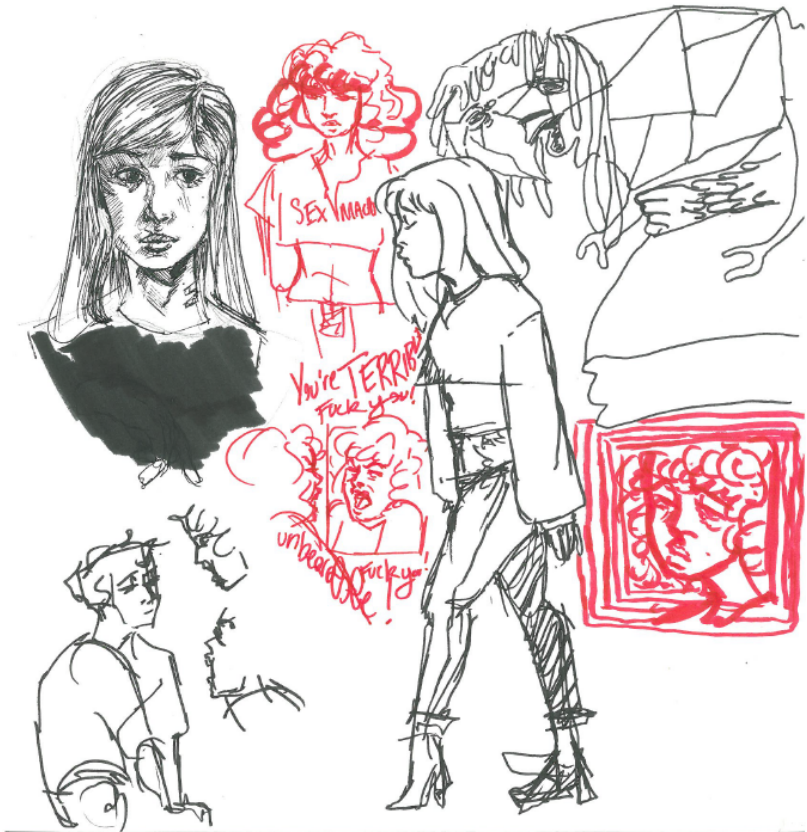
may not be related to feeling trapped in the wrong gender, but perhaps, a different personal issue. One difficulty I commonly see at NEC is the feeling that one does not feel “good enough” or that they do not deserve to be here, or as my friend and I dub it, “imposter syndrome,” because the one suffering feels like an imposter in their high-achieving community. When interacting with others, we all need to realize that everyone has a story and may be facing challenges. I understand that this line has been said thousands of times, but it is true: we cannot be quick to judge others. For all we know, we may be seeing an outer shell that someone is wearing to make others around them feel comfortable or to conform to what is perceived as the standard of acceptance.

In regards to Alex Tizon’s ode to Lola, he prompts one to question how quickly an identity can be created for someone else. A simple description of a friend or someone we met may create an identity that is completely false. Once an identity is created, it may be very limiting and not show the depths or the many facets a person has. It can also be very hard to change this new identity, as a first impression can be hard to undo. For Lola, this was clear. Her owners treated her as subhuman, a non-valued slave. Their identity of her completely limited her and her ability to live an enjoyable and productive life in the United States. Lola eventually morphed into the suppressed identity she was given and was no longer able to break free from it. Tizon shows us there was so much more to Lola that was hidden beneath the surface. How much of one’s true identity is hidden by the clumsy societal mascot costume that we place upon ourselves or that others don upon us?

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Drawing of Many Figures, Boston, MA

Daisy Chesler

Cassandra Pinataro

## Judgment is a Barrier

*Litany for the Long Moment*, by Mary Kim Arnold, illustrates the struggles faced by an adopted Korean child. Arnold speaks of herself as she fights to overcome the language barrier and the oppression she feels as an adopted immigrant. In his preface, "To Make You See," Joseph Conrad speaks of "the artist" having special capabilities in communication and connection. Mary Kim Arnold has trouble finding her ability to communicate her "artistry" as she struggles with language barriers. Images and purposeful white spaces mirror the gaps in Arnold's vocabulary and knowledge. Metaphor, including *The Bridge of No Return*, emphasizes the barriers in Arnold's life as she tries to find her sense of belonging in the world. Mary Kim Arnold uses white space, metaphor, and imagery to illustrate her confusion and feeling of loss as she struggles through the barriers of her life.

Arnold's use of white space conveys the mental gaps in her own knowledge of language. Throughout *Litany for the Long Moment*, Arnold uses unclear sentences followed by long white spaces on the page. The spaces depict her internal confusion as well as the information she did not wish to think about as she overcame her struggles as an adopted child. For example, Arnold says, "Many things were hard to speak of; some were just too painful to write about—and these amounted to quite a few in number—and I have left them out" (38). This is immediately followed by three-fourths of a page of white space to depict the thoughts that are running through her mind but are not openly expressed. Arnold had many of these thoughts which torment her mind as she tries to handle her feelings on her own. Arnold also utilizes white space when she writes, "But I want more. I want to know: Is the fact that a relationship exists between the subject and the object of the sentence more important than the nature of that relationship? Or more

important than the action that transpires between them?" (92). Arnold follows this with white space, showing the barrier of language and vocabulary that is present in her life. She also focuses on the structure of a sentence as a metaphor for the lack of structure in her life.

The metaphors used in *Litany for the Long Moment* act as a vehicle for the missing words in Arnold's language as she tries to describe her life. The Bridge of No Return illustrates the barrier and internal pull Arnold feels as she tries to learn about her past and understand her new life. As Arnold visits the Korean Demilitarized Zone, she writes, "Our tour bus idles at the Bridge of No Return. At the end of the war, prisoners were given the choice to either remain in the country of their captivity or to cross over to their homeland, knowing it was a choice they could only make once" (71). This "catch-22" from *The Bridge* creates a vicious decision for those making their choice. Both decisions have few positive attributes and have multiple negative attributes. Arnold feels that this was true about her life and uses the Bridge as a metaphor for her own personal struggles. The Bridge is, in fact, a barrier in disguise. Most bridges connect two places of culture or thought and help bring those cultures or ideas together. In Arnold's life, she wishes to find a bridge that could connect her pre-adoption and post-adoption lives and help her find a balance of family, language, and culture. She wants to feel complete, but just as this Bridge did to the prisoners, Arnold feels that she can only have pieces of one culture or another. She fights this barrier, but it leaves her feeling incomplete even in her efforts to link both cultures of her life. Arnold also comes to this feeling when she uses an apple as a metaphor for her relationship with her mother. She writes, "Your friend calls you on the phone, he says, and the connection is not good. You want to tell your friend to bring you an apple. In English, you would say: 'I want an apple.' But the phone cuts out before you finish the sentence. So all your friend hears is 'I want,' and she would never know what it was you wanted" (91).

This is indicative of Arnold's relationship with her birth mother and adoptive mother. She wants to ask questions to connect herself with her past, but does not know what questions to ask, and wants to be close with her adoptive mother, but feels a barrier due to the lack of shared blood. Mary Kim Arnold uses metaphor to show the difficulty of finding a sense of home in her adopted life. This kind of difficulty leads to Arnold feeling confused and lost as she searches for the true meaning of her life and her place in the world.

Unable to express her feelings about her life in words, Arnold uses imagery to illustrate scenes from her life that cause her confusion. For example, Arnold depicts a photo of a chart in which she repeatedly copies her name in Korean Hangul. This photo shows the limited Korean language at Arnold's disposal—such as only knowing her name. The difficulty of only knowing small amounts of two different languages creates an inability for Arnold to express her emotions and thoughts. She is unable to express herself, defend herself, or fulfill herself as she struggles to find words in each sentence she formed. Arnold also uses imagery when she writes, "Had my mother still been living, I do not think I would have made the trip. To her, it was a question of loyalty. Choose the mother who stayed over the mother who left. She wanted it to be possible for me to start a new life, untethered to the past. To her, it was a choice. I didn't have the language then to say that those first two years were part of my life too. My year. My life. I wanted to take it" (10). This conflicting statement is followed by a large picture of Arnold as a small child with a woman, assumed to be her adoption-mother. Her face looks cheerful, but her lips are pressed as though she may speak, communicating how Arnold feels as she grows up. She is always on the verge of saying something but does not have the vocabulary to state her thoughts. Although she is grateful for her mother and her life, she wants to speak of her past and learn about her birth mother but does not have the words to express this desire. She is always searching and always

wanting more knowledge, but unfortunately cannot defend her mind as she lacks the words and knowledge to explain her internal struggle.

*Litany for the Long Moment* helps the reader understand the barriers and life struggles Arnold has to overcome as the result of a life she didn't choose. Arnold walks through questions of her past, her birth mother, her adoption-mother, her languages, and her identity. As she uncovers these questions, she realizes that she simply cannot answer them. She never learns a full language and therefore finds gaps in her own knowledge of how to express feelings. This leaves Arnold feeling out of touch with herself and feeling confused. As she allows the reader to look into the torments of her own mind, Arnold seems to hope to make the reader see that judging others can only cause a barrier between ideas and cultures, creating a greater divide in the people of the world. A past life can create internal conflicts in an individual, and judgement can only make these conflicts worse. Arnold intends for this lesson to be applied in many situations of life. For example, college students can quickly judge one another based on appearances, talents, or intelligence. If these students learn from Arnold's book, they can avoid using judgement and instead find empathy for those around them as they seek to find the good in people. In *Litany for the Long Moment*, Arnold convinces the reader to have more insight into the lives of others as they uncover the unseen struggles in an individual's life.

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*Peaches, Tunisia*

Bosba Panh

Adrian Liao

## Burnt Pie

### Literary Analysis of “Pumpkin Pie”

*“So Antoinette gave Texas the bowl of six left-over egg yolks to keep him quiet and just ran from the big house, out the back door, through the garage with the ten cars so smashed in that no one could ever get any but two of them out, and she squeezed through the hole in the fence everyone but the Marvins knew about, and ran for ten minutes solid to get home, and when she did found Cheri and her husband sobbing and smiling and sighing in each other’s arms, and she was glad because she liked the young man, he was just so young, and a baby needs two parents, and the smell of a pumpkin pie which the boys were making was rich and strong in the house, and there was Juanita saying she was sorry, she was sorry, she’d got frightened, and Antoinette grabbed the hot pumpkin pie out of the oven because she knew the one at the Marvins’ would be burned, she’d forgotten to turn the oven down, and the boys said that’s okay, that’s okay, because they were good kids, and she borrowed six eggs from Juanita who, what with the burnings and crashings, hadn’t gotten round to making her own, and ran back to the house, and she was in through the hole of the fence and sure enough the kitchen was full of the smell of burnt, fat-free, egg-yolk-free pumpkin pie but she switched on all the extractor fans, of which there were many, and whisked the ruined pie out of the oven, burning her fingers as she dropped it on the floor and it skidded under the table and Texas ate it, as she knew he would, scalding his mouth but he didn’t care” (Weldon 86-87).*

It is difficult for those unrestricted and privileged to empathize with ones who are restricted in any way. This lack of consideration for those different from oneself can often come back to backstab an individual in a world where each person



must fend for themselves. Antoinette is a single mother working for the Marvins, where she is required to singlehandedly prepare a Thanksgiving dinner for the Marvins and their guests. Family troubles arise in her own household, and Antoinette must rush home unnoticed and return, resulting in her burning of the pie that she is supposed to serve that night. She is forced to take the pie from her own family's oven to substitute the Marvins' pie. In this passage in "Pumpkin Pie," Fay Weldon explores this disconnection between the wealthy and the poor through chaotic delivery, syntax and tone. Her themes centering on indifference, control and ignorance help to convey this frustrating social gap and its implications and evoke sympathy towards Antoinette and the poorer populations as well as a bitter exasperation towards the Marvins and richer households. In this scene, there is a certain indifference throughout to either one's own environment or others' situations. The entire passage is expressed in one single sentence, long and unceasing thought that conjures an image of Antoinette running around without pause and frantically attempting to accomplish everything at once. However, her daughter and daughter's husband fails to notice her obvious distress as she arrives to mollify their predicament, which turns out to be nonexistent. Weldon uses the terms "sobbing...smiling...sighing," (86) in an alliteration that brings forth a full range of emotions within the couple, but with an obvious lack of concern for Antoinette, who must then hurry back to the Marvins' household to finish her work. When she returns, Antoinette burns her fingers and Texas scalds his mouth, but neither is able to care much nor does anyone seem to care about their plight. Antoinette's sons also show an affable nonchalance when their pumpkin pie is taken from them, adding to this indifferent attitude within this passage. This standoffish tone serves to make light of Antoinette's problems and, along with Weldon's choice of an omnipresent point of view, brings the reader to side with Antoinette and sympathize with her troubles. Weldon is also making a statement regarding the rich and poor here, as

perhaps Antoinette and her family cannot afford to care too much about their environment due to their rather poor circumstances. Honey Marvin, on the other hand, is free to obsess over tiny details in her life and develop anxiety over items that are of little to no importance because of her economic standing and wealth. Texas, the Marvins' dog, serves as a foil to the fastidious humans around him in his easygoingness regarding the pumpkin pie and whether or not it contains heavy cholesterol and oil. He just devours whatever is given to him, even biting Antoinette a few times. Weldon, ironically, uses Texas to help Antoinette at the end, when he helps to cover the evidence of the burnt pie by swallowing it. He seems to be her foe at the beginning of the paragraph when she must keep him satiated in order to freely leave the house, but his greed trumps this enmity between them as he successfully gets rid of the pie for her. Each member of the household has drastically different dietary conditions, showcasing their difference in social class and causing the reader to identify with Antoinette, who must balance and deal with all these different concerns.

Often, food and its preparation can become a "negotiation and conflict between adults" (Bell and Valentine 59) and Weldon utilizes Honey Marvin as a picture of this control issue. Honey attempts to dictate her entire environment, seen through her iron clasp on her husband's diet, her own diet, her hostess events, Antoinette, and many more. But in this scene, all of the above are ruined simply because of her inability to show true compassion towards Antoinette. Honey does not understand the plight of others, forcing Antoinette to sneak out of the house, and consequently serve a pie full of cholesterol and oil to Honey and her guests. It is through her attempt to fully control Antoinette that Honey's grasp on all these other aspects is nullified. Weldon is suggesting that through the neglect of others in an attempt to focus on one's own wellbeing, this wellbeing can be compromised in a twist of irony. This matter of

control is fleshed out in the two households the story takes place in, where a parallel is drawn between Antoinette's and Honey's families. Antoinette's household is disturbed by an apparent fight between her daughter Cheri and Cheri's husband, but this disintegrates to nothing by the time Antoinette shows up to save the day. Similarly, Honey Marvin seems to deal with an ongoing battle of self-esteem as well as anxiety, where she frets over trivial things such as having thirteen (an unlucky number) guests invited to her gathering. Both situations turn out favorably, but Weldon successfully portrays the different circumstances the two women experience in a sort of hierarchy. This household they are both a part of "is a site of multiple, sometimes contradictory consumption practices crossed by complex webs of power relations between household members" (Bell and Valentine 59). Weldon depicts this relationship through the conflict between Antoinette and her employer, which serves as a picture for the larger social ladder which exists between the wealthy and the poor. The six offending yolks for multiple pies which are used in so many different ways seem to place the Marvins and their dog on top of the hierarchy, where they despise their yolks and discard them to those lower on the ladder. However, it becomes clear that actually, it is Antoinette who has the power regarding these yolks in her dishonesty and inclusion of them in the Marvins' pie, showing again the breach of Honey's control over her environment.

Honey Marvin is also unable to control the outward aspects of her situation, such as the hole in the fence, of which only she and her family are unaware. She cares immensely about her social events, food, room décor and her body shape, but neglects the hole in her fence which could completely usurp all of these things if utilized by the wrong person. This hole signifies Honey's ignorance to the obvious and her ultimate failure to see and empathize with the conditions of those around her. She pretends to care for Antoinette, and perhaps truly

thinks she does. However, when it really matters, such as when an important phone call arrives for Antoinette or Antoinette's feet hurt from her pinching shoes, she seems to airily dismiss these truths and urge Antoinette to continue on despite the pain. The Marvins' ignorance extends to their attempts to limit their intake in certain foods, namely, fat and cholesterol. Honey tries obsessively to keep many things out of the Thanksgiving pie to make it somewhat healthy but neglects the sugar content which arguably could do the most harm to her and her guests. She also has "hysterics if there [is] a drop of oil in the lemon dressing on the spinach salad" but vanquishes "whole walnut cakes...overnight," (Weldon 83), furthering this fussiness in diet as a symbol of her inability to see the bigger picture. Bell and Valentine also introduce this concept of food being a factor of exclusion and inclusion within a community, and Honey quite obviously treats Antoinette as an outsider in her circle, directing a false sense of bravado and gratitude towards Antoinette, as she shoves food she needs to get rid of, as well as discarded gift items her rich acquaintances refuse, at Antoinette. These items are the same ones she offered her guests, but only after they have been drained of their newness and are in a cold, secondary state are they offered to Antoinette, and with plenty of proudness on Honey's side as she believes she is doing a good thing towards her employee. This pumpkin pie Antoinette ends up serving at the Thanksgiving dinner, full of cholesterol and fat, functions as a "source of resistance" (Bell and Valentine 91) where Antoinette is forced to rebel against Honey due to Honey's ignorance and lack of consideration.

Honey Marvin and Antoinette are caricatures of the wealthy and the poor in "Pumpkin Pie," where they both find themselves unable to care about certain things due to their social class – Antoinette about her own situation and Honey Marvin about Antoinette's wellbeing. Antoinette does not have the luxury to be picky regarding her condition, and Honey Marvin develops anxiety due to her obligation to retain her social standing,

therefore failing to look past her own wealth and problems to the world around her. This anxiety and selfishness thus usher in a certain ignorance and fanatical desire to control her situation, leading to her ultimate loss of this same control in an attempt to manage it all. Honey's sense of focus centers on her own environment and that only, which forces Antoinette to have to fend for herself and thus harm Honey in the process. It is because of this developed oblivion that Honey ultimately brings damage upon herself, a situation which could have been avoided by simply widening her view and caring for Antoinette in the process.

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Hear Here! 2019



*My Culinary World at NEC, Boston,*  
"Cooking is something in my blood, just like music."

David Wenhao Shaw

Dan Hirsch

## Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Her Portrayal of Mental Illness

An effective literary portrayal of mental illness is often an elusive achievement. Most authors will resort to the obvious tropes of clear absurdity, or maybe they'll nuance it with an unreliable narrator, so we miss the issues at face value but are able to unpack them later. The latter of these two methods really drives home the point of how necessary it is to be more observant and attentive when looking for signs, as they can hide in plain sight. "The Yellow Wallpaper," written in 1892, serves as Charlotte Perkins Gilman's medium for illustrating the effects and expressions of mental illness, but she does this in a way that most authors do not- with brutal honesty and blunt force. She tells the story of an unnamed women who has been taken to the countryside by her physician husband, John. The woman is being administered rest cure for what is likely Postpartum Depression (PPD), which is a type of depression that can occur after childbirth. The literary decisions she implements all interact with one another to create a sympathetic attachment and trust for the narrator, despite her mental instability. The use of not-so-subtle irony then, helps to provide the shock value that accents the climax of the work. This straightforward approach in turn supports a contradictory theme of simultaneous transcendence and entrapment that confuses the reader and forces them to thoughtfully question the story's conclusion. By allowing us to see the narrator's deterioration clearly, and by ending the work with dual themes that appeal to the logic and the conscience in different, very conflicting ways, Gilman is explaining how fragile mental illness is and the effects of it being ignored and/or mistreated.

A large part of what makes Gilman's point so powerful is the emotional attachment and trust that she builds between the

narrator and the reader. Often, literary portrayals of mental illness are legitimized by the lack of trust we give to the narrator as we discover that he/she is not being truthful, a usual sign that something is wrong. However, Gilman has her narrator communicating intimately with us from the start to foster trust, yet we're still able to tell that there's a problem. It's very much in the style of a journal entry, but it feels like she's confiding something in us and gives the reader a feeling of inclusion. The fact that she's so strikingly self aware of her illness and what it's doing to her is very important. One might say this works against trusting her because it suggests the person is in control of their illness, but that is not the case. She's in a place where she can analyze how she's feeling and knows that the illness is affecting her, but is also in a position where she is powerless in remedying it. This allows the reader to have a second level of understanding concerning what the narrator is experiencing, which surprisingly continues to be present even when she's reached the point of no return. When she contradicts herself, she's still very descriptive and honest about what she think she sees and what she actually does, like in these two passages: "This bedstead is fairly gnawed!" and "...I got so angry I bit off a little piece [of the bed] at one corner--but it hurt my teeth." (Gilman 15). The fact that her insane alter ego is still being very full disclosure allows the narrator's reliability to be sustained throughout. In addition, John severely mistreats the narrator, which only reinforces the empathy we already have. John doesn't believe that the narrator is sick and constantly treats her like a child. While this contributes to, and arguably accelerates, the illness' consumption of the narrator, the main takeaway is that it leaves the reader yearning for her to break free from this mistreatment, a feeling that is crucial to the mental conflict the reader ends up with upon finishing the work.

In conjunction with this, the end of the work has a disheveled and chaotic tone that is simultaneously celebratory in an eerie manner. That chaos is aided by the choppy structure of



the work. The format looks like a poem, where ideas are split up and have significant white page space between them. This stanza-like form allows a clear progression of the illness to be seen, but most importantly it accents the bluntness of the contradictions that the narrator makes. They literally stand alone on the page, have an aura to them, and it's easy to retrace our steps to earlier in the work in order to cite the other half of the contradiction. The narrator spends most of the work confined to a room with yellow wallpaper. She painstakingly expresses her hatred for the wallpaper and as her illness progresses, she begins to see a woman trapped in the wall, her eventual alter ego. The narrator often bounces erratically between topics and returns to them as her alter ego, as shown in these two excerpts: "I've got a rope up here that even Jennie did not find. If that woman [inside the wallpaper] does get out, and tries to get away, I can tie her!" and just a few lines later: "I wonder if they all come out of that wall-paper as I did? But I am securely fastened now by my well-hidden rope..." (Gilman 15). Gilman inserts some space between these two ideas to divert our attention, which makes the "Wait, what?" moment we experience that much more ironic and meaningful. The celebratory but creepy side of the tone is created by the fact that this work is from the narrator's point of view alone. The story ends with the narrator succumbing to her illness and going psychotic, fully embracing her identity as the woman who was inside the wallpaper, but the way she acts suggests that it's liberating for her. After all, she has freed herself from John's oppressive restriction in that she's too far gone to even be aware of it. However, this resolve only complicates things further and it leaves the confused reader entangled in emotional conflict.

This is a brilliant simultaneous use of Pathos and Logos that cause the conscience and the rational mind to spar. Logically, this is a very sad ending, as the narrator's mental state has deteriorated severely. What John may end up doing with her after the events of the work could be much worse than before,

and the narrator's life as a functioning member of society is most likely over. However, the emotional appeal is that the narrator has escaped John's mistreatment. It was orchestrated for the reader to sympathize with the narrator, so shouldn't they be happy that she is free? Any further mistreatment from John might go completely unnoticed because of how deranged she has become, so maybe it's for the best. She has transcended John's mistreatment, but she's been entrapped by her mental illness, possibly forever, and we don't know what to think about it because logic tells us that mental illness is bad, but our conscience suggests that continued oppression from John may be much worse. In the end, there's this feeling of hopelessness and despair since neither the transcendence or entrapment interpretations put the narrator in a favorable position going forward.

Gilman's blunt approach to depicting mental illness raises awareness about how toxic it can be to ignore and mistreat someone that is suffering, and her contradictory dual themed ending ignites a debate concerning what can be considered freedom from oppression. The narrator gained her freedom at the cost of losing her state of mind, but ideally, one should be able to have both without any tradeoffs. The important takeaway is that those who are ill need to be listened to, they need to be taken seriously, and they should not, under any circumstances, be mocked or belittled. Gilman later said that she wrote this work to keep people from going mad, in such a way where the work serves as something potentially relatable and definitely eye-opening ("Why I Wrote"). It's easy to feel trapped when one is aware of their problems, but can't fix it on their own, and a toxic environment will only make it worse. Not many literary portrayals have featured both of these scenarios at work and their combination yields a very powerful message. This message has proven to be effective, and will continue to work in showing the wrong way to treat a mentally ill person, and people in general.

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Luke Burrell

# Crimson Path

## The Imagery of Fatal Ownership in Greek Drama

It may seem unimaginable today that material possessions would be held at a higher value than one's own life. However, barely a page can go by when reading Homer's Iliad without the depiction of warriors, Greek and Trojan alike, stopping in the heat of battle to strip the armor from an enemy's breast. Whether these passages should be taken literally or not is an issue of modern interpretation: the message, however, that one's material possessions are of equal or greater value than one's life undeniably shows through. Agamemnon, the Mycenaean Empires, the warriors of old and Homer himself are all far removed in time from the Classical Athens of the 400's BCE, but the fascination and reverence for the Mycenaean period remained a central topic well until the fall of Athens. Through the stories of Agamemnon, Jason, Oedipus, Medea and indeed the entire pantheon of Greek heroes and gods the Athenians created a powerful and potent lens through which it was possible to reflect upon and criticize the contemporary Athenian society. One theme that returns through almost every play is the idea of ownership and property. This value was not restricted to the mythological lives of heroes but was a central concern of the Athenian citizens and the Empire itself. Through the growth of Athens as a capital and the prowess of its navy, cities, and villages fell and paid homage to the great democracy with resources and spoils of conquest. It is only to be expected that the playwrights living in Athens would focus their view upon the vain hoarding of wealth, and transmit the reality of Athenian overreach and greed through the plays and to the public. Be it a crimson tapestry, gilt dress or an instrument of war, the image of

wealth, ownership and the ruin that accompanies them can be traced in evolution through Generations of Greek plays.

The first play in the Oresteia trilogy, *Agamemnon* is more than the story of a wife's deception and revenge; it is a depiction of downfall bought with power and conquest. To properly understand the downfall through ownership presented in *Agamemnon*, it is necessary to understand the value of the main depiction of Agamemnon's wealth, the crimson tapestry. The tapestry represents Agamemnon's exertion of power in the obvious depiction of his newfound control of the oceans from Troy and his ability to produce an unrestricted amount of the rare colour. The play touches on the subtler notion that his treading upon the tapestry demonstrates his dominance, and lack of reverence, for the gods themselves. However, another, and perhaps less obvious, connection to the tapestry is that of the *oikos*. As Kenneth Morrell states, "nearly every major female character in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is involved in either some aspect of the weaving process or the care of fabrics when she appears in her *oikos*." (Morrell, pg.146) The close association for the Athenians of women and fabrics creates the association of fabrics and a woman's value and authority. By laying down a crimson tapestry for Agamemnon to walk upon, Clytemnestra is laying down the equivalent of not only her value as a woman but the authority of her *oikos* for Agamemnon to tread upon. The backstory to the play includes the detail that the Trojan war had begun only because of the sacrifice of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon's daughter, Iphigenia for favorable winds. This willingness to cut down his own daughter is translatable as a disregard for what was, for Athenian society, the most valuable role of women in society: the production of children.

The tapestry, now, is much more than Agamemnon's spoils or the precursor to Clytemnestra's trap, the tapestry is an image to represent the defilement of the *oikos* already committed by Agamemnon through the murder of Clytemnestra's child. It is only when this wrongdoing is depicted with the spoils of war

that Agamemnon, seemingly blind to all but wealth, feels any shame about treading on the crimson tapestry. "...and great the shame I feel/to spoil such treasure..."(Aeschylus, lines 948-949) Though Agamemnon feels a great shame to step upon his great treasure, he felt no shame when sacrificing his daughter and does not realize that his mistreatment of the tapestry is merely an admission of his degradation of the oikos years prior. Hence, it is with this unknowing admission of guilt that Agamemnon's symbol of ownership and power following the Trojan war becomes the icon of his mortal downfall at the hands of Clytemnestra, his "property", whose authority he had ignored and defiled with the murder of her child. This was not an idea that was alien to contemporary Athenian society at the time. As the influence and wealth of Athens grew and the power of its navy began to extract more from the spoils of war at sea, this "crimson path" can be seen as an image to represent Athens own trajectory away from traditional values in the pursuit of material wealth and ownership.

Agamemnon's death at the hands of his wronged wife is not a difficult passage for modern readers to traverse, and indeed it seems like one of the most justified ends to a character in any literature. The fate that Creon and his daughter receive at the hands of Medea, however, stand out as some of the most gruesome and seemingly unjustified deaths imaginable. These too, upon closer inspection, follow much the same trend as Agamemnon. Though Jason appears to be the one in the wrong in the play *Medea*, blame cannot be excluded from Creon and his daughter, as both are aware of the marriage and sons between Jason and Medea at the time. Jason ignores the laws governing the oikos and the rules of his marriage, but it is an equal crime that Creon and his daughter commit by willingly infringing upon the oikos of Medea. Not only had Medea previously sacrificed her family and "barbarian" life to save Jason, but she adopted and performed the Athenian role of a woman to give birth and govern her oikos. This makes the

infringement of Creon and his daughter worse than the crime of Agamemnon, as they actively ignore the pseudo-Athenian laws that govern their own lives in the pursuit of personal conquest and gain. It is a response to this attack upon her willing assimilation into "Athenian" society and relinquishment of her previous freedom that Medea retaliates with a symbol of her authority as a woman.

As I have stated previously, among the many duties expected of a woman in her oikos one of the most closely associated was the female's duty to produce and tend to fabrics. It is fitting, then, that Medea's revenge upon those who actively sought to destroy her marriage and oikos comes in the form of one of her chief duties as a woman. The fatal Image that destroys Creon and his daughter is the fine silk dress and gold jewelry that Medea offers in exchange for her sons to remain in Corinth. As the princess accepts the garment, in a passage that can easily be read as an analogy for seizing the oikos from Medea, the fatal repercussions of her overreaching desire exact their revenge. Had the princesses motives been pure, she would have spoken as Jason does, "If my wife considers me of any value, she will think more of me than money..."(Euripides, pg. 92) The intent of Creon and his daughter, however, is not truly the marriage of Jason or even the conquest of the oikos from Medea, but the treasure and wealth to be plundered by exerting their ownership over Medea. It is through this desire for excess that the princesses and Creon's undoing takes place. The symbolism of the garment and jewels is twofold in this context — as Agamemnon, in the *Oresteia*, had implied that fancy dress and jewels were only fit for barbarians, underscoring the uncivilized and barbaric actions of the princess and Creon.

It is not difficult to apply the symbolism contained within Medea to Athenian Civilization at the time, as their conquest of smaller civilizations for exploitation of resources had begun to reach a point of leading Athens into actions of mass destruction and folly for the Empire. A direct response to these actions can

be seen in Euripides', *The Trojan Women*, and with it, comes another evolution in the symbolism of fatal ownership. Set after the fall of Troy, the play follows the sorrow of Hecuba and the Trojan women as well as the Greeks pursuit to kill the young Astyanax to prevent a future rebellion. The case for the murder of the child is argued by Odysseus, renowned for the power of his mind, in the "assembly." Following the death of Astyanax, his body is laid next to and upon his father, Hector's, shield. The shield in this play is another manifestation, though more abstract, of fatal ownership in the Greek dramas. As was mentioned earlier in this essay, passages throughout Homer's *Iliad* show the pervasiveness of the importance of personal belongings, especially armour, in relation to one's life and honor. The claiming of Hector's shield symbolizes the ownership of the life of Hector, and by killing their highest protector, the lives of the Trojans themselves. It is then the responsibility of the Greeks to weigh how the lives of those that are conquered should be handled, as they now lie in the control of the Greek forces.

The idea of hope in the young Astyanax is noted as a positive and negative force by the Trojans and Greeks respectively. More generally, this hope can be seen as the hope that the Greeks will act with some humanity by granting the Trojans their lives. Ultimately, the choice of the Greeks to seek total annihilation of the Trojans, at the cost of killing young Asayanax, seals the fate of the Trojans and Greeks alike. Though placing the body of young Asayanax with his father's shield symbolises the objectification of the Trojans in the eyes of the Greeks, it simultaneously symbolises the downfall of the Greeks themselves. As Astyanax is placed upon his father's shield, this becomes the symbol of Greek and, almost certainly, Athenian downfall. Because the boy is slain and placed upon his father's shield, a treasure won in the spoils of war; this becomes the symbol of the death of the Athenian empire in its humanity. The Greeks were given the option throughout to treat the Trojans as humans and beings of worth but instead saw them as another



object won in war, through the trend of unchecked greed and domination in the Athenian empire's history, and sought complete dominance over the Trojan's lives. The symbol of Astyanax's body on the shield represents the Greeks attainment of that ownership, as the Trojans very lives are now on the same level as the war spoils. It is through this dehumanization of the other civilizations around the Greeks that they create the death of their humanity.

Be it in the form of gilt fabric or war tarnished bronze, the images of fatal ownership are ever present throughout the body of Greek drama. The idea of the pursuit of wealth, land or life as a corruptive force was one that was dear to Classical Athenian society. It seems likely that this symbolism was included in response to the international policies of Athens, the first play observed being written during the height of the Athenian empire and the last two just before the true downfall of Athenian society caused by overreaching greed. Though these recurring images of conquered items show the warning of Athens' downfall, none tell it as faithfully as the fate of the Athenian democracy itself.

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*Ta Prohm Tree, Siem Reap, Cambodia*

Bosba Panh

Angel Jochi Hernandez-Camen

## Examining the Quantitative Movement of Violence and War

In Steven Pinker's book, *"The Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence has Declined"*, published in 2011, he posits that violence has declined, not only during the past few hundred years, but since the origins of human civilization. This claim remains controversial. The philosophy of his thesis comes markedly from the writings of the profoundly influential 17th century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, whom Williams writes believed that humans were dominated by their inclination to act on their own self-interests (Williams). With this view, Hobbes demonstrates a strong pessimism towards the idea that humans can rule themselves; as he claims: "Individuals in the 'state of nature' are beasts" (Sussman 99). Deducing from these theoretical foundations, Hobbes asserts that to solve the ails of this natural state of humanity it is necessary to impose authoritarian rule in order to keep people in line (Williams).

This contrasts strongly with the view of French thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau of the 18th century who argued that the speculations of those like Hobbes on the uncivilized state of humans in nature did not in fact examine what they purported to examine, but instead the state of humans already contaminated with the vices of civilization unleashed into a world without order (Delaney). Rousseau saw the elements that made humans warlike as emanating from a historical process which led to concepts such as the owning of property, divining future conditions, conjecturing on the nature of other people, and so on (Delaney). Without these factors, Rousseau believed that humans, with their innate behavioral compass not only resting on the principle of self-preservation, but also on a sense of pity and repugnance at seeing the tribulations of others, would act naturally peaceful and good even in the void of an imposed

moral code to dictate right and wrong (Delaney). Although Rousseau is often charged with romanticizing the 'noble savage', I would argue that Rousseau's views were closer to the scientific reality of human and nonhuman animal nature than Hobbes'; furthermore objections to the contrary by recent authors such as Steven Pinker lack scientific rigor and furthermore contribute to the undermining of Indigenous rights and the promotion of the subjugation of Indigenous people.

Applied to the historical and present understanding of prehistoric and Indigenous people, both Hobbes' and Rousseau's theories of humans in a state of nature are woefully simplistic and represent stereotypes of a Western binary conception of 'primitive' people; either as 'noble savage' or 'savage savage'. The reality is far more complex than that. The popular characterization of non-human animals also suffers from corresponding generalizations, which are being shown as baseless by modern science inquiry. Dr. Mark Bekoff, a professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Colorado, wrote a fabulous book entitled "Why Dogs Hump and Bees Get Depressed", assembled from select essays he wrote for the magazine *Psychology Today*. In it he argues against Speciesism and discusses the cognitive abilities, emotional complexities, and moral intelligence of these fascinating creatures who live in tandem with us on Earth (Bekoff).

In disputing the notion that great apes are excessively violent, Bekoff often refers to the work of Jane Goodall and John Horgan. Ironically, Goodall's research is often used as confirmation of the violent nature of chimpanzees, especially since the observation of the Gombe Chimpanzee War of 1974-1978 (Barras). Steven Pinker is one of those scholars in question, and he enjoys shocking with gruesome detail: "if they [the chimpanzees] encounter a solitary male, or isolate one from a small group, they will go after him with murderous savagery. Two attackers will hold down the victim, and the others will beat

him, bite off his toes and genitals, tear flesh from his body, twist his limbs, drink his blood, or rip out his trachea” (Pinker, chap.2).

Nevertheless, Goodall comments that extreme aggression among chimpanzees is relatively rare, and examining the data on chimpanzee homicide Horgan finds that researchers typically only observe murder rates of one chimpanzee per every seven years (Bekoff). This finding is confirmed by Robert Sussman who similarly argues against the notion that humans are genetically programmed for violence and that they inherited this characteristic from their primate ancestors. He sees the prevalence of this belief as a cultural bias inherent to a West European and United States worldview and a reminiscent callback to the Eugenics Movement which simplified human behavior through the doctrine of biological determinism and fueled the racist ideologies of Nazi Germany.

Sussman further points out that, just as humans can be violent and selfish, they are additionally 'hardwired' to be pro-social and cooperative, and it is ultimately the environment and culture humans find themselves in that determines their variations in violent behavior, not biology (Sussman). In fact, the majority of people seem to have little predisposition to extreme violence, which is seen as repugnant, taboo, antisocial and can have serious mental impacts on both the victim and perpetrator. Humans do have an obvious inclination to prosocial and communal behavior however, such as cooperation, empathy, altruism, and nonviolent conflict resolution which are behaviors which support psychological well-being.

Therefore, it seems strange to suggest that people are by nature predisposed to violence and aggression. On the other hand, Pinker and other neo- Hobbesians would suggest exactly that and argue that the State has pacified us. Has civilization really made us more peaceful? The evidence does not seem to agree when it comes to our evolutionary primate cousins, but in order to fully answer the question we must now look at the

levels of war and violence in human prehistory and Indigenous societies.

In Pinker's book mentioned above, he compares the proportions of death from warfare by State-level societies and hunter-gatherers, hunter- horticulturalists and other tribal groups, and prehistoric archaeological sites to make the point that State societies have lower proportions of violence and are therefore more peaceful than other groups (Pinker 49). Nassim Nicholas Taleb and Pasquale Cirillo in their work: "The Decline of Violent Conflicts: What Do The Data Really Say?" eloquently explain the main difficulties with Pinker's use of statistics. The first problem they note is the "fat-tailedness" of violence (Taleb and Cirillo). What does this mean? Well, first consider the normal distribution (also called the bell curve or Gaussian distribution), which determines that the probability of getting something close to zero is most likely with probabilities dropping off as you get more positive or more negative. Something like the heights of people or the tossing of a coin to see if you get heads or tails would tend to follow this pattern of the normal distribution.

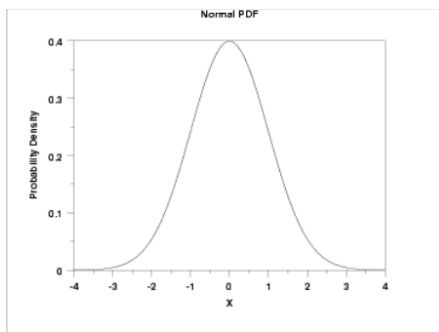


Fig. 1, National Institute for Standards and Technology. Engineering Statistics Handbook, U.S. Department of Commerce, n.d., Accessed on 16 December 2018. <https://www.itl.nist.gov/div898/handbook/eda/section3/eda3661.ht>

On the other hand, fat-tails follow a power-law distribution which is dominated by extreme events and outliers (Taleb and Cirillo). This contrasts with normal distributions which are dominated by normality and allow less variation from the norm. An example of a power-law distribution would be the fact that only 1% of the world's population owns  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the world's wealth or that the top 2% of Twitter users send out 50% of the tweets.

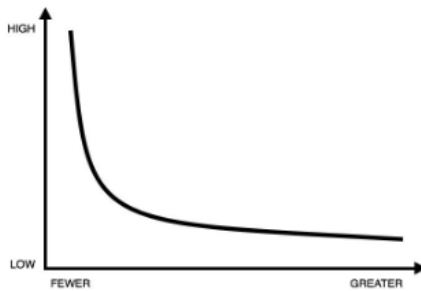


Fig. 2, Newquist, Russel. "A Power Law curve". Russel Newquist, 16 March 2015, Accessed on 16 December, 2018. <http://russellnewquist.com/2015/03/power-law/>

Pinker's data on the homicide levels of human prehistory and Indigenous people ignores the reality of fat-tails by mistaking the "head" for the "tail". For example, the category of hunter-horticulturalists and other tribal groups contains a mere ten tribes, five of them from New Guineau (Pinker, chap. 2). Since there are thousands of tribes in New Guineau, these five really only represent 0.5% of the total population (Correy). It is ludicrous to suggest that this small sample of cherry-picked cases shows anything about the average warfare among the native people of New Guineau. Pinker's cases of human prehistoric warfare are similarly biased, showing an inclination towards extreme and unusual cases while ignoring regions where war was widely or completely absent, as discussed by war anthropologist R. Brian Ferguson. Looking through Pinker's



twenty-one examples of prehistoric warfare, Ferguson finds four lacking in sufficient evidence of warfare and three more were eliminated due to duplications. This left fourteen cases which represented extreme outliers of lethal violence, unique for their antiquity and lethality and completely unrepresentative of the larger whole and 'norm' (Ferguson).

This distortion and manipulation is damaging to our perceptions of reality, especially since Pinker is such a well-known, influential and celebrated academic. This distortion, intended or not, is highly reminiscent of mass media which also thrives on the extremes produced by fat-tail variables such as war, crime, and natural disaster; as they say, "if it bleeds, it leads". Bekoff comments on the impact of media in propagating negative stereotypes about animals by objectifying them through inanimate pronouns, stressing their utilitarian ends, and even misrepresenting their conservation status which can undermine conservation efforts (Bekoff). Media often promotes discriminatory attitudes and even Pinker admonishes them in the preface of his book for presenting the world as more violent than it really is (Pinker 1).

One important influence of Pinker's views on Indigenous people is certainly the infamous anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon, whom Pinker references in his book and whose writings on the Yanomami tribe of the Amazon rainforest revived the conception of Indigenous people living in a state of constant warfare (Survival International). This is despite the fact that Chagnon's work has been widely criticized by fellow anthropologists who have spent far more time with the Yanomami than he has. In 2013, nineteen anthropologists signed a letter deploring his characterizations of the Yanomami (Bruce et al.). During the same time a lay missionary who observed and lived with the Yanomami for nearly 50 years by the name of Carlo Zacquini commented, "The harm from a [Yanomami] 'war' is far less than the harm caused by flu" (Zacquini).

Contrary to the implications of Pinker's thesis and the idea of authoritarian- induced peace advocated by Thomas Hobbes, Indigenous people are not so much more violent, and from their point of view the State often brings them exponentially more violence than they had ever known. Consider the reply of a Dani/Lani tribal leader Benny Wenda on the assertion by Jared Diamond that the Indonesian government saved them from a cycle of violence: "Indonesia illegally occupied our country in 1963 and that is when the massacres really started everywhere in West Papua...they brought violence to us like we had never known before – they have murdered, raped and imprisoned my people and they have stolen our land to make themselves rich. I remember in 1977 when Indonesia started a war...They killed thousands of people, I saw my people being murdered by Indonesian soldiers and my own Auntie was raped in front of my eyes. Indonesia told the world that this was 'tribal war' – they tried to pretend that it was us that was violent and not them – this book is doing the same" (Wenda).

A more critical eye needs to be turned to the state of civilization today as far as to the levels of violence that actually perpetuate in our societies. For example, our civilization has institutionalized environmental violence and environmental degradation and destruction; does this need to be added to the tallies? Furthermore, is it helpful to spread the belief that we are more peaceful than those "savage Indians" if we bring back human rights to the 15th century? After all, the rhetoric by Pinker, Diamond and Chagnon is reminiscent of the excuses held by those who led the 'pacification' (read genocide) of American Indigenous people. If the evidence they use to build their claims is indeed as faulty as I have shown here, then that does brighten our view of nonhuman animals and Indigenous people, but let that not be an excuse to romanticize. Most societies are violent in some degree and this paper is not trying to downplay that fact; simply we need to ask ourselves: to what degree? It should also be said that if we wish to strive for further

peace in our world then further studies into human nature should focus more on both animal and humans propensities for peace and what contributes to their virtuous nature.

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Daniel Calahorra-Oliart

## Justice and Genocide

The crime of genocide is different from other crimes against humanity in that its intention is to destroy a specific group, which could be national, ethnic or religious, as defined by the UN Genocide Convention. A genocide could be a massacre of hundreds of thousands, but it could also be less bloody destruction of a culture. It could include several perpetrators or a handful of opportunistic organizers. The varying forms of genocide make the pursuit of justice a unique phenomenon in international law. In the past twenty-five years, international tribunals, national courts, and local ad-hoc courts have dealt with cases of genocide in different ways. The radical differences portray the need for case-by-case adaptation of the effort to bring the perpetrators to justice. The international community should not look for a single solution to the prosecution of genocide. Rather, every case should be closely studied, taking into account the number of perpetrators, victims, and *modus operandi*, to more effectively bring those responsible to court.

In the general sense, achieving justice for the crime of genocide presents several challenges. The scope of the crime of genocide requires a large-scale organized effort and a specific intent. Hence, its perpetrators are almost always members of an army or a government with numerous people under their power. One of the biggest challenges for international justice is the elusiveness of the suspects and the need for international cooperation. These people are usually under the protection of a nation and its institutions. General Ratko Mladic of the Bosnian Serb army had both juridic protection from the Bosnian Serbs and from the president of Serbia. To bring him to trial, the international community needed the collaboration of the Serbian government. This was only possible because the Serbs lost the war and were interested in participating in the global

community, particularly the European Union. In contrast, Omar al-Bashir, president of Sudan since 1993, was charged with genocide in 2008, but the authorities of Sudan (under his control) have so far refused to cooperate with international justice efforts.

The international tribunals for former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (ICTY and ICTR), as well as the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), don't have police powers. There's no such thing as an international police. Every effort to bring an international criminal to justice has to be made by sovereign states, without the intervention of other organizations or nations. Thus, these courts are restrained by their need for neutrality. However, neutrality is also a necessary condition for the subsistence of the courts. Due to the need for international cooperation, every country involved has to perceive the court as neutral. Otherwise, nations would have an effective political excuse for refusing to collaborate. Neutrality becomes both a requirement and an obstacle in the pursuit of international justice. These courts rely on international cooperation while also encouraging international pressure. Economic and political pressure had a big impact in persuading Serbia to bring Mladic to The Hague: "Serbia's government has said that its main priority is to accelerate the country on the path towards European integration" (Economist, Karadzic, 4). Political and economic isolation is an effective encouragement to cooperate with international justice efforts.

The courts' overarching goal is to "end any notion of impunity for the chief perpetrators of atrocities - and so help deter future ones" (Economist, Milosevic, 2). If they are to erase impunity and deter future genocidaires, they cannot fail to bring the suspects to court. However, accountability and justice are not always the same thing. It's hard not to see the creation of these tribunals as coming from the international community's embarrassment to prevent the atrocities in the first place. If a handful of political and military leaders organize genocide and

kill hundreds of thousands, even if they get sentenced to life in prison, it still feels painfully far from just. The judicial deterrence of accountability is far less effective than an international military intervention to save lives when the crimes are just getting underway. Yet, after the tragedy occurs, a truly neutral verdict of guilt or innocence helps create a coherent narrative. During the Cambodian genocide, the Khmer Rouge still held a seat in the UN and, being in the midst of the Cold War, the Western powers preferred supporting a genocidal government than a communist one. A fair trial for the leaders of the Khmer Rouge helped in the search for historical truth: “the lack of historical knowledge has made it easy for Cambodians to continue to believe that the root causes of the crimes are basically to be found in outside interferences ... The tribunal might be an opportunity to come to a more honest assessment of the country’s own history ... to acknowledge the fact that Khmer killed Khmer in that time, without being remote-controlled by outside powers and at least in part driven by extreme Cambodian nationalism” (Menzel, 226). In this sense, the tribunals can help not only to bring justice but to have a positive influence on the shaping of the victims’ future.

Another positive influence that the pursuit of justice can help create is the conditions for effective long-term security. This is especially true in ethnic conflicts, particularly because the ethnicity under attack (likely already a minority before the conflict occurs) is further diminished and in danger of new attacks. The courts then have the opportunity to bring about reconciliation and healing. In Rwanda, the government believes that this requires that “perpetrators be brought to account for their wrongdoing as quickly as possible” (Corey and Joireman, 82). However, a challenge to these efforts is the so-called “victor’s justice”. The ICTR, the national courts in Rwanda, and the local gacaca courts have as their focus the crimes committed by the Hutu genocidaires and exclude the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the Tutsi Rwandan

Patriotic Front, which was the victor of the conflict. Corey and Joireman argue that the gacaca courts, which are faster and simpler than the national courts and the ICTR, should charge the RPF as well to break the cycle of ethnic violence amongst the Tutsi and the Hutu and deliver true justice and not just vengeance. However, the gacaca courts were established as a result from the need to try thousands of perpetrators in a reasonable amount of time (Corey and Joireman estimate that without the help of the local gacaca courts, the national tribunals would take over 200 years to try all the accused). Therefore, the courts are only responsible for the crimes of genocide, with which only Hutu are charged. The national courts and the international tribunals should have the responsibility to charge the Tutsi RPF leaders with war crimes and crimes against humanity, and thus not fall into delivering only victor's justice.

The ICTY faced a similar challenge when, after insistence from critics, they investigated the bombing of civilians by NATO. The tribunal "reported that civilians were killed, but that they received no cooperation from NATO and were unable to find war crimes" (Times, Mladic Trial, 14). The international community must put more pressure on NATO to cooperate with the tribunal so that it can effectively be just. Otherwise, NATO is undermining the neutrality that is a necessary condition for the subsistence and effectiveness of international law.



*Tunis, Tunisia*

Bosba Panh



Hongbo Cai

## On Equality with God

In the shining galaxy of all the theologians in the history of Christianity, the mystic theologian Meister Eckart is probably one of the most radical figures who altered Roman Catholic theological models in the late 13th and early 14th century. Unlike Thomas Aquinas, the representative of scholastic teaching, Eckhart does not conform to established interpretations of Scripture developed by previous authoritative thinkers. His provocative doctrines not only challenge the doctrines of the Catholic Church regarding the human's subordinate position relative to God, but also redefine the relation between faith and reason. As we will see, in his Sermons 1, 48, and 52, faith no longer consists of man pursuing God through endeavors like interpreting Scripture, but rather of uniting man with God Himself through the annihilation of perception and comprehension. This annihilation compels God to unite with the human soul, which therefore becomes equal to God. Holding the belief that the "core" of the soul has the capability of becoming inhabited by God, as well as of achieving deification, Eckhart develops the radical claim that only by negating human reason—which is, in his view, tied to material world—can we attain the eternal union with divinity.

In Sermon 1, Eckhart distinguishes himself from scholastic theologians with his specific understanding of the relationship between reason and faith. He clearly separates reason from faith by arguing that the birth of Christ, by which he implies the union of our souls with God, directly takes place in the "core" of our souls, without any sensual or rational assistance. He claims that, to enter the core, one must withdraw and transcend all mediating agents which are derived from reason. In his view, we cannot apprehend divine truth through the senses, through rational speculation or investigation, or through anything within the range of human capability. For reason always depends on

agents which merely bring us the multiplicity of created world, thus it remains unable to provide man with any knowledge of divinity. To explain this, he writes that "Whatever the soul does, it does through agents. It understands by means of intelligence. If it remembers, it does so by means of memory...the power of sight can be effectuated only through the eyes, for otherwise the soul has no means of vision" (Eckhart, Sermon 1, 63). On this basis, he concludes that rationality is irrelevant to the "core" of the soul, as we see when he asserts that "the (soul's) results are achieved through an intermediary and not within its own essence" (Eckhart, Sermon 1, 63). Therefore, with respect to divine truth, Eckhart states that human reason can never attain knowledge or form any mental representation of God.

Eckhart further affirms God to be an existence beyond all contingent knowledge. Eckhart explains that, while human reason apprehends outward objects, it creates a corresponding idea or likeness, but that reason is unable to reach God who transcends all materiality. For ideas only represent aspects of objects, while union with God involves divine participation. If we perceive God through agents of the soul much the same way we perceive any other external objects, the soul does not truly approach and unite with God; rather, it constructs an artificial idea of Him. For Eckhart, the soul forms ideas which manifest subjective images received by senses. He writes that "agents of the soul deal only in ideas, taking things and naming them" (Sermon 1, 67), "then bear them back again into the self" (Sermon 1, 64). Given this, Eckhart explains that rational ideas limit the soul from providing any knowledge of God. He asserts that "No idea represents or signifies itself. It always points to something else, of which it is the symbol" (Eckhart, Sermon 1, 65). If ideas play a role in understanding God, that God must be a mental representation that is projected by human reason instead of God Himself. Therefore, the way to uniting with the divine Being cannot only depend on human cognition, because

it belongs to the world of generation and corruption and, as a result, exists contingently.

According to Eckhart, man achieves union with God in the core of his soul, where no rationality or idea has a place. He emphasizes that God does not belong to the world of transitory motion and is not accessible through rational knowledge, for He represents an eternal being, whereas the human soul only knows finite objects through its agents. He excludes what pertains to the multiplicity of rational concepts, then asserts the "core" to be the exclusive dwelling where the union with the divine takes place, since the "core" serves no worldly function and exists outside of time. When he makes this claim, he declares that "In Being, there is no action and, therefore, there is none in the soul's essence. In that core is the central silence, the pure peace, and abode of heavenly birth" (Eckhart, Sermon 1, 63). Because the "core" does not involve rational knowledge or rational agents, it has no communication with external objects. By negating reason, one creates a vacancy where divine Being can dwell. Furthermore, Eckhart claims that there are other characteristics of the "core" that make it the abode for heavenly birth. He places emphasis on the emptiness of the "core", as we find in Sermon 1 where he writes that, "An idea, so received, necessarily comes in from outside, through the senses. Thus, the soul knows about everything but itself... for lack of means" (Eckhart, Sermon 1, 64). Here, the "core" is free of any corruption that might interrupt or limit our process of approaching God. The "core," which is pure, hollow, and without the act of instrumentalities and ideas, is best suited for the divine inhabitation, for God Himself too, is pure and everlasting.

For Eckhart, attaining detachment (or spiritual poverty), in which we withdraw every possible agent or idea, represents the ultimate preparation for the divine birth. In Sermon 1 and Sermon 52, Eckhart defines detachment as God entering the "core" of the soul without external corruption, as we see when

he describes this occurrence: "a light (in the soul) comprehends God without a medium, uncovered, naked, as he is in himself, and this comprehension is to be understood as happening when the birth takes place" (Eckhart, Sermon 48, 198). Here, to reach the utterance of God's word, meaning to comprehend His purity and unity, Eckhart suggests that we must detach ourselves from all instrumentality and likeness, writing that "The more you can withdraw the agents of your soul and forget things and the ideas you have received hitherto, the nearer you are and the more sensitive to it you will be" (Sermon 1, 65-66). Thus, by gazing inward to the simple silence within the core, we are ignorant of our rational and sensory faculties, and from any exterior creature. In the "core" of the soul, we remain peaceful and stand immovable regardless of whatever incident may occur. That is partly the meaning of "detachment".

The highest degree of detachment (or spiritual poverty) can be attained by annihilating the rational self and its agents, but also requires eliminating the concept of God himself. What distinguishes Eckhart from other theologians such as Thomas Aquinas is the way he develops his unique doctrine of rejoicing with God through a birth of His Son within the "core" of soul. Given this, he implies that we become so united to God that the distinction between the human soul and God vanishes. If the relationship between the human soul and God remains a subject-object relation, we cannot truly elevate ourselves and approach the divine Being. With this contentious claim, Eckhart writes that "when I flowed out from God, all things said: 'God is.'" (Sermon 52, 203), which means that we form an idea of God. In his view, this cannot make us blessed, for when the soul is apart from God, it is subordinated to Him by human rationality and ideas. Eckhart further says "when I received my created being, then I had a 'God,' for before there were any creatures, God was not 'God' in the creatures, but was 'God' in himself" (Sermon 52, 200). In this context, he argues that only by eliminating the idea and word of "God" can we turn inward

to the "core" and become filled with his grace. Why would one call God "God" if the soul becomes identical to God through divine grace? Therefore, we have no need for the term "God" any longer since we do not perceive Him through a rational idea, but rather by being inhabited by His spirit. Eckhart writes that God "has perfect insight into Himself and knows Himself up and down, through and through" (Sermon 1, 65), and that we participate in God's insight after we enter the "core." As a result, when we abandon the word "God," we simultaneously abandon mortal life, since we have left our identities as creatures behind, and share equality with divine Being. By achieving this, one no longer remains in time, but rather becomes "what I am, what I was and what I shall remain" (Eckhart, Sermon 52, 203), namely, the life everlasting,

According to Eckhart, detachment compels God to enter the "core" of the soul. In *On Detachment*, he asserts that the heavenly birth within the "core" naturally rises from spiritual poverty (or detachment), since by detachment we turn ourselves towards the state in which the divinity dwells. Explaining this, Eckhart writes that "everything longs to achieve its own natural place. Now God's own natural place is unity and purity, and that comes from detachment" (*On Detachment*, 286). Thus, Eckhart suggests that we have assurance of rejoicing with God by achieving detachment, in which we compel God to unite Himself to us. In the "core" of the soul, agents annihilated, rationality dismissed, even the idea of God eliminated, we remain pure, simple and formless. In consequence, God will devote himself to our deification, as Eckhart concludes that "God cannot do more for the spirit than to give himself to it... the man... is so carried into eternity" (*On Detachment*, 288).

Meister Eckhart relocates philosophy in a new context. He develops some of Aquinas' ideas according to which, as we see in *The Five Ways*, God exists as a substance beyond contingent matters. However, Eckhart represents a radical departure from scholastic philosophy and theology. Appearing as the figure of a mystic preacher, Eckhart negates the function of human reason in terms of salvation, and he proposes withdrawing from created world in order to enter the highest divine ignorance.

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*Hear Here! 2019*



*Fenway Sky, Boston, USA*

Bosba Panh



Anonymous

## Miscommunications

He vaporized out of thin air.

At least, it seemed that way at first. The boy walking towards her was just a random passerby, until he wasn't, and then he was looking at her.

It was interesting, really, the way he studied her as if he was scared she would notice him. But when she finally looked up, blinked once, and broke into a smile, his mask crumbled haltingly, and his smile matched hers and grew.

"I look so bad," she said, laughing softly and covering half her face with her sleeve. She knew it didn't matter, yet it did, in the strangest of ways. If his feelings were genuine, they wouldn't be hindered even if she grew a third arm and started speaking in another language. But she wanted to look her best and be her best when she saw him, a feeling she had never quite encountered before.

When she saw an opportunity to care for him, she took it, in an envelope kind of way where she cared for tens of hundreds of people just so she could have an excuse to do something for him. No matter how many people thanked her or praised her, the only reaction she truly remembered was his.

As he met her gaze, a tender smile spread across his face, and a myriad of emotions flitted between the two of them.

I like you.

She almost couldn't maintain eye contact with the overpowering sentiment that spoke through his wordless gaze.

I know.

"You look fine," he uttered, but it was almost as if he hadn't spoken at all.

I know that you know.

"I thought you were studying abroad in London?" she asked, coughing loudly into her sleeve. It was a bad habit she had picked up recently. Whenever she got too excited or involved in something, she would start hacking away as if she were attempting to drain some of the excess emotion that way.

I know that you know that I know.

"London?" he replied, his eyebrows shooting up slightly, "Where did you hear that?"

That's how I feel. I'm sorry you don't feel the same way.

"I don't know," she said, and for a moment wondered if she'd made it up. She swiveled as the cars behind them began to honk cacophonously.

I know that you know that I know that you like me. But what would you do if you knew I liked you, too?

Her last thought was carried away into the sound of the car horns which seemed to multiply in response to one another.

Daniel Rosenberg

## Perpetuated Privilege in Conceptualized Success

Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers* received national recognition following its release in the fall of 2008. Gladwell captured the attention of millions, with a book democratizing the ideas of the social sciences. But what did that success mean? I remember the book's release well. It dominated conversation. My father, my mother, my teachers and friends were elated by this book that told them work is meaningful, but chance is important too. For every person who felt they were never given a shot at "success" the book had an answer, and for every hard working "successful" person, an affirmation. The world's dinner tables and break rooms were flooded with chatter over the "10,000 hour rule." Gladwell's book was "the it," the hype. By all his standards, Gladwell's book was a "success."

But Gladwell's obsession with success failed to appropriately define the term. His measurement of the word remains an unreasonable obsession with fame and wealth. These are the values that reap long term reward, claims the subtext of his every narrow example. Mozart, Bill Joy, The Beatles, and Bill Gates; Vanderbilt, Buffet, Carnegie, and Rockefeller all share financial and popular "success" (Gladwell 35, 40, 47, 50, 62). Though his examples range in occupation from musicians to financiers, differences in professional fields need not matter, since their successes live in the uniform infamy of namesake. His evidence for "mastery" does not stretch beyond vast commercial success, and therefore does not vary based upon occupation. Gladwell's adornment for this warped form of success proves misguided. By all his own measurements, Gladwell's book was "successful," but the hype came with the massive presumption that hard work has any influence over his

singular definition of achievement. In this regard, *Outliers* was a failure. Privilege alone leads to fame and celebrity.

For our purposes, we will use Gladwell's version of success to assess the interplay of work, talent and privilege. Many forms of success see their origins outside of privilege. People often achieve success within their own measurement of the construct. Success is vastly personal. Many successful individuals, by Gladwell's standards, also attain personal success. Often successful people exhibit talent and hard work, too. Those qualities may contribute to increased attention, however, their public achievements do not arise from those qualities. Though effort and talent may contribute to success, they prove irrelevant in the face of the constructs core determinant: privilege.

The year *Outliers* saw publication, I was ten. My sister, Rachel, had received her acceptance from Stanford. Since the book had gained considerable traction, Stanford chose *Outliers* as the required reading for their incoming undergraduate class, and Gladwell accepted an invitation to speak at invocation. I had no context for the book, and its principles floated about my household in fragments. I remember one afternoon in the summer, Rachel lay on the patio flipping through pages of the book. Though she started her education in public school, my parents moved her to a private elementary school. Her original class spent one week on each letter of the alphabet, and Rachel could already read. After that, we all attended private elementary and preschool. Our parents read to us constantly, and I remember connecting the dots on my own copy of *The Foot Book* at age four.

Rachel read *Outliers* in silence, as the Santa Catalina Mountains looked down on her focused demeanor. Looking back, I'm in awe of the property where we grew up. It was quieter outside than inside, save for the birds. I could sing tunes like "Swing, Swing" by the All American Rejects to no one's

displeasure. It was a creative sandbox; a place where we could realize any whim with no worldly limitation.

I asked Rachel, "Is that the 10,000 hours book?" "Yeah Dan." "You believe that?" "Hardly! I got into Stanford and I spent less than 10,000 hours applying."

Did Rachel accumulate a slew of accomplishments that made her an attractive candidate? Sure. She won tennis competitions, and spoke fluent Spanish, volunteered in Panama, served as president of Latin Club. But those were the expectations of a lifestyle she knew. She spent no time fussing about how she'd pay for a new racket, nor did she struggle to focus on her school work. Rachel's efforts were focused. All the doors were open, and she walked through them. The privileges of a wealthy life made her efforts possible. Advantage socialized her, and she spoke the cultural language in which Stanford shared interest. She wrote her college applications with the aid of the best college counselor money could buy. Rachel knew her ivy acceptance was well earned, but it was also clear to her that circumstances eclipsed her efforts, that she was not solely responsible for her achievements, that she enjoyed privilege.

I wondered about this question through my gap year: How much of my own success might I attribute to myself, how much to privilege? I fled a year of emotional mutilation at Oberlin. Oberlin assumed a self-deprecating emphasis on privilege. Social capital positively correlated with societal oppression, and talent held no relevance in the face of privilege. This lecture in the role of privilege in my own life, though overemphasized, confronted me with the idea that my success was not my doing. Indoctrinated by principles of privilege related guilt, I left the school unhappy, with no confidence, direction, self-understanding, or transfer acceptances. That year our home sold, my mother moved, my father and I fought, and I felt alone. I continued to surf my wave of socialized privilege, but I felt the

jagged cold stone of rock bottom. In every action I saw how advantage had influenced my success.

I cried with an old singing teacher whose love I'd gained after years of paid lessons. I interviewed for AmeriCorps on my year-old Apple computer, a high school graduation gift. I piled everything I owned into the blue Honda Element my parents bought me at sixteen. I drove thirteen hours into Denver, and stayed in my heiress aunt's Highlands Ranch home for the month that I searched for an apartment. My father cosigned a lease with me and fronted some cash. I wanted to explore some fiscal responsibility, and took a few different service jobs. I afforded my expenses, and saved money in the solitude of a new city where gentrification, homelessness and drug addiction were more visible than anywhere I'd lived.

My father sent me a piano, with which I fell in love with music again. My parents paid for lessons, for applications, for recordings, for college counseling, and audition travel... again. I sang the music, I wrote the essays, I knew my relative pain, and I saw the success of acceptance. Without the privilege of wealth, though, I realized neither my talent nor my efforts would have mattered. I had access to the academic world of music because I could afford it. That keyboard was a consolation gift from a father to his son, whom he barely recognized. The keyboard saved my life from passionless monotony, and it saved my life.

Beyond the privileges I've known that allow my musical training, I recognize that a passion and innate talent for the practice lives within me. "You're so musical" and "great timing" are comments I've read over and over on judge sheets for competitive auditions. Music somehow is something I understand. Inexplicably, I've known how to emphasize certain words, care for different phrases, and time breath in a way that intensifies musical arguments. When I first auditioned for the Tucson Arizona Boy's Chorus, I was a young soprano with no musical training. The director, Julian Ackerley, asked me,

“Where have you been?” Singing was a skill in which I found a fluency that moved other people. I love to entertain people, to manipulate emotions, to commit audiences to a shared fiction. I’ve loved the attention drawn by my talent. The more praise I received, the more effort I contributed to music. Talent, passion, affirmation, effort: these were the factors that landed me personal success in the musical realm. I’ve debuted on Broadway, won dozens of competitions, and received acceptances from fifteen of the most elite musical institutions in the United States. These accomplishments represent an acclaim among community members that signal the beginnings of a successful career. Talent and hard-work contributed to this success, however, these successes were possibilities born out of a privileged upbringing. The talent, the efforts, those I can claim, but the time, the money, the love, the support, these are the factors that made room for my blooming talents. Though I concede that other factors have influence on societal acclaim, I maintain that without a base level of privilege, talent and effort have no chance to contribute to a person’s perceived success.

I appreciate the value that labor and talent add, but disagree that they size up to the role of privilege in the pursuit of success. Success requires a basic level of advantage. In the absence of this advantage, talent and effort have no influence, overshadowed by a cloud of onerous struggle. I am fascinated when musicians who attend conservatories take full responsibility for their success. Conservatories of music prove inaccessible to individuals without privileged socializations. Singers require extensive classical training within a specific technical standard, and other musicians demand costly instruments. The classical music scene panders to wealth and privilege. It plays on conservative sympathy for antique sentiment. It is a culture that alludes to distant cultural climates with which only the educated can engage. To gain acceptance to a musical institution evidences a certain degree of privilege,

and acceptance perpetuates privilege on those within the conservatory network.

Gladwell too nods to the contribution of privilege within his conceptualized success, but underemphasizes its importance. *Outliers* interprets Bill Joy's massive commercial success in software. Gladwell wrote, "Bill Joy was Brilliant. He wanted to learn. That was a big part of it. But before he could become an expert, someone had to give him the opportunity to learn how to be an expert" (46). Gladwell suggests that the access Joy gained to state-of-the-art computers at University of Michigan allowed for his success, a major reservation on admirable qualities such as brilliance, and a drive to learn. Gladwell, in lieu of the term privilege, uses access to encompass both socio-economic advantage and chance. The Beatles, he notes, gained access to thousands of hours of practice thanks to a coincidental gig they landed playing nonstop shows in an Italian strip club (Gladwell 49). The definition of privilege that precludes the influence of talent and effort includes accidents and coincidence. In some cases, luck provides the advantageous ground from which masters blossom. Though Gladwell's argument around access remains weak in comparison to its full significance, it echoes the idea that privilege plays a role in the kind of success that Gladwell appreciates.

Other reviews of the literature on talent and training leave out any consideration of privilege. Ericsson and Pool make a cherry picked argument that critics tore to pieces. The psychologists detest the idea that predetermined factors play a role in individual success. Their rebuke includes an admitted fear for excuse-making related to a blame on any genetic factor that "'manifests itself in all sorts of 'I can't' or 'I'm not' statements'" (Hambrick). Though Ericsson did not specifically address privilege in regard to success, his distaste for the talent argument's appealing influence on 'unsuccessful' individuals speaks to a mindset devoid of a comprehensive understanding of life within the social hierarchy. The value-driven



pseudoscientific argument Ericsson lays out fails not only to exemplify an acceptance of basic phenotypical variation, but also leaves out contradictory evidence within the research. A *Scientific American* review of Ericsson's book, *Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise*, challenges a slew of omissions in the book (Hambrick). Interpretations of success that disregard predetermined factors miss the mark.

Talent and effort present profound value for the person focused on personal success. However, the social sciences discussion on success focuses on a short sighted definition of the word. That definition refers to an arrogant quantifiable success that commonly characterizes white men. Presumably, white men do not include the only individuals capable of talent and hard work. The idea that individuals with wealth and fame may assume full responsibility for their success demonstrates naiveté. The base level of privilege required to achieve success deserves irrevocable emphasis. Conservative optimism that exists in a sheltered, identity-blind utopia propagandizes a value set concerning success that ignores the reality of advantage and disadvantage. Failure, poverty, and loss of potential cannot be blamed upon individuals, but instead must be attributed to a system that presumes the worst of the masses, and reinforces self-blame. The public deserves basic privileges so that a fair competition of talent and effort can settle the "success" argument, unobscured by the widespread disadvantage challenging so many talented, hard-working individuals.

## Works Cited

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*Bloom I, Boston, MA*

Bosba Panh

Darynn Dean

## Toy Chest

Momma always told me to put my toys back in the chest  
But like you, I couldn't find a place for them  
The floor suited them well  
They lay scattered  
comfortably  
Resting on the carpet until I was  
Ready  
I resisted  
the clean-up  
That displaced all of my wildest fantasies and  
Sterilized my dreams  
The reality  
that Ken would leave Barbie and  
pursue other dolls  
and  
the batteries would run out of  
my aardvark  
and  
My white unicorn would become  
a lurid yellow color.  
Fading were the memories that  
excited me enough to play house  
And squeal at the thought of  
holy matrimony  
I sat for a while  
Still and quiet  
succumbing slowly  
To the truth of child's play

Bronson Kelly

## On Standby

*This train will be delayed for ten minutes due to a disabled train...*

His heart clenched. He didn't have ten minutes to spare. The concert started in about ten minutes. His eyes darted around the crowded platform. A plump, elderly lady shoved him to the side, moving towards the front of the train.

"I have to get to the next stop," she told the driver emphatically, "Is there any way you can just drive?"

For a moment, he wasn't sure if he had spoken or if somehow his subconscious had morphed into an old lady. The passengers murmured amongst themselves in response to her oblivion, and he felt the pang of guilt as if he was the one who had spoken.

Think, think. He pulled out his phone clumsily, knocking his bag into the man behind him.

"Sorry," he muttered, which earned him a cold stare of acknowledgment.

He opened the shared ride app on his phone and requested a ride without even waiting for the price to pop up.

"Hurry, hurry, hurry," he whispered under his breath, as he pushed his way as gently as he could in his frantic state towards the front of the car. He slipped off the train, checking his phone urgently as he ran. He almost collided with the crowd as he moved towards the exit, and he threw hasty apologies their way. He always tended to become a different person when he was in a rush. His morals went out the window, and he found himself struggling to be a kind and polite member of society. The frenzy unnerved him, and he hated walking, which was minimal compared to how much he hated running.

Why are you doing this? An unwelcome thought nagged within him, and as his lungs heaved and his legs screamed for help (yes, pathetic, but true), he couldn't help but give into it for a split second.

Then her face popped into his mind, and the way his heart had leaped when he first received the email.

Dear friends, it had read, I will be playing in a concert this coming weekend at Tuckerman Hall. I know it's been a while since I've been in touch with a lot of you, but I would love to see you there and possibly catch up afterward! Your presence itself would mean so much to me.

He couldn't tell if she had purposefully sent him the message. It was probably an old mailing list, something she didn't even bother checking before hitting the mass send button.

His app finally loaded. A text popped in, informing him that Joachim would be here to pick him up in three minutes. He tried not to let the panic set in. Nine minutes to seven o'clock. Would he make it? He desperately hoped she wasn't the first to play. Concerts didn't normally start on time, did they?

The car finally arrived after what seemed like far longer than three minutes. He noticed his hand was shaking wildly under the weight of his phone, and he wondered if it was from the anticipation of showing his face at her concert, or perhaps the fact that he had just probably exhausted his monthly quota of running.

His mind raced as he stumbled into the car and mumbled a hello to the driver. Should he say hi? Would she be happy to see him?

He tried to put himself into her shoes, and imagine how he would feel if she showed up to any of his events. He got goosebumps just thinking about it, and couldn't avoid the giddy smile that spread across his face.

"Is this okay?" the driver's coarse voice drove him out of his mind's ramblings.

"Oh – yes," he answered, "This is perfect. Thank you." He glanced quickly at his watch. Seven o'clock. No!

He tumbled out of the car and raced towards the entrance of the hall, tripping over his shoes a few times before finally making it inside.

"Ticket, please?" the usher asked, obviously bored and completely not entertained by his job.

"Oh!" He dug in his pant pocket and pulled out the wrinkled piece of paper he'd printed the night before, and the usher scanned it methodically.

He tore towards the double doors once he was approved, and slipped into the venue. The lights had already been dimmed, and the stage was lit with looming lights from above, highlighting the glossy, gorgeous grand piano standing victoriously in the center. His heart leaped a little. He found a seat near the back and tried to sink in as low as possible as if he wasn't allowed to be here. Which he couldn't, for the life of him, figure out if he was. Had she really meant to send him the –

He was interrupted by the pounding of the applause around him, and his hands automatically joined them. His eyes moved to the stage, and then she entered. She was wearing a long, baby blue gown accentuated with sequins along the waist and skirt areas. She had to be wearing heels, because her figure was long and elegant, not like the little version of her he remembered. She turned to the audience and smiled, a reserved smile, not like the dazzling smile he thought about often (even in his dreams. Perhaps it was too embellished in his mind) and took a small bow.

Then she seated herself at the piano, and the crowds hushed. An anticipatory silence covered the room, and he wondered if he should hold his breath. Someone coughed near

the front, and he sent a dagger-like glare their way, before shaking his head almost imperceptibly and reminding himself to be a proper human.

Her first note rang loud and clear. It sang past the hundreds of people seated in the hall and reached him, bringing him into her world. To him, it was almost as if he was playing just for her, and he was the only one seated in the audience. Perhaps it was just the joy of seeing her again or the wonderful acoustics of the hall, but he felt he had never heard Beethoven in such a magical and transformative way. Two hearts, pounding for one another amidst the packed music hall. He wondered if anyone else could feel it. He envisioned an invisible thread connecting the two of them, aligning their worlds and making all the timing and miscommunication and everything right between them again.

She finished far too quickly, leaving him hanging in the middle of his hopes and daydreams. His what-if's and if-only's and whatever else he had managed to conjure while she was playing. He knew she wasn't aware that he was in the audience, watching her among all the others who had crowded into the space to hear her perform. Would it have made a difference?

He watched wistfully as she walked off the stage, smiling at someone who opened the door for her, a glimpse of the dazzling smile that was ingrained into his mind. It was only when the door closed behind her that he realized that he had forgotten to applaud.

\* \* \*

"Good job!" Ethan whispered as he closed the door behind her.

"Thank you." She beamed, still driven from the adrenaline of being on stage and performing in front of so many people. The glow of the stage lights was still imprinted in her mind, and the wonderful rush she felt as she exited backstage enveloped her.



It was normal for her, another day in the life of a performer. Yet somehow, her heart felt oddly warm as she stepped out of the darkness into the green room.

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