



# LABY RINTH

**COLLEGE OF SAN MATEO • THE WRITERS PROJECT**

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The CSM Honors Project faculty, staff, and students, with special thanks to David Laderman, for their continued support of our club and our vision, our inspiring club advisors, Sarah Mangin and Keira Travis, the always encouraging ASCSM, and the students who submitted their work to be considered for this publication.

We want to thank you for reading our new issue of Labyrinth and hope that this publication continues to inspire you.

Keep writing. Keep learning. Keep creating.



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# Letter from the Editor

As the world continues to seek a sense of normalcy from the turbulence that seems never ending, the students of Canada, Skyline, and the College of San Mateo carry over the unique opportunity provided through Writers Project to fill the pages of Labyrinth with their own literary and artistic creations each semester. This special opportunity serves both students and the SMCCD community as a whole, as it allows for connection and exposure on a scale beyond all three campuses.

When I first joined Writers Project it was towards the end of the fall semester, but despite this, I was still enthusiastically taken in, and it was then where I quickly learned exactly what Writers Project aims to be. Writers Project aims to be an extension of students, to act as a tool for students to showcase their passions and their capabilities to the masses—that’s what ultimately moved me to become a member of Writers Project. Since my first semester, I was graciously provided the opportunity to fill the role of Editor-in-Chief, where I later oversaw the club function as well as the creation of the 14th edition of Labyrinth. Such an opportunity allowed me to learn so much about the work that goes into soliciting, creating, and publishing the gem that is Labyrinth.

Throughout my time in Writers Project, I have developed a sense of responsibility and community beyond what I came into CSM with. Now, as I look onward to the future of Labyrinth, I’m filled with excitement as we continue to foster an outlet for the talent and artistry that makes SMCCD the special. I extend my deepest gratitude to our club advisors, Sarah Mangin, Keira Travis, and David Laderman for there continued support and guidance, and to all the members who diligently pushed to complete this edition, I cannot thank you enough.

- Lesieli Petelo



# Reflections



## Childhood Memories

Robert Ennis Jr.

Childhood is a fleeting memory  
Oh how I miss it so,  
To the elementary school where I made memories  
Oh how I miss it so,  
To the old chair where my GrandFather used to sit  
Oh how I miss it so,  
To the old tree where I met with friends  
Oh how I miss it so,  
To my old friends for which I met  
Oh how I miss them so,  
To the Wii games I used to play with my siblings  
Oh how I miss them so,  
To the memories of fun and play  
Oh how I miss them so..

Life can be like a fleeting memory because we don't know where it will go.  
It passes on like seasons changing, from spring to winter snow.

Life back then felt simple,  
No worries or fears of time,  
No thoughts to keep you up at night,  
No thing that comes to mind,  
No homework to miss out on,  
or colleges to impress,  
Just focusing on the good times,  
the present moment can take a rest.





Amerikanische Ente mit breitem Schnabef.

Art by: Eunkyung Han

# Trailblazers

Diana Castro

I am from  
Tragic stories, but resilient people  
Sun-damaged skin, but hardworking hands  
Soft words with hidden steel

Loving and joyful  
Constantly growing and leaving the past behind

But as a child, it felt unfair to be asked to do so much.  
The quiet expectation to do great, to go beyond the path previously  
walked

by my *abue* and my mom.  
But then I remember, it comes from love

The anticipation  
To graduate, create, and rise  
From the ashes of a desperate past, to lush new grounds  
It's not a burden, to be asked  
To walk beyond our family's past.

But how can I rise, when I'm tied down  
By the realities of this life?  
Losing family, closing doors  
Opportunities bleeding through the floor.



Struggling to deal with the word "income" in an uncertain time,  
Feeling guilty to be worried about money when an aunt just died.

Guilt and worry,  
Hand in hand,  
Fracturing my thoughts.  
Cloudy and dark into this journey,  
Questioning every step.  
Do I belong here?  
Is someone like me supposed to even be here?  
And then I think, "Who is 'me'?"

Am I the labels assigned to me?  
Brown, Whitewashed, Low Income?  
What does this mean,  
to me?

Trying to think, with all the noise in my head  
Trying to think, through all I'm being feed  
It's confusing, it feels unfair  
To be defined by someone else

I'm girl  
I'm a student  
I'm mixed race

I'm a dreamer, and a thinker  
I'm a helper, and a fighter

Pushing through, working hard  
Towards a better future for me and mine

Although distant, the fog will dissipate  
Goals will be met, checklists crossed out  
One day I'll graduate, but it will be more  
Then a piece of paper on a wall  
it'll be a representation of my family's hard work

Together we'll leap as one, in this team effort to go beyond the lines  
drawn for us.

It is scary to walk through this maze,  
But I'm not alone.

Together as one, we are strong.  
Together as one, we will go beyond the path we've previously walked.

Without compromise.





Art by: Jennifer Loving



# Ode al Llanto

Diana Castro

Siento un dolor entre el pecho,  
el corazón gritando,  
sentimientos encontrados.

Nubes negras sobre mi cabeza;  
yo ya no aguanto.

Siempre viene la tristeza,  
como una avalancha,  
destruyendo todo lo que alcanza.

Las nubes negras, super densas,  
bloqueando la luz.

Parece que nunca termina  
el dolor en mi corazón.

De pronto llega,  
inesperada,  
a la vuelta de la esquina.  
Se asoma el llanto,  
esa ausencia de sentimientos.

Empieza con una chispa,  
una gota,

y luego se deja caer  
como una tormenta de lluvia.

Llanto bueno,  
llanto vaciante.

Se ve feo el llorar.

Ojos rojos,  
hinchados,  
adoloridos.

Nariz mucosa,  
voz ronca,  
manos temblorosas.

Pero de pronto,  
el cielo se abre.  
Un rayo de luz corta entre las nubes negras.

Ese es el llanto,  
un rayo de luz,  
una puerta,  
un camino,  
que deja entrar de nuevo a la felicidad.

Las lágrimas lavan mi cara  
limpiando mi alma,  
dan vida y espacio a las carcajadas.

Gracias llanto,  
por devolverme la alegría.

Gracias llanto,  
por ser parte de mi vida.

Las gotas terminan,  
mis mejillas se secan,  
y con un gemido final  
vuelvo a la normalidad.

Adiós llanto de mi corazón.  
Gracias por ayudarme a volver a ser yo.





Art by: Diana Mendez

# Artistry and Industry in Cinema Paradiso and Millennium Actress

Phuong Hoang

## Artistry and Industry in *Cinema Paradiso* and *Millennium Actress*

Film is “based on the art of moving images used to convey ideas, stories, perceptions, feelings, beauty, or atmosphere” (<https://artradarjournal.com/2021/11/17/why-is-filmmaking-considered-a-true-modern-art-form/#:~:text=of%20other%20skills.-,What%20Is%20Film%20As%20An%20Art%20Form%3F,feelings%2C%20beauty%2C%20or%20atmosphere>). As such, film requires artistry – creative skill or ability – to envision, sculpt, and birth it.

Assisting in film’s birth is Artistry’s pragmatic twin: Industry. As “industry”, film is both “hard work” and “enterprise” as it requires “the processing of raw materials and manufacture of goods” with each having built-in investment and expenses possessing internal as well as external valuations. Such valuations shape the film as continuous exchange between Artistry and Industry (A&I) examine various natures of their metaphoric dualities as they take shape within the spaces of play and work, individual and community, creativity and norm, youth and age, freedom and restriction, experiment and experience, eternity and impermanence. The complexity of these dualities are heightened and deepened through a combination of presentation, perspective, and participant engagement – aspects that are in constant dialogue with A&I to establish meaning and determine significance.



In *Cinema Paradiso*, differing forms of A&I are evident as the film “uses the subject of cinema as a metonymy [showing diverse forms of metaphoric duality within] [] Italian society” (Vahdani, *Off Screen*). One such duality is found in the cinematic experience itself: the physical venue of Giancaldo’s cinema is owned and operated by the Catholic Church, the cinematic subject matter is curated by Church superiors, and specific content is censored by the Church’s local representative – the parish priest, Father Adelfio. Within these dynamics, matters of A&I develop through relationship polarities between individual and community, creativity and norm, youth and age, freedom and restriction, experiment and experience, eternity and impermanence as exemplified within Alfredo and Toto’s interactions.

That A&I are intertwined is apparent with Alfredo being its quintessential embodiment. Alfredo is a cinemaphile who understands the artistry of film, relishes its creativity, and internalizes cinematic narratives to define his own life. Indeed, Alfredo *lives* the “art of moving images” to “convey ideas, stories, perceptions, feelings, beauty, or atmosphere” and thus, serves as an incontrovertible stand-in for “film” itself. Alfredo does not just live “film” figuratively and metaphorically; Alfredo lives “film” literally as well because his job as the town projectionist is – in fact – his livelihood, his bread and butter, and the source of his income. Therefore, Alfredo consubstantiates “film” as both “Artistry” and “Industry”. Thus, it is no wonder that he puts Film before all else, including Toto’s lovelife justifying first love as fleeting and film as eternal.

While possessing keen cinematic devotion, Toto – at 8 years old

and new to the art of film – initially personifies its Artistry, *unfettered* by Industry. Toto lives Film’s Artistry highlighting its creativity, youth, and freedom as he watches, absorbs, and experiments. But ultimately, Toto takes Alfredo’s place to become the town projectionist bringing him closer to Film’s “Industry”. Once Toto becomes a renowned director, the unification of A&I is complete and Toto achieves cinematic stardom, the equivalent of immortality – precisely what Alfredo hoped for, knew he himself could not achieve, but saw Toto as its very incarnation.

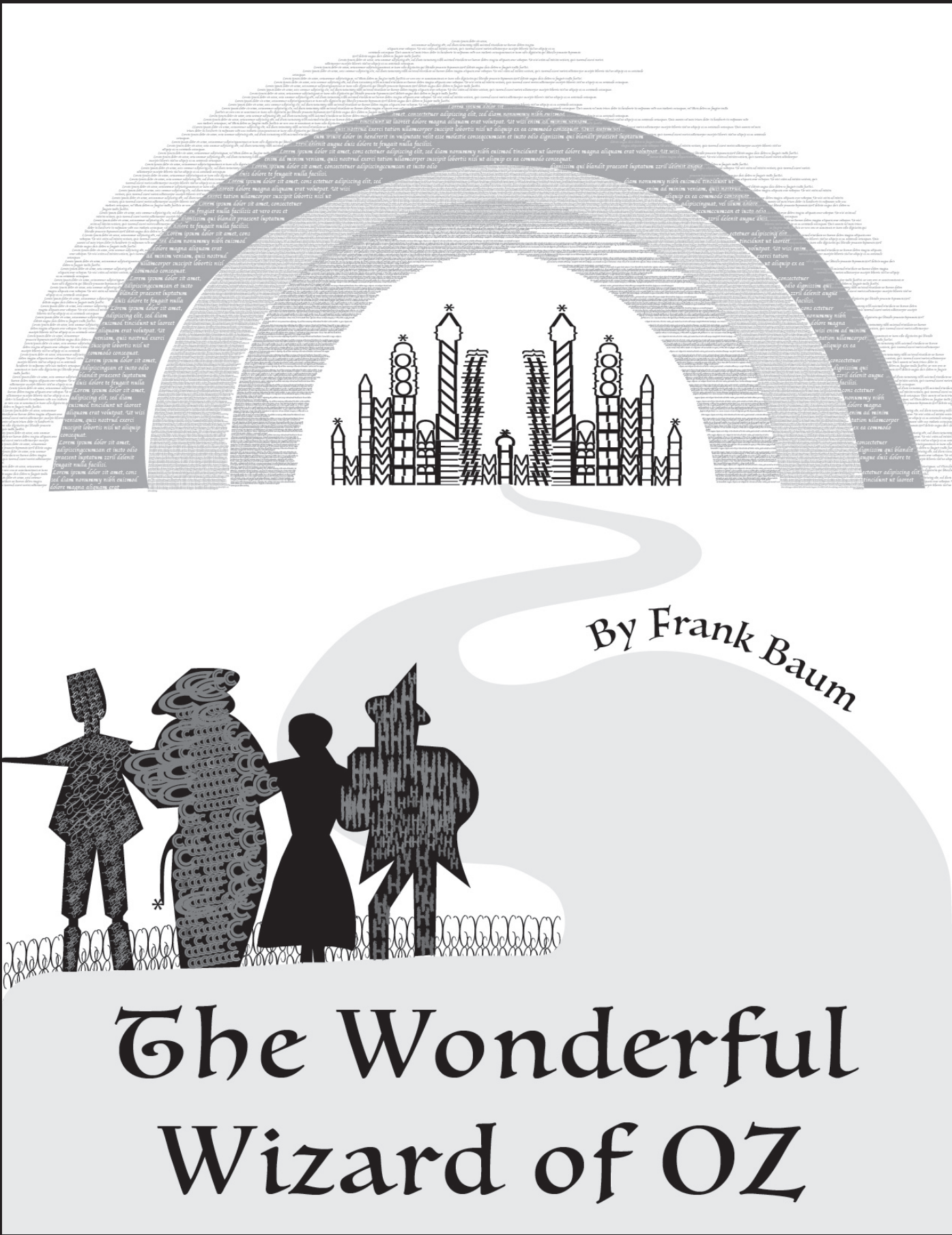
Immortality is also what motivates Chiyoko Fujiwara in *Millennium Actress*: “Chiyoko’s entire life [is] an attempt to immortalize an image of her youth on the canvas of the silver screen” because she wanted to “freeze her life at the moment she met the artist, as it’s the moment when she was most alive and life seemed most vivid and full of possibilities” (Bergstrom, *3 brothers film*). This nostalgia – though different due to cultural contexts – is reminiscent of both Alfredo and Toto’s own sentiment because, in the end, time is “recaptured” through “lost” film.

In Alfredo and Toto’s case, the “lost” film is the physical film spliced together from rescued pieces of cut film salvaged from Alfredo’s days as a film projectionist. Alfredo’s parting gift allows Toto to “recapture” lost moments: lost affection, lost kisses, lost love, lost time. In Chiyoko’s case, the “lost” film is all the films she’s retreated from but eagerly “re-lives” through Genya Tachibana’s interview. Through their interaction, Chiyoko comes to understand that she herself has been the archetype of Film because – as Genya reminds

her – Chiyoko embodied both A&I: living in Film, through Film, and because of Film.

Cinematic polarities between individual and community, creativity and norm, youth and age, freedom and restriction, experiment and experience, eternity and impermanence are reflected in both Chiyoko’s on-screen as well as off-screen life. Entering cinema as a way to achieve the goal of reuniting with the dissident artist, Chiyoko must also accept being a participant in Sino-Japanese war propaganda illuminating the tensions of individual-community, creativity-norm, youth-age, and freedom-restriction dynamics. Artistry and Industry co-exist here in uneasy companionship, each using the other for its own purposes.

However, A&I become “the key” that tangibly delivers to Chiyoko “the most important thing”: fulfillment. Without A&I, A&I necessarily interact with its surrounding geo-political environment is “key”: in *Cinema Paradiso*, the geo-political environment is set within the Italian town of Giancaldo as it is influenced by the Catholic Church while in *Millennium Actress*, the geo-political reality varies with successive Japanese periods from the 1930s through to the 1970s. In both cases, social realities interface with and are – in turn – influenced by artful cinematic polemics.



Art by:Eunkyoung Han



# The World According to My Betta Fish

Neyda Carranza Espinal

The LED light beats down on me  
while the filter barely works,  
pushing water through the baffle.

My mother and aunts are at school.

The corner of the tank has moss growing,  
spreading to the heater and the baffle.

The gravel stirs gently under the stream  
I avoid with growing worry and fear.

The uneaten pellets bob, bloat, and drop  
as I look at them with little hunger.

The dried shrimp, which I enjoyed so dearly,  
floats by the weak filter fully intact.

I wait near a corner, staring  
at my reflection intently.

Will this be the last thing I see  
before I die from poisoning?

Nacho the dragon scale betta  
purchased on a whim but loved so dearly?

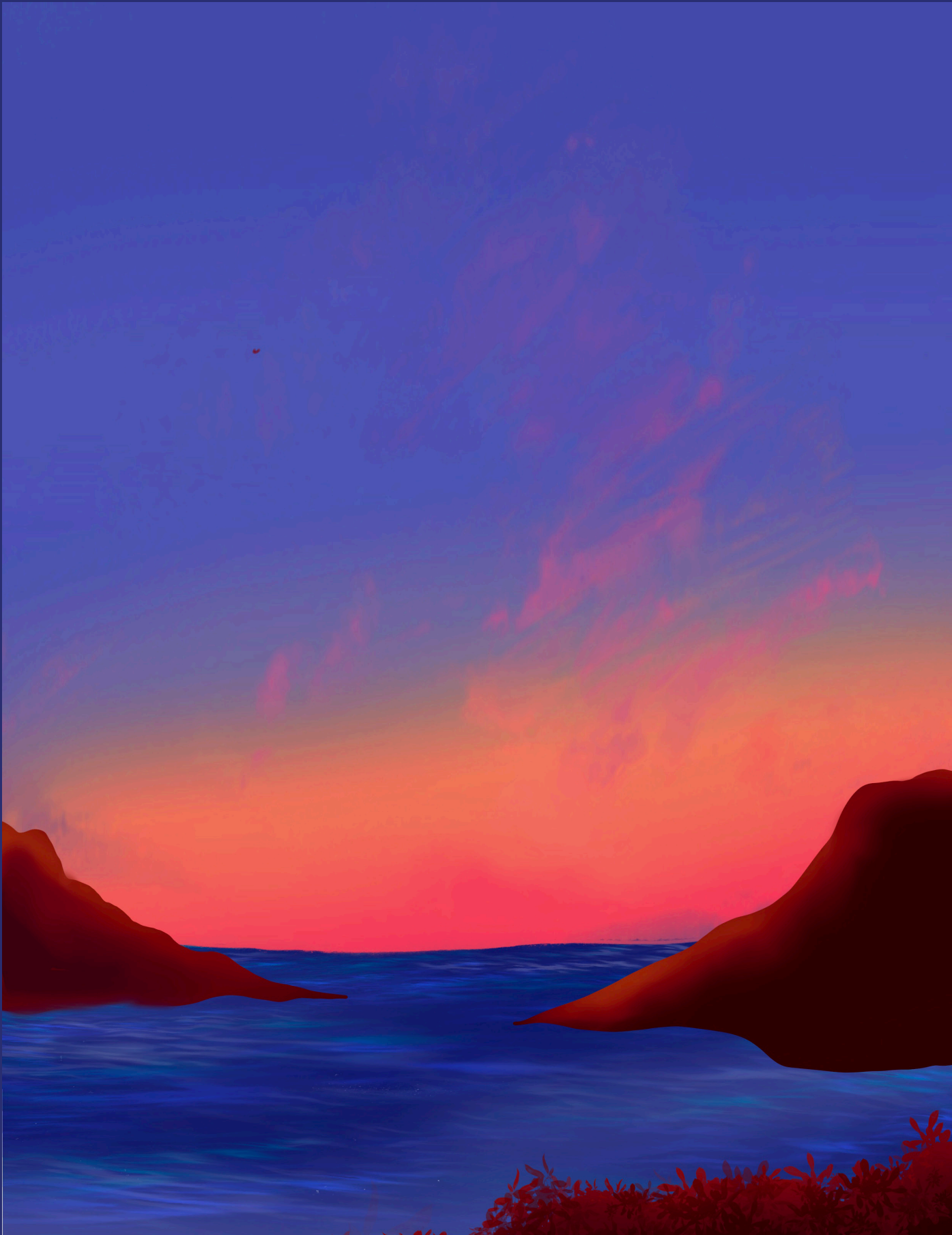
(My kind is prone to blindness in old age,  
something I could only dream of reaching.)

My scales are all black. They were blue  
before the ammonia got worse.

I cannot eat. I cannot move  
to my hiding spot like normal.

My tank grows cold. The heat's on.  
I stare at the door like old times.

They have to be here before I  
float up, go into the blue sky.



Art by: Diana Mendez

# To Be A Better Me: American Born Chinese

Queenie, Pui Kam Chung

Every one of us will encounter different difficulties on the path of life. Even the scientific giant Newton, the father of the nuclear bomb Oppenheimer, and the master of literature Tolstoy, are no exception. Our living environment and social environment often give us all kinds of problems. In fact, facing problems is one of the hallmarks of life. It is precisely because of these problems we have faced in our lives that enable us to learn how to grow up and change to a better “me”. After reading *American Born Chinese*, maybe you can have a deeper understanding about the importance of learning to growth. *American Born Chinese* is a graphic novel written by Gene Luen Yang in 2006. The book is focusing on three main characters and their stories: A Chinese legend the Monkey King, A Chinese American boy Jin Wang, and a general white American boy Danny. These three parallel stories run into one another in the book and integrate into one at the end. Yet, even though they are distinct, there is a recurring theme in these three stories: growth and change. Each character is facing different kinds of difficulties in their life, and they decide to change to

adapt to the role that they want to and grow up to be a better “me”. Even though Yang does provide instances of staying true in the book, he mostly wants his readers to value the importance of growth and change.

In *American Born Chinese*, Yang uses a parable and object to symbolize growth and change. From the beginning of Jin’s story, Jin’s mother tells him an old Chinese story “Moving three evictions”, and it is a symbol of change (Yang 23). In the story “Moving three evictions”, the environment of the living place affects the son’s behavior. If he is living near a market, he pretends to do business with his friends; if he is living near a cemetery, he pretends to do ceremonies for dead ancestors. Finally, his mother decides to move near a university, and her son spends all the times to reading and learning. We can see the plot in the parable are exactly match with Jin’s situation. Yang not only uses the story of the parable to explain to readers why Jin’s mother decides to move from Chinatown to a White community, but also symbolizes that Jin’s mother believes the living environment will change Jin’s personality when he

is growing up. Obviously, the parable is an implicit symbol to describe changing in this book. Beside the “Moving three evictions” story, the “Transformer” plays a role in the book to symbolize growth and change. Jin is clutching a Transformer toy when he is on the way to new home, and this represent his environment is changing (Yang 23). Also, when Jin first meets with Wei-Chen, he is rude and cold. However, when Wei-Chen takes his monkey Transformer out, Jin starts to change his attitude because he finally meets a new friend who has the same interest as him (Yang 39). Later, Yang describes that this monkey Transformer is given by Wei-Chen’s father, the Monkey King (Yang 217). After monkey Wei-Chen gets the monkey Transformer, Yang illustrates that monkey Wei-Chen slowly is changing to a human in the same panel. Similarly, the Transformer is a robot toy that can be configured into other forms, such as cars, trucks, or airplanes. Thus, Yang uses it, as well as the parable, as symbols to implicitly describe changing and perfectly match with these changing situations in the story.

Besides the parable and object to symbolize growth and change, Yang also uses his character the Monkey King to represent the importance of growth in the book. From the beginning, the Monkey King is facing his first difficulties in his life. He wants to attend a dinner party with the gods, but he is rejected by them as his identity is a monkey and he has

no shoes (Yang 14). After that, the Monkey King locks himself inside his room to meditate how he should change to fit in better with these gods and get the respect of them. He learns four major disciplines of body forms and invulnerability by himself to be more powerful. Additionally, he decides to act like he is not a monkey, try to wear shoes and ask all the monkeys who living in Flower Fruit Mountain need to wear shoes. Yang draws the Monkey King as a baby size from the beginning and draw as an adult size once the Monkey King came out of his room (Yang 59). In addition, the Monkey King began to call himself “The great Sage, equal to heaven.” (Yang 60) In fact, both of these examples are representing how the Monkey King is determined to change himself to fit with the social environment. However, he changes to be violent. He believes that he is the most powerful and he hurts and intimidates other gods. Later, in the story, Tze-Yo-Yzuh, who is the creator of all the gods, he punishes the Monkey King and buries him under a mountain for five hundred years until he meets the man who will become his master, Wong Lai-Tsao (Yang 143). Wong Lai-Tsao asks the Monkey King change back to baby size and escape from the mountain to help him with the west journey, but the Monkey King rejects to help. He does not want to change his human form because he wants people to respect him. At the time, two demons appear and attack Wong-Lai-Tsao. The



Monkey King frees himself by returning to his true form – baby size, to escape under the mountain to save Wong-Lai-Tsao. Finally, the Monkey King agree to go with Wong-Lai-Tsao to the west journey (Yang 160). We can see after 500 years of punishment, the Monkey King changes himself. He becomes humble and kind. Sometimes, we need to change ourselves to fit with the environment, but we still need some mentors like Tze-Yo-Yzuh or Wong-Lai-Tsao to encourage us to growth on the correct path and become to be a better “me”. In other words, this is the key message that Yang wants to express to his reader by the Monkey King story.

Moreover, the other main characters Jin and Danny also represent the growing and changing to a better “me” in the book. Although they are growing to change in the negative way at the beginning, they turn back to the correct path to a better “me” at the end. After Jin moves to the White community, he is one of the couple Asian student in his class. Yang does not write any dialogues to represent Jin’s changing, but he uses through visual images : Jin’s lunch box and outfit. We can see Jin’s lunch box change from dumplings to sandwich (Yang 33-35). Further, Jin perms his hair to fit with the style of a popular blond classmate, Greg (Yang 77). Both of these examples show us Jin is changing after moves to the White community. In the book *Whistling Viv-*

*aldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do*, Claude Steele describe, “We know what “people could think. “We know that anything we do that fits the stereotype could be taken as confirming it. And we know that, for that reason, we could be judged and treated accordingly” (Steele 5). This is perfectly match with Jin’s situation. Jin tries to avoid doing anything “like Chinese” because he does not want to be label as Chinese. He wants to become as American as possible to fit with the social environment. Later, we know that Jin turns into Danny in his dream. Danny, a White boy: blond, popular, smart, and handsome. Yang uses Danny to intimate a person that Jin wishes he could be. Danny has a Chinese cousin Chin-Kee who embarrasses Danny in every way that he can, such as his awful eating habit and exaggerating outfit. Chin-Kee represents all the negative stereotypes of Chinese. Actually, Yang uses Chin-Kee to intimate that Jin is struggling by his identity, which is damaging Jin(Danny)’s social life. At the end, Danny discovers that Chin-Kee is the father of Wei-Chen – the Monkey King, and he also represents Jin(Danny)’s conscience. After talking with the Monkey King, Jin realizes that he no need to follow anyone’s steps to growth. He is growing to accept his true nature and willing to face with his mistake, apologize with Wei-Chen at the end because he kisses Wei-Chen’s girlfriend. He pulls down the labels which he puts on himself and

changes to a positive way. Definitely, Yang uses Jin and Danny as the core examples in the book to showing the importance of growing to accept one’s true nature and changing to a better “Me”.

While Yang emphasizes the importance of growing and changing, many people point out Yang’s story also touches on the value of staying true to oneself. For example, Wei Chen is one of the characters that stay true in the story. At the beginning, Jin’s attitude is cold and rude. He even says “I have enough friends” to Wei-Chen, but Wei-Chen does not give up and friendly as he can (Yang 38). Even when Jin kisses Wei-Chen’s girlfriend, after Jin finally says sorry to Wei-Chen, Wei-Chen accepts his apology and becomes friends with Jin again (Yang 231-232). We can see Wei-Chen is keeping kind and friendly from the beginning till the end. However, everything possesses two sides. Yang uses some details in the book to tell us Wei-Chen actually changes himself at the end. When Wei-Chen meets with Jin again, he is smoking cigarettes, wearing the “coolest” clothes, driving a nice car with heavy bass music and putting a sunglasses on (Yang 228-229). He is not the boy who wears sweatpants with collared robot shirts, and thick, large glasses anymore. Although he is still kind and friendly, obviously his behavior is affected by the environment. Somehow, changing and growing are not limited to turn a per-

son into only one side, the positive side. Therefore, those who believe that Yang’s main concept is staying true in the story are mostly incorrect. Evidently, there are many more instances of the importance of change and growth, which is the main message that Yang mostly wants his readers to value in this book.

Through three parallel stories of the Monkey King, Jin and Danny, Yang highlights the importance of the willingness to change and grow in the *American Born Chinese*. All of these characters try to modify themselves to avoid some stereotypes to fit with the environment while they are growing. Maybe they change to a negative way in the beginning, because they put different kinds of labels on themselves to limit their growth. However, they pull downs all the labels and turn back to the correct path after overcoming different obstacles. Like the characters in *American Born Chinese*, these obstacles in our lives are essential because we are always gaining experience from them. It makes us grow gradually and carve us into a unique and a better “me”.WW

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# Origami

Chloe Chou

I begin to love her through the cracks of perfection

She watches the gray of morning,

The screeching of birds at dusk

She watches these things and I watch her, thinking  
Of the adjectives that break through the screaming silence,  
And they shatter before I can think of one to describe her.

We take the cable car to the dock, I find her floating  
Through her dreams. I wonder how someone can feel so comfortable  
In their own body & she moves as deliberately as the passing of the  
seasons.

She teaches me to fold paper cranes, her hands brushing against mine  
As we work through the steps. We make them with uneven wings  
And we hang them all up anyway, yarn stringing through their delicate  
Paper bodies. The passing of the seasons begin to bleed into each other  
&

I am not ready to let go of her yet.  
Will you meet me at the same time tomorrow?





Art by: Jiatong Liu

# Song of Sand

Spencer Mallette

Please, take my hand

Dance with me for a moment

Dance with me

Dance shadows across the floor like black ink

Like pools of nighttime soaked into the wood

Dance with me in the flicker of candlelight

They dance with us, you see

They're dancing too

They dance with their glowing arms

Fire licks the cool air with a sweet warm tongue

Dance with me as the horizon drowns the light of the day

Watch as the stars dance with us

Through that window, right there

See how they flicker to our heartbeat rhythm

The darkness makes dancing so easy, doesn't it

Dance with me as the hourglass empties

Time is our slow dance

Look at me, not at the sand slipping through my fingers

The cascading grains will scare you

Fear is not for the life of the dance

Dance with me just a little longer

Lean into my embrace

Feel my skeleton hand around your waist

Let your head fall against my midnight cloak

Rub the sand from your eyelashes

The music from your skin

See how the stars are closer now?

Look at them dance with us

Please, finish this dance with us

And take your final bow





Art by: Kemmy Rai

# Fall

Chloe Chou

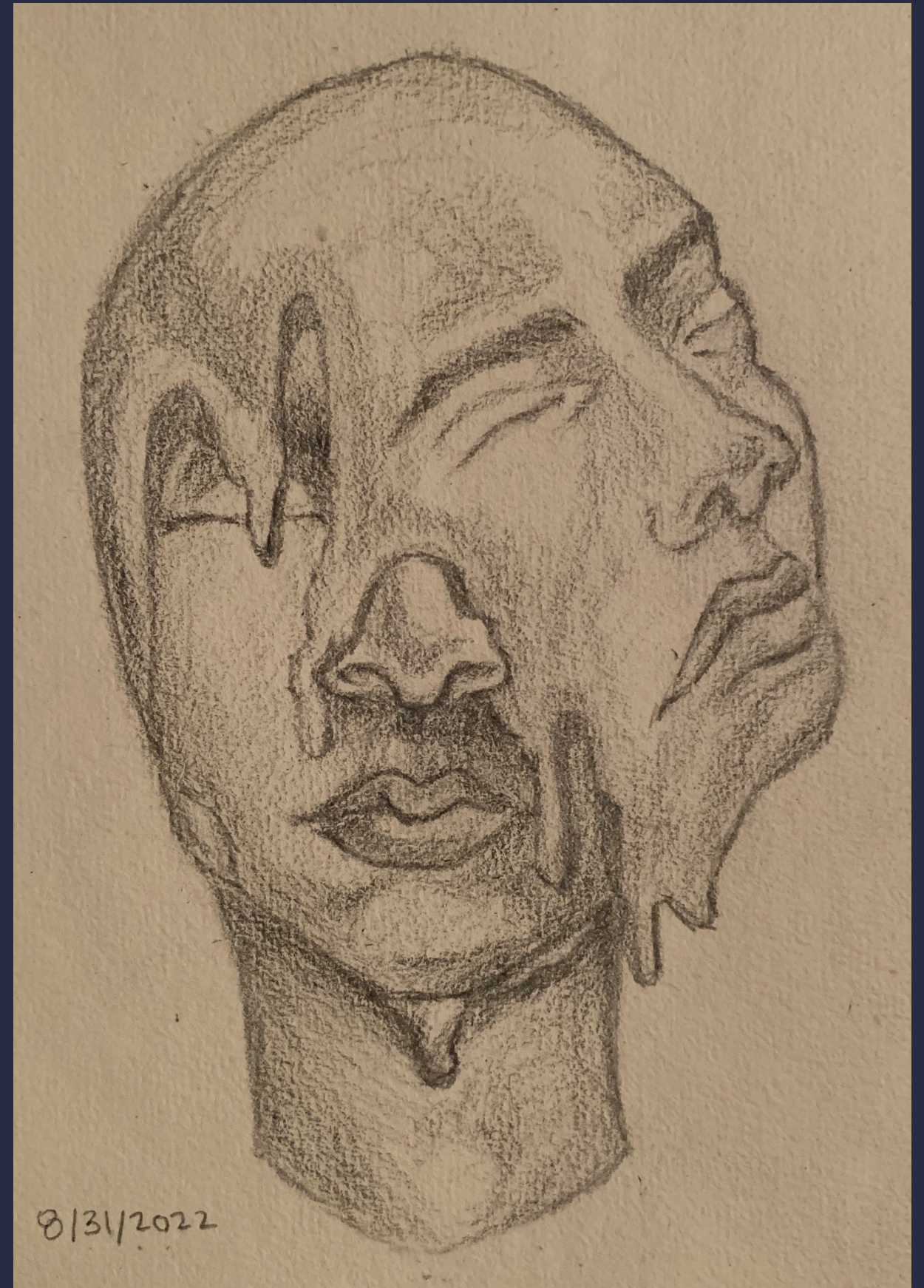
he finds himself falling without reason, as  
if you could have a good reason to fall.  
he thinks about how this must be the best part of dying,  
this letting go & this acceptance. of course,  
he is a liar. men can become gods if they want it enough, so he  
tells himself he can live if he wants it enough. as he falls  
through the whistling air, he shuts  
his eyes tight and says this is ok, this is just the final part of  
living.  
if he believes it hard enough, he is something more than just  
falling.  
he is a liar.





# Connections

## Internal/External





# *Winter Wonderland*

---

*Stephen Gillette*

Throughout middle and high school I've only been able to commit to a handful of things. Two of which were eating and jogging, both of which were surprisingly connected. Before dinner I always jogged, and this evening I especially needed to leave early due to the blizzard laying layers of snow over the freezing earth.

As always I prepared myself by pulling jacket after jacket over my head before mom told me to put on another pair of socks. I reluctantly did so and opened the door letting a cool breeze sweep through the house beginning a verbal exchange that ended with me and my deafening music escaping before either of my parents decided how I was to leave.

The snow melted upon contact with my skin causing my face to cool at an accelerated rate. The snow had accumulated slightly on the road and greenway forcing me to pay careful attention to where I shifted my weight to and where I stepped. Normally when I jog I pay no attention to my surroundings and because of this I miss many crucial details for instance one time I stepped on a snake and almost stomped on a turtle!(don't worry both survived) However, this time I began to take a look around me and I was finally able to notice and admire every snowflake that melted against my face.

I had jogged on the greenway till my legs had turned into playdough. I unsteadily wobbled my way level to the field in the middle of the greenway. For the first time I glanced across and stopped. Across the way stood two deer both of which were indulging themselves in the frozen grass. I approached the deer not in the way you would think. I crawled on all fours till I was able to see the whites of their eyes. At this point one of the deer was watching me and the other was filling itself to its hearts content. I dragged myself along the ground completely soaked from head to toe. At this point I was within an arm's length distance from the deer and they were both just staring at me. So as any logical person would do I put my head down and lay there in silence. I heard the trees blowing in the wind, the snow making contact with the already white landscape and the steady calm breathing of the deer. I stared at them and they stared back at me. Over time they calmed down and returned to eating. So I sat up not sure what to expect. However, it definitely exceeded my expectations. They didn't care about me, but for me it was quite the opposite.

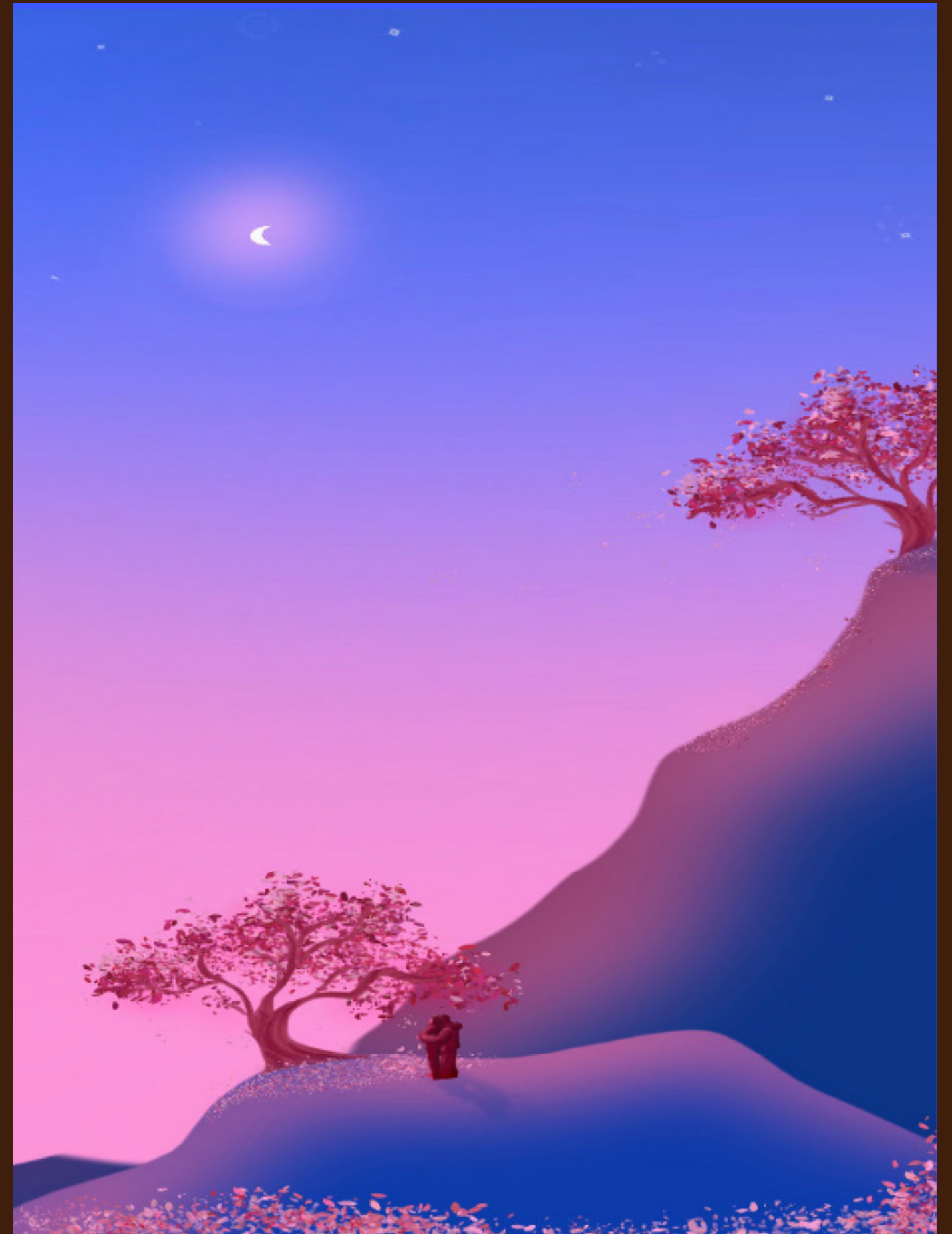
I sat there for who knows how long mesmerized by nature and what it had to offer. The sun was setting and I knew my time with the deer was coming to an end. I slowly stood up startling one deer and lightly crunched away through the snow facing the pair. The snow had thickened, obstructing my vision. I fidgeted with my phone feeling absolutely nothing before turning my music on and I sprinted up the hill on the greenway. Ice had coated the sidewalk that I had compacted from multiple rounds that I ran. I slipped multiple times clawing at the ground that slid beneath my grasp, but I was never discouraged or exhausted.



I was happy. It was kind of ironic that me and my frozen butt that was quite literally crawling up the road half soaking in freezing clothes was happy. I pushed on past the hill and onto a flat area passing by a church. I stopped and looked at it. I was freezing and the people inside the church were all warm and ignored what was happening outside their conscience.

I continued on my way thinking back to when I lived in Nepal for a year. During that time loadshedding would occur and you would have no power for long amounts of time. The winters in Nepal were very dry and very cold. My family and I would huddle together on our couch and play Uno, unable to tell the difference between the blue and green cards. I met people that I would have never met in the states. People who were happy and content with what they had even though they didn't have air conditioning or any mode of transportation.

I marched my way through the slush that lined the roads and quite literally slid onto my driveway. I did the usual stomping before my door alerting all of my existence, especially my dog. I grabbed the negatively heated door knob turning it and strode into my house stepping away once more from reality and into my utopia.



# Learning How To People

Anonymous

The three poems discussed in this essay were written over a span of over 70 years, by authors of various sociological backgrounds discussing various different subjects. They stretch from the early years of the Modernist era of literature to the later years of the Post-modernist era. The first poem, perhaps one of T.S. Eliot's most highly acclaimed works, was published in 1915, when he was 27 years old. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is a dramatic monologue told from the perspective of the titular J. Alfred Prufrock. The next poem, "The Gift" by Li-Young Lee, published in 1986, sees the speaker telling us of an incident in his childhood from a first-person perspective. The final poem is "Immigrants in Our Own Land", published in 1979 by Jimmy Santiago Baca, who wrote this piece about the experiences of inmates in the prison system. All three speakers reveal to the reader their prowess with interpersonal relationships which they develop through the course of the poem; however, not all of the speakers are aware of their gained power.

"Prufrock" is one of the earliest examples

of the use of fragmentation, a trait of modernist poetry in which the narrative structure, imagery and plot of a poem are broken up, and thus difficult to follow. The speaker here is a typical, early 20th century everyman. He's articulate, indecisive, eloquent, neurotic, emotional, timid, riddled with self-doubt, and the poem is a sort of examination of his psyche. The poem is told through a stream of consciousness of the speaker, J. Alfred Prufrock himself, and because of his neurotic, anxious rambling it is difficult to pinpoint one particular feeling the speaker has. The only consistency in the speaker's monologue is the visceral, soul-baring nature of his rambling.

It is immediately apparent that Prufrock is deeply insecure, sometimes addressing a woman, sometimes himself. At the beginning he seems to be trying to address a potential lover, trying to ask her an "overwhelming question" (Eliot, line 10). The nature of this question isn't clear, but it is clear that he has a great deal of anxiety about asking it. The first stanza of the poem sees Prufrock inviting the

woman on a romantic evening stroll. He characterizes the evening sky as a "patient etherized upon a table" (Eliot, line 3), preparing the patient for the pain of surgery, just as Prufrock prepares himself for the agony of asking this overwhelming question. As the poem progresses, the speaker's thoughts dart around, and the imagery changes. Somewhat randomly, he describes the fog around him, likening it to a housecat, personifying the "yellow fog" as rubbing its "muzzle" on window panes, "lick[ing] its tongue into the corners of the evening", "lingering," making "sudden leaps," and finally after seeing that it is a fall night, "curling... about the house" and falling asleep (Eliot, lines 15-22). As though aware that he is stalling, the speaker spends the next stanza assuring himself "there will be time" for his dawdling (Eliot, line 23). He assures himself there will be time to look at the yellow fog, time for him to prepare himself to meet people and interact with them, time for him to answer questions, and of course time for him and the woman. He also assures himself that there will be time for him to make up his mind and change it again "a hundred" times (Eliot, line 33). The use of the word time here so repetitively betrays the speaker's sense of anxiety, as though he feels

as though he is running out of it. Everything he describes is mundane and repetitive, and they all involve interactions with other people, showing the reader both how socially anxious the speaker is as well as how bored he is with his life. In the next lines, the speaker delves deeper into his social anxieties and muses to himself. The phrase he repeats to himself is "do I dare" (Eliot, line 38), doubting whether he has the audacity to present himself, to be more than a fly on the wall in a room with other people. He questions whether he "dare[s] disturb the universe" (Eliot, line 46), and he anxiously imagines the people around him ridiculing him for his thin arms and legs and his bald spot. Then his tone changes again, as though trying to convince himself he's unimpressed by the things he secretly yearns for, like connection. He goes on, saying that he "has known [these social interactions] already" (Eliot, line 49), describing the mundane web of social interactions. He seems to feel disconnected from this web though, describing the way the world interacts around him as a voice "from a farther room" (Eliot, line 53). He resents the way that people look at him, dismissing him with a "formulated phrase" (Eliot, line 53), the way he "digresses" with the women he



has “known... already” (Eliot, lines 62-66).

At this point, the speaker’s tone changes again as he drops his mask and admits his weaknesses and his anxiety again. The many women he claims to have “known already” haven’t prepared him enough, and his lamentful rant ends as we’re drawn back to his walk with this woman, as he questions whether he will “have the strength” to disturb the peaceful night and ask the question he has been holding on to for so long (Eliot, line 80). Prufrock laments that though he has “grown slightly bald” and “wept and fasted”, he is “no prophet”, no “great matter”. The “moment of [his] greatness [has] flickered,” it is in the past now. He questions whether achieving this greatness “would have been worth it”, amid “the cups, marmalade, the tea”, the small talk and cordial interactions of everyday life (Eliot, line 88).

The final lines of the poem are when Prufrock really breaks down. He drops his mask of indifference and admits, he is “not Prince Hamlet...[but merely] an attendant lord... [there to] start a scene or two...at times, indeed, almost ridiculous— almost, at times, the Fool” (Eliot, lines 111-119). He falls further into his insecurities about his looks, won-

dering if he should change his hair, or if he is worthy enough of eating a peach (Eliot, line 122). Prufrock ends describing the mermaids singing to each other, lamenting “I do not think that they will sing to me” (Eliot, line 125).

Throughout the entire poem, Prufrock has shown himself to be a frantic-minded, deeply insecure character. He is indecisive to a fault, and it affected him even in this poem – we never find out if he did end up asking the woman he was with the “overwhelming question”. Prufrock’s social anxieties are exacerbated by his feelings of loneliness in the world. He doesn’t know his role. Clearly a very well educated man, he compares himself to the protagonists of many stories, such as John the Baptist, Hamlet and Lazarus of Bethany, ultimately deciding that his role is unlike any of them – he is merely a background character, a passerby, an unimportant extra on the world’s stage. This sentiment is best expressed when Prufrock remembers mermaids singing, admitting that even he doesn’t think they would sing to him; he is simply too unimportant.

Prufrock might appear to be a very weak character, and his poem ends in a moment of great despair, but there is hope. Eliot

has given this character a power – Prufrock will be able to overcome his interpersonal inhibitions because he has the unique ability to see and understand his shortcomings, and therefore he can fix them; the poem itself can be seen as Prufrock venting about his own shortcomings and fears. Through his cultural references and brilliant insight into the world, it is evident that Prufrock is a well-educated man with a great ability to articulate himself. He is ruthlessly self-critical, but that criticism shows he has a knack for analysis and dissection. Thus, he leaves us hopeful that if he overcomes his lack of confidence, he can employ the same articulateness to address other people which he uses to address himself.

The next poem, “The Gift”, begins with a warm memory from when the speaker was a young boy. When he was seven a piece of a metal blade got stuck in his hand, and being a young boy he was petrified, thinking “[he’d] die from” the pain (Lee, line 5). But, his father

carefully removed the piece of metal from his hand, “recit[ing] a story in a low voice” to distract him (Lee, line 2). The speaker can’t remember what the story was, but he remembers the virtue his father taught him to be calm in the face of danger at that moment. He likens his father imbuing him with this value to “flames of discipline” being raised above his head, igniting a metaphorical spark in his seven-year-old self (Lee, line 12). In the next lines, the speaker asks us to imagine the scene, saying we would think instead that his father was putting something into his hand, such as a “tiny flame” – the flame of discipline he referenced in the previous stanza (Lee, line 17). The speaker is saying that in this moment, the values of fortitude and discipline were taught to him. Had we followed the speaker’s story, we would end up at the present moment when he shaves his wife’s thumbnail down to remove a splinter for her, doing so gingerly so as to make sure she feels no pain. He remembers when his father did

**" He is ruthlessly self-critical, but that criticism shows he has a knack for analysis and dissection."**

the same for him, but now he is in his father's position, still holding fast to the values of fortitude and discipline he was taught by him. The speaker remembers how he felt after his father took the shard out and he held it "between [his] fingers" (Lee, line 27), noting that he didn't think it was dangerous to him anymore.

The significance to the speaker of this lesson in forbearance in the face of fear is made clear to the reader by the speaker's detailed recollection. In the final four lines of the poem, the speaker thinks of how he reacted after his father helped him, noting that he did not "lift up [his] wound and cry" in fear of death, as he did before his father's help (Lee, line 31). He instead thanked his father for the gift of those life lessons that he had inculcated into the speaker by giving him a kiss.

While Eliot's "Prufrock" is distraught and despondent in tone, Lee's "The Gift" is much more nostalgic and sweet. Both are ponderous monologues reminiscing on past and present experiences – in the case of "Prufrock", of course, the narrative structure is fragmented, however. But the main difference between the speakers in these two poems is awareness. In "Prufrock", the speaker J. Alfred

Prufrock has a tremendous gift for articulation and a beautiful way with words. However, he spends the entire poem languishing in his own shortcomings, hyper fixated on everything wrong with himself and completely unaware of his own strengths. In contrast, "The Gift" sees a much healthier speaker, reminiscing on a moment of learning in his own life, acknowledging the fear of pain he overcame and thanking his father for teaching him such an invaluable lesson. Both speakers have powers they have gained through their lives, one via his interactions with the world and one via his interactions with his father, but in "The Gift" the speaker is aware of his powers; the speaker in "Prufrock" has yet to discover his.

The final poem, written in 1979, sees Baca, presumably, as the speaker, writing of his experience as a prisoner. It begins with an implied comparison between inmates and immigrants, both "born with dreams in [their] hearts" (Baca, line 1). The changes both groups experience are intense – they receive newspapers, clothes, vaccines, and they are "oriented to the new land" they will now live in (Baca, lines 8-9). He speaks of the diversity in both groups' backgrounds, saying "some of

us were craftsmen... others were good with their heads... but most of us didn't finish high school" (Baca, lines 10-15). The next stanza describes the old inhabitants of the land they are new to – old men with "deep, disturbed eyes" who "stand around idle" (Baca, line 18). The new inmates/immigrants have high expectations, perhaps "rehabilitation, being able to finish school, and learning a good extra trade" (Baca, lines 21-23). These hopes don't last long, though. Both worlds find them providing cheap labor, working for "three cents an hour" (Baca, line 25). They segregate themselves by race, as were their neighborhoods in the places they came from, and the administration is approving of this. The speaker then discusses the physical and psychological impacts on the inmates/immigrants of the turmoil they go through. He speaks of trying to get away from "false promises" and blue-suited "dictators in our neighborhoods" who arrested, swung clubs and shot at them whenever they pleased (Baca, lines 33-34). But the authorities in the new land they are in are just as cruel and apathetic as their previous dictators – so their "bodies decay, [their] minds deteriorate, [they] learn nothing of value. [Their] lives don't get better" (Baca, lines 39-41).

The next stanzas describe the speaker's surroundings; there is a sense of chaos and bustle as men run around trying to help each other and complaining about broken appliances. The speaker sees the fresh batch of "immigrants" arriving at the prison, wondering if they have "a dream in their heart" and they too think this is a new chance at life, like he once did (Baca, lines 55-58). In the final stanza of the poem, the speaker muses about the changes the prison makes to each "immigrant", and how each one will turn out. Some may become gangsters, others may "go on living without a soul... or reason to live" (Baca, lines 63-64). The only thing he is confident in, though, is that "very few will make it out of here as human as they came in" (Baca, lines 66-67). They will all wonder what their purpose is, as they are "so long gone" from their jobs, families and life itself (Baca, lines 68-70).

In a sort of combination of the tones of Lee's and Eliot's poems, "Immigrants in Our Own Land" starts off very reminiscent, almost nostalgic, and ends in a place of despondence and depression. Like Lee's speaker in "The Gift", Baca's speaker looks at the experience of going to prison in the context of how it



changed him and what it took from him and gave him. Similar to J. Alfred Prufrock of T.S. Eliot's poem, Baca's speaker seems to feel a sense of despair with his situation. This is especially apparent with the emphasis of how "long gone" (Baca, line 68) he and the other prisoners are from the world, just as Prufrock felt to be listening to the world like music "from a farther room" (Eliot, line 53). The speaker in Baca's poem, just like Prufrock, seems to be unaware of the power he has gained through overcoming his hardships. He spends the final stanza lamenting the loss of his soul, future and humanity, as well as the loss of every other prisoner's. What is clear to the reader but not to the speaker, though, is that his humanity isn't lost at all. The entire poem itself is a testimony to the speaker's capacity for empathy for his fellow prisoners. He imagines the wishes, dreams, fears and hopes for the future of each and every one of the new prisoners who come in, putting himself in their shoes. Not only has he overcome the hellscape of prison that wipes the soul from inmates and leaves them alone in the world, he has drawn

**Baca, Jimmy Santiago.**

"Immigrants in Our Own Land by Jimmy Santiago Baca." Poetry Foundation, Poetry Foundation, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49558/immigrants-in-our-own-land>.

those inmates closer together in acknowledging their shared experience through this poetry.

These three poems are special in that they show three characters learning, essentially, to be better social creatures. To connect with others more often, more deeply. To practice the art of talking to other people, learning from other people, loving other people. What is so poignant about these speakers is that though they all make great progress in this endeavor, they don't all realize it. Prufrock and Baca's speaker don't even recognize how well-equipped they are to connect with other people, and for lack of this awareness they sentence themselves to lives of loneliness and distance from the rest of the world. Perhaps this can serve as a reminder to the readers of these poems: people are a lot better at understanding each other than we think. Just give it a shot.

**Eliot, T. S.**

"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock by T. S. Eliot." Poetry Foundation, Poetry Foundation, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/44212/the-love-song-of-j-alfred-prufrock>.

**Lee, Li-Young.**

"The Gift by Li-Young Lee." Poetry Foundation, Poetry Foundation, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43010/the-gift-56d221adc12b8>.



Art by: Kemmy Rai





Art by: Sophie D



# Eons

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Jake Owen Connorton

The old crone atop the hill.

The artificer secluded within the tower.

The shepherd boy in the field.

And the young woman at the door.

Stories separate and intertwined by the  
convergence of a lifetime.

## Calvin I

The grass blew wildly on a bright summer's day. Sunlight flowed across the edges creating waves across the pastures. A boy with a shepherd's hook guided a flock of sheep towards a small holdfast. The valley was sparsely populated by man made structures of timber and masonry, but blanketed with old oaks and stolid stones. Tree and rock had stood in this place for centuries before men of farm and field had come down to set their mark upon it. The valley was stubborn to bend to their change and much of it remained untamed. Not wild per say, for there was a piece of harmony here that persisted far beyond the conflict of

wilderness and civilization. Nevertheless, a boy marched with his flock. They were on their return journey to Billen Hold after spending the last week grazing on the lush hills. Back there there would be a warm bed, a mug of beer, and hot food. The boy looked forward to it with both heart and hunger. But he would not make it to the holdfast. For what was once a bright, clear day had now darkened. Great storm clouds gathered overhead and refused to rain upon the land. Instead they hung high in the sky, threatening the valley with deep rumbles of thunder.

The sheep were beginning to grow restless under the boy shepherd's yoke. It was not but a mile until the holdfast, the safety of its carved stone walls and wide beam roofs. The boy was confident he could make it, but the sheep raced for the protection of a wide oak tree. Its branches would've cast shadows over half a hillside if not for the newly clouded sky. The boy called for his flock to follow him. He stood in the open field, waving his hook side to side, up over his head-

And the sky broke open down upon him. The idle threats of thunder proved not so idle. A great bolt of lightening struck him. It scrawled along his left hand and across his back. He fell into a

smoking heap onto charred grass. His flock shivered with terror beneath the oak. And then the valley was silent.

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"It was Calvin! Lou and Tallwyn's boy m'lord. I saw the sky strike him down from my post atop the walls." A young voice spoke with a slight tremor. He spoke out in a wide hall where others gathered for drink and respite. He spoke to a man sitting at the end of the hall atop a simple chair.

"The shepherd boy?" An aged, tired voice asked.

"Yes m'lord." The man sitting in the chair said, "Go alert Captain Orson. Have him send a party to recover the boy's flock." He thought for a moment,

"And fetch Mallory and two stablehands. Bring them to the spot you saw him fall, recover what you can."

The young sentry bowed his head and took his leave. This news brought a silence to the hall that hung for many moments. As if fed up with the quiet, the sitting man stood and walked from the room. He walked through a narrow hallway that passed the kitchens, thick with the warmth of a long days cooking. He climbed a rarely used staircase that ended in a hatch.

He opened it and peered out from atop the holdfast's highest roof. Thick storm clouds were bidding farewell to the valley with a gentle but heavy rain. He could see the lands they watered, the rivers they bolstered, the livestock they gave drink to. He thought, if they could recover the sheep, the life of one boy was little to pay for this blessing.

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"WAIT! Don't touch him," the old woman screeched. "You said a sky bolt hit him eh? Well it could still be living in him, could leap out and touch you too!" Her warnings would have sounded almost comical any other time. These three youngsters thought this wise woman was not so wise, cracked in the head more like. But they listened to her this time, they had never seen anything like this before. At the front stood Walter, a young sentry who had grown up with the shepherd. He wanted to see if his friend was alright.

Behind him were Tristan and Olly. Olly was scared, he wanted to be back at the holdfast. Tristan, on the other hand, wanted to see what happened to a man that got struck by lightning, he wanted to see so very badly.



Mallory approached the unmoving body. What was once a white shirt was now scorched and singed with huge chunks of it missing. The boy's chest was exposed to the returning sun, she could see it rising and falling ever so faintly. His face was as it was the best she could recall, but pain could be seen in the furrow of the brow. She took a smooth dark stone from a small pouch and pinched it in her hand. She pressed it into the boy's sternum. Those watching saw sparks leap out from the boy's chest and into the stone.

The old woman nodded, "Turn him over. I want to get a look at where it hit him." Walter came over and, as gently as he could, turned the boy so that his chest rested on the top of Walter's thighs. He cradled his head and was happy to feel the gentle breathing on his forearm.

Mallory pulled the boy's destroyed shirt to the side. Her eyes went wide. She expected to see blackened skin, cooked flesh, scarred tissue. Instead what she saw was a branching arch of violet energy. It crisscrossed down the back of his arm, splaying across his shoulder, lining along his spine. It stretched like a creeping vine reaching up cobbled walls. Beads of what looked

like glass were embedded along the path, pulsing as the lattice work breathed light from end to end.

She was perplexed, confused, horrified. What could she do for this boy? Whatever this was, it was far beyond her means.

"Give me your cloak Walter. Now!" she snapped to pull him out of his stupefied gaze. He unclasped his white cloak and draped it over the boy himself. Much went through his mind as he covered his friend's bare skin, still cradling his gently breathing head in the crook of his arm. Things such as this were unheard of to people like him, and things that were unheard of were oft not permitted to linger long in the valley. He feared for his friend, the fate that befell him, and where it might force him to go.

"Calvin, can you hear me? Cal?" His voice was eager, eager for anything that could bring things back to normal, that could unwind time. But the boy did not stir. He continued to breath tranquil breaths while upon his face were the signs of a raging maelstrom within.

# Implications of ancestry testing on personal identity

Angelique Chan

Thanks to the progression in genomics within the previous decades, direct-to-consumer (DTC) genetic testing is growing explosively, with more than 28 million tests sold in 2018. While genetic ancestry tests are putatively advertised for recreational purposes, the service has recently become an ethical controversy as companies invoke deeply personal concepts of individual identity when marketing their tests, leading to ambiguity and unanswered questions.

Y-chromosome testing is one of the main ancestry tests which can uncover a male's patrilineal lineage. Short Tandem Repeat (STR) markers or Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNPs) are analyzed to determine the male's Y-DNA haplotype, a unique genetic code for their paternal lineage. This technique is relatively reliable due to the unlikelihood of mutations. However, the result of the haplotype alone will be fruitless as it must be collated with other similar codes to determine akin agnates. Since the Y chromosome is inherited in the same pattern as family names in many cultures, it is often used to investigate whether two families with the same surnames are related.

Mitochondrial DNA testing discloses the maternal lineage. Unlike most of our DNA, mitochondrial DNA is found in the mitochondria as its own circular loop of DNA (mtDNA), and this is inherited from the mother alone. Because of the low frequency of allele recombination and mutations, the sequence of mitochondrial DNA remains unchanged over generations and thus is a useful tool for looking at distant maternal haplogroups.



Art by: Sophie D



In comparison to mtDNA and Y chromosome markers, autosomal markers present much more extensive ancestry details because they represent a much higher proportion of genome history. Autosomal DNA tests utilize DNA from the 22 pairs of autosomal chromosomes, which are the 22 pairs of chromosomes excluding the 23rd sex chromosome pair (XX or XY). It is inherited from both parents; therefore, either gender can take the test. Autosomal testing is used to identify individuals with a common ancestor up to the 5th cousin level and can reveal the ethnicity percentage composition of the tester as well as the location and migration patterns of ancestors. However, it cannot ascertain which side of the individual's family those long-term ancestors came from and has a limited timescale as it can only trace relatives up to the second cousin level.

Ancestry inference—in both its research and commercial applications—prompts a host of psychological and ethical concerns for the individual. Many testers are promised lavish but questionable data sets and misunderstanding may lead to identity-related conflicts. Firstly, what differentiates cultural heritage from their genes is the fact that cultural behaviors and traditions can undergo observable changes within a person's lifetime - (people's relationship with their smartphones, for example), while their nucleotide sequence is fixed. Your DNA is a relic of your cultural history, but the culture in which you are surrounded and accepted determines your cultural identity. A recent study showed that up to 62% of consumers use third-party applications to interpret the raw data not included in companies' reports. Additionally, online DTC testing companies lack effective regulations, which further obscures the information's accuracy.

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1 Regalado, Antonio. "More than 26 Million People Have Taken an at-Home Ancestry Test." MIT Technology Review, MIT Technology Review, 24 Jan. 2020, [www.technologyreview.com/s/612880/more-than-26-million-people-have-taken-an-at-home-ancestry-test/](http://www.technologyreview.com/s/612880/more-than-26-million-people-have-taken-an-at-home-ancestry-test/).

2 Ucl. "Understanding Genetic Ancestry Testing." UCL Division of Biosciences, 13 Feb. 2019, [www.ucl.ac.uk/biosciences/understanding-genetic-ancestry-testing-0](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/biosciences/understanding-genetic-ancestry-testing-0).

Subsequently, this can permanently alter an individual's perception of their cultural heritage and is capable of causing emotional fallouts and irremediable identity crises.

Ayshah Blackman, a Caribbean woman in her 50s with Indian heritage, had decided to take a DNA ancestry test last year through the UKTV show *The Secrets in My Family* in hopes of searching for her half-sister. However, the results were not at all what she was expecting. According to the test, Ayshah had no Indian DNA at all. She reported to *The Guardian*, "It made me question my ancestry, the fact that I might not be what I thought I was. I began to think that my grandmother had had an affair, that my mother had an affair." Blackman's AncestryDNA test traced her roots to west Africa. For people of African descent, whose individual and collective histories are blurred by the legacies of colonialism, slavery, and rape, what they know about their identities is particularly important. Consequently, Blackman felt that her family history has been tainted and regrets doing the test. This narrative demonstrates the withering impacts DNA DTC testing can have on consumers.

Companies are emotively marketing their tests through the disclosure of complicated histories, blurring the perception of genealogy and heritage, ultimately promoting the popular delusion that one's DNA determines race. These are two separate entities of an individual's life that should not be confused.

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3 Royal, Charmaine D, et al. "Inferring Genetic Ancestry: Opportunities, Challenges, and Implications." *The American Journal of Human Genetics*, 10 May 2008, [www.cell.com/ajhg/home](http://www.cell.com/ajhg/home).

4 Wang, Catharine, et al. "Consumer Use and Response to Online Third-Party Raw DNA Interpretation Services." *Molecular Genetics & Genomic Medicine*, John Wiley and Sons Inc., Jan. 2018, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5823680/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5823680/).

5 Lawton, Georgina. "'It Made Me Question My Ancestry': Does DNA Home Testing Really Understand Race?" *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 11 Aug. 2018, [www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/aug/11/question-ancestry-does-dna-testing-really-understand-race](http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/aug/11/question-ancestry-does-dna-testing-really-understand-race).



# Becoming Woman

By Phuong Hoang

## Self-Defined Identity in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *No Name Woman*

In Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* ("Mockingbird") and Maxine Hong Kingston's short story *No Name Woman* ("Woman"), both bildungsromans show society and social stratifications as major influences in the evolutionary process of young women, an issue integral to women's literature. As the protagonist-narrator in *Mockingbird*, Jean Louise Finch, better known as Scout, is conditioned to become the ideal "Southern belle" while Maxine Hong Kingston, the protagonist-narrator in *Woman*, is acclimatized to become a traditional Chinese lady. Though culturally and ethnically different, Scout and Maxine are expected to conform to pre-defined social norms that preclude individualism. As young American females during highly impressionable ages, Scout and Maxine become aware of society's social stratification through diverse but comparable life lessons.

*Mockingbird* is a tale of a young, white, motherless, 6-year old Scout born and raised in Alabama, who is taken under the wing of her father's sister, Aunt Alexandra, whose goal is to educate Scout in the ways of being a lady, the prototypical Southern belle. Through verbal critique, behavioral adjustment, and material objects, Alexandra sets herself and Finch family history as two fundamental metrics by which she measures Scout's proximity

to becoming this ideal construct of womanhood. During her Christmas visit, Alexandra's blunt verbal critique of Scout's masculine attire conforms with her personal vision of ideal feminine deportment declaring that Scout "could not possibly hope to be a lady if [she] wore breeches" and emphatically concluding that a lady "wasn't supposed to be doing things that required pants" (Lee, 83).

Behavioral adjustment occurs when Alexandra exposes Scout to expected socializing norms by dressing Scout in a dress then having Scout "join [the missionary circle women] for refreshments" (Lee, 231). Both verbal critique and behavioral adjustment are accompanied and reinforced by material objects such as clothing and a pearl necklace Alexandra gave Scout at birth, all of which symbolically represent the ideal Southern belle (Lee, 231, 83).

In addition to her candid disapproval of Scout's attire and attitude, Alexandra draws from Finch family history with examples like cousin Joshua who exemplify how Scout is "not from run-of-the-mill people" but the "product of several generations of gentle breeding" to further substantiate her position for insisting on Scout's conversion from tomboy to Southern belle (Lee, 133-134).



Art by: Sheima Araghi



In contrast to Scout, Maxine, the protagonist in *No Name Woman*, is a first generation Chinese American just entering menarche whose mother, Brave Orchid, talks-stories and serves as her primary life coach with the goal of schooling Maxine in the ways of becoming a traditional Chinese lady. Through talk-story, threats of erasure, and cultural adherence, Brave Orchid employs personal family history and cultural norms as two fundamental metrics with which she frames Maxine's positionality even as she guides Maxine towards becoming this ideal construct of womanhood. Using her husband's sister, No Name Woman, as a talk-story or "a story to grow up on," Brave Orchid teaches Maxine that traditional Chinese ladies are voiceless, dutifully fulfill expected gender norms, and do not step outside of the expected gender role of being a man's faithful, chaste, and subservient partner culminating with the penultimate warning that "what happened to her could happen to you" (Kingston, 1).

To oppose tradition and "cross[] boundaries not delineated in space" like No Name Woman who was an outcast because she committed adultery while "her new husband sailed for America" was to warrant the supreme penalty of erasure (Kingston, 2, 1). Cultural adherence was the center from which a Chinese lady's life radiated and it defined their dreams, miens, and realities "[a]s if it came from an atavism deeper than fear" (Kingston, 2, 3). This personal family history was consistently intertwined with cultural norms that predetermined womanhood. Therefore, to become a traditional Chinese lady, Maxine must model herself after Brave Orchid, "powered by Necessity," follow patriarchal orders, and not be like No Name Woman who harbored "singulari-

ty," humiliated family, and consequently, deserved to be "forgotten as if [she] had never been born" (Kingston, 1, 2, 3).

Both Scout's and Maxine's concepts of womanhood hinge significantly on their experience with life lessons as they are interpreted and applied by family, community, and society. For Scout, being "American female" and being influenced by the community, meant she should be more "ladylike" and remain within the confines of a conventional "Southern belle" while for Maxine, being "American female" as she is coached by her mother, meant she should be more like a "Chinese lady" and reserve her actions to those that neither humiliated her family nor angered her ancestors. Despite the divergence, both protagonists struggle to comprehend, process, and construct an identity of the "American female" that suits their individual character by absorbing, analyzing, and distilling ideas to incorporate an individualized and personal sense of selfhood.

Part of this selfhood entailed an understanding of economic status, another considerable aspect of becoming woman. Both *Mockingbird* and *Woman* investigate racial and class differences that affect perspective and stratification. In *Mockingbird*, Scout learns to differentiate between whites and blacks and amongst upper-, middle-, and lower-classes through Maycomb's treatment of its townspeople. In *Woman*, Maxine learns to differentiate between being American and Chinese American and times of abundance and shortage. For Scout and Maxine, concepts of social value hinge significantly on their interpretations of the interrelationship between social value and economic status.

In Scout's case, as a child growing up during the 1930s within Alabama's social context of segregation, Jim Crow

and anti-miscegenation laws, she becomes keenly aware of the racial stratification between White and Black as it bears out in Tom Robinson's trial which dualistically and concomitantly teaches her about class structure as well. Because Atticus chooses to defend Tom Robinson, his own nephew, Francis, brands him a "nigger-lover" to offend, denigrate, and disparage his conviction. While Scout is offended, Atticus re-appropriates the term, explaining that "[n]igger-lover is just one of those terms that don't mean anything – like snot-nose [] it's slipped into usage with some people like ourselves, when they want a common, ugly term to label somebody" (Lee, 113). In other words, people are people, no matter their skin color and to say "nigger-lover" is to say Atticus is a "people-lover" which, indeed, he is because Tom's case "affect[ed] him personally" so failure to represent Tom would rob both of their humanity. (Lee, 80).

In a similar manner, Atticus again teaches Scout – through Walter Cunningham – that class differences are social constructs which neither divest nor imbue virtue. Walter Cunningham Sr. is part of the "country folks, farmers, [that] the crash hit [the] hardest" but he does not take handouts and unfailingly pays off his debts; thus, poverty does not divest Walter of his virtues: diligence and honesty (Lee, 27). By the same token, neither does poverty imbue Walter with the virtue of racial tolerance because he is actually the leader of the mob that intended to lynch Tom simply based on perceived racial inferiority (Lee, 139).

Akin to Scout, Maxine extrapolates social worth from her interpretation of the dynamics between social standing and economic status. Known as a time of starvation, in 1924, Kingston's grandfa-

ther – as did many other northern Chinese men and No Name Woman's husband – "sailed for America, the Gold Mountain" to "get contracts" and "sen[d] money home" (Kingston, 1). Just as men's high social status gave them correspondingly high economic value, so women's low social status afforded them low economic value which left them vulnerable to societal fluctuations of generosity and forbearance: "Adultery, perhaps only a mistake during good times, became a crime when the village needed food" (Kingston, 4). Thus, even though the adultery occurred between two humans, a man and a woman, the man became the duplicitous masked avenger who "joined the raid on her family" while No Name Woman "hazarded birth" and her "fear did not stop but permeated everywhere" making the man victor and the woman victim (Kingston, 2).

In addition to equating gender with economic worth, Maxine also learned about racial differences and its correlation to gender norms when she fervently asks: "Chinese-Americans, when you try to understand what things in you are Chinese, how do you separate what is peculiar to childhood, to poverty, insanities, one family, your mother who marked your growing with stories, from what is Chinese?" (Kingston, 1). Such self-questioning reflects the differences between Eurocentric principles of self-centeredness and individuality as being diametrically opposed to Chinese cultural values of self-sacrifice and communalism. Moreover, it alludes to the devaluation of the Chinese lady's feminine worth, a direct consequence passed down and carried forward through the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which was not repealed until 1943.



By incorporating their respective life lessons, both protagonists in *Mockingbird* and *Woman* use their experiences to develop their own perspectives as they grow into womanhood. In *Mockingbird*, Scout does not adopt the discriminatory attitudes of her environment and instead comes to invest in the belief that humanity is capable of both good and evil but that, with sympathy, understanding, and tolerance, evil can be mitigated. In *Woman*, Maxine goes through her own process and considers the possible interpretations of her No Name Woman's circumstances and actions, holding the unknown man and villagers accountable for her aunt's erasure, and decides to re-appropriate her aunt's position through acknowledgment, documentation, and naming. Scout's and Maxine's choices demonstrate the alternative ways females can respond to pre-defined social stratifications, make their own choices, develop their own values and principles, and construct a self-defined identity of womanhood.

Scout and Maxine's ability to construct a self-defined identity aligns with the female phase of feminist literature characterized by self-discovery and a freedom from predefined conceptions of womanhood that works toward developing a "female aesthetic," elevating sexuality to a world polarizing determination, "creating a separatist literature of inner space" through "creative processes [] [and containing] both transcendental and self-destructive vulnerability" (Lecture 4). Through their constructions, Scout and Maxine ultimately chose personalized individual paths diversifying the construct of "womanhood": Scout re-defines "Southern belle" to connote cultured, fair, and inclusive whereas Maxine re-defines "Chinese lady" to signify American, as-

sertive, and vocal. The issues experienced by Scout and Maxine still pervade today's society because the teaching, training, and transmission of values, principles, and perspectives continue to be rooted in society and its community members. Having different literary role models provide alternative vantage points that broaden and build greater independence and expression for womanhood and future generations.

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## Historical

## Learning



Photo by: Nico White



# The World Before Industry

## By Jasmine Fung

William Wordsworth's world was changing—and rapidly. Life in early nineteenth century Britain was heavily influenced by the industrial revolution and with it brought the adverse grip of capitalism to the very fabric of society. Wordsworth translates his brutal critiques into his poem, “The World Is Too Much With Us.” Aligning with many writers of the Romantic Era, Wordsworth's poem denounces the way industry has taken away human worth, creativity, and everything essential to humanity. “The World Is Too Much With Us” is a reflective and critical poem of its time and the inevitable cultural and social shift brought on by the consequences of industrialism.

Wordsworth points the finger at capitalism and industry without hesitation or any kindling of remorse. While the poet does not specifically call out the capitalist system, the imagery of time and money communicates it just as well. “The world is too much with us; late and soon” (1) writes Wordsworth. Later in the poem, Wordsworth brings up the concept of time again: “For this, for everything, we are out of tune;” (line 8). The usage of the words “late,” “soon,” and “tune” alludes to time and imagery of a clock. With the rise of industrial life spreading across Britain, the lack of time for people in their daily lives was apparent in the new rigidity of a capitalistic and industry-based economy. People were suddenly living on a strict timetable to ensure the continuation and profitability of a system that does not value them as human beings—a sharp contrast to the more autonomous leisurely lifestyle of a rural economy. Wordsworth also indicates society's rising obsession with greed and materialistic desires, accusing people of “Getting and spending” (2) and that “We have

given our hearts away, a sordid boon!” (3) In Wordsworth's poem, the speaker fervently condemns the surface-level transactions occurring between people. Britain's deviation from agrarian society to industry grooms people to seek the rewards of indulging in the constant cycle of working and consuming materialistic goods.

The nation's shift towards industry and capitalistic priorities moves people away from true interactions with each other and into a world of factories and whirring machinery. The exchanges between people have ultimately been reduced to simply a means to an end. Wordsworth's poem criticizes how Britain's capitalistic agenda has robbed the people of their time, autonomy, and empathy for each other.

Wordsworth's poem is also incredibly critical of Britain's will to shift away from nature. Throughout the poem, Wordsworth consistently includes imagery and personification of nature. Wordsworth states, “Little we see in Nature that is ours” (3). Wordsworth's tone is serious, solemn, and dejected at the notion that people have all but moved away from the beauty and benefits that nature provides humanity. The distinction between “nature” and “ours” gives off the implication that the two are no longer one and the same but have separated into different entities. In another section of the poem, Wordsworth introduces more elements of nature into the poem with, “This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon; / The winds that will be howling at all hours, / And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers” (5-7). The majestic and ethereal depiction of the beautiful and natural relationships within nature sharply contrasts the deprecatory attitude and annoyed tone which Wordsworth uses to describe the rigorous capitalistic system.



Wordsworth further explains the consequences of society being removed from nature: “It moves us not” (9) and that “we lay waste our powers” (2). The speaker of Wordsworth's poem views society's detachment from nature as a shift away from humanity. The ever creeping grip of capitalism prevents people from noticing, experiencing, and appreciating the natural rhythms of the world. The poet reasons that society's burgeoning distance from nature causes people to forgo their creativity, originality, and awareness of their surroundings and therefore, an essential part of humanity. Capitalism's discouragement of society's connection and need for nature eventually deters people from creating and innovating. Instead, the societal shift of the industrial revolution fosters people who are destined to become mindless, droning profitable workers.

As the first section of “The World Is Too Much With Us” condemns and emphasizes the consequences of catering society towards a dehumanizing system, the latter half reminisces the past and the glory of being connected with the natural world. Wordsworth uses the allusion of a dying religious practice to signify his resignation at the trajectory of humanity: “Great God! I'd rather be / A pagan suckled in a creed outworn” (9-10). The speaker of the poem reveals that he feels despair and unhelpful about the direction that the industrial revolution is heading. He claims that he would choose to be a pagan if it meant that he could return to the past where people were one with nature. The speaker reasons that at least he could, “Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea; / Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn” (13-14) and confesses that he wishes to “have glimpses that would make me less forlorn” (12).

The speaker's pessimism about the future of their industrial society is transparent through the glamorization of the past. Wordsworth's inclusion of the Greek gods, Proteus and Triton, reminisces and embraces humanity's previous glory before the industrial revolution. Although paganism had mostly fallen out of favor by this time period, the speaker determines that the proposed alternate reality would still be the better and more hopeful future for the British people.

“The World Is Too Much With Us” exposes the futility and detriment of the rise of the industrial revolution and the inevitability of capitalism. In Wordsworth's world, people are being subjected to the whims and needs of a system that does not value humans as more than mere workers. With the change in lifestyle and priorities, people have ultimately created their own demise.

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# Perhaps In Death There Is A Lake

## By: Antoni Klopotoski

A six-pack of beer in one hand, a fishing rod in the other, a man who was told by a team of doctors to stay in bed trudges through the woods. He is bald, his shoulders slump over, and his clothes hang loosely over the crevices of bone his skin has sunk between. The man drops his equipment, leans against the bark of a Sequoia tree and wheezes into a fist. Even walking causes him to gasp for air now. But, the man catches his breath, picks up his equipment and walks on. This is the last time he'll ever fish, the man thinks. Hence the beer and cigarettes; they were brought with the hope of the moments casting the fishing rod lasting just a moment more. The scent of pine trees fills the man's nose; the sweet aroma of the Goddess Mother Nature in her holiness. She's blessing the fish tonight, he thinks. The setting summer sun shines its rays on the sweat on the back of the man's neck, feeling as only the sun can feel. The earth beneath the man's boots is like he's walking on the clouds of heaven, or however you call it. He knows the kids will shout at him. He'd get scolded for coming here; how he ran away to a place with no cell phone service, without telling anyone, in his condition... But, the man had to say goodbye.

As he walks, the pine trees, bushes and reeds part to reveal a dam of green grass above the lake, void of any other fishermen, shining in the golden setting sun. The man has been here hundreds of times before; with the same fishing rod, in the same shirt and jeans, the same model boots, with the same heart and hands and eyes and mouth. He stops at a boulder in the middle of the dam. Once he's there, wherever that is, he will thank the poor soul who dragged this here so one can sit as he fishes, he thinks. Wheezing, the man sets down his stuff, and takes a seat on the boulder. He gazes out ahead of him. The knowledge that he will die soon makes all he sees have more shades of color, tastes of scent, feel to his hands. Tonight, the surface of the lake is like a painting; the sequoia trees dance in the water's ripples with branches that have survived storms, floods, and fires; the moon with



its craters made hundreds of thousands of years ago by stray asteroids rises in the sky; a family cooks barbecue ribs, sits on the dock, their feet in the water, and laugh. Birds sing their last songs of the day, a toad bellows, a bat flies above his head. It will be dusk soon, but the summer mountain heat still falls from the setting sun. The man knows these are the last moments he'll ever have with these views.

The man breaks into a smile as a fish splashes the surface of the lake. This is the time for fish. They awake in the evening; swimming around in search of food. The fish feed on flies, mosquitos, water spiders, but the fish that are meant to be eaten are the ones that feed on other fish. A dynamic like any day at the office, the man thinks, or like what the tumors have done to his lungs. The man takes a deep breath, but, like most of his breaths now, there's not enough air. A hand on his chest, he takes a moment for his lungs to catch up. Tonight, he tells himself, he'll be lucky. The man is going to catch a fish that one can eat; a catfish or a bass. He'll cook the fish, sprinkle it with thyme and marjoram, and have dinner with his kids. Cancer patients are usually disgusted by food, but this will be different, the man thinks. It will be for them. This will be a dinner his kids will remember him for; a dinner that he caught and prepared himself; a dinner he can part his life after.

The man grabs the six-pack by the handle, tears it apart, and pulls a cold, wet beer from the plastic spine. As he cracks open the beer it foams and spills over his hand and to the grass. The man takes a long drag. The cold drink washes down his throat, his stomach warms, bubbles rise up, a burp leaves his lips. This tastes much better than chemo juice, the man thinks. Then, he reaches into his pocket, takes out a pack of American Spirit cigarettes, gives them a pat, tears open the plastic, and takes out a cigarette. He looks over the cigarette in his hand for a moment. He's smoked thousands of these in his life. The cigarette in his hand is the size of a finger, the paper it is wrapped in is a clean white, the filter is soft enough to use as a pillow for a kid. But, this is what the man will die from. Well, it's too late to change now, the man thinks, I've done it myself. He puts the cigarette in his lips, and sparks a lighter. He takes a drag, tastes the tobacco; feels the warm smoke fill his lungs; his head starts to spin; feelings that, if the man was

honest, he has missed. He blows smoke. He blows smoke. Then, cigarette on the edge of his lips, he gets down on his knees, on his shaking elbows, and digs in the earth. He'd rather do it the way he was taught as a kid than buying bait at the store. He pulls out three earthworms digging beneath a patch of grass, and kisses each. "You'll be my luck," he says under his breath, smiling. He stands by the help of the boulder, then falls back on it and wheezes. In a dirt-stained, shaking hand, with careful focus, he attaches a worm to the hook of his fishing pole, leaving the rest in the pocket of his jeans.

The man raises his fishing pole. With a woosh sound, he casts the line behind him, then towards the lake. The hook and the bob float in the air for a moment, gone from sight in the sky, then a bloop is heard, and they are in the water. Smoking cigarettes, drinking beer, sitting on the boulder, the man watches the orange bob as it floats on the surface of the lake. He reels in, casts, reels in, casts to try another place; each time the worm is still on the hook. Each time, he reels the line in free of a fish's bite, or even a nibble. He does this again and again; and feels the common fisherman's experience, or that of any person with a passion, of forgetting that time passes.

As he watches the line, the man falls into reflection. In his life, he's gone fishing in each region of America. He's proud to have caught bass, catfish, sharks, even toads have hung from his line. But, the man has yet to fish outside of the country. He has yet to do a lot of stuff, he thinks. The man's life had grown like an old oak tree; with twists, bends, loops, fissures in the bark, its leaves green, golden, or falling with the seasons. As a kid he'd played baseball, had broken his wrist, had snuck out to ride bikes and pass a bottle of stale beer around amidst rows of corn. His dad taught him how to fish at the Sacramento River. He remembers how he would watch as his dad flicked the ash off his cigarette; how its tip glowed orange; how he blew smoke to the side to protect him. His grades in high school didn't widen any eyes, but they did get him an admission's letter to a college more than 3 hours away from his hometown. A bouquet of roses in his hand, he asked a girl he adored to prom, and she said yes. He had thrown toilet paper at the school principal's house, and had smiled and shook the principal's hand in front of the school at graduation four days later.



He had taken a chance at a career in Geology. He was interested in this subject more than the business major that his friends chose. Rocks: they can be seen, can be felt, can be taken apart and analyzed. We all came from rocks, we'll all end up rocks he would joke often. In college, he had gone to parties, had gotten drunk to the point of getting sick a handful of times, and smoked hundreds of cigarettes as he studied his textbooks. Through this time, he was faithful to his high school sweetheart. They would stay up late, her teaching him about Jesus Christ, him teaching her about rocks and fish.

He graduated, and his focused work ethic at the engineering company allowed him to rise to the position of Chief Geologist. With his job he was able to buy a car, a home, and a diamond engagement ring. His marriage was a loving, joyful one, but she passed before him. He would do anything to talk to her again, to see her laugh, to kiss the freckle she had on her cheekbone. The edge of his lip curls. She'd always tease him that "he loved catfish more than her". If only he could speak to her one more time, he thinks. If he knew she would be gone so soon, he would have spoken to her more. They had kids, and the man had loved his kids, but in the end their relationship turned to criticism and shouting; that someone his age should go out and meet another woman, not take fishing trips every weekend. He wanted his son and daughter to go to college, but his daughter told him to "Stop controlling our lives." He stopped asking that day. His wife would know how to talk to them better, the man thinks. He has realized that he wants what is best for his children, even if that is different than what he thought that would be. Retirement was forced on his life due to cancer. Now, he spends most of his days in bed. The man realizes he traded the exciting, short dream life of youth for a long boring one, but he accepts that he did so.

He realizes that his life has been a piece of algae in the sea's currents, not the kind that grows on boulders braving the waves, but that means he's seen a lot of the world- well, this world, at least. Fishing was more of a religion for him than the one practiced in churches, but if there is a God, he thinks, he'd be happy with how the man had lived. But, still, if he could do it one more time he'd change, he thinks. He would have been grateful for his time.

He would have built something his kids would be proud of. He takes a crackling drag of his cigarette, then ashes it on the boulder.

But now that he was on the verge of death everyone was kind to him. Now that he was ill, frowns, crossed arms and hard eyes turned into smiles, pats on the back and promises of "being there" for him. As he lay in his bed he dreamed of fishing one more time; of casting the fishing pole; of reeling in the line; of a catfish dangling from his hook. But, according to doctors, the only thing he could do was take it easy, drink fluids, take his medicine, and get plenty of rest. Rest for what? Doctors with wrinkles in their eyes, his kids off in their own lives, 20 year-old nurses wanting to wipe his ass for him; all the people "helping" him succeeded in was reminding him of a life he had wasted. Perhaps in death there is a lake; a place where he can swim, drink a beer, cast the fishing pole... The man's palms turn sweaty and he rubs the back of his neck as he thinks of what the place after death will be like. There is the answer religion provides; halos and wings and clouds in the sky or flames that burn so that the dead yearn for death. There is his daughter's answer; soul families, reincarnation, we are soul beings having a human experience. There's Native Americans that say the dead speak to us through art, dance and rituals. There may be nothing but a black void after death. There may be nothing more than a return to the rock state we came from, as he would joke in college. He takes a long drag of his cigarette and hopes he'll have peace there, wherever it may be. A bird flies over the lake, reflecting in the water. A bird thinks of nothing but what it's doing, he thinks, only a person entertains thoughts. Perhaps thinking so much causes all our problems, he thinks.

Tonight he'll have come home with dinner for his kids, he thinks.

The man is brought out of his reflection as he feels a gentle tug on the line. The edges of his lips turn to a smile, wrinkles form in the corners of his eyes, joy sparks in his chest. He cuts the fish some slack, then reels in. He does so again. This is what he does it for, he thinks: for the joy. But, as the fish is reeled in, he sighs. The catch is a Bluegill; a fish the size of a palm, with sharp quills, a dirty silver color, and too much cartilage for eating.



“This is not what I came down here for,” he says under his breath. He takes it off the hook, then tosses the fish back in the lake. The fish swims away towards deeper water.

As he casts the line again worry rises in his chest; he won’t eat any bass or catfish tonight. It was a waste of time to come here. His daughter was right, he should have stayed home, if not in bed then in the yard where he can watch the birds, in his wheelchair, with a steaming cup of coffee, in a place where he can pick up his cell phone. His nurses will do all kinds of tests and his team of doctors will give him a stern talk when they find him. “What have ya’ done now?” he hears his Pop’ say.

No. Worry is like a pit that, once one falls in, only tears the skin on your arms and legs and chest as you try to crawl over the rolling rocks and back to sunlight. Worry drives blessings away. Worry causes cancer. The man takes a hard drag on his cigarette, and watches the border move from ember to ash. This is his last fishing trip; he has to try.

Brows furrowed, the man drinks beer, smokes, and fishes until the sun can be seen in the lake; glaring red from the tops of the Redwoods. Fish avoid my line tonight, he thinks. They must be repulsed; he has the scent of death on him. He might as well pack up right now, he thinks. The sun will set, the night will come, he’ll go home and he’ll die the same. But, he will cast the line one last time, he tells himself. He has to catch a fish tonight. This is his last fishing trip. He will catch one. Sit still. Make no sound. Don’t even light another cigarette for the spark of the lighter...

A moment later, a group of teenagers jump in the other side of the lake. They surface a few seconds after, laughing and shouting and splashing. “Oh, come on,” the man’s voice rumbles. He reels in, then casts the line again. One more time, he tells himself.

A blue dusk comes over the sky. The line floats in the lake. The man must squint to see the bob in the darkness. Crickets sing. Bats begin to chirp and fly about; hunting for insects. Toads bellow from the reeds and jump in

the water, splashing. A breeze cools the remaining heat of the day. The world will spin on without him, the man thinks. The sun will rise in Africa now, with its millions of people living among trash, making 20 cents a week, dying from mosquito bites, and then on the other side, we, our universities, our skyscraper offices, will be in the same light as was in Africa. As he casts a fishing rod in hope of a final dinner with his kids, the Earth orbits around a ball of flames hundreds of times its size, and that ball of flames rotates around a ball of many flames, and that ball of fire has so many suns in it that if you were to count the grains of sand of all the beaches in the world they would fall short. What is between the spaces?, the man thinks. His palms sweat. What if everything this world is and everything we know is a grain of sand on a beach? What if one could take the universe in a palm and let it sift through your fingers? What is his life, his cancer, his fishing rod to that beach?

The line slices the air as it unfurls by a foot a second. The man jumps to his feet, tugs the rod against the pull of the fish, reels in, then cuts slack, reels in and cuts slack again. His weak, skinny arms shake as the fish pulls. She jumps, splashing water, and the man sees the truth of what he has caught: a species of fish he has yet to catch, larger than any fish he’s ever had on the line. A golden aura emanates from the fish; it shines as the fish jumps, lighting the pine trees, and makes the water shimmer. He wrestles with the fish on the line, pulling back and cutting slack, but the fish pulls so that it hurts his hands. She’ll get away, he thinks. But, this is the last chance he will ever have of a fish on his hook. He reels in as hard as he can. As he reels in, his arms shake, the rod bends at an angle that threatens to snap it in two. The fish pulls on. The man’s foot falls in mud, slides and the man falls. He tumbles down the dam and falls in the lake. He sits up in the shallow water, drenched, gasping for air. The rod is pulled into the deeper water but he catches it. Sitting in shallow water, he pulls in, against the fish so that he thinks the handle will break off, “I’ll sit here all night with you!” he shouts, then wheezes. He reels in, cuts it slack, and does so again. After a moment of struggle, he notices the fish is tiring. He takes advantage and pulls hard. The fish struggles against the pressure. He cuts it some slack, then pulls in again. The man reels her in, slapping against and splashing the water.



The man's eyes squint as he looks at the fish. The fish shines like the sun; like a wildfire; like a bolt of lightning is in the fish's body as it writhes on the hook. The man laughs. It's a prize fish. A record-breaker. It's the biggest fish he has caught in his life. Of all his years of fishing in his life, this is the end. The man smiles as he breaks into tears.

After a moment, the man realizes where he is again. Night had set in as he struggled with the fish. The man came here with an intention; he'd catch a fish, go back to the house, clean it, cook it, and have one last dinner with his kids. But now, as the man's body shakes, his clothes drenched in lake water, as a crescent moon shines above, and teenagers laugh on the other side of the lake, an intuition overcomes the man: the fish will die, as he, his kids, his doctors, and everything, will. The man says, "Well, I have a degree in science hanging on the wall at the office, but that only got me this far." He wheezes. "Who knows what plan Life or God or The Universe or Whoever has laid down for us after it's all been done." The fish gazes at him, gills trying to breathe. The man shrugs. "I hope you live the rest of your days like you know nothin." He gives the fish a kiss on the lips, and tosses it back in the lake.

As he tosses the fish, it grows wings. They are an eagle's wings; shining as gold as the fish does. The wind nearly knocks the man over as the fish's wings beat against the sky. As the fish flies, it grows; as large as the Redwoods around the lake that dig their roots in waiting soil. Above the fish's head appears a halo that blinds the man, as if he is looking into the sun. As the fish flies into the moon, owls, frogs and bears dance amid the stars. Among them are golden beings with halos, bird's wings, six eyes, and antlers made of gold adorned with gems and jewels. They dance too. They dance to music played by instruments the man hears for the first time. The man feels as if he was a person who had walked a cross country trek and as if he had swam across oceans at once; like he's hiked mountains of snow and tread under the desert sun at once; like he had felt the darkness of the night and the clarity of day at once. The beings dance on. Flames like fireworks or lightning or bombs of colors the man sees for the first time explode amid dancing northern lights of rainbows of these colors.

But then, it's as if the fish and the animals and the beings see something toward where the lights stretch. The man sees it too. The forms of life float farther away into the universe. The man tries to swim or fly or crawl there but he remains where he is. The beings disappear. Then, the stars in the night sky fall as gold flakes from space to the Earth. The man stands in the shallow water; gasping for breath. He looks at his hand, bathed in white under the moon, to see if it is real, and a flake of gold falls on his finger. Shaking, he casts the line one more time.



Art by: Diana Mendez



# *The Reaper*

*By: Daniel Grau*

The Reaper had gone by many names. In the beginning, he was nothing more than a concept, unfamiliar and vague, but inevitable nonetheless. To some, she was a woman, shrieking and howling. To others, a psychopomp, escorting souls to the afterlife. A tall, pale figure. A ferryman. A hooded skeleton wielding a scythe. The bringer of judgment. The Reaper was all of these things, and none at the same time, for he only took the form bestowed upon him from those destined to cross her path.

As the first breath of humanity came into existence so too did the Reaper, for with every beginning must come an end. If every soul was a crop amidst an expansive field of life, then she would wander purposefully searching for harvest. The Reaper was burdened with one responsibility to which he had carried out for millenia. She carried it out well. As life and culture blossomed and spread throughout the world like a field of wildflowers, it brought variability. The Reaper's presence prevented humanity from unraveling into an everlasting state of chaos. So too did he provide meaning, for when time is limited, purpose becomes a necessity.

And yet, she was dreaded, scorned, and shunned. Some venerated him, or perhaps surrendered to his inevitability, but all feared the Reaper. They cast her away, hiding in veils of ignorance so that they could somehow miraculously escape her inevitable intentions. Many attempted to defeat him, even devoted their lives concocting a way to never meet the Reaper. They deluded themselves into the belief that they could hide from, stall, or prevent her visitation. Few things puzzled the Reaper, but he could never comprehend humanity's innate desire to flee, to view him with such terror and hatred. It seemed to her that the misunder-

standing was shared, for with every greeting came confusion. Those he hadn't yet met would bargain, beg, and cry. The Reaper would observe, and attempt with all her might to feel as they did. To understand the horror that he wielded, to see himself as an inescapable enemy that he must eventually concede to. She never could. The enigma of the Reaper's existence was one neither humanity nor the Reaper himself could ever possibly fathom.

Everything about the Reaper's reality seemed paradoxical. If everything that begins must end, was her existence finite as well? He had prevailed for millenia and yet remained unchanged. Would she, thousands of years in the future, die as a star does amidst a glorious explosion of energy brilliant enough to engrave a memory of her existence into the fabric of the cosmos? Or would he slowly wither and fade, a forgotten ghost of an infinite and empty universe?

Everyone asked the same questions, and like the Reaper, they received no answer. What comes next? How did it happen? The Reaper would solemnly shrug, as if to imply: does it really matter? Many fell into denial, some accepted, few rejoiced as though it were an honor. Some asked no questions. Many pondered if they were dreaming. Perhaps they were. Perhaps the Reaper was a constant figure in everyone's imagination, only tasked in transitioning the mind's passing from one place to the next, or to nothing. It did not matter to her, for her reality was as he experienced.

The amount of souls he had encountered was beyond his own comprehension. She did not tire, she did not yearn for an existence or a purpose other than that with which she was delegated thousands of years ago. Even when the universe scorned him as being an ev-

erlasting curse that nobody could escape. Life was creation, and the Reaper was destruction. Everything good was in Life and everything evil in the Reaper. She wondered, maybe the notion that the Reaper opposed Life like two eternal enemies engrossed in an endless dance together was simply a misconception, some poor attempt to understand a fleeting concept beyond the human mind. They could not exist without each other. Perhaps they were merely a duality of something greater, something that the Reaper was never meant to understand.

As time passed and more souls were escorted onward, the questions that so many had asked eventually began to intrigue the Reaper. What lies next? Nothing, or something? Which is more terrifying? Many are overwhelmed upon the epiphany that the futility of life is accentuated when presented with these options. The human mind is advanced enough to raise this question but not nearly enough to comprehend it. The Reaper could not denigrate them however, for he too could not answer. If all things must end, why must they exist in the first place? If the length of any finite piece of time will always be infinitely small compared to the grand scheme of the universe, what purpose does Life serve if the Reaper lies at the end to destroy it? Perhaps, the Reaper would wonder, every end is instead a new beginning, and nothing truly ends. Would there be another Reaper after her? Was there one before? With time came thought, and with every passing the Reaper's fascination would increase.

Eventually, less souls approached the Reaper. The time in between each greeting lengthened as did his moments in solitude, until his life seemed to descend into a cruel triviality. Every time these intervals increased, the Reaper believed he had now become devoid of purpose, and questioned his own existence yet again. Almost every time, a new visitor would arrive shortly after, until decades went by with nothing. Was seclusion a curse, or was it peace? Part of her desired for another soul to cross her path, so that she could feel meaning once again. He wondered why he still existed.

With no beginnings there were no ends, and with no ends, there was no Reaper.

A decade was a blink in the perspective of the Reaper, and yet seventy years felt as though they lasted as long as her entire existence had. The Reaper always took a form to the soul he was encountering, typically one of comfort, veneration, or familiarity. People of certain faiths would see her as they believed they would in life. Some would see past loved ones. Yet now, years in isolation, the Reaper had no incarnation. An empty, insignificant entity cursed to be alone and purposeless.

Was the Reaper meant to wander these endless fields once providing fruitful harvest, now devoid of life, as some sort of cruel mockery to what he once was? Perhaps this was an inevitable fate, just as everyone must inevitably meet her, so too would she be met with isolation.

"You're not my mother...are you?" the soul spoke softly, yet confidently. The Reaper shook his head.

It felt ironic that the one to give her life was seemingly about to take it as well. The old woman sighed.

"I suppose that would have been more shocking than whatever you really are," she began to laugh. This puzzled the Reaper. "I never met my mother. She's beautiful." Silence enveloped the two of them. The Reaper felt almost out of practice. She knew not what to do next, as if this elderly soul was supposed to guide her. As usual, the Reaper prepared himself for a bombardment of questions, some that he could answer and some that he could not, yet he would always abstain from doing so. Eventually, the spirit would fall into acceptance and the Reaper could escort them onward. This moment was theirs and the Reaper would oblige to the time they required. The reality of this was much different. "Will you die with me?" The woman asked. The Reaper tilted her head as if in questioning. Was this a request to the incarnation that this woman was being presented with, as a form of comfort?



"I am the last one," she stated, and seemed to almost avert her gaze from the Reaper. "When nothing is left to die, surely Death must cease to exist as well." The Reaper, for the first time in millennia, was presented with a question he did not expect. It struck immediately as though it were not a thought that she had already conjured millennia ago. Only now was he realizing the gravity of the idea. Throughout the decades of solitude, she had almost wished to find his reflection and be taken onward as she had done for the world so many times. Yet now, as he faced himself, he felt hesitation, for the epiphany he had ages ago was now confirmed: even Death must one day die.

"I will not pester you with any more questions that I'm sure you always hear, and act like I haven't pondered them myself for the majority of my life," the woman said bluntly. "My family met you decades ago. Do you remember them?" The Reaper remembered all of them. She nodded.

"I've never known if I would ever see them again. I made peace with it long ago. I've lived most of my life in solitude. It was peaceful, but very lonely..." the woman trailed off, as if in thought. The Reaper waited patiently. After a few moments, the woman seemed to snap back into reality with a small chuckle. "I am sorry, it seems that even in this abstract construct of my own reality that my mind is still weak and frail. At least my knees feel a bit better than before." She shared a toothy grin and shallowly squatted as if to show the Reaper that her knees functioned. The Reaper watched curiously. Silence returned to the two of them like an old friend of both.

"We have both always been alone," the woman began, abruptly changing tone. It seems only fitting that they should die that way as well. The Reaper would guide her passing, and then slowly fade from existence as his purpose was no longer necessary.

"Will you die with me?" the woman asked again, this time as a request instead of a general question. She extended her hand, exuding a fake vulnerability as though to give the Reaper purpose in his final moments. The woman remained composed.

"Please." The Reaper took her hand. She had exchanged displays of affection several times, as when she presented herself as a loved one a soul would almost always embrace her. This time however, was the first that it felt like it was for him.

"I've lived a good life," the woman said open endedly, as if expecting the Reaper to agree about her own. He began to think. She had lived a purposeful life. He had tended to these fields of souls as long as they existed, reaping the plentiful harvest of the fertile Earth. Now, the fields were empty, filled with endless lines of tilled soil prepared for seeds that would never come. The Reaper had no regrets, she had no fears. Perhaps one day, new seeds would return, and a new Reaper would tend to them. It was now time for him to pass as he had helped billions to do in the past. She believed she was ready, but it didn't matter. As if in sudden realization, the feeling of uncertainty that the Reaper had always been puzzled by in humans became apparent. The woman squeezed his hand, and he felt comfort. At least now they were not alone.



Art By: Jennifer Loving



# CAN WE USEFULLY TALK ABOUT A FAILURE OF INTELLIGENCE? A THEORY OF MIND PERSPECTIVE

## Introduction

Failures of intelligence are useful insofar as they can be evaluated so as to improve analysis. In this process, it is important that one considers the psychological processes that underpin analytical failures. It is especially important to consider how failures of intelligence are governed by insufficient ability to understand the perspectives of others. This ability to determine other's mental states is known as theory of mind.

Theory of mind is principally studied as part of the developmental field of psychology, as it is a mechanism that children purportedly acquire at the age of four (Wimmer and Perner, 1983). However, there remain very legitimate flaws in adult thinking that are comparable to weak theory of mind ability. The psychological phenomenon known as theory of mind is related to the logical flaw referred to as mirroring by the intelligence community. Further, I suggest that the human mind is more complex than we might imagine, and that though psychologists estimate that theory of mind is developed at age four, it is evidently an imperfect process—otherwise, how would mirroring and other logical flaws when considering others' perspectives occur?

Also, just as theory of mind is being discredited as an absolute threshold, it is also being understood to be more nebulous than previously envisioned, and is influenced by factors such as imagination. Further, theory of mind is critical for collective intelligence, which is important for analytical judgements within intelligence community settings. This raises many questions regarding ramifications in terms of improving logical analysis in the intelligence community based on improved understandings of how the human mind works. It is useful to consider how the intelligence failures that result from the limitations of theory of mind could be examined so as to overcome some of these mental limitations when performing future analyses.

## Part I: The Relationship Between Collective Intelligence and Theory of Mind

In a study by Woolley, it was shown that the performance of a group at intelligence tasks, referred to as "collective so much with the average or maximum intelligence of members of the group, but rather with 'average social sensitivity of group members, the equality in distribution of conversational turn-taking, and the proportion of females in the group'.

interact and communicate information with one another (Woolley). A group's ability to coordinate with one another effectively is more important than the intelligence of individual group members (Malone). By this logic, it would seem that social intelligence, especially theory of mind, would be useful not just as a way for intelligence agencies to understand the groups they are evaluating, but also as a means of improving how analysts communicate information to one another. Further research on this shows that theory of mind is critical for collective intelligence (Woolley).

## Part II: The Role of Imagination in Theory of Mind

Since the original study by Wimmer and Perner in 1983, researchers have examined children's understanding of theory of mind through the paradigm of the false belief task. In the Wimmer and Perner study, a subject observed the actions of a boy, Maxi, in an enacted scenario. The tests were conducted on children aged three to nine. In the task, there was an object, child and a protagonist in the room. The object is moved from one place to another, with the child observing but the protagonist not observing. The child was then asked where the protagonist would believe the object had been placed. The correct response was that the protagonist believed the object was still in the same place because if the child understood the protagonist's mental state, he would understand that the protagonist did not observe the place change. However, if the child was incorrect, he might say that the protagonist would believe that the object had been moved to its new location be-

cause he failed to understand the protagonist's mental state (Wimmer and Perner, 1983).

Despite this initial assessment, it had been shown that theory of mind is a dynamic, indefinite, and ongoing perceptual change over a range of years. Various adaptations of the false belief task have already revealed various aspects of how children learn to understand false belief at different stages in development. In a study by Onishi and Baillargeon, researchers came to the conclusion that even fifteen-month-olds could understand false belief (Onishi and Baillargeon, 2005). Though it would be inaccurate to state that the infants understood theory of mind in the same way as the four-year olds, the study did reveal how that altering aspects of the false belief task affects children's performance. Consequently, these studies show how children's approach to the false belief task characterizes their grasp of various aspects of theory of mind.

According to Cognitive Development, children under the threshold age of four are able to comprehend false belief through use of pretense (Flavell, Miller, and Miller, 1993). When playing pretend games, children imagine things they know to be false. According to a study by Rosen, Schwebel, and Singer, children understand pretense based more on contextual clues than through use of theory of mind (Rosen, Schwebel, and Singer, 1997). However, according to Taylor and Carlson, there is a correlation between children's aptitude for imaginary games and children's understanding of false belief (Carlson and Taylor, 1997). There must be an interplay between the two. Possibly, pretense facilitates children's



understanding of theory of mind. Another study showed that pretense involved use of some, but not all, of the representational skills for false belief (Dissanayake and Nielsen, 2000).

Therefore, through various studies, it has been shown that theory of mind is far more complex and governed by many mental factors, including imagination. Understanding other's mental states is not achieved through a concrete mechanism but rather through various aspects of cognition that can be quite gradual and variable. Given this variability, it is important to utilize these mental factors in order to improve theory of mind.

### Part III: The Role of Imagination in Collective Intelligence

The impact that imagination has on collective intelligence can easily be extrapolated from the above research. It has been shown that theory of mind is vital to the cooperation necessary for the intelligence community to achieve a high degree of collective intelligence in their analysis, and for understanding the intentions behind the actions of the other side without simply projecting one's own intentions onto that other side. Given that theory of mind is more nebulous than previously understood, and that imagination is a critical component, we know that imagination plays an important role in collective intelligence. What exactly this role is remains open for further postulation and study but imagination is an im-

portant tool in collective intelligence, and therefore vital to conducting more accurate analysis. This demonstrates the importance of understanding underlying mental processes in order to improve future analyses.

Conclusion: Ramifications for the Intelligence Community

In his article on what he names "the human domain", Sands writes of the importance of evaluating behavior in understanding conflicts: 'the defining variables of the human domain critical to the management of it are behavioral and based on constructs such as worldviews and underlying cultural lattices of belief systems and values of the actors (including military and/or intelligence personnel); in other words, these underlying cultural systems greatly influence the behavior that is observable in the human domain.' Further, he writes that 'the application of these types of knowledge sets to ascertain meaning of behavior and to interact within this domain with pertinent actors is tantamount to success and requires mastering thinking strategies and interpersonal skills and abilities not traditionally a part of military operations or learning programs.'

Perhaps it seems strange to suggest that imagination plays much of a role in intelligence analysis, but I argue that the whole profession relies upon the ability to extrapolate, which requires a certain type of imagination. Perhaps not fantastical imagination, but at least a certain kind of imagination based upon the sequenc-

ways. He writes that 'there are countless dots that can be connected in a great many ways' and it is important that analysts use imagination with discipline rather than not at all. He believes that it was lack of imagination that led to the failure in Iran because analysts were unwilling to imagine that the Shah would not crack down forcefully as predicted based on his countless dots that can be connected in a great many ways' and it is important that analysts use imagination with discipline rather than not at all. He believes that it was lack of imagination that led to the failure in Iran because analysts were unwilling to imagine that the Shah would not crack down forcefully as predicted based on his reputation. It was also failure of imagination in part that led to the failure to consider that there might not be weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, just because Saddam's behavior seemed to suggest that he was hiding these. Duelfer and Dyson suggest that this was a case of misperception, 'defined as the gap between the world as it actually exists and the world as it exists in the mind of the perceiver' on both sides that lead to the decision to engage in the Iraq war. Saddam overestimated the U.S. and Iraq's common interests and believed that the U.S. knew that he did not actually possess WMD. He also did not believe that the U.N. was likely to take action against him if he did. The U.S. did not correctly perceive that Saddam was hiding a lack of WMD rather than WMD. Perhaps these misperceptions on both sides could have been averted through greater

imagination in understanding the other's mental intentions.

Jervis writes that 'intelligence analysts are selected and trained to stay close to the information and to eschew speculation', instead of utilizing the human capacity for imagination to understand the mental states of subjects they analyse. In Kent's papers in which he considers why the Board of National Estimates missed the Soviet deployment of offensive missiles in Cuba, he writes: 'If NIEs could be confined to statements of indisputable fact the task would be safe and easy. Of course the result could not then be called an estimate. By definition, estimating is an excursion out beyond established fact into the unknown--a venture in which the estimator gets such aid and comfort as he can from analogy, extrapolation, logic, and judgment.' On the other hand, the successful conclusion of the missile crisis is something that Neustadt attributes partially to Kennedy's ability to 'constantly put himself in Khrushchev's position', a theory of mind exercise in imagination.

According to Duelfer and Dyson: 'States send each other signals as to their thinking and likely behavior both intentionally and unwittingly. At the same time, they are receiving signals and attempting to make sense of them...The consequence is that international politics is characterized by incomplete, often contradictory, information concerning interaction with multiple international actors where the payoffs for each side are constantly shifting.' This means that having a superi-



in a section that focuses on imaginative thinking as a structured analytic technique. Given that estimation is a necessary analytic technique, it only remains to further explore the psychological processes underlying this as a component of theory of mind, and thus, collective brainstorming. Just as imaginative thinking can be used for understanding unknowns regarding other's mental states, it becomes useful as a brainstorming mechanism for considering unprecedented possibilities to foster more comprehensive understanding of a scenario. for considering unprecedented possibilities to foster more comprehensive understanding of a scenario.

The handbook encourages brainstorming methods such as incorporating outside views and considering unconventional viewpoints, which truly reflects the use of imagination as a theory of mind tool. Further, the use of imagination as in theory of mind is meant to cultivate open mindedness when considering intelligence concepts by providing enough time for thorough thought and determining the reason behind associative thoughts. The manual emphasizes the importance of recording thoughts and doing away with hierarchies for the purpose of imaginative discussion, which makes sense in terms of both theory of mind and brainstorming given the need for continuity and unfettered investigation of the "other"- whatever that may be in either case. The manual also emphasizes the importance of structure in this processes to ensure that divergent ideas converge, so that the new ideas are fully synthesized and incorporated into the collective thinking. This reflects psychological concepts of theory of mind, wherein imaginative thinking seems use-

ful when constrained to thinking about the possible mental states of the "other". This would be applied to brainstorming both for the purposes of improving collective understanding through cooperative, interactive thinking, as well as for the purpose of understanding the unknown intentions of entities envisioned in the scenarios, such as state leaders. In another section of the handbook, there is a section devoted to encouraging analysts to avoid "mirroring" or projecting their interior understandings about themselves onto the entities that they are analyzing- a nearly impossible task, but one that becomes possible due to theory of mind, and the intrinsic imaginative processes therein. To truly understand the "other", and their motives, values, and perceptions, it is necessary to think like the adversary. In order to do so, one must 'consciously place analysts in the same cultural, organizational, and personal setting ("putting them in their shoes")'. The handbook advises that 'a manager needs to build a team of experts with in-depth knowledge of the operating environment, the target's personality, and the style of thinking used'. In particular, it is vital that this form of analysis avoids the use of caveats or qualifications and assumes that the recipient understands that the paper is aimed more at provoking thought or challenging the conventional understanding of how an adversary thinks', which highlights the imaginative component whereby thought is provoked for theory of mind to work in an analytical context. Alternative futures analysis is just another example of the use of imagination through theory of mind, simply because it is the job of analysis to 'imagine the future'. Further studies on different methods of imaginative

thinking as it is used in theory of mind processes could be useful to better understanding its use for focused brainstorming in analytical work. Therefore, this paper has been a case study in that it demonstrates how past analytical failures and their underlying psychological inconsistencies are useful to developing better mental abilities- such as a more imaginative theory of mind ability as benefits collective intelligence- for improved analysis.

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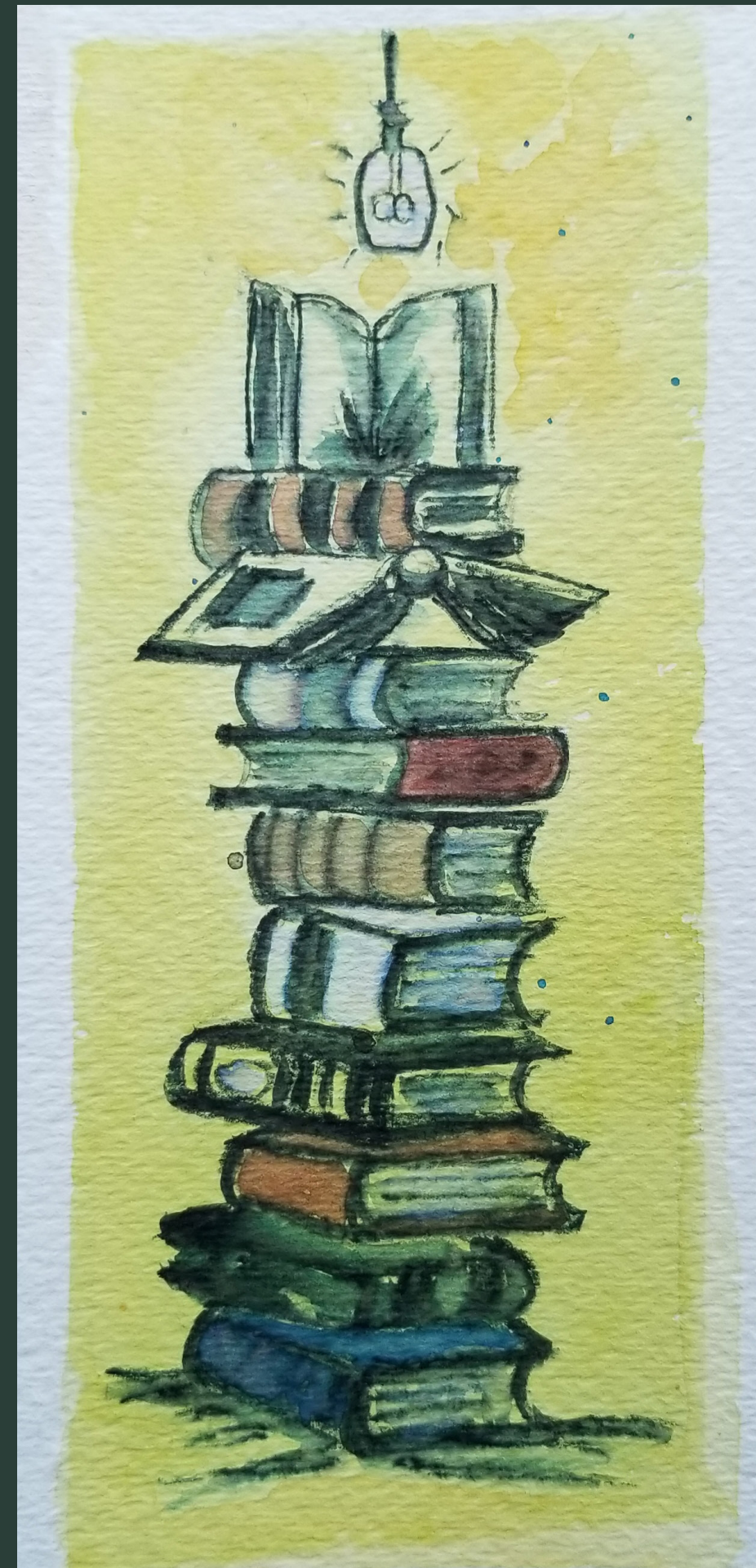
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Art by: T. Varis



# PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY'S OZYMANDIAS AND THE TIMELESS FALL OF EMPIRES

BY: NATHANIEL WRIGHT

Percy Bysshe Shelley was known in his lifetime as a fighter for the working class. His seditious poem "Song (to the men of England)" directly calls for the working class to topple the aristocracy despite him being an aristocrat himself. Yet Shelley's earlier, and perhaps most famous, work "Ozymandias" carries similar themes. "Ozymandias" not only portrays how even the most mighty of empires can crumble, but also shows how emperors and their faulty ambitions live on in new forms.

"Ozymandias" utilizes irony and contrast in order to criticize the idea of empire-building. Its most famous line, "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: / Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" (10-11) positions the speaker of those lines as Ozymandias himself; written at the base of a state which he had commissioned. Their intent is clear: Ozymandias is expecting the might of his empire to cow any who witness it into submission. It's

a warning of his power—he built these incredible works, thus he wields incredible might. The presence of the line on the statue also portrays a desire for symbolic immortality. Though he will eventually die, all of the work he put into driving his subjects to make great works will live on and the statue will make it clear that it's as a result of him. These two lines paint Ozymandias as a man full of pride and ambition; someone who desires to be worshiped forever, which is what adds the ironic punch to the line that follows: "Nothing beside remains" (12). In spite of his desires to be remembered forever, all that remains of Ozymandias is "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone" (2) and "ashattered visage" (4)--the remnants of the statue which bears his inscription. Shelley continues the contrast by describing just how barren the land is: "Round the decay / Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare / The lone and level sands stretch far away" (12-14).

This immediate contrast undercuts the power of Ozymandias' proclamation. Though he once considered himself the king of kings and believed his works so mighty that anyone who perceives them should immediately fall into submission it is now only the ironic remnants of his statue that remain. Shelley is making a commentary on the nature of empire-building and emperors and how they're all doomed to fall eventually. Even the most mighty of empires can't stand the test of time and what once stood large may lie crumbling in the sand the next day. What makes it clear that this isn't just about Ozymandias' empire is the historical context of the poem. "Ozymandias" was written in the wake of England defeating Napoleon, himself a man trying to build an empire. At first glance this may portray "Ozymandias" as being about Napoleon, but it is just as likely about England, an empire itself at the time. Though they may have defeated Napoleon and thus gained a place as the new powerhouse of Europe, just as with Ozymandias, they could easily crumble. Taken further with Shelley's own politics about aristocracy and his oth-

er works, it also sends a message that peasantry being pressed into service and back-breaking labor in the name of an emperor is an ultimately fruitless endeavor that serves only the ego of a person who will ultimately be lost to time.

Shelley also works ideas about the timeless ego of these emperors into the text itself. When describing the statue, the speaker is harsh about its expression. It's described as having a "frown" (4) as well as a "wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command" (5). The statue does not portray a particularly pretty portrait of Ozymandias. He comes off as a cruel, commanding man purely through the look of his face alone. Shelley is making a commentary on the cruelty held by emperors—the kind of attitude needed to rule over so many people and have them make mighty works for you. He furthers this idea in the following line: "its sculptor well those passions read" (6). The sculptor captured the despicable passions of Ozymandias—represented in his cruel expression—as the most fitting ones to carry forth his legacy, rather than passions represented by a smiling, benevolent visage.



The line that follows contains a double meaning which furthers the idea of emperors such as Ozymandias and their faulty ideals being timeless; “Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things” (7) could mean that Ozymandias’ cruel passions yet survive stamped on the lifeless stone, or it could mean that his cruel passions yet survive in modern empires stamped on their lifeless aristocracy. Shelley is making it clear that while Ozymandias may be long dead and gone, there are countless Ozymandias’ which live on in modern empires. The ego of Ozymandias is further expounded upon in the following line; “The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed” (8). The hand refers to the sculptor's hand, mocking Ozymandias through portraying him with a sneering expression. The heart refers to Ozymandias’--his ego was so great that he fed on the statue even though it was designed in a mocking manner. He did not see that the sneer was not meant to portray him in a good light, he only saw the legacy and might that the statue would represent, further tying into the idea that he saw himself as infallible. All of these elements culminate to

portray a ruler who was too prideful and egotistical to believe that there would be a time in which he was no longer worshiped. Taken with the timelessness that Shelley works into the poem as well as the historical context in which it was written as well as the context of his feelings towards the aristocracy a central meaning becomes clear. Though a ruler may see purely through the look of his face alone. Shelley is making a commentary on the cruelty held by emperors--the kind of attitude needed to rule over so many people and have them make mighty works for you. He furthers this idea in the following line: “its sculptor well those passions read” (6). The sculptor captured the despicable passions of Ozymandias--represented in his cruel expression--as the most fitting ones to carry forth his legacy, rather than passions represented by a smiling, benevolent visage. The line that follows contains a double meaning which furthers the idea of emperors such as Ozymandias and their faulty ideals being timeless; “Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things” (7) could mean that Ozymandias’ cruel passions yet survive stamped on the lifeless stone, or it could mean that

his cruel passions yet survive in modern empires stamped on their lifeless aristocracy. Shelley is making it clear that while Ozymandias may be long dead and gone, there are countless Ozymandias’ which live on in modern empires. The ego of Ozymandias is further expounded upon in the following line; “The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed” (8). The hand refers to the sculptor's hand, mocking Ozymandias through portraying him with a sneering expression. The heart refers to Ozymandias’--his ego was so great that he fed on the statue even though it was designed in a mocking manner. He did not see that the sneer was not meant to portray him in a good light, he only saw the legacy and might that the statue would represent, further tying into the idea that he saw himself as infallible. All of these elements culminate to portray a ruler who was too prideful and egotistical to believe that there would be a time in which he was no longer worshiped. Taken with the timelessness that Shelley works into the poem as well as the historical context in which it was written as well as the context of his feelings towards the aristocracy a central

meaning becomes clear. Though a ruler may see themselves as great and eternal, though they may believe they have the worship of their subjects, though they may think their great works will stand in testament to their might for all time, in the end all of that will fade and what will remain is their cruelty.

#### Works Cited

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Art by:Jeniffer Loving



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