Writing
for a
Real World

A multidisciplinary anthology by USF students

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Editor’s Introduction

Thanks to a conversation I had recently with our encyclopedically knowledgeable Archivist, Fr. Michael Kotlanger, S.J., I have discovered quite a bit about just how rich our tradition of publishing student work at the University of San Francisco truly is. Among the many treasures he has in his lower-floor lair at Gleeson Library are stacks and stacks of USF-sponsored journals, including the San Francisco Quarterly (pictured below) which featured student, faculty, and staff writings from the 1930s to the 1950s. At some point I highly recommend seeking out some of the impassioned entries of fiction, essays, verse, and other offerings that one can find among the well-preserved back issues. (I was especially intrigued, for example, by an interesting screenplay in the Summer 1940 issue called “Thomas Hobbes Looks at 1940” in which the curmudgeonly social contract theorist, given voice by one James C. Walsh, Jr., explores the moral imbroglios of World War II.) After the evanescence of the San Francisco Quarterly in the 1950s, The Gaviotta made its first appearance in the early 1960s, only to be moved off campus some years later. And of course let’s not forget that The Ignatian, founded in 1910, with its numerous interesting turns and recrudescences, has a very rich tradition all of its own as well (its latest incarnation dates back to 1988, by the way). Having spent some time with several of these publications recently, I inevitably found myself taking the long view of our rich tradition of honoring student voices. It’s good to remind ourselves on occasion that this university has long celebrated superior student work. Writing for a Real World, now in its twelfth edition, is of course the latest iteration of our enduring endeavor, and I am more than happy to have had a hand in its production for the last several years. This year, as in years past, we offer a kind of top ten of
undergraduate research projects based on the entries we received in our annual contest.

Our selections process, as always, is competitive. Each year the WRW publication committee issues a call for students to submit their top two papers by early May. More than twenty faculty and librarian readers, in service to the university, then spend at least two weeks anonymously scoring the work (this scoring took place during and just after finals week, I might add). From our 69 submissions this year we selected our top ten works. All reviewers agree to recuse themselves if they recognize their own students’ work. Everything here in print—and every honorable mention—received high marks from at least four reviewers. Notifications were issued in June, after which the authors were invited to revise and polish their work before resubmitting manuscripts in August. Student copyeditors in my RHET 325/ENGL 325 course then took over in September and helped lay out and revise all 220 pages of this book throughout the fall. To my staff of ace copyeditors who pored over every sentence you’re about to read, I owe a great debt, and I will thank them all subsequently.

First, however, I’d like to heartily congratulate Madison Paige Russell, now a two-time winner of the Fr. Urban Grassi, S.J., Award for *Eloquentia Perfecta* for her top-scoring entry, “Shaving the First Amendment: The Case of the Sacred Beard.” Impressively, this effort is Madison’s third opus appearing in *Writing for a Real World* over the last four years. Written for Professor Brian Weiner’s upper-division Politics of American Justice course, Madison’s piece offers a stunningly well-executed brief for a petitioner before a mock Supreme Court. The assignment, as Professor Weiner points out, asks students to write either a brief or a legal decision based on the role they are assigned. Fulfilling this role with such authenticity and well-informed legal backing, however, is no easy task. (Look to last year’s volume of WRW for Madison’s masterful invocation of Justice Alito and you’ll see why anyone might surmise that Madison has a bright future in the law.)

Following Madison’s piece we present Ryan Popper’s outstanding sociolinguistic investigation, “‘Won’t Think Straight, Won’t Talk Straight!’: Reimagining Queer Discourse and Strategies for Resisting Heteronormativity.” Written for Professor Doreen Ewert’s How English Works
class, Ryan’s research masterfully weaves in his own transcriptions along with some brilliant and insightful critical discourse analysis.

Next we offer a terrific piece (and not his first publication in WRW) by Steven Sladen (he was featured twice before in WRW Issues 10 and 11). Steven, in research written for Celia Stahr’s course, explores the early self-portraits of Frida Kahlo and offers genuinely interesting insights into her work. I’d like to pause here and profoundly thank Hannah Rhadigan of the Artists Rights Society in New York who generously allowed us to reprint Kahlo’s work in full color on pages 80 to 83.

Following Steven’s piece is Alfred Si and Deeqa Mohamed’s detailed research proposal written for Professor Jennifer Dever’s herpetology course. Alfred and Deeqa offer a pragmatic approach to realistically studying an endangered species of tortoise in the troubled nation of Myanmar. Their research, if enacted, would surely raise further concerns about the consequences of damming the Irrawaddy River.

Moving from sciences to history, we are also proud to print Lincoln Stanfield’s exploration of early independence movements in Saint-Domingue—better known to an American audience as Haiti. Lincoln’s impressive research earned the History Department’s David Herlihy Prize for outstanding historical scholarship by a graduating history major. After reading his essay, written for Professor Katrina Olds’ class, you’ll see why he earned these accolades.

Overlapping to a great degree with historical research, we next present Alexa De Leon’s fascinating piece on Atomic Art in Japan. Tracing its roots from the harrowing post-Nagasaki and Hiroshima photographs to the upstart public art of Chim↑Pom, Alexa does a wonderful job of illuminating an American audience about the aesthetic and moral imperatives of tackling some of humanity’s worst moments through art. Alexa’s research here is a shorter version of a capstone written for Professor Antoni Ucerler, S.J., who serves as Director of the Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History.

And speaking of aesthetics, Kathleen Thaete’s work on Oscar Wilde, written as a capstone project for Professor Christina Garcia Lopez, was a beautifully rendered exploration of Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. As Kathleen points out, unpacking the layers of Wilde’s work is a pleasurable but almost infinite endeavor.

And now for something completely different—an excellent piece of
research on macroeconomics by a trio of financial economics students: Charles Hazzard, Nate Wilcox, and Michael Caswell. Even someone as non-economically oriented as I am can see the important contribution here in the correlation between stock prices and macroeconomic news. Thanks to you, gentlemen, for double-checking the math; and thanks to Professor Michael Jonas for your expertise and input.

Next, Nicholas Pisanelli offers an intriguing coalescence of history, politics, poetry, and philosophy by applying a Nietzschean lens on two of Yeats’ greatest political poems, “Easter 1916” and “September 1913.” As a lifelong fan of Yeats I was very pleased to see Nicholas bring new insights to his work. Nicholas’ work was also written for Professor Christina Garcia Lopez’s capstone course, so clearly some great things are happening in that seminar!

Finally (and I wish there were a fresher way to sincerely convey, “Last but not least”) we conclude with Sofia Marbach’s intertextual investigation of “voluntourism” and “pity aid.” Sofia, whose piece was written for Professor Brian Komei Dempster’s Written and Oral Communication course, exemplifies mindful exploration and synthesis of texts while also maintaining her own voice. We are happy to let Sofia have the last word in Issue Twelve.

Our Gratitude

To bring Writing for a Real World to fruition both as a book and as an annual celebration of student writing is an enormous collaborative effort. People at every level of the university are involved—from the dozens of students who submitted papers, to the 22 faculty members and librarians who judged manuscripts, to the 7 student copyeditors who pored over all the layouts, to the valuable behind-the-scenes work of the WRW Publication Committee members and our program assistants, to the presentations of our inspiring guest speakers at our ceremonies, to the fine work of our computer whizzes who have enabled us to accept online submissions, and to the Deans who have enthusiastically supported our efforts—this project could not be what it is without multivalenced support. I thank you all for rallying behind this project with such enthusiasm.

Let me name here a number of our valued allies and supporters. We are, first of all, deeply grateful to Provost Jennifer Turpin, who supported
this project from its inception twelve years ago. We also thank Marcelo Camperi, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and Eileen Fung, Associate Dean of Arts and Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences—both of whom continue to back this project with unwavering enthusiasm.

I also thank my class of eagle-eyed student copyeditors whose names are listed prominently on our masthead for their detailed review of manuscripts and layout of the journal. Our Fall 2014 course was devoted to carefully preparing this book, as indeed any book of this kind deserves. Their professionalism in handling matters was truly impressive.

And making those layouts possible through the acquisition of the very latest version of InDesign, I would like to thank John Bansavich, Director of the Center for Instruction and Technology (CIT), who has provided more than just tech support for this journal for the last several years. John has also been instrumental in securing us plenty of lab time to devote to making this book a reality.

And speaking of serious tech support, I’d also like to thank Alexey Fedosov for helping us streamline our submissions process by creating an online review portal for students and editors. This innovation helped us make a quantum leap, not only in terms of our efficiency in reviewing, it will also, we’re certain, pay off in terms of increased submissions in the future. Thank you again, Alexey.

I’d also like to thank Algie Abrams, whose stunning photograph taken in Antigua, graces our cover. Algie, whose work I first encountered in an exhibit at the Faithful Fools Ministry in the Tenderloin, has innumerable amazing shots. See them at algieabrams.com.

We also gratefully acknowledge the important work of Digital Collections Librarian Zheng Lu who spearheaded digitizing WRW—making this, and every issue, available for future researchers.

A special salute goes to Crystal Chissell, program assistant extraordinaire for the Department of Rhetoric and Language, who deserves special praise for helping us with publication, publicity, distribution, and ceremony details.

Many thanks of course go to John Pinelli for helping us pay the bills.

I’d also like to underscore my thanks to all 22 of our journal referees who spent many collective hours reviewing the research that ultimately ends up in WRW. As the saying goes: “Many hands make light work”—but the fact that so many people rallied to carefully review so many manuscripts while also grading final papers and resisting the siren song
of summer, well, that effort demonstrates the real camaraderie to be found here at USF—and—the genuine devotion to honoring student work, as we have done now in various forms for virtually one century.

Our deepest thanks, of course, are reserved for those students who submitted their work. As our Honorable Mentions list illustrates on the following pages, we received many more fine papers than we were able to publish. Congratulations go to all those who earned honorable mention, and especially to those students whose work we hope you will now read.

We hope that this journal, in keeping with what is now more than a 100-year old tradition, truly honors the finest undergraduate writers at the University of San Francisco, and reminds us that our intellectual work and our yearning to advance human understanding is never done.

—David Holler, Editor, on behalf of the WRW Publication Committee
Honorable Mentions

**EUNICE AHN**
“Studying Abroad and its Effects on Students”
Written for Qualitative Research Methods
Brandi Lawless, Communication Studies

**GABRIELLA BARNES**
“The ‘Silent Epidemic’: A Look at Traumatic Brain Injury in Sports”
Written for Written Communication II
Devon Holmes, Rhetoric and Language

**PATRECIA FRAY**
“Student Veterans on the College Campus: Communicating Identity”
Written for Qualitative Research Methods
Brandi Lawless, Communication Studies

**MARCIA GONZALEZ**
Written for English Senior Seminar
Christina Garcia Lopez, English
SARAH JABIN
“Taming the Tiger Cub: Stress and Asian-American College Students”
Written for Written Communication II
DJ Quinn, Rhetoric and Language

AIDI MA
“Environmental History and Scientific Research: Agricultural Practice Changes in Unstable Malarial Areas in Sub-Saharan Africa”
Written for Environmental History of Africa
Heather Hoag, History

NAUDIA QUEEN
“The Single Parent Paradox”
Written for Qualitative Research Methods
Brandi Lawless, Communication Studies

SAMUEL WILDER
“From Victory Gardens to Urban Agriculture”
Written for Alternative Media and Social Change
Dorothy Kidd, Media Studies
"Shaving the First Amendment": The Case of the Sacred Beard

Madison Paige Russell, class of 2016, is a Politics major and Legal Studies minor. She currently works for the American Civil Liberties Union.
MADISON RUSSELL

WRITER’S COMMENTS

The Arkansas Department of Correction (ADC) enforces a grooming policy that places strict limitations on the growth and maintenance of facial hair for its state prisoners. Although the administration exempts inmates with certain medical conditions, it does not extend the same courtesy to male religious practitioners whose faiths encourage or even necessitate beards. A Muslim prisoner, Gregory Holt, has sued Ray Hobbs, the ADC Director, on the basis that the institutional ban violates his and potentially other inmates’ constitutional rights. The federal lawsuit, *Holt v. Hobbs*, is now awaiting resolution before the United States Supreme Court; it will be heard and decided next term. The following piece was written from the perspective of an attorney asked to represent Mr. Holt. Abiding by the same formal rules as real documents submitted to the highest court, this opening legal brief presents main arguments predicated on half a century of important case law as well as our instilled American values of democracy, free expression, and justice for all. Unlike this moot court assignment, the actual litigation does not center on the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment, but a piece of federal legislation known as the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA). RLUIPA is specifically geared toward the protection of devout prisoners, dispensing legal coverage when policies infringe on their beliefs and practices. Prior to the statute’s adoption in 2000, the Supreme Court had upheld a less protective standard that, if applied to the case at bar, could conceivably shift the outcome in either direction. For the sake of fair game, this brief assumes that reality, making Holt’s claims fall predominately under the narrow scope of the First Amendment rather than the all-encompassing Act. This shift was contingent on altering the original facts and analyzing them under a completely different framework. That challenge inspired extensive research and creative examination of the Court’s past and present jurisprudence, complete with socio-political implications for its future.

—Madison Russell
INSTRUCTOR’S COMMENTS

A primary component of Politics 322, The Politics of American Justice, is a “mock Supreme Court case” in which students are assigned to play the part of either an attorney or a Supreme Court Justice. Students are asked to examine a factual situation and apply the constitutional rules or doctrine covered in the course and if playing the role of an attorney, to write a legal brief, and if a Justice, to write a “mock” Supreme Court opinion.

Madison Paige Russell was assigned to represent Gregory Houston Holt, also known as Abdul Maalik Muhammad, a Muslim detained in an Arkansas state prison who sought to enjoin the state from requiring that he shave his beard on the grounds that he is exempt from the prison’s “no beard policy” because of his religion. One of the remarkable facts of this case is that Holt wrote and submitted a handwritten pro se petition for certiorari (that is, a request to the Supreme Court to hear his case) after the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit ruled against him. Very rarely does the Supreme Court agree to accept petitions, and rarer still is the Court’s acceptance of pro se petitions.

Ms. Russell’s legal brief is an excellent example of how a well-written brief can distill lengthy and complex legal arguments into the key issues of constitutional doctrine and public policy. Her brief aims to persuade the Supreme Court Justices of her position by refuting the arguments of the state of Arkansas and by presenting Mr. Holt’s claims in a reasonable yet passionate manner. Ms. Russell’s opinion is exceedingly well researched and both captures the nuances of First Amendment doctrine and the lofty aspirations of how a democratic state should treat its most despised citizens—convicted prisoners. One learns a lot about First Amendment jurisprudence from Ms. Russell’s brief and is reminded of the extraordinary rights and responsibilities of living in a democratic republic.

—Brian Weiner, Politics Department
No. 01–2014

IN THE

Moot Supreme Court of the United States

GREGORY HOUSTON HOLT
A.K.A. ABDUL MAALIK MUHAMMAD,

Petitioner,

v.

RAY HOBBS, DIRECTOR,
ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION, ET AL.,

Respondents.

On Writ of Certiorari to the
United States Court of Appeals
for the Eighth Circuit

BRIEF FOR PETITIONER

MADISON PAIGE RUSSELL
Counsel of Record
UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO
2130 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

Attorney for Petitioner
QUESTION PRESENTED

Whether the Arkansas Department of Correction’s (“ADC”) grooming policy prohibiting beards violates the First Amendment, and by extension, the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (“RLUIPA”); and whether permitting a one-half-inch religious exemption for Petitioner would compromise the objectives that inform the policy.¹

¹ For the purpose of our moot court exercise, this opening brief will focus primarily on the First Amendment and reserve the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) for a subsidiary claim.
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D. Rational Basis Review is Insufficient.

II. THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION’S
GROOMING POLICY VIOLATES THE RELIGIOUS LAND USE AND INSTITUTIONALIZED PERSONS ACT (“RLUIPA”)

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STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Petitioner is Gregory Houston Holt, a 38-year-old inmate serving a life sentence for first-degree domestic battering and aggravated burglary at Varner Supermax in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Also known as Abdul Maalik Muhammad, Holt is a Salafi Muslim who follows the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad and the Salaf as-Salih, or the “Righteous Predecessors.” Holt expects Islamic men to be faithful by “clipping the[ir] mustaches short and leaving the[ir] beard as it is” (Sahih Al-Buhari, Volume 7, Hadith 5893). In accordance with this custom, Holt sought a religious exemption from the Arkansas Department of Correction’s (“ADC”) grooming policy that prohibits beards of any length for all inmates, excluding those with assigned skin disorders. Republished in the “Inmate Handbook” distributed to all prisoners (as of the 18th printing in January 2013), the ADC’s Administrative Directive (AD 98-04) stipulates:

No inmates will be permitted to wear facial hair other than a neatly trimmed mustache that does not extend beyond the corner of the mouth or over the lip. Medical staff may prescribe that inmates with a diagnosed dermatological problem may wear facial hair no longer than one quarter of an inch.

Also included is the ADC’s methodology and purpose behind the ban:

… to provide for the health and hygiene of incarcerated offenders, and to maintain standard appearance throughout the period of incarceration, minimizing opportunities for disguise and for transport of contraband and weapons.

During several disciplinary meetings with the prison’s superintendents and warden, Holt’s request to maintain a one-half-inch stubble in observance of his religion was consistently rejected. In October 2011, he won a preliminary injunction and temporary restraining order while his complaint was under consideration by the magistrate. After an evidentiary hearing on January 4, 2012, it was dismissed.

2 See Appendix E in Petition for Writ of Certiorari, No. 13–6827
Holt then filed suit against Ray Hobbs, Director of the ADC, and his associates in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas. He asserted the grooming policy—and Hobbs’ refusal to negotiate alternatives—violated both the First Amendment and the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (“RLUIPA”), a piece of legislative armor for religious prisoners. The District Court vacated Holt’s injunction on March 23, 2012. A stay was issued on April 19, 2012, before Holt’s appeal could reach the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. In affirming the lower court’s position, the Eighth Circuit released an unpublished per curiam opinion. It subsequently denied a rehearing en banc, declining to reexamine the three-judge panel’s decision.

As a last resort, Holt has turned to the United States Supreme Court for final review. In a handwritten petition for writ of certiorari and motion for leave to proceed in forma pauperis, he pleaded for the Court to hear his case for two main reasons: to award him permanent relief, and to resolve the current split in the appellate circuits. Holt submitted an application for another injunction pending the disposition of his petition, which was received by Justice Alito. Both parties were then asked for supplemental briefing. Following those filings, and after the Justices reviewed Holt’s petition, this Court granted certiorari on March 4, 2014. At Petitioner’s behest, it immediately reinstated the preliminary injunction, giving Holt permission to display a one-half-inch beard in Varner Supermax while his case awaits resolution. Oral argument has been scheduled for the October 2014 term.

An important development has transpired since certiorari was granted: Mr. Holt has retained counsel. Madison Paige Russell of the University of San Francisco was selected to craft this opening brief; she will argue on behalf of Petitioner in the Moot Supreme Court of the United States on April 23, 2014. Ms. Stacy Le of the American Civil Liberties Union of Arkansas will assist as amicus curiae.

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3 It surmised that the “defendants met their burden under RLUIPA of establishing the ADC’s grooming policy was the least restrictive means of furthering a compelling penological interest… notwithstanding Mr. Holt’s citation to cases indicating that prisons in other jurisdictions have been able to meet their security needs while allowing inmates to maintain facial hair.” (Holt v. Hobbs, 509 Fed. Appx. 561 (8th Cir. 2013)).

4 See Brief of Amicus Curiae in Support of Petitioner.
SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

(Prologue)

“The Fathers of the Constitution were not unaware of the varied and extreme views of religious sects, of the violence of disagreement among them, and of the lack of any one religious creed on which all men would agree. They fashioned a charter of government which envisaged the widest possible toleration of conflicting views. Man’s relation to his God was made no concern of the state. He was granted the right to worship as he pleased and to answer to no man for the verity of his religious views. The religious views espoused by [Petitioner] might seem incredible, if not preposterous, to most people. But if those doctrines are subject to trial before a jury charged with finding their truth or falsity, then the same can be done with the religious beliefs of any sect. When the triers of fact undertake that task, they enter a forbidden domain. The First Amendment does not select any one group or any one type of religion for preferred treatment; it puts them all in that position.” (Douglas, J., majority) (United States v. Ballard, 322 U.S. 78 (1944)).

Under the guise of security, convenience, and conformity, this beloved set of ideals has been disgraced. By implementing a strict grooming policy that leaves no room for religious accommodation, the State of Arkansas has denied a prisoner adherence to a long-standing and sacred obligation. In so doing, it not only tramples on his free exercise rights under the First Amendment, but draws a preferential line discriminating against a specific spiritual practice without legitimate, let alone compelling, justification. This infringement is damaging to the immediate Petitioner along with all other devout inmates affected by the policy. Perhaps more troubling, in this timeless debate between liberty and safety, is how it is really our democratic system that remains the most vulnerable to attack.

When practitioners of varying faiths demand immunity for committing violence, torture, or human sacrifice, their views can indeed seem, as Justice Douglas noted, “preposterous, to most people.” Ballard, supra. The instant dispute presents a conduct at issue far less threatening and
sinister. This case revolves around a matter of personal hygiene: simply put, a man’s ability to wear facial hair within the confines of a publicly owned and operated institution.

Beards are laden with symbolic meanings that cross cultures and generations. For some groups, they are a testament to masculinity, sexual virility, wisdom, status, and experience. For others, they epitomize the rejection of modern standards of beauty that require men to alter their natural state for a more orderly and socially acceptable appearance. Among Muslims; Orthodox, Messianic, and Hasidic Jews; Shaivite Hindus; Sikhs; Rastafarians; and the Amish, beards signify a commitment to biblical icons and supreme beings. Their religious antiquity and influence are irrefutable. Removing them by any means, especially during holy days, is considered an egregious and shameful act. By restraining the growth and style of Petitioner’s facial hair, Respondents directly obstruct his civil liberties as well as an integral part of his identity.

In its defense, Arkansas contends that once Petitioner was incarcerated, he relinquished his freedom. He could no longer travel, carry on a profession, or vote in political elections. He became dependent on the State and subject to all its regulations. According to Director Hobbs and other ADC officials, forcing male inmates to shave regularly helps prevent occurrences of hidden contraband and confused identities. But forty-four other states, together with the District of Columbia and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBP), allow facial hair without experiencing serious problems or incidents. The ADC’s steps to mitigate its employees’ irrational fears prove far too hasty and are poorly supported by the record.

In these instances, it is true that courts have typically given due deference to correctional officers who best understand the inner workings of their yards—with the caveat that power does not absolve them of responsibility. Prison workers must respect the rights of their prisoners as guaranteed by the First Amendment and controlling federal legislation. Although the administrators at Petitioner’s institution may or may not have provided him with some materials and opportunities to worship, the notion they would halt at his beard is constitutionally problematic. Officials do not possess the authority to determine what particular religious practice is more important than, or can be substituted for, another.

Contrary to Arkansas’ perspective, the First Amendment’s wingspan stretches further and covers more terrain than mere civilian expression
in colloquial settings. It was enacted by our original statesmen, and has been preserved by countless jurists over two centuries, to harbor minorities and dissidents when the law is emphatically not on their side. The prohibition here, both in its intention and execution, runs afoul of that very principle: one this Court must strive to protect.

The embodiment of a truly secular and equitable society is one in which the state and its citizens neither impose their God on others nor prevent others from believing in a deity of their choosing—and expressing that belief through cherished rituals and traditions. Though the penal backdrop in this case adds some complexity to the issues, the reasons for suspending Petitioner’s free exercise do not stand taller when measured side by side against his constitutional privileges. Even individuals convicted of the most atrocious acts do not cease being American citizens or human beings when the prison gates close behind them.

Justice and jurisprudence are often mutually exclusive terms. Yet on this rare occasion, delivering redress for Petitioner—and who and what he represents—is following the mandate of the Constitution. The document itself does not promise stability or ease for its government; it promises liberty for its people.

ARGUMENT

I. THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION’S GROOMING POLICY VIOLATES THE FREE EXERCISE CLAUSE OF THE FIRST AMENDMENT.

Comprising the Religion Clauses, the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause read: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…” U.S. Const. amend. I (emphasis added). While the Establishment Clause forbids the government from overtly endorsing religion, its counterpart shields individuals and groups from persecution based on their affiliations. The phrase secures free thought and sentiment, and activity to a certain degree. Under special circumstances, it allows for the breach of neutral or generally applicable laws in the name of religious devotion. Making exceptions for a person or organization on account of their unique circumstances is not always inconsequential, however. This accomo-
tionist approach can sometimes place the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause in opposition. Courts must then decide, on a case-by-case basis, which provision is superior so to end the conflict between the two constitutional companions. Similarly, judges weigh the stakes of both parties in a balancing act, frequently walking a tightrope between crucial governmental intervention on one hand and treasured private autonomy on the other. This process often involves lengthy and subjective interpretation, giving rise to enormous contention among participants.

When the First Amendment was adopted, it was drafted in relation to the United States Congress, leaving states and local municipalities unchecked. Prior to *Cantwell v. Connecticut*, 310 U.S. 296 (1940), it was not yet legally clear how the Constitution safeguarded religious practitioners from restrictions at all levels. In *Cantwell*, the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice Hughes, incorporated the Free Exercise Clause to the states vis-à-vis the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The opinion written by Justice Roberts paved the way towards a new period of increased sensitivity to religious freedom.

The underlying theory that citizens should possess and act on their conscience, without coercion or restraint, is a major touchstone of our constitutional law and way of life. It speaks to the values upon which this country was founded and by which it stays intact. “The very reason for the First Amendment is to make the people of this country free to think, speak, write, and worship as they wish, not as the Government commands.” (Black, J., dissenting) (*International Association of Machinists v. Street*, 367 U.S. 740 (1961)). To understand the parameters of free exercise in general, a brief overview is helpful.

This Court first made the everlasting distinction between opinion and action early in its jurisprudential history. See *Reynolds v. United States*, 98 U.S. 145 (1878) (upholding a Mormon’s bigamy conviction in spite of his “religious duty” to marry multiple women). Investigating the Framers’ intent, the Waite Court held that Reynolds’ fervor was not an acceptable criminal defense. It established that while a citizen’s freedom to believe is

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5 “We hold that the statute, as construed and applied to the appellants, deprives them of their liberty without due process of law in contravention of the Fourteenth Amendment. The fundamental concept of liberty in that Amendment embraces the liberties guaranteed by the First Amendment.” (Roberts, J., majority) (*Cantwell*, supra).
absolute, the ability to act on that belief is not immune from limitation.

Religious-oriented litigation then took a hiatus, reappearing around the mid-20th century in full force. *Sherbert v. Verner*, 374 U.S. 398 (1963), involved a Seventh-day Adventist who refused to work on Saturdays. When she was fired from her job and denied state benefits, she sued the South Carolina Employment Security Commission. Expanding on the belief-action groundwork set forth in *Reynolds*, the Warren Court ruled in her favor and developed the “Sherbert test,” which tended to aid religious practitioners in unemployment compensation cases.6

The reach of the Free Exercise Clause into the military and public school system is also relevant to this discussion. In *United States v. Seeger*, 380 U.S. 163 (1965), the Warren Court granted religious exemption to conscientious objectors refusing to serve in the military during the Vietnam War. Unlike those seeking to avoid the draft due to “merely personal moral code[s]” or “on the basis of essentially political, sociological, or economic considerations,” the Court found that the objectors had a “sincere and meaningful belief occupying in the life of its possessor a place parallel to that filled by the God of those admittedly qualified for the exemption.” The Amish parents in *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205 (1972), possessed that same conviction. Their need to direct their children’s education superseded the State’s interest in forcing those children to attend public school past the eighth grade.7

The Court utilized the Sherbert test again in *Thomas v. Review Board of the Indiana Employment Security Division*, 450 U.S. 707 (1981)(finding that a Jehovah’s Witness was unconstitutionally denied benefits in Indiana when he quit a foundry that produced mass weaponry). In *Employment Division, Department of Human Resources of Oregon v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 (1990), however, the Sherbert test yielded much different results. After ingesting peyote, a sacramental substance in their culture, two Native

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6 A person must have a claim involving a “sincere religious belief” and a “substantial burden” must be placed on that person’s ability to practice that belief. In order to invalidate their claim, the government must indicate it has a “compelling state interest” and is pursuing that interest in the “least restrictive manner.”

7 “This case, therefore, does not become easier because respondents were convicted for their ‘actions’ in refusing to send their children to the public high school; in this context, belief and action cannot be neatly confined in logic-tight compartments.” (Burger, J., majority) (*Wisconsin*, supra).
American men were fired and refused reimbursement on the basis of “work-related misconduct.” Weighing their rights to practice freely with the governmental need to dissuade illegal activity, the Rehnquist Court decided to preserve the “financial integrity” of the State’s Employment Division. Justice Scalia’s opinion distinguished Smith from Sherbert or Thomas; the “compelling interest” standard was not necessary for generally applicable laws. As Oregon had criminalized peyote for everyone in the State—not just Native Americans—a religious exemption could conceivably “lead to anarchy.” Any impingement on the believers was an “incidental effect,” as the law itself did not offend the First Amendment.

Although unemployment compensation was not at issue, general applicability did factor into the Rehnquist Court’s analysis in Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. City of Hialeah, 508 U.S. 520 (1993). In a 9–0 vote, this Court struck down a Florida city ordinance outlawing Santería, or animal sacrifice, that had passed in apprehension of a local church opening. Because the Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye was the only congregation in town that engaged in this practice, the law was ultimately not neutral and could not be interpreted under the same low-level scrutiny in Smith. The case therefore precluded rational basis review, in which any “legitimate” governmental interest was enough to jeopardize free exercise. The Justices returned to the more demanding “compelling interest” standard that originated in Sherbert, and Justice Kennedy added “narrow tailoring” to the mix. Failing on both accounts, Hialeah’s ordinance was deemed unconstitutional.

In spite of the Smith decision, this Court looked at risky rituals once more in Gonzales v. O Centro Espírita Beneficente União do Vegetal, 546 U.S. 418 (2006). It granted immunity to the leaders of a Brazil based church in New Mexico whose congregants drank hoasca, a hallucinogenic tea. The Court could not acknowledge any compelling governmental interests in stopping their practice.

Like all these cases, settling Holt v. Hobbs requires the Supreme Court to complete several tasks: A) assess the validity of Petitioner’s grievance; B) evaluate the governmental interests and given fact pattern under First Amendment criterion; C) review prior precedents in related prisoners’ rights cases; and D) decide what standard should be applied. Such a thorough inspection should produce only one outcome: Arkansas’ no-beard rule is blatantly violative of Petitioner’s free exercise.
A. Petitioner Was Impermissibly Denied the Right to Practice a Key Tenet of His Religion.

In Petitioner’s culture, the ability of a man to mature and grow a beard is organic, God-given, and to some extent, metaphysical. Any institutional policy that would force the alteration of such an intimate and deeply personal feature is “intolerably oppressive” insofar as it “pits the rights of Muslim inmates against a system that is hostile to these views [and the image of the beard itself].” Petitioner for Writ of Certiorari, No. 13-6827, 14. There is no doubt that Holt is sincere in his beliefs, and that AD 98-04 places a substantial burden on his practice—even if that practice is not truly understood or appreciated by prison officials. “Religious beliefs need not be acceptable, logical, consistent, or comprehensible to others in order to merit First Amendment protection.” (Kennedy, J., majority) (Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc., supra).

The ADC’s administration ignores the vital role that facial hair (and daily conduct in general) plays in the preservation of Islam in Petitioner’s life. Respondents refuted speculation that they did not oblige Holt with other forms of worship: e.g., prayer rugs, religious services, special diets, extended visitations with an imam, etc. However, most of that testimony was inadmissible; the rest was highly contested. What is clear from the record, is that Holt’s facial hair lost him “good time” to enjoy amenities and engage in both secular and religious activities. Those conditions landed Petitioner in a quandary: either obey his God and face disciplinary action, or abandon that relationship in acquiescence to the grooming policy. This ultimatum is not permissible under the First Amendment.8

In the end, the ADC’s punishments could not persuade Holt to forgo his eternal vow; after all, he had already surrendered the remainder of his mortal life to the State. But without an exemption, Petitioner will suffer more severe consequences and lose his entitled right to free exercise.

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8 “The door of the Free Exercise Clause stands tightly closed against any government regulation of religious beliefs as such. Government may neither compel affirmation of a repugnant belief, nor penalize or discriminate against individuals or groups because they hold views abhorrent to the authorities.” (Brennan, J., majority) (Sherbert, supra).
B. Petitioner’s Constitutional Challenge Survives the Turner Test.

In *Turner v. Safley*, 482 U.S. 78 (1987), the Rehnquist Court determined that a Missouri prison violated its inmates’ constitutional rights to marry when it restricted those unions without official permission by the administration. The Court simultaneously upheld a prohibition of inmate correspondence that had proven to jeopardize prison security goals. It estimated that a regulation on religious freedom is valid if it is “reasonably related” to a State’s “legitimate penological interests.” Justice O’Connor’s majority opinion outlined the four-prong “Turner test,” which remains the current and prevailing standard for prisoner claims under the Free Exercise Clause. In evaluating the constitutionality of a particular policy, a court scrutinizes four factors:

1. Whether there exists a “valid, rational connection between the prison regulation and the legitimate governmental interest put forward to justify it;”
2. Whether “there are alternative means of exercising the right that remain open to prison inmates;”
3. “[T]he impact accommodation of the asserted constitutional right will have on guards and other inmates, and on the allocation of prison resources generally;”
4. Whether there exist any “obvious, easy alternatives” that show the policy is an “exaggerated response” to legitimate prison concerns.

**Valid, rational connection.** Prison regulations must forward a legitimate governmental interest to meet the first criteria. In this case, the ADC’s method is illogical and fundamentally flawed. The administration correlates beard forbiddance with a decrease in the amount of hidden drugs, weapons, and unapproved objects. Yet, inmates admittedly smuggle materials in their pockets, shoes, undergarments, and orifices—not on their faces for all to see. The type of facial hair at issue is not dense, draping, and opaque. It is short, sparse, and transparent—accessible
enough for guards to catch syringes, coins, razor blades, and SIM card for unauthorized cell phones). If Arkansas is so perturbed by hirsute trafficking, one wonders why its grooming policy does not address the removal of pubic hair where, presumably, it would be more convenient to transfer and shelter items.

No more persuasive is Respondents’ argument that a religious accommodation would contribute to disguise and delinquency. For an inmate to bypass countless guards and advanced camera equipment without being seen or recognized is, in and of itself, extraordinary. A quarter-inch to half-inch beard emphasizes the contours of a man’s face, framing the jaw line. It is not a large bushel of hair that would suddenly and totally mask Petitioner’s features or transform his entire appearance. Amidst situations of attempted getaways, there are more effective means of achieving the ADC’s desired outcome than universally stripping all inmates of personal grooming choices and free exercise rights. Photographs can be taken at a prisoner’s entry and periodically throughout his stay (with or without the beard), so officials know precisely how he looks at every stage regardless of his facial hairstyle at that point in time. The record reveals no rational link between an average prisoner’s beard length and the likelihood he will misbehave.

Other means of exercise. Correctional officers are not religious chaplains, advisors, or tribunals. They cannot vouch for the sacrifice of one practice for the sanctity of another. As briefed, there was conflicting testimony about Holt’s worship methods—specifically what he was allowed to have, use, and do while practicing Islam at Varner Supermax. See p. 36, supra. Though his faith demands a full beard (“a fist-length”), Petitioner is willing to compromise for half an inch in light of his incarceration. While prayer rugs and special food orders, etc., may place some marginal imposition on the prison’s budget and schedule, Holt’s beard costs virtually nothing to grow and little to maintain. More importantly, it carries a personal significance for Petitioner that cannot be duplicated, and the practice itself does not come at the expense of another prisoner and his free exercise.

Impact of accommodation. The third prong considers whether there will be any ripple effects on guards or other inmates if a prisoner is exempted from a particular policy. Concerns were raised in the lower courts that giving Holt essentially a “free pass” to wear a beard, even if
limited to a half-inch, would stir resentment among his peers. However, inmates with dermatological conditions are already excused from AD 98-04; they are presently receiving quarter-inch accommodations. No history of intimidation, quarrel, or violence has ever been reported at Varner Supermax (or any other Arizona institution) between convicts with permitted beards and those without them. Moreover, the ADC provides no valid justification for why a religious exemption threatens prison objectives, while a medical exemption does not. The record lacks documentation that accepted beards would initiate some sort of domino effect—what the Court has routinely called “opportunistic conversion”—with inmates claiming religiosity in order to reap its benefits. This Court has already resolved that problem by empowering state and federal prisons to question the sincerity of an inmate’s faith. Nevertheless, the practices to exercise that faith must be protected.

In terms of the allocation of state resources, past testimony indicates that correctional facilities are well prepared. Barbers are already equipped with electric clippers and trimming utensils for scalp and facial hair, and guards are informed of the rules regarding length. Pictures of quarter-inch and half-inch beards can easily be posted and circulated for guidance. Even assuming that granting Holt a religious accommodation would lead to a percentage of Muslim (or Jewish, or Sikh, and so on) inmates requesting the same treatment, respecting their wishes would tack on little or no additional costs to what the prisons spend on their barbershops now.9

Absence of alternatives. The final assessment lies in the reasonableness of the policy and whether officials exhausted all other avenues before embracing it. The ADC’s utter lack of consideration is telling. In his petition for writ of certiorari, Holt listed several conceivable options for handling exemptions:


[B] Direct orders for inmates to get into compliance with the half-inch rule or face disciplinary action.

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9 “But if an inmate claimant can point to an alternative that fully accommodates the prisoner’s rights at de minimis cost to valid penological interest, a court may consider that as evidence that the regulation does not satisfy the reasonable relationship standard.” (O’Connor, J., majority) (Turner, supra).
These suggestions were shunned by Respondents, despite ample proof of their feasibility in dozens of other states with parallel operational concerns. Indeed, AD 98-04 is an “exaggerated response” to common problems that arbitrary measures will not solve.

Although the State of Arkansas has legitimate interests in maintaining safe and amicable communities within and outside its prison walls, those interests do not substantiate, nor are rationally related to, its stringent grooming policy: one that disproportionately disadvantages male practitioners of certain minority religions and impinges on their most fundamental rights. Prison officials must rely on firm evidence—not assumptions, suspicions, or stereotypes. They cannot legitimately deny a religious accommodation based on some hypothetical that its recipient(s) will plot an escape, hijack security measures, or overthrow the administration. So far, the only thing that has been hijacked in this case, is the First Amendment.

10 Petition of Writ for Certiorari, No. 13–6827, 10.
C. The Eighth Circuit’s Decision Disregards Decades of United States District Court, Court of Appeals, and Supreme Court Precedents.

When the Eighth Circuit upheld the ADC’s grooming policy and did not exempt Holt, it erred by negating 40 years of case law that overwhelmingly supports Petitioner.

**District Courts.** *Monroe v. Bombard*, 422 F. Supp. 211 (S.D.N.Y. 1976), and *Moskowitz v. Wilkinson*, 432 F. Supp. 947 (D. Conn. 1977), similarly dealt with prisoner beards. In *Monroe*, a large group of institutionalized Sunni Muslims fought a facial hair regulation that did not allow for medical or religious exceptions. When they sought damages, class action certification, and injunctive relief, the District Court for the Southern District of New York granted all three remedies. The following year, an Orthodox Jewish prisoner petitioned for a writ of habeas corpus and requested a temporary restraining order against a comparable directive in *Moskowitz*. The same result occurred in the Connecticut District Court when the scale tipped in his favor.\(^\text{11}\) Returning to the New York District Court, the government utterly flunked the *Turner test* in *Arroyo Lopez v. Nuttall*, 25 F. Supp. 2d 407 (S.D.N.Y. 1998), when it could not prove it had a compelling interest in physically shoving a Muslim inmate during prayer. Consequently, the prisoner won significant damages for the First Amendment violation, and the officer who assaulted him was discharged.

**Court of Appeals.** *Teterud v. Burns*, 522 F.2d 357 (8th Cir. 1975), implicated an Iowa penitentiary that disapproved of a Native American convict wearing long, braided hair. By accommodating his spiritual beliefs and exempting him from the facility’s short-hair mandate, the Eighth Circuit was “just as vigilant in protecting a prisoner’s constitutional rights as [it was] in protecting the constitutional rights of a person not confined.” *People v. Lewis*, 68 N.Y.2d 923 (1986), was another example of a governmental impediment on an appellee’s religious custom. Lewis, a Rastafarian

\(^{11}\) “The critical issue is whether this governmental interest reasonably justifies the impairment of petitioner’s ability to observe his religious beliefs… We contend it does not.” (*Moskowitz*, supra).
felon with dreadlocks, had not trimmed his hair in over 20 years. A state appellate court decided that simply pulling his hair back for an identification photograph was somehow less intrusive than demanding it all be snipped. The Second Circuit in *Benjamin v. Coughlin*, 905 F.2d 571 (2nd Cir. 1990), also assisted Rastafarians in the State of New York by preventing the Department of Correctional Services from punishing them for refusing haircuts as well. *Thomas v. Gunter*, 103 F.3d 700 (8th Cir. 1997), involved an inmate who was denied access to a ceremonial sauna while practitioners of other denominations were given frequent entry to equivalent locations. Thomas appealed his First and Fourteenth Amendment claims as he felt he had been singled out and targeted for his particular faith. In applying the *Turner* test, the 8th Circuit “[could not] say, without reasons advanced by the appellees, that [the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services] acted reasonably in denying Mr. Thomas daily access to the sweat lodge for prayer.” Finally, the District of Columbia Circuit and the Second Circuit sent *Levitan v. Ashcroft*, 281 F.3d 1313 (D.C. Cir. 2002), and *McEachin v. McGuinnis*, 357 F.3d 197 (2nd Cir. 2004), back to district courts on the basis that they had misapplied the *Turner* test. In both occasions, the inmates’ free exercise claims were thus vindicated.

**Supreme Court.** Most notably, *Cruz v. Beto*, 405 U.S. 319 (1972), was the landmark victory for prisoners’ free exercise rights. The Petitioner, a Buddhist inmate at a Texas institution, was placed in solitary confinement for two weeks after distributing materials. He could not enter a chapel or write to his religious advisor. After this Court granted *certiorari* (and Cruz’s motion to proceed *in forma pauperis*), it vacated and remanded the Fifth Circuit’s decision. Acknowledging the mistreatment of Cruz, this Court’s per curiam opinion negated the full, unconditional discretion of prison personnel. It clarified the role of federal courts in the future: “[W]e sit not to supervise prisoners, but to enforce the constitutional rights of all ‘persons,’ including prisoners.”12

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12 In addition, the opinion hinted at the prevalence of religious and cultural intolerance: “If Cruz was a Buddhist and he was denied a reasonable opportunity of pursuing his faith comparable to the opportunity afforded fellow prisoners who adhere to conventional religious precepts, then there was palpable discrimination by the State against the Buddhist religion, established 600 B.C., long before the Christian era.” (*Cruz, supra*). The same logic applies to Islam, Mr. Holt, and his beard.
Collectively, these disputes, among others, construct a historic model for how jurists have adjudicated cases in a pre-RLUIPA, unilaterally First Amendment-based context. They demonstrate the effects of comparable policies on similarly situated inmates, and various courts' responses to them. This background is further evidence that AD 94-08 has endangered and will destroy the free exercise of Petitioner unless he, too, is offered a religious exemption.

D. Rational Basis Review is Insufficient.

Respondents are gravely mistaken in assuming that Petitioner’s institutionalized status and legal standing deprive him of a fair and just review; they do not. Rational basis is inappropriate, even negligible here, as it does not pay close enough attention to a suspicious governmental policy that subordinates certain members of its prison population and suppresses their religious needs. If correctional officers can concoct any story or fabricate any record to legitimize their own behavior—and not be held accountable by a court of law—nothing is to restrain them from continuing to eviscerate inmates’ rights in severely prejudicial ways. If the bar for analyzing this case is set at whatever seems commonplace or rationally sound, almost any reason for hindering Petitioner’s practice could suffice. This Court would essentially authorize the ADC to become a new legislative body, a contemporary Framer onto itself: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof … except when it makes sense.” That, it may not do.

If the Justices are content with the Turner calculation and body of past evidence, they need not go any further. Otherwise, Petitioner welcomes the consideration of his secondary claim, along with the use of a more rigorous standard.

II. THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION’S GROOMING POLICY ALSO VIOLATES THE RELIGIOUS LAND USE AND INSTITUTIONALIZED PERSONS ACT ("RLUIPA").

In the aftermath of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), most of which this Court struck down in 1997, RLUIPA came into ex-
existence. Since 2000, it has insulated churches and religious landowners from zoning regulations, addressing tensions with eminent domain under the Establishment Clause. Some RLUIPA cases have invoked the rights of individuals in state and federal penitentiaries when the Free Exercise Clause was too narrowly defined. The pertinent segment, 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc–1, recites:

(a) General rule
No government shall impose a substantial burden on the religious exercise of a person residing in or confined in an institution, as defined in section 1997 of this title, even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability, unless the government demonstrates that imposition of the burden on that person—

(1) is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest;

(2) is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest.

Overall, the federal statute has a much broader scope than the First Amendment. Before its enactment, the Supreme Court had sustained a “free exercise inquiry,” posing whether the government had placed “a substantial burden on the observation of a central religious belief or practice.” See Hernandez v. Communion of Internal Revenue, 490 U.S 680 (1989) (emphasis added). Disappointed with that minimal amount of protection (and the effects of the Turner test), Congress created RLUIPA to cover “any exercise of religion, whether or not compelled by, or central to, a system of religious belief.” 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc–5(7)(A) (emphasis added).

The Act was initially challenged in Cutter v. Wilkinson, 544 U.S. 709 (2005). After the Sixth Circuit ruled that RLUIPA disrupted the Establishment Clause by promulgating religious accommodations for five convicts in Ohio, this Court vehemently disagreed. It found that RLUIPA had actually saved the inmates from wrongful tramplings on their spiritual freedom. Moreover, the Justices concluded that Congress had not overstepped its bounds in legislating the Act in the first place. One
month after the Court published its unanimous decision in *Cutter*, the 9th Circuit issued an opinion in *Warsoldier v. Woodford*, 418 F. 3d 989 (9th Cir. 2005). Warsoldier was a Native American in a California correctional facility who only cut his hair upon the death of a loved one. He asked the Circuit Judges to lift the assorted sanctions imposed on him as a result of disobeying a California prison code. The 9th Circuit balanced the hardships of Warsoldier’s substantial burden, the state’s compelling interests, and any least restrictive possibilities under the RLUIPA format. It also cited *Sherbert* and *Thomas* as First Amendment paradigms. See p.34–35, supra. At appellant’s behest, the Judges reversed and remanded the district court’s ruling, releasing Walsoldier from custody pending further proceedings. In the majority opinion, Circuit Judge Pregerson regarded California’s policy as “sweeping,” both in its inconsistent treatment of male versus female inmates as well as its probability of inflicting irreparable injury to Walsoldier’s free exercise.

Additionally, in *Koger v. Bryan*, 523 F.3d 789 (7th Cir. 2008), a district court dismissed an inmate’s case as moot. The Seventh Circuit then determined that RLUIPA required the Illinois Department of Corrections to provide Koger, an ex-Buddhist who joined the Thelema sect, with a specific vegetarian diet even though it was not necessarily “central” to his new faith. The Judges referenced *Warsoldier* as a “sister circuit” precedent. Most recently, *Garner v. Kennedy*, 713 F.3d 237 (5th Cir. 2013), presented a nearly identical set of facts to the one currently before this Court: a Muslim man wanting a “clipper-shave pass” after being repeatedly disciplined for his inability to comply with a Texas state prison’s no-beard policy. Unconvinced by the institution’s arguments that allowing beards would incur extra governmental costs and promote successful escapes, the Fifth Circuit affirmed the lower court’s judgment and the plaintiff was granted his exemption.

These cases exhibit a recent trend in appellate jurisprudence. In every lawsuit, the Circuit Judges upheld the inmates’ statutory claims. As the latest relevant petition for *certiorari* was denied in *Thunderhouse v. Pierce*, 131 S.Ct. 896 (2011), the Supreme Court has not taken on a prisoner’s complaint under RLUIPA specifically—until now.

The infamous Footnote Four in Justice Stone’s majority opinion in United States v. Carolene Products, 304 U.S. 144 (1938), introduced different levels of judicial review. During the New Deal, most cases on the Court’s docket involved social programs and interstate commerce: topics easily dependent on rational basis review. Sensing the lack of a doctrinal framework for situations when the government encroached fundamental freedoms or threatened historically oppressed groups, Justice Stone formulated a higher degree of examination. “Strict scrutiny,” as it were, is triggered when a piece of legislation in question:

1) on its face violates a provision of the Constitution (facial challenge); 2) attempts to distort or rig the political process; and 3) discriminates against minorities, particularly those who lack sufficient numbers or power to seek redress through the political process.13

Despite the glaring truths that Petitioner falls within a religious minority category and has had his First Amendment liberties curtailed, heightened scrutiny has yet to be deployed in this case. The Turner test, as previously described in I (B), only places the standard of review somewhere on the lower end of the hierarchical pyramid by which our courts assess clashing principles. See p. 36–37, supra. The very language of Justice O’Connor’s platform suggests that the default guideline for adjudicating First Amendment claims is rational basis review.

But if RLUIPA is at play, it raises the benchmark from “legitimate penological interests” in Turner to “compelling governmental interests,” and from “central religious beliefs or practices” in Hernandez to “any exercise of religion” (emphasis added). As RLUIPA ultimately governs this case, it calls for the pinnacle of scrutiny.

13 (J. Stone, majority) (Carolene Products, supra).
B. If the Government’s Interests Are Not Legitimate, They Are Not Compelling.

Assuming *Holt v. Hobbs* solely turned on the First Amendment, relying on rational basis alone would make it more difficult for Petitioner to prevail on the merits. Yet, even classifying Arkansas’ interests for prison safety and peace as “legitimate” does not satisfy the remaining constitutional criteria, especially when these types of monumental rights are at risk. If scrutiny is enhanced, however, the “compelling interest”/“least restrictive means” archetype is imminent. Applying that standard of review, the grooming policy cannot pass muster. Under *Turner*, it flounders. Under RLUIPA, it fails.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, the judgment reached by the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit should be reversed in full and the case should be remanded to lower courts for further proceedings consistent with that ruling. The portion of the Arkansas Department of Correction’s grooming policy prohibiting beards should be declared unconstitutional. At minimum, Petitioner should be granted a religious exemption not to exceed one half of an inch as requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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RYAN POPPER

“Won’t Think Straight, Won’t Talk Straight!”: Reimagining Queer Discourse and Strategies for Resisting Heteronormativity

Ryan Popper, class of 2015, is a Fine Arts major.
WRITER’S COMMENTS

The culmination of Professor Ewert’s RHET 320: How English Works was a research paper on some topic in linguistics. I (naturally) chose Queer Linguistics. I wanted, however, not only to engage what other scholars had said about “queering” language, but to get out and find answers in what people were actually doing. Being in San Francisco, the queer “promised land,” gives me the opportunity to continually challenge my ideas about queer community and theory vs. action. How can we create spaces, discourses, and practices which critically disrupt hetero-hegemony while welcoming those whom Queer Academia renders voiceless? What do we do differently with our words and voices to achieve these goals? What is the potential for the ways we talk to one another outside journals and conferences? Professor Ewert’s encouragement and USF’s “extended classroom” allowed me to seek answers to these questions outside (and inside) the library—I am extremely thankful for that.

—Ryan Popper

INSTRUCTOR’S COMMENTS

Ryan Popper has written a compelling critique of the ways in which identities are formed and constrained by language in use and theories of language analysis. By reviewing previous research and theory on the interface between language and sexual identities, Ryan designed a primary research study of the language use of transgendered activists in a group meeting. Using discourse analytic methods developed mostly through his own research, Ryan adroitly noted differences between the dualistic approach of Queer Theory linguists, who emphasize the distinction between gay and straight talk, which can promote heteronormativity, and the dynamic approach of the group members. Their talk was characterized by a much wider use of linguistic resources for identifying self, thus reducing or eliminating altogether attention to or the ability to identify sexual orientation. The depth of understanding and level of analysis in Ryan’s paper is among the best I have seen over decades of teaching undergraduates, but the greatest pleasure for me was how much I learned.

—Doreen Ewert, Department of Rhetoric and Language
Abstract

This paper focuses on linguistic heteronormativity resistance taking place outside of the traditional academic realm of Queer Theory and discourse studies. An overview of Queer Linguistics (QL), as well as earlier Gay/Lesbian or “lavender” linguistics, is presented, and the flaws in both approaches are discussed: the limited perspective of the strict ethnographic approach, and the inaccessibility/elitism of the highly theoretical approach. Using a Queer Linguistic theoretical framework and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this paper analyzes data gathered from a meeting of an expressly political queer-identified direct action group in San Francisco as an example of a non-academic queer discourse. From the data, it identifies strategies used in this non-dominant discourse to build queer community and resist heteronormative linguistic constructs. Results show that the speakers in this conversation employ certain strategies; namely, explicit pronoun negotiation and de-centering of sexual identity, especially heterosexual identity, to deconstruct heterosexuality/cissexuality as normative and natural states of being. These findings are analyzed within the framework of political queerness and the suggestion is offered that, contrary to much previous academic discussion of the subject, the deconstruction of heteronormativity can and is taking place outside of academic contexts.

Keywords: queer linguistics, critical discourse analysis, heteronormativity, sexuality, identity
The purpose of this study is to outline linguistic strategies used outside of academia to deconstruct heteronormative language structures and in turn build distinctively queer discursive spaces. I apply a Queer Linguistic theoretical framework and use Critical Discourse Analysis to examine how an explicitly politicized conversation's speakers resist heteronormative and cissexist language to construct a shared queer identity. I do so to build on the existing but limited research that has studied the idea of “gayspeak,” or the communication of gay and lesbian people from a primarily ethnographic standpoint, as well as Queer Linguistic theory. In doing so, I hope to bridge some of the gaps between the strict sociolinguistic and the strict theoretical points of view, and to find practical application for Queer Linguistic theory. From a Queer Linguistic theoretical framework, I seek to observe not a queer “language” or “dialect” as such, but strategies of nonparticipation in the dominant discourse of hetero- and cissexuality, resistant to both the limitations of heteronormativity and the occasional abstraction of Queer Theory.

**A Note on Terms**

I feel it is important to briefly outline definitions for the words *heteronormativity* and *cissexism*. Though they are commonplace in many queer/academic spaces, they are relatively newly created and not widely used in Standard American English. As this paper is devoted to discourses of queerness that exist outside the journal article, it is not my intention to use language so inaccessible that only those with a Queer Theory and/or LGBT studies background may understand.

The central focus of this paper is *heteronormativity*, which may be defined as the set of social, cultural, and institutional constructs that allow the systemic privileging of heterosexuality over other forms of sexual identity. In a linguistic context, heteronormativity is language that “raises heterosexuality to the status of a largely unquestioned norm [and] privileges certain forms of heterosexuality over others” (Leap and Motschenbacher, 2012, p.9, as cited in Koller, 2013). Heterosexuality and heteronormativity rest on a binary system of gender/sex that assumes male/female are opposite and mutually exclusive categories of being. From this binary originates *cissexism*, defined by Julia Serano as, “the belief
that transsexuals’ [transgender people’s] identified genders are inferior to, or less authentic than, those of cissexuals [non-trans people]” (2007, p.33). Cissexism, the assumption that cisgender (i.e., not transgender) identification is normal, natural or right, leads to systemic persecution of transgender people and devaluation of trans identities, particularly those of transgender women and other male-assigned trans people. Both cissexism and heteronormativity mutually uphold one another, as transsexuality/transgender people are perceived as a threat to heterosexuality, and queerness/homosexuality is perceived as a threat to rigid binary gender (Butler, 1999; Serano, 2007). Cissexism and heteronormativity’s manifestations through language inform and co-create each other. Because of their interdependence, where I say “heteronormative” in this paper it can be presumed that cissexism is also present.

Queer Linguistics

Queer Linguistics (henceforth QL) is a relatively young field of linguistic inquiry that views language from the perspective of Queer and post-structuralist theory, chiefly drawing from the works of Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida (Motschenbacher, 2011). It is important to distinguish QL from earlier, more essentialized approaches to the relation of language and sexuality, which may be called “gay and lesbian linguistics,” or “lavender linguistics.” These approaches focused on indexing the speech characteristics of gay men and lesbians (usually separately) toward an idea of “gayspeak” (Chesbro, 1981; Leap, 1996; Livia et. al., 1997; Rosello 1994). This early research, according to Motschenbacher, “was still driven by a motivation to put lesbian and gay male speakers on the sociolinguistic map,” (2011, p. 150) and treated cisgender gay and lesbian speakers similarly to an ethnic or geographic group without questioning or delving into the discursive construction of these identities or dealing with the linguistic enforcement of the gender binary among queer people, although some did question the essentialized notions of male/female gendered language (Queen, 1998).

Queer Linguistics is markedly different from gay/lesbian (or “lavender”) linguistics in that it centers its criticism on the construction of heterosexuality in order to challenge heteronormativity—that is, the cultural assumption that heterosexual identity is right and natural (Wagenknecht,
2007, as cited in Motschenbacher, 2011). QL takes the point of view that all sexuality is constructed through discourse. I refer to Foucault’s definition of discourse here, being “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972; Foucault, 1976). Thus, the discourses of sexuality and identity construct gender and sexuality in normative and non-normative manners. Queer Theory, and by turn Queer Linguistics, focuses on destabilizing the normative (i.e., heterosexual) with QL focusing on how language creates and re-creates normative constructions, even within queer/LGBT spaces.

In order to grasp the scope of heterosexism’s enforcement, it is vital to name and deconstruct the ways in which everyday speech continuously establishes and reinforces heterosexual and cisgender dominance. Anti-queer language does not end at “f*ggot,” “d*ke,” and “tr+nny,” just as the violent marginalization of queer people does not end at hate crimes but is maintained in social structures that legitimate that violence. The “othering” of queerness, the epistemological justification for anti-queer, anti-trans violence, has become ingrained so deeply into the English language that those who occupy dominant identities often completely fail to see it (McIntosh, 1992). A homonormative discourse of equality which does not challenge heteronormative language and epistemological structures fails to question key foundations of anti-queer oppression.

Problematising Queer Theory vs. Queer Reality

The centrally accepted problem with Queer Theory, and by extension, Queer Linguistics, is that it exists largely removed from the lived experience of queerness. Academic queer culture is often exclusive of the most marginalized queer people. This creates a serious problem with queer theory, as its codes often act as a barrier to those often most affected by heterosexist structures of domination (e.g., poor queers, homeless queers, trans women, sex workers, queer people of color, and others with additional institutional barriers to higher education). The group upon which this study is based, henceforth referred to as GROUP, addresses this divide between queer theory and queer reality on their website:

If you are writing a paper, GROUP offers plenty of materials online and hopefully our meetings are great sources of inspi-
ration. We hope that once your paper has been turned in that you remember to unleash your defiance on the world for all to see. GROUP challenges you to step away from the classist pillars of theoretical “discourse” and celebrate direct action deviance. (“GROUP and Academia,” n.d.)

It may, therefore, seem somewhat counterintuitive for me to frame this study through the lens of formal discourse analysis, but my aim here is to show that academics are not the only ones who have the ability to critically analyze heteronormativity in discourse. Doing so through academic discourse analysis underscores that this kind of deconstruction of heteronormative language structures functions on levels other than the scholarly article. I use this form of discourse as a proof that it is not the only form in which heteronormative language can be challenged.

**Methodology and Subjectivity**

Methodologies for studying Queer Linguistics vary; the discipline itself fundamentally challenges the notion of objectivity in its origins in poststructuralism. Morrish and Stauntson (2007) propose that studies of sexuality do not especially lend themselves to traditional, quantitative methodologies; they further propose that in sexuality and critical heteronormativity research that subjective, author-influenced insights can be just as valuable. Motschenbacher (2011) posits that “[T]he study of non-heterosexualities and non-normative heterosexualities has a legitimate starting point in the personal experiences of researchers” (p.160). It would be disingenuous to present this study without also presenting honestly my own involvement and the extent to which my own queer and trans identity informs my interpretation of the data and my embarking on this project at all. For the sake of transparency, I have indicated my own participation in the data where it appears—my name (Ryan) is the only one that has not been altered. I did not attempt to influence the direction of the conversation, participating minimally but doing so where I felt was appropriate. From the Queer Linguistic perspective as outlined by Motschenbacher, this subjectivity is not so much a limit as a factor like anything else; regardless, it may influence the data.

The methodology of this study is based in large part on this perspec-
tive and the suggestion that “[s]tudy[ng] local gender and sexual identity negotiation enables researchers to detect practices on the micro-level that clash with hegemonic discourses on the macro-level and therefore contribute to the destabilization of these latter discourses . . . A practice-oriented focus is also more in tune with poststructuralist conceptualizations of identity as performative” (Motschenbacher, 2011, p.164). Much of the format is also based on a 1998 study by Robin M. Queen entitled, “Stay Queer, Never Fear: Building Queer Social Networks” which analyzes a single conversation between a group of lesbian and gay speakers with no previously existing social network and finds that gay- and lesbian-identified people tend to employ certain linguistic strategies for this purpose in gender-inclusive situations as well as gender-exclusive (e.g., all-gay male or all-lesbian spaces) settings. This study focuses on a meeting of a queer direct action group, the purpose of which is expressly political, as demonstrated in the following Statement of Purpose:

GROUP is a Virus in the System. We are committed to a queer extravaganza that brings direct action to astounding levels of theatricality. We will not be satisfied with a commercialized gay identity that denies the intrinsic links between queer struggle and challenging power. We seek nothing less than a new queer activism that foregrounds race, class, gender and sexuality, to counter the self-serving “values” of gay consumerism and the increasingly hypocritical left. We are dedicated to fighting the rabid assimilationist monster with a devastating mobilization of queer brilliance. GROUP is a celebration of resistance: all are welcome. (“Statement of Purpose,” n.d.)

Transcription is also heavily based on Queen’s formatting. Lines aligned left with no breaks indicate uninterrupted speech. Indentation, if present, indicates at what point during the turn the speaker begins talking, and lines overlap if speech is simultaneous. Non-verbal communication (e.g., laughter) is indicated with brackets.
Data

The data are drawn from transcripts of roughly 85 minutes of taped conversation of a meeting of a direct action group in the Mission District of San Francisco on November 16, 2013. For the preservation of anonymity of the group and of the individual participants, all names have been altered, barring my own (RYAN), and the group itself shall be referred to as GROUP. All participants were informed of the recording and consented to being taped, with assurance that the data would be anonymized. Participants range in age from 18 to mid-60s and have varying ethnic backgrounds, although they are predominantly white. Asha has been with the group since its inception in the early 2000s, I for several months, and Francis has attended a few meetings in the past. Dani attends meetings sporadically and knows Asha from another group they are part of (referred to as Q, with whom GROUP occasionally does joint action). Dani and Roz have a pre-existing friendship. Tiffany, Amy, and Mary are complete newcomers.

Figure 1. Relationships among participants.
As demonstrated in Figure 1, the group dynamics necessitate group-building strategies in order to establish cohesion and a collective identity, which are presumed to be on the basis of shared assumptions about queerness and common political leanings (e.g., anti-capitalism, leftism). Because this group of participants does not represent a complete existing social network, because many of the participants do not share relationships with others outside of group meetings and action, and because much of the conversation relies on a discursive understanding of shared identity, the linguistic strategies at work here provide suggestive data for analyzing how these strategies can be used to build queer spaces alternative to the dominant heteronormative discourse and outside of the elitism of academic queerness.

Strategies of Linguistic Resistance

Pronoun negotiation. One of the more difficult linguistic manifestations of these systems, being that it is ingrained into the grammar of English, lies in the pronoun. The third-person pronoun system in English is cissexist and erases non-binary gender identities in that it requires ascribing a male or female gender to a human subject and lacks a neutral third-person pronoun. The options for third-person singular are limited, in terms of prescriptive “correct” language, to “he,” “she,” and “it.” This linguistic construct reproduces cisgender privilege constantly and pervasively. It cannot help but reinforce the oppression of transgender people (Smith et al., 2013). It mandates that assumptions about a person’s gender be instantaneously made based on their appearance, further placing the power of assigning gender into the hands of the cisgender populace. This, once more, is especially harmful to transgender women, who are frequently the targets of violent assault because of their being perceived as transgender and “really” male (Serano, 2007).

The American Psychological Association has published guidelines on avoiding sexism in third-person constructs where gender is ambiguous, which ignores the effects of gendered language upon people outside of the male/female binary and suggests that the only concern with using gendered language is that it may enforce male superiority (American Psychological Association, 2009). In queer/trans reality, the pronoun system in English can be experienced as a continual source of psychological, microaggressive violence against transgender people (Smith et al., 2013; Serano, 2007) as well as contributing to the erasure of non-binary identities from even
REIMAGINING QUEER DISCOURSE

LGBT-oriented discourse.

Example 1 below shows a widely used practice in queer-oriented space: the negotiation of pronouns, sometimes referred to as PGP (preferred gender pronoun). In this exchange, the meeting’s attendees formally begin the meeting by going around the circular table and stating their names and PGPs, after which some complications arise.

Example 1

1 ASHA: So intros. Um. Say your name, PGP—preferred gender pronoun...
2 DANI: My name’s Dani and I go by she. She.
3 RYAN: Ryan, he/him, or they/them, if you want.
4 DANI: [Laughing]
5 MARY: Mary. She/her.
6 ROZ: She, although I don’t know, I’ve sure been thinking about it...
7 Nobody’s, nobody’s staying put on their gender anymore, am I being left behind?
8 ASHA: [Laughing] Asha, I prefer feminine pronouns, but it doesn’t super matter that much to me.
9 ROZ: Oh, you do prefer she?
10 ASHA: Mhm.
11 ROZ: Oh, that’s the first time I’ve heard about that.
12 ASHA: Um. Don’t worry about it.
13 So the Q action.

There are a number of discursive tactics at work here. Asha, the instigator of this conversation, begins by using the abbreviation “PGP,” which assumes a common knowledge of the practice of asking pronouns. She then quickly corrects herself and explains the term. (See Example 2 for a repetition of introductions on the entrance of new group members, where Asha changes linguistic tactics for this purpose.) From context, we can project that she is correcting herself based on her own perception that she has made an incorrect assumption about shared knowledge, which is supported by the second half of Example 1. The exchange in lines 7-15 is awkward, with both participants talking over one another, and Asha’s haste to change the subject once Roz continues talking about her pro-
nouns would indicate that this may be the reason that Example 2 contains an altered and somewhat abbreviated version of pronoun negotiation.

Example 2

1 DANI: Do you think we should introduce ourselves again?
2 ASHA: Oh yeah sure.
3 I'm sorry. Intros, and PGP, if they want, you don't have to.
4 DANI: I'm Dani. She.
5 ASHA: I'm Asha, I prefer feminine pronouns.
6 ROZ: Roz, she.
7 MARY: Mary, she.
8 RYAN: Uh, Ryan, they.
9 AMY: Amy, she/her.
10 TIFFANY: Tiffany, she/her.

Here, Asha takes time to specify that providing a pronoun is not required (line 3), presumably based on the earlier exchange with Roz (Example 1, lines 9-15) and the correction of her assumption that all in the room would be familiar and comfortable with the act of asking for pronouns. Asha also leaves out her earlier qualification that pronouns don’t really matter to her (Example 1, line 10; Example 2, line 3). Pronouns having been brought to the front of the discussion may have something to do with this shifting of qualification from her own pronoun preference to the requirement of giving a PGP. Roz appears to have picked up on Asha’s earlier discomfort and presumably understood that it is a violation of the speech code of this conversation to linger on pronouns or question the ones a person provides, and she simply states her name and PGP. There is no interruption in this exchange, as each participant waits for and takes their turn in the discourse.

It is important to emphasize that participants are asked for and voluntarily provide pronouns, not identities. Pronouns are expressly for pragmatic purposes. The goal behind asking for PGPs is to avoid the speech act of misgendering (referring to a person in a manner inconsistent with their identified gender/preferred pronouns). Misgendering is an incredibly frequent microaggression faced by transgender people on a daily basis—a micro-invalidation that repeatedly invalidates their identities and causes
significant psychological harm (Smith, 2012; Sue, 2010, as cited in Koller, 2013). In a queer-unfriendly space, the act of correction upon misgendering is out of the question as it risks revealing a person’s gender-transgressive identity and thereby exposing them to danger. Unfortunately, it is also difficult in many expressly queer-friendly environments, as correcting an incorrect assumption of gender often leads to outing a person as trans—something many trans people avoid, given that queer-oriented spaces that center sexuality issues are often unfriendly environments to be trans, even if they are not immediately “dangerous” as such. Asking everyone in a situation to provide a preferred pronoun, even if they are cisgender, is intended to avoid the act of misgendering in the first place, as well as to underscore that gender identification ought not be assumed. Asking cisgender people to provide a preferred pronoun places their gender identification on the same discursive level as trans identification and challenges deeply rooted cultural cissexism, which presumes that the pronouns which cisgender people prefer are “natural” and thus not in need of negotiation and not, in actuality, a preference. Avoiding linguistic assumptions of gender is central to challenging cisgender hegemony which routinely naturalizes cis-ness and others trans-ness.

**Singular “they.”** A related strategy employed by participants in this conversation is the avoidance of gendered language or assigning gender to people not present in the room; that is, breaking the rules of Standard English, which demands third-person singular pronouns be gender-specific. The singular form of *they* is most commonly used, as illustrated in Example 3 (see also line 3, Example 2).

**Example 3**

1. **RYAN:** I have a friend who works there so I might see if, yeah.
2. **ASHA:** Oh okay.
3. **RYAN:** What’s your friend’s name?
4. **ASHA:** Liz.
5. **ASHA:** Do they work Fridays, do you know?
6. **RYAN:** I don’t think so.
7. **ASHA:** My contact is, is named Lucien.
8. **RYAN:** Lucien.
9. **ASHA:** Yeah, they’re cool.
In lines 5 and 9, we see they used twice by Asha with a singular antecedent to refer to two separate people, one of whom she knows and another she does not. The question of they’s grammaticality is a prescriptive one. It is not my interest to debate whether or not using they as a singular third-person pronoun is “correct” by any prescriptive standard. APA maintains that they is ungrammatical if used to refer to a singular subject; it also maintains that generic he is unacceptable and suggests using be or she to avoid sexist construction (2009, p. 66). Regardless of its grammaticality, they with a singular antecedent has been used historically (it appears in the works of both Austen and Shakespeare), is quite commonly used in everyday speech, and in this context it underscores the emphasis in this non-dominant discourse on not assuming or assigning gender to others. Notice in Example 2 that Liz and Lucien are clearly perceived in our society as female and male names, respectively, but that gendered pronouns are used to refer to neither of them, once more reinforcing the discursive tactic of deliberate removal of gendered language.

**De-centering (hetero)sexual identity.** In the entire 85 minutes of recorded discussion, there is not a single mention of the word “straight,” “heterosexual,” or variation thereof, and proportionally very little discussion around sexuality. The conversation participants construct sexuality, when they do talk about it, in a way that assumes a shared understanding of queerness as political, not oriented around individual sexual/romantic inclinations. A key piece of dismantling heteronormativity that has largely been ignored by gay/lesbian linguists in studying the interaction of gays and lesbians is the absence of heterosexuality from discourse—the choice, conscious or not, to not contribute to the discursive construction of heterosexuality, whether positive or negative. Silence itself can be a discursive tactic (Stauntson, 2013). Here we find an exchange between queer-identified people that does not mention queerness’s constructed and validated opposite and thus refuses to reproduce that construction.

The relative absence of sexuality also contributes to a non-dominant discursive construction of sexuality that negotiates some of the problems that come up around agency in queer theory. Centering a queer-oriented discussion away from sexuality as it is commonly constructed refuses to participate in a discursive construction of queer identity categories as they are defined by heteronormativity. Straight society demands that if a person has a “deviant” sexuality/gender that they announce and place
it into a category that can be understood through a heteronormative mindset; self-definition and self-determination for queer people are lost in this straight-oriented identity politic. Without explicitly deconstructing identity categories until they lose political agency, the participants in this conversation challenge heteronormativity through the creation of a non-dominant discourse, rather than analysis of the dominant. By excising straightness from the conversation instead of focusing attention on its deconstruction, the political agency in queerness that can be lost in post-structuralist post-identity discourse is maintained. This is not to say that QL is inherently disempowering, but its maintenance that all sexuality is socially constructed may be dangerous ground to tread upon in straight company when heteronormative society already looks for excuses to delegitimize queer and trans identities (Bourcier, 2012; Motschenbacher, 2011; Smith et al., 2013). Example 4 below recounts the only instance of explicit conversation around sexual identification.

Example 4

1    FRANCIS: A lot of people used to be here.
2    RYAN:     Apparently. According to the New York Times, San Francisco isn't the gayest city in the country anymore, it's DC. Yeah.
3    ASHA:     Really?
4    ROZ: Oh DC's been super gay for a long time.
5    RYAN: I know, it's super gay but now it's, like, super commercial gay. It's great. It's horrible. [Laughter]
6    FRANCIS: Oakland actually has the highest per capita rate of women who identify as queer, allied, gay, trans...
7    ROZ: It's a symptom of low rent, that's self-repairing, that'll get fixed.
8    ALL: [Laughter]
9    ROZ: The rents are going up. They will move on to Vallejo.
10   ALL: [Laughter]
11   DANI: You got that right.
12   ROZ: They're already starting to talk Vallejo.
13   ALL: [Laughter]
14   TIFFANY: Is there a meeting I missed?
This exchange is the only part of the conversation where sexuality and gay identity are at the forefront, and the participants use certain language features to communicate their shared understanding of queerness and create a communal discourse criticizing the construction of gay identity. The “they” in this exchange is understood to be the queer women referred to in line 10. Roz makes the assumption that the group shares certain constructs in their understanding of “queer women in Oakland,” namely that they are there because the rent is low (lines 11-13). “It will get fixed” is a reference to the shared belief that queer people are often at the forefront of gentrification and move where rent is lower, and Roz makes the group laugh by suggesting that the shared queer identity that causes this is created via literal dialogue among all queer women in the area (line 16), which Tiffany reinforces by asking, “Is there a meeting I missed?” (line 18). This exchange unites the group via humor and draws to attention a common understanding of queer identity as expressly political, with more to do with how queers relate geographically and economically than private sexual-romantic interactions. One would perhaps not expect a queer discourse to construct “gay” negatively (in this context as responsible for gentrification). In doing so, the participants criticize the dominant discourse of gayness/queerness that emphasizes individual sexuality, desire, and “rights” rather than any collective radical politic.

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1 Tiffany later mentions her identity as a trans woman, specifically a trans woman of color, in the context of speaking about her time in prison, relying on a collective understanding of the experiences of transgender women of color in the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC):

TIFFANY: When I was in Boston, um, had, um, some bad experiences, um, doing direct action, being uh, arrested and being a trans woman of color, that’s uh. Yeah. Difficult thing with law enforcement.

As this identity is volunteered for contextual purposes to invoke a specific set of implications about the PIC, I do not include it as an express discussion of identity as is mandated by heteronormative discourse; that is, it is in keeping with the understanding of identity as expressly political and does not construct it in a normative manner.
Conclusion

Though not comprising anything like a comprehensive study of non-dominant queer discourses, the data show that linguistic strategies are used in queer spaces outside the academy to challenge heteronormativity on a linguistic level, from individual words to semantic constructions of identity groups and to the effective silencing of the hegemonic discourse of heterosexuality. Using all of these strategies, the participants in the conversation were able to communicate with one another and share a sense of collectivity without creating a rigid in-group identity construction. Many of the ideas of Queer Theory and QL are present without being overtly referenced. The perceived lack of applicability of QL is called into question, as well as its insistence on centering discussion on the dominant discourse (destructive rather than creative), and by extension its assumption that only academics are able to perceive and carry out this deconstruction. As Koller suggests, “[Critical Discourse Studies] can be very much enriched by an analysis of non-dominant discourses, where in- and out-group construction may work quite differently from the patterns in dominant discourses, which have for so long been the focus of critical analysis” (2013, p. 585). Application of QL to non-dominant discourses could further its aim to destabilize heteronormativity by taking a step away from it; after all, heteronormativity by its nature demands that heterosexuality be at the center of all our lives, and the goal of de-centering it may actually be achieved by observing the ways we can simply refuse to talk about it. To be clear, I do not believe that analysis of heteronormativity is fruitless, but I would urge who engage in academic queerness to be critical of the normative, rigid and inaccessible discourses we can ourselves create and uphold to be the superior and enlightened way of thinking. Queer academia itself creates normative constructions and an us-them dynamic that shadows the legitimate linguistic strategies used every day by people and movements seeking the same emancipatory goals.
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Señora Rivera: Negotiating a New Public Persona in Frida Kahlo’s Early Self-Portraits

Steven Slasten, class of 2014 (summa cum laude), double-majored in Communication Studies and Advertising and double-minored in Arts History/Arts Management and Gender and Sexuality Studies.
WRITER’S COMMENTS

When I signed up to take a course on Frida Kahlo, I thought what nearly everyone thinks when they hear her name: tortured female artist. It is her constructed identity in nearly every art history textbook, and it is the identity that we are comfortable—if not gleeful—to ascribe to her. But is this identity really hers, or merely the one we, as viewers, want to believe? Unfortunately, in our haste to mythologize artists for our own purposes, we tend to lose what really makes them special. Frida Kahlo is no different. As I found in my research, Frida Kahlo is not special for the myth she exists as today, but rather as the successful and valiant negotiator of two very different identities: that of the wife of a famous artist and that of the painter Frida Kahlo. As always with Frida Kahlo, there is more than meets the eye.

—Steven Slasten

INSTRUCTOR’S COMMENTS

Steven Slasten’s essay comes out of a class I taught in the fall of 2013 called Frida Kahlo and the Crossing of Cultural Boundaries. This seminar evolved out of a book that I’m writing, which focuses on the cross-cultural influences affecting Kahlo’s paintings in the early years of her creative development while living in the United States. The class looked critically at how Kahlo was perceived in the United States as the wife of famed muralist Diego Rivera and compared this perception to how she presented herself in her paintings. Steven was interested in the topic of the gaze. I encouraged him to look at bell hooks’ essay on the oppositional gaze. When I read Steven’s paper, I was impressed with how he used hooks’ theory to elucidate Kahlo’s choice of gaze in three very different paintings. Instead of viewing Kahlo as a victim of circumstances, Steven’s paper reveals an artist who is making strategic choices.

—Celia S. Stahr, Art History/Arts Management Program, Department of Art + Architecture
Abstract

In the early years of Frida Kahlo’s marriage, especially during her stay in the United States from 1930-1933, she was known primarily as the wife of famed Mexican muralist Diego Rivera. Although Kahlo could not control how others viewed her, she could control her own image in a series of self-portraits she made between 1929 and 1933. This essay analyzes the use of the gaze in *Self-Portrait—Time Flies* (1929), *Frieda and Diego Rivera* (1931) and *My Dress Hangs There* (1933). Drawing upon bell hooks’ theory of the oppositional gaze, I conduct a close analysis of the varying effects that Kahlo’s choice of gaze in these works has on the viewer. My feminist analysis reveals that her choice of gaze serves both to construct a public persona as the wife of a famous artist and as a means of negotiating her own identity amidst her burgeoning public persona as “wife.” I conclude that she eventually dismantles this public persona in *My Dress Hangs There* so as to destroy the Frida that she was expected to be in the early days of her marriage. Ultimately, the death of this persona signifies a rebirth—the birth of a Frida who would become known for her penetrating gaze and Tehuana dress in the 1940s.
Señora Rivera: Negotiating a New Public Persona in Frida Kahlo’s Early Self-Portraits

“The most important thing for everyone in Gringolandía is to have ambition and become ‘somebody,’ and frankly, I don’t have the least ambition to become anybody.” —Frida Kahlo

As wife of Diego Rivera, the famed Mexican muralist, Frida Kahlo was constantly a victim of the gaze. She was scrutinized by men as a woman, by Americans as a Mexican and by the media as an exotic wife. Yet, her art tells a different story. In her paintings she is never the victim of the gaze, but rather the perpetuator of it. At first glance, the viewer is presented with the façade of her public persona, but through the use of her gaze she allows viewers to peer behind it and see something deeper; and at no time is this more apparent than during her years in the United States. Thus the question must be asked: How does Kahlo, both before, during, and immediately following her stay in the United States, use her gaze to create her own identity amidst the construction of her burgeoning public persona? I will argue that Kahlo uses an oppositional gaze in Self-Portrait—Time Flies, 1929 (fig. 1), Frieda and Diego Rivera, 1931 (fig. 2), and My Dress Hangs There, 1933 (fig. 3), and that tracking her oppositional gaze through these three works provides insight into how the artist negotiated her emerging identity as young wife to a famous artist, ultimately destroying the very identity she had created.

Wedding Bliss: Mexico and San Francisco

Kahlo’s early self-portraits, before marrying Rivera, depicted a fiery girl ready to take on the world. She was not content with the typical phallocentric male gaze so common in depictions of women in art, and so her self-portraits show a determined Kahlo staring straight out at the viewer in a challenging, almost knowing way. “There is power in looking,” argues bell hooks, a black feminist activist, because “even in the worst circumstances of domination, the ability to manipulate
one’s gaze in the face of structures of domination that would contain it, opens up the possibility of agency.” In effect, Kahlo’s intense gaze can be interpreted as the artist taking ownership of her agency. As a result, Kahlo takes up an oppositional gaze in response to the power structures that would otherwise make her an object of male consumption. This is most apparent in her self-portrait painted right before her marriage to Rivera entitled, *Self-Portrait—Time Flies* (fig. 1). In this self-portrait the viewer is presented with a young woman with red cheeks that are full of life, ready for the endless possibilities that the future holds, as made clear by the ascending airplane behind her. Her gaze is strong and focused, and she positions herself directly in front of the viewer with a confidence that is uncommon in portrayals of women in art prior to the Feminist Art Movement of the 1970s. She does not cast her eyes down, tilt her head to the side, or even stare indirectly at the viewer as would be common with many artistic depictions of women. Rather, Kahlo’s powerful gaze transforms her into the viewer not content with being viewed as a passive object.

This constructed gaze plays into a larger attempt by Kahlo to negotiate the beginning of a new identity. She is no longer portraying herself in the style of the Italian Renaissance, as in her first *Self-Portrait* (fig. 4), but rather, she is beginning to paint herself as a modern Mexican woman, as epitomized by her simple cotton blouse that was popular in Mexico at the time. She is no longer a child—she is a woman beginning to define herself, and a woman on the verge of marrying one of the most famous artists of the time. In effect, she is no longer the injured girl from a trolley accident, but rather she is a strong and determined woman. Through her relationship with Rivera, she became increasingly involved with a very visible group of artists. Furthermore, the imagery she chooses to use in the painting reflects her transformation, and her excitement at this new beginning in her life. For example, the center stone on her necklace

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3 bell hooks, *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, 94.

is the Aztec symbol for “beginnings” and “now-ness” which was as an appropriate symbol for the new life she was constructing. The clock on a pedestal near her face places the self-portrait directly in time—a time that had both a past and a future. When combined with her strong gaze, the result is a woman who is “fi

erce enough to have commanded Rivera to come down from his scaffold...[and] fetching enough for him to have done so with alacrity,” but also a woman who is not willing to give herself up fully to the total scrutiny and domination of the male gaze; in this case, Rivera’s. She is therefore a woman who may be marrying a powerful man, but also a woman who is determined to maintain her agency.

On August 21, 1929, soon after Kahlo painted Self-Portrait—Time Flies, she was married to Rivera. The wedding was tumultuous to say the least, and soon after, Kahlo found herself in the role of wife to a famous artist. In her biography of Kahlo, Hayden Herrera claims that for the new bride “the best way to see Rivera was to join him on the scaffold, where she was content to leave the role of genius to her husband, to play the great man’s young wife,” and thus Kahlo devoted most of her time to becoming a pillar of Diego’s life in the early months of their marriage. “Her life revolved around her husband” and she worked on molding herself into a good wife, whether that be through bringing Diego lunch to his worksite, learning to cook, or just becoming his most reliable comrade. But this is not to say that Kahlo lost herself in Diego, but rather that she was adapting herself to a new identity. She was now the wife of a famous artist, not just another member of the Communist group of artists that had become her friends. Instead of her relative obscurity before her marriage, she was now thrust into the limelight and the upper echelons of the art world, and so the early days of her marriage can be seen as a negotiation between the shifting identities of young woman and young wife.

6 Ibid., 10.
8 Ibid., 103.
9 Isabel Alcántara and Sandra Egnolff, Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera (New York: Prestell, 1999), 33.
About a year after they were married, and after being kicked out of the Communist party (Kahlo resigned from the party as a result), Diego received a commission to paint a mural in San Francisco. Consequently, both Rivera and Kahlo made the long journey to California, and thus, began their four-year stay in the United States. While in San Francisco Kahlo painted *Frieda and Diego Rivera* (fig. 2), or what is commonly referred to as their marriage portrait. At first glance, the portrait appears to be an image of the couple in very clear gender roles. Diego is the forceful, dominant, and breadwinning artist whereas Kahlo is the delicate, submissive and adoring wife. Herrera argues that this piece serves as Kahlo’s presentation of her “catch” to the world, and that it represents her acceptance of the typical Mexican wife motif of subservient woman in public but controller of the household in private. Yet, when read in light of her shifting identities this piece takes on a much different meaning. This was not a presentation of her catch to the world, but rather a presentation of her new identity.

Kahlo’s new identity is most clear in the way she chooses to depict herself. While her dress is not the dress of the Tehuantepec woman that she became known for, she still shows her attachment to the Mexican people through the shawl around her shoulders. The detail to which she painted this shawl and the color (the color of the Communist party) points to the political views that both her and Diego shared and the value that she places on them. Furthermore, Kahlo portrays herself quite differently in this portrait than in any of her other work. For example, she has dainty feet and doll-like features; instead of the strong, penetrating gaze that she is known for, her gaze is soft and tempered. This could be an indication of her willingness to accept a submissive role in the marriage, but a closer look reveals that her gaze maintains some form of agency in that she looks out at the viewer instead of casting her eyes downward. This agency is seen to a greater extent in the way in which her hand interacts with Diego’s in the middle of the self-portrait. While the touching of hands in the center of the portrait has been commonly interpreted as an allusion to the importance she places on the marriage vows, the fact that the hands are not clasped together suggests

11 Ibid., 124-25.
12 Ibid., 125.
something else altogether.

Rather than an expression of the importance of marriage vows, it would be more accurate to read the unclasped hands as an assertion of self-possession that is usually suggested by her gaze. It is a public statement that yes, she is the adoring wife of a famous artist, but that she maintains her own personhood at the same time. It is an example of her oppositional gaze shining through in which she challenges the cultural assumptions of her role as the dependent wife. The unclasped hands thus point to her refusal to accept the typical Mexican wife motif that Herrera mentions, and rather constructs an image of a woman who maintains her agency. In effect, she is portraying her new identity as Diego’s wife, but she is also making it clear that she is more than that: she is her own person whose identity cannot be completely encompassed by the label of “wife.”

From *Self-Portrait—Time Flies* to *Frieda and Diego Rivera*, there is a shift in the way that Kahlo portrays herself. In *Time Flies* she is the young bride-to-be on the beginning of a new journey. She has her whole life ahead of her and is beginning to negotiate the new identity that goes along with it. As a result, she is just beginning to adopt a public persona, but she is still Frida Kahlo, not Frida Kahlo, wife of Diego Rivera; however, two years later and in a new country, she tells the viewer something very different. In *Frieda and Diego Rivera*, Kahlo is very clearly negotiating her public image as “wife.” At first glance, she is submissive, dainty and she yields control to her artist husband; however the depiction of the couple’s hands, merely resting atop one another and not clasped, points to an identity that cannot be fully encompassed by the public persona that she has started to create for herself. In public she is Diego’s wife, but in private she is still Frida Kahlo.

**Fading Magic: New York**

As Kahlo and Diego’s time in the United States dragged on, Kahlo became increasingly dissatisfied with the country. While Diego “enjoyed being lionized by the press,” the news portrayed Kahlo as “shy and

13 Alcántara and Egnolff, *Frida and Diego Rivera*, 45.
— the perfect submissive wife. While Diego was “enthralled by the trappings of his burgeoning fame and notoriety in the United States,” Kahlo “felt increasingly alienated from the world, her friends…and Diego.” While Diego was convinced of a revolution in an industrialized country, Kahlo was irritated by her alienation from “Gringolandia.” In effect, while Diego wanted to stay in the United States and paint and gain fame, Kahlo yearned to go home to Mexico. The strain of constantly maintaining the public persona of Diego’s wife had finally gotten to her. She had had a miscarriage in Detroit that nearly killed her, she had stood by Diego’s side as Nelson Rockefeller destroyed his mural, and now she was forced to watch him have an affair with one of his assistants, Louise Nevelson—all this while in a foreign country that she despised for its adherence to the creed of capitalism that had corrupted its once strong moral values. She had done everything to be the perfect public wife to Diego, but the persona was cracking. She missed her family, her friends, and most of all her country.

This deep divide between her public persona and private life can be seen most clearly in My Dress Hangs There (fig. 3). In the quasi self-portrait, Kahlo is nowhere to be seen. All the viewer sees of her is her Tehuana-style dress hanging from what seems to be a clothesline. This dress, arguably Kahlo’s most recognizable trademark besides her unibrow, was a representation of her identity and a device she used to present her public self to the world. But more importantly, the dress “served as a stand-in for herself, a second skin never totally assimilated to the person hidden under it but so integral to her that even when it was taken off, it retained something of the wearer’s being.” Consequently, the dress is interchangeable with Kahlo. It was a representation of her

14 Ibid., 33.
16 Hererra, Frida, 171.
17 Ibid., 141, 165-72.
18 Steven S. Volk, “Frida Kahlo Remaps the Nation,” Social Identities 6, no. 2 (June 2000): 178.
19 Hererra, Frida, 110.
20 Ibid., 112.
identity both as Diego’s wife and as a dedicated Mexican nationalist. Thus, the fact that she chose to paint the dress without her in it tells the viewer something about the strain that maintaining her public persona was causing her at the time. Art historian Steven Volk, in summarizing fellow art historian Oriana Baddeley’s theory of the meaning of the vacant dress, argues:

Baddeley herself later refers to the Tehuana outfit as a piñata, ‘decorative yet potentially explosive.’ The piñata metaphor is an appropriate one, for the dress, with its papier-mâché texture, hangs like all piñatas above an expectant crowd. Yet this piñata, this representation of tradition that stands in juxtaposition to the industrial US, is empty: there are no candies or prizes for the waiting children. This does not suggest Kahlo’s dismissal of the past: empty does not signify meaningless. Rather the meanings of tradition must be provided, and those meanings, as with all the images that Kahlo provides about identity, are likely to be multiple.

Therefore, the empty dress is more than just a stand-in for herself. It is a symbol of the emptiness of capitalism and the emptiness that her public persona represents. It is a statement of “withdraw[al] from the world which she found so inhuman and lacking in culture,” and as a rejection of “Gringolandia” itself. Hidden from this world is her private self, to be replaced by the empty shell of the public persona she had constructed since coming to America.

It should be noted that it is not Diego himself that she wants to escape from, but rather the empty capitalistic society of America that he seems to have fallen in love with. In My Dress Hangs There, Kahlo personifies capitalism into a living, breathing monster through the construction of an active circulatory system that serves to connect the “organs” of this monster together. As art historian Joanna Latimer argues, in Kahlo’s art

22 Volk, “Frida Kahlo Remaps the Nation,” 180.
23 Alcántara and Egnolf, Frida and Diego Rivera, 46.
24 Hererra, Frida, 174.
“the flow of bodily substance depicts a flow of relations, and how persons are made up, substantially as well as figuratively, of these relations.” While capitalism itself is not a person, Kahlo presents the viewer with the different pieces of this behemoth that she so despises and desires to escape from. There is the toilet, which represents the American obsession with cleanliness and technology, and the golf trophy, which represents the American obsession with sports, between which her dress is suspended. There is the church with its dollar sign cross in the top left of the painting connected by the circulatory system to Wall Street with its profit chart stairs. There is the critique of the false values of luxury in the deteriorating billboard of Mae West, and the consequences of adherence to these values in the bloody trash-bin in the bottom left. There is the towering gas pump staring down at the collage of the unemployed and starving “masses.” And sitting atop a skyscraper, just near the center of it all, is the heart of the circulatory system: the phone. It is the start and the end of the system, weaving through windows and above the crowd. It is the phone that connects the city together, and unites all the pieces of the monster of capitalism. And in the midst of all this is the Statue of Liberty, far off in the distance, reminding the viewer of what America used to be. And just to the right of that is a steamboat heading full-speed ahead out of the city; the boat that Kahlo wishes she was on.

This painting thus embodies Kahlo’s full abandonment of the public persona she constructed both before and during her stay in the United States, and showcases her dissatisfaction with her identity as Diego’s wife, and the emergence of a new identity altogether. To fully understand the painting, the viewer must first understand the history of its creation. It was executed over a five-year period and was begun in New York but finished in Mexico. The work was created at a tumultuous time in Kahlo’s life that spanned her stay in New York, her return to Mexico, her second

26 Herrera, Frida, 174.
27 Ibid., 175.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 174.
30 Ibid., 176.
abortion, and her separation from Diego. Interestingly enough, it was not until she returned home from the United States that she began to don the Tehuana style dress. In fact, the original version of the painting had an ordinary dress, “without distinctive ethnic decoration” hanging from the clothesline. Furthermore, the painting was only halfway done when she returned to Mexico and the title was changed multiple times from My Dress Hangs Here to New York to America. The phone, the billboard of Mae West, the fire, the collage, and most importantly, the Tehuana dress were all added in 1938 amidst the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War, Trotsky and Breton’s visits to Mexico, and the great schisms rippling through Soviet communism. As a result, the painting cannot merely be read in the context of her stay in New York, because it encompasses much more than her time in America. It encompasses the full process of shedding her public persona as Diego’s wife and the construction of a new identity altogether. From the ashes of the discarded “perfect young wife” persona arose the Frida Kahlo that she has become famous for: the confident woman artist.

The choice to switch the dress from one that was ordinary to that of the Tehuana dress serves the dual purpose of emphasizing her growing comfort with her new identity, while also presenting an oppositional gaze to capitalism by eliminating her old identity “in the face of structures of domination.” Her Tehuana dress allies her closely with Mexico and the ideals of the Mexican Revolution, while at the same time it distances her from the millionaires like Henry Ford and Nelson Rockefeller who benefit from the system of capitalism and who forget the common man amidst the greed and industrialism that had so corrupted the United States. Her dress is thus transformed into that of a true comrade and an authentic “worker”—a genuine Communist against capitalism. Capitalism may be destroying the United States, but she got away. Her dress floats like a piñata as a reminder of the emptiness of both her persona and capitalism, and also prompts recognition of the new identity that began to emerge at the end of her stay in the United States.

32 Ibid., 146.
33 Ibid., 148.
34 Ibid., 147.
35 Ibid., 146.
36 bell hooks, The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader, 95.
Therefore, the work is not only an abandonment of the identity she constructed during her time in the United States, it is also a symbol for the new Frida that emerged. A Frida more dedicated than ever to anti-capitalism and worker’s rights. A Frida more tied to Mexico and her people. A Frida who is no longer viewed as merely Rivera’s wife. Furthermore, as with most of her paintings, it is a celebration of rebirth in death. Her old identity was a public persona that was expected to attend shows and parties of people she hardly knew, a persona that had to smile through Rivera’s not-so-private infidelities and long work hours, and a persona that was required to feign interest in a country whose industrialism and capitalism had led to the destruction of values that had once been so highly prized. Her empty dress is therefore both a stand-in for the Frida who was created in the early years of her marriage to manage the stresses of being Rivera’s wife, but also a stand-in for the newly born Frida.

Radical Communist? Mexican Revolutionary? Gringo-hater? Or, simply an adoring wife? No matter how hard researchers and art historians try, there will never be one distilled version of Frida Kahlo. She would probably be delighted to know that she has had this effect on the art world—that she frustrated the “Other,” prying into her life to construct a story that we, the viewers, are satisfied with. A condensed version would not be the true Kahlo, the artist whose paintings always consisted of “partial connections...that could never be settled into wholes.”

Her life cannot be tied up so neatly, nor would she want for it to be.

These three works that Kahlo created both before, during and immediately after her stay in the United States serve to illustrate the construction and death of a public persona created in the early days of her marriage to a famous artist, and the emergence of something new altogether. Her gaze masked her private pain associated with her abortions, Diego’s infidelities and her stay in a country she did not like, but more importantly, it served to help her negotiate a new identity that she may not have been prepared for when first marrying Diego. By the time Kahlo completes My Dress Hangs There in 1938, she leaves her gaze to her dress only, signaling her discontent with the country and the public persona that

she had found herself trapped in, and signaling the death of a persona that she could no longer maintain. But it also signifies a rebirth—the birth of a Kahlo that would become known for her Tehuana dress in the 1940s. This new Kahlo, unlike the one who was just starting to be constructed in *Self-Portrait—Time Flies*, had finally grown into her own.
Bibliography


Volk, Steven S. “Frida Kahlo Remaps the Nation.” *Social Identities* 6, no. 2 (June 2000): 165-180.
Appendix

Figure 2. Frida Kahlo, Frieda and Diego Rivera, 1931. Reprinted with permission. Kahlo: © 2014 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F./Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.
Quantifying the Environmental Effects of Myitsone Dam Construction on the Irrawaddy River

Alfred Si, class of 2013, graduated with a degree in Biology.

Deeqa Mohamed, class of 2014, graduated (cum laude) with a degree in Biology and a double minor in Neuroscience and Latin American Studies.
WRITER'S COMMENTS

It is believed that we are currently living in an age of extinction fueled by human activity. Although it is normal for organisms to go extinct, it is abnormal for organisms to go extinct at the current high rate. To better understand when, where, why, and how organisms are becoming critically endangered it is important to conduct research that looks at the issue through different perspectives bridging multiple academic disciplines. With the instruction of Professor Jennifer Dever, we wrote a grant proposal which would bring together the fields of herpetology, zoology, and environmental science. The grant proposal looks at a particular endangered species of tortoise in Myanmar (Burma)—a region with high biodiversity that is now being threatened by habitat destruction and commercial activity. The proposed study would determine if future damming projects in the region will further endanger the local tortoise population and other endemic species.

—Alfred Si and Deeqa Mohamed

INSTRUCTOR'S COMMENTS

The goal of conservation biology is to preserve biodiversity. I have been teaching this class for the past 13 years and sometimes feel overwhelmed by the rampant loss of species. Yet students like Alfred and Deeqa give me hope. They realize that conservation science can be used to successfully protect wildlife. Recognizing the fact that Myanmar's biodiversity faces many potential threats such as deforestation and the development of wildlife habitat Alfred and Deeqa chose to focus on the endangered Burmese Starred Tortoise. This turtle species is found nowhere else in the world and specifically lives in habitat slated to be inundated once the Myitsone Dam is built. Their proposed project would gather critical data on the species prior to this habitat loss and might even be used to mitigate the impending destruction.

—Jennifer Dever, Biology Department
Quantifying the Environmental Effects of Myitsone Dam Construction on the Irrawaddy River

Project Summary

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a tortoise and freshwater turtle specialist group, the Irrawaddy River basin supports one of the most diverse assemblages of freshwater turtles in the world. Most of these species are considered to be endangered, or are otherwise listed as threatened (1989). In particular, the Burmese Starred Tortoise (*Geochelone platynota*) is an endemic freshwater turtle species that is native to Myanmar’s Irrawaddy River valley. However, in spite of being listed as critically endangered by the IUCN in 1996, the Starred Tortoise population continues to dwindle due to commercial harvesting and mass exploitation. In the past decade, genetic approaches have revealed that highly conserved intercellular signaling pathways form the basis not only of developmental processes such as axis formation, cell division, differentiation, organogenesis and body patterning (Pires-daSilva and Sommer, 2003), but also regulate aspects of the regenerative process (Galliot and Ghila, 2010; Gurley et al., 2008; Stoick-Cooper et al., 2007). While axial specification during embryogenesis has been thoroughly researched, far less attention has been given to the molecular program responsible for the reestablishment of axial polarity in adult organisms.

Most recently, the Irrawaddy River was approved for dam construction in 2007 by the Burmese military in conjunction with the China Power Investment Corporation. The 152-meter tall hydropower Myitsone Dam is the largest dam project in all of Myanmar and threatens to completely alter the river ecosystem. Hydrological effects include changes in river flow and sedimentation patterns. Ecological effects include a significant decrease in biodiversity, especially for threatened populations such as the Burmese Starred Tortoise. For this reason, a one year study will be conducted to investigate the effects of Myitsone Dam construction on the Burmese Starred Tortoise population. During the initial phase of collection, the capture-recapture method will be employed to quantify the rela-
tive abundance of the species prior to and after dam construction. Biodiversity samples from the Irrawaddy River will then be compared to those of nearby dammed rivers (the N’Mai and Mali Rivers) to determine if the tortoise species is found only in the Irrawaddy River basin. Freshwater samples will be obtained from multiple river systems over the course of dam construction, so that the nutrient and chemical contents can be compared. Lastly, levels of monsoon rainfall will also be measured in order to predict how flooding patterns will alter the natural habitat of the Starred Tortoise. It is predicted that if dam construction continues, the wild Starred Tortoise population will go extinct. The proposed research aims to document the immediate impact of dam construction on critically endangered turtle populations like the Burmese Starred Tortoise. In doing so, this project strives to further the efforts of many Burmese environmental organizations, such as the Myanmar Environmental Institute and the Wildlife Conservation Society, in contesting the national government to permanently halt dam construction.

Project Description

Background on Geochelone platynota

Given its name, the Burmese Starred Tortoise is most easily distinguished by the radiating star pattern on its carapace. According to Platt et al. (2011), the domed carapace is approximately 26 to 30 centimeters in length. Carapace color ranges from dark brown to black, upon which six yellow stripes emerge from large, yellow central spots forming a star pattern. The head, tail, plastron, and limbs are also yellow in color. Male and female tortoises can be distinguished by the size of their tail, since males have much longer and thicker tails. Although rarely observed outside of breeding season, the diurnal species is a generalist, relying on multiple food sources for adequate caloric and nutrient intake. This includes, but is not limited to, grass and vegetation (such as mushrooms), as well as fruits, insects, and larvae. Breeding season for the species generally lasts from June to September and nesting occurs at the end of February. On average, a captive female lays approximately four to five eggs.

Considered a delicacy in many parts of Southeast Asia, the Burmese Starred Tortoise population has plummeted due to unsustainable harvest-
ing practices and widespread exploitation. In China and Taiwan especially, turtles are in high demand for both consumption and (perceived) medicinal purposes (2011). Unfortunately, the rare and critically endangered status of the tortoise has only increased its market value. According to Platt et al. (2011), the illegal pet trade enables and encourages countless low-income individuals to partake in the mass exploitation of wild populations, since collectors in Europe and North America will pay thousands of dollars per tortoise. In this way, tortoise hunting serves as a highly lucrative business for rural communities to the extent that hundreds of tortoises can be harvested from the wild within a period of just a few, short months.

Conservation efforts have been supported by the Shwesettaw Wildlife Reserve and the Minzontaung Wildlife Sanctuary, both of which have started introducing some of the tortoise species into captivity for breeding. However, even these sanctuaries are vulnerable to wildfires, land loss (due to insufficient federal funding), and corrupt government and military officials.

Background on the Irrawaddy River and the Myitsone Dam

The Irrawaddy River is one of Myanmar’s greatest treasures. It flows from north to south across the entire country, making it the nation’s most important commercial waterway. The Irrawaddy River and the Irrawaddy River delta are also heavily relied upon for agriculture. The fertile silt is used to grow crops while the surrounding mangroves and freshwater swamp forests are home to a diverse number of tropical species, such as the Burmese Starred Tortoise. In May of 2007, however, construction of the Myitsone Dam was proposed and agreed upon by the Burmese military and the China Power Investment Corporation (Figure 1). Although six other dam projects were also signed into agreement, the 152 meter tall hydropower Myitsone Dam is by far the largest, and is therefore predicted to have the greatest impact. The Kachin Developmental Networking Group asserts that the dam threatens to increase the flood zone to approximately 766 square kilometers (an area larger than Singapore), subjecting nearly 10,000 people or 47 villages to severe flooding (Figure 2).

Based on prior research (McCully, 2001), it has been established that dam construction completely alters river ecosystems via changes in the sedimentation pattern, river flow, and oxygen content. The changes in
these abiotic factors triggers a shift in the local biodiversity, from plant life and aquatic invertebrates on up the food chain to larger marine species. Dam construction can also potentially lead to speciation, which is another way for loss of genetic variation within a population to occur. By geographically isolating the organisms that live upstream from those that nest or breed further downstream, migration effectively comes to a halt. Within small populations, inbreeding occurs at a much higher rate, as does genetic drift. Together, these two factors will increase homozygosity and decrease the fitness of a population.

Objectives

Although many environmental groups have begun to document the hydrological effects of dam construction, minimal research has been carried out thus far to quantify the impact of dams on biodiversity in the IndoBurma region. For this reason, a one year study will be conducted to observe the ecological effects of the Myitsone Dam on the endemic Burmese Starred Tortoise population. The objective of the proposed research project is to quantify the relative abundance of the Burmese Starred Tortoise species in the Irrawaddy River valley by comparing the biodiversity between multiple nearby dammed river ecosystems.

Methods

The Burmese Starred Tortoise is most often observed in the Irrawaddy River valley during breeding season, or from June to September. Collection should theoretically be at its peak at this time, since breeding season also coincides with monsoon season, which extends from May to November. In support of our experimental rationale, three assessments will be used to measure the extent to which we can quantify the ecological effects of dam construction on the Starred Tortoise population.

1. Measure the relative abundance of the Starred Tortoise population via the capture-recapture method using BioMark PIT tags and Markal B white paint markers. Then compare and contrast the Starred Tortoise abundance in the Irrawaddy River with that of nearby dammed rivers (N’mai & Mali).
i. Phase 1 of collection (June 1 to July 15) → Allow two weeks for tagged individuals to mix with untagged individuals.

ii. Phase 2 of collection (August 1 to September 15)

iii. Calculate the average population density for each phase of collection.

The general capture formula* =
\[
\frac{\text{(the # of tortoises marked in the 1st catch)}}{\text{(total # of tortoises in the 2nd catch)}} / \frac{\text{(# of recaptures in the 2nd catch)}}{}
\]

*A high number of recaptures is indicative of a small population.

2. Obtain freshwater samples from the three rivers to compare nutrient and chemical content in response to dam construction. This will allow us to determine how much hydrological characteristics are shifting as a result of the dam.

   i. Sampling will occur once a week during Phase 1 and Phase 2 collections.

   ii. Data analysis will be performed by colorimetry, which relies on the absorbance of particular wavelengths of light to determine the chemical (im)purity of a solution.

3. Measure the levels of monsoon rainfall at the Irrawaddy River delta in response to dam construction. This can be used as an indicator to predict how flooding patterns will impact the natural habitat of the Starred Tortoise, which needs dry swamp forests)

   i. Daily measurements will be recorded during both of the collection phases at the N’mai, Mai, and Irrawaddy rivers.
Teaching and Research Staff

In order to further support our research efforts, we will partner with Yangon University in Myanmar, as well as with local environmental institutions such as the Myanmar Environmental Institute and Wildlife Conservation Society. This will provide us with access to fully equipped laboratory and classroom facilities, as well as data about the Burmese Starred Tortoise populations prior to dam construction. In exchange, we will work with Burmese undergraduate students from rural communities to broaden the participation of underrepresented groups in research.

- The U.S. research team will have a total of five members: PI (primary investigator), co-PI (co-primary investigator), two USF graduate students (biology or environmental science), and one USF undergraduate student (biology or environmental science)

- The Myanmar research staff will have a total of seven members: two Myanmar Environmental Institute (MEI) professors, one Yangon University (YU) professor of zoology, two MEI graduate students, two YU undergraduate students (zoology)

- Myanmar PIs and students will cover their own expenses. Instead of receiving monetary compensation, the Burmese students will receive university course credit toward their graduation requirements.

On field days, a total of eight members will collect data at the three river sites while four members stay behind to analyze data in the lab. Members will rotate tasks so that all of the students have an equal opportunity to practice their collection and data analysis skills. Also on field days, at least two professors will be present at the data collection site, and at least one professor will supervise the students in lab.
Expected Significance of Research

The proposed research will evaluate the immediate environmental effects of dam construction on the Irrawaddy River basin. Based on prior research, it has been established that dam construction drastically alters river ecosystems (McCully, 2001). For instance, the dam wall acts to trap sediment that normally replenishes the river, so that fertile silt is prevented from reaching the food-producing areas of the river downstream. As a result, the fertility of the Irrawaddy River delta greatly decreases, such that the nation’s major agricultural crop (rice) can no longer be grown here. In addition, dams also destroy natural flooding cycles, changing the free-flowing river ecosystem to a low-flow “slack” water reservoir (McCully, 2001). This in turn, produces changes in the local biodiversity (i.e., aquatic plant and animal life), which have adapted to that specific river ecosystem.

Therefore, for the previously mentioned reasons, it is predicted that construction of the Myitsone Dam will severely devastate the Irrawaddy River ecosystem. These changes will only serve to further exacerbate the extinction vortex problem faced by the Burmese Starred Tortoise population. According to Johnson (2010), extinction vortexes occur due to the interaction of multiple causal factors, such as demographics, genetics, and the environment. When these forces act in a concerted or coordinated manner, the end result is a much more rapid decline in biodiversity. Threatened or critically endangered species are especially vulnerable since these populations are already undergoing rapid species loss. In this way, the added environmental stresses caused by the dam, will likely prove to be the “tipping point” for the Starred tortoise population. That is to say that if construction of the Myitsone Dam continues, the wild Burmese Starred Tortoise population will go extinct shortly thereafter.

Broader Impacts of Research

Ultimately, the aim of this research is to help support Burmese environmental nonprofit agencies in their struggle to convince the national government to terminate Myitsone dam construction due to the detrimental effects it will have on the Irrawaddy River ecosystem. Major changes to the hydrological and ecological characteristics of the river will trigger a
dramatic shift in biodiversity. This will in turn impact all nearby living organisms, from aquatic plant and animal life, to the 47 rural farming communities that reside on the river’s edge. Therefore, a dramatic increase in awareness and conservation is needed in order to protect the Irrawaddy River ecosystem from further disruption.

By incorporating local Burmese undergraduate and graduate students, the aim is to broaden the participation of underrepresented groups in research. In addition, by teaching these students, we hope to engage the local community in conservation and educational efforts to help protect the remaining wild Burmese Starred Tortoise population from becoming extinct. In this way, the maintenance of biodiversity in the Indo–Burma region will be more sustainable.
Figure 1. The map above represents the geographic layout of the Kachin state of Myanmar, or the nation’s primary rice producing region. From this figure, it can be observed that the Myitsone Dam threatens the entire river ecosystem, since its location is at the epicenter of the river basin (where all three rivers meet). The dam will generate approximately 3,600 MW of electricity, all of which will be exported to neighboring countries, but primarily China.
Figure 2. The map above demonstrates the projected flooding patterns of the Irrawaddy Myitsone Dam according to the Kachin Developmental Networking Group (KDNG).
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The above table lists the proposed expenses for the experiment.

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Table 1. The above table lists the proposed expenses for the experiment.
References


Le nom français
lugubre encore nos contrées:
The Violent Logic of Modernity and the
Independence of Saint-Domingue

Lincoln Stanfield, class of 2014,
graduated with a degree in History.
This essay won the David Herlihy
Prize in recognition of superior his-
torical scholarship by a graduating
history major.
WRITER'S COMMENTS

Although the island of Haiti is heavily influenced by the United States, little is known about its history. Especially in the American periphery, we generally are either ignorant of this country’s roots or we elect to ignore their troubles. This paper concisely uncovers important highlights of this nation’s independence movement during the late eighteenth century. It also provides an analysis of the commonalities between the Haitian Revolution and the American and French Revolutions. The aim of this paper is to encourage American historians to refrain from identifying the United States as the only “America.” Young students in the U.S. should not be deprived from learning about the concurrent revolutionary activity that existed in the other Americas circa the over-hyped year of 1776. The Eurocentric, Victorian-era understanding of American history blinds us from paying the Haitian Revolution—the first successful slave rebellion in human history—its much deserved attention.

—Lincoln Stanfield

INSTRUCTOR'S COMMENTS

In this ambitious, imaginative, and well-researched essay, Lincoln Stanfield tackles the complex heritage of the Haitian Revolution, a monumental event in world history that followed on the heels of the French Revolution at the turn of the eighteenth century. Lincoln wrote this paper for my senior seminar on myths and forgeries in European and Latin American history. For his final paper, Lincoln could have chosen a much simpler topic. Instead, he set out to accomplish a nearly impossible task: namely, to summarize the complex events of both the Haitian and French Revolutions, to analyze the racialized rhetoric of French colonists, and to assess the lasting legacy of European disdain for this tiny nation, which is still the poorest in the Western Hemisphere, in merely 24 pages. The end result is a delightful, illuminating, and accomplished essay that speaks to Lincoln’s enthusiasm, intellectual ambition, and political convictions.

—Katrina B. Olds, History Department
Le nom français lugubre encore nos contrées:  
The Violent Logic of Modernity and the Independence of Saint-Domingue

This paper provides a new interpretation of the meaning of violence during the Age of Revolution. The Haitian Revolution (1791-1803) is a relevant case study worthy of attention because it directly challenged the system of racial hierarchy that had prevailed throughout the Atlantic world since the beginning of the colonial era. By using violence and the revolutionary excitement of the time, this insurrection suppressed the institution of slavery and established an independent republic in Haiti. While slavery was abolished in February 1794, this momentous achievement was met with contrasting responses in France’s contentious political climate. In an atmosphere of military, economic, and social upheaval, the French Revolution entered into a period known as the “Reign of Terror,” which was characterized by radical measures like an intensified search for internal enemies and increasing use of public executions. Despite its much criticized violence, this period was also marked by an extraordinary optimism about what the French Revolution could accomplish for the cause of human rights. Upon situating Haitians’ reactions to this new civil rights lexicon stemming from France, the Haitian Revolution has comparative linkages to the French Revolution and the modern European world. Despite the common narrative that links the Haitian Revolution’s principal outcome with savagery, the violent logic it inspired has commonalities with the independence of developed nations like France and the United States of America. After establishing a close dialogue with first-person narratives from the Haitian Revolution, violence and revolution ultimately made Haitians more modern and more French than it made them backward and primitive.

The historical timing of this event coincides with other well-documented revolutions. Both the American Revolution (1775-1783) and the French Revolution (1789-1799) preceded the slave insurrection in Haiti. This is important to consider because the Haitian Revolution, despite taking place in a relatively unknown geopolitical hotspot, does not rest

1 Prior to 1804, Haiti was known as “Saint-Domingue.”
on the periphery of these two aforementioned revolutions. It is true that the result of this event was unprecedented; however, the Haitian Revolution's spirit was not utterly organic.

Sugar was the economic miracle for many countries in the eighteenth century. By 1789, France was an estimated 300-500 million livres tournois in debt due to its involvement in the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution. The cultivation of cash crops such as sugar, coffee, cotton, indigo, cocoa, and molasses was the most significant contribution to French trade. These commodities, under the commercial policy known as exclusif, were grown in Haiti and whatever manufactured goods the colonists needed to cultivate they were compelled to buy from France. C.L.R. James’s *The Black Jacobins* illustrates this imperial relationship:

> From the beginning, the colonists were at variance with the French Government and the interests it represented. The French, like every other Government in those days, looked upon colonies as existing exclusively for the profit of the metropolis. Known as the Mercantile system in England, the French called this economic tyranny by a more honest name, the Exclusive.

As rich and proud as the French bourgeoisie was, the colonial trade was too big for it. Saint-Domingue was the most profitable colony the world had ever known. The island was known as the pride of France and was responsible for sixty percent of the world's sugar supply. From 1783 to 1789, this amazing colony doubled its production. But colonists grew increasingly bitter toward the straitjacket the maritime bourgeoisie used to restrain them. The French bureaucracy in Haiti could arrest without warrant and arbitrarily tax planters because, as James put it, “God was too high and the King too far.” The bureaucracy, with its source of power so many thousands of miles away, was progressively losing its grip on France’s colonial possessions as the country neared social upheaval by

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2 The up-to-date conversion rate amounts to $1.2-2 billion USD.
4 Ibid., 46.
5 In this context, maritime bourgeoisie included the royalist bureaucracy in Haiti, an elite sector of French society comprising wealthy aristocrats and nobility.
6 James, *Black Jacobins*, 58.
the end of the century. While the French bourgeoisie led the assault on the absolute monarchy at home, the planters followed suit in the colonies.

The taking of the Bastille in Paris on July 14, 1789, represented the flashpoint of the French Revolution. The Bastille was a medieval prison in the heart of Paris and stood as a symbol of the absolutist monarchy’s power. In total, this revolution involved three orders of society: the First Estate (13,000 clergymen), the Second Estate (350,000 aristocrats), and the Third Estate (everyone else). Irate commoners—27 million Frenchmen, 80 percent of whom were peasants—successfully challenged the political power of the top two estates and sparked what many scholars recognize as a turning point in European history. The bourgeoisie, or the resulting “middle class,” hastened to form a national guard and profited from the blow dealt to the monarchy. In August 1789, they drew the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which stipulated that all men were born free and equal. In Haiti, the colonists caught wind of this and sought independence—or at the very least a large amount of autonomy—from the maritime bourgeoisie in order to break the Exclusive and rid themselves of the royalist bureaucracy in Saint-Domingue.7

The concurrent revolutionary activity in Haiti was unique because the Haitian Revolution was a transcultural movement. There existed seven distinct interest groups in the colony: the transplanted French bureaucracy (513 soldiers and aristocrats responsible for justice, finance, and general administration); rich white planters and plantation owners (grand blancs); property-less artisans, merchants, and plantation managers (petit blancs); free blacks (wealthy in comparison to petit blancs and often owned slaves); free mulattoes (or creoles, who were born in the colony but to a “pure white male slave-owner and a pure black female slave”); slaves (two-thirds of whom were born in Africa and the remaining one-third originated from Taíno indigenous tribes); and maroons (escaped slaves who fled their plantations and lived in nearby mountains and woods to subsist). Approximately, whites numbered 28,000; free blacks totaled 30,000; and slaves were an impressive 450,000 to 500,000 at the onset of the revolt in 1791.8

7 James, Black Jacobins, 81.
The above, lop-sided census is similar to the French Revolution’s unbalanced interest groups. Slaves outnumbered their white counterparts by a ratio of 18 to 1; French peasants outnumbered aristocrats and clergymen 54 to 1. In both the Haitian and French Revolutions, the challengers were catapulted by their respective strength in numbers. Since the French Revolution arguably represents the beginning of the modern period in European history, it is interesting to draw a parallel between the violence inspired by the Haitian Revolution and its French revolutionary counterparts. The rebels in Saint-Domingue were victorious because of their numerical superiority—advantage insurgencies hope to have.

As in France, the geographical divisions of Saint-Domingue and their historical development also shaped the revolutionary movement and the coming insurrection of the slaves. Saint-Domingue planters and the French bourgeoisie had generated internal stress and intensifying external rivalries that linked two worlds together, the New World and the European Motherland. These two forces moved blindly to explosions and conflicts, which would shatter the basis of their dominance and create the possibility of emancipation. It was the quarrel between the bourgeoisie and monarchy that brought the Paris masses on the political stage; it was the quarrel between whites and mulattoes that woke up the sleeping slaves.

James cogently describes this transference of revolutionary sentiment: “[Slaves] had heard of the revolution and had constructed it in their own image: the white slaves in France had risen, and killed their masters, and were now enjoying the fruits of the earth. It was greatly inaccurate in fact, but they had caught the spirit of the thing: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.”

The institution of slavery has long dictated that the safety of the conqueror and his dominant force demands that the oppressed are constantly kept in the most profound ignorance. Instruction is often withheld from them. But one does not need education to cherish a dream of freedom. Central Africa, the home to the majority of Haiti’s annual thirty thousand slave imports, was a territory of peace and happy civilization during the

9 James, *Black Jacobins*, 58.
10 Ibid., 25.
11 Ibid., 73.
12 Ibid., 81.
eighteenth century. African slaves were born free. The new French revolutionary spirit, or “French-ness,” surfacing from the birth of democracy inspired slaves to remember their liberated pasts. Not only were slaves surrounded by commercial tensions between the “grand blancs” and the “petit blancs,” but they were also profoundly moved by free men of color like Vincent Ogé, who persuaded the French National Assembly to grant political rights in the colonies to his interest group. In 1790, Ogé was a free colored representative in Paris and upon hearing the National Assembly’s decree of inclusive political rights for men in France, returned to Saint-Domingue and led a short-lived uprising. Although this rebellion was unsuccessful, his moderation and timely decision to negotiate with white colonists were new types of compromise that cut across racial divisions. Eventually in May 1791, the National Assembly accepted a proposal that granted rights only to men whose parents had also been free. This decree was the first breach in the system of racial hierarchy in the colonies.

Vincent Ogé’s petition calls attention to an important historical question: What did “French-ness” mean to Haitians? As the preceding story indicated, the Haitian revolt was a historical event bounded by sliding perspectives and motives based upon economic interests and legal codes. But “French-ness” also carried a political aura. After all, some scholars presume that Haitians were determined to achieve their independence because they were invigorated with a civic, self-imposed charge of nationalistic fervor. However, over the course of this twelve-year struggle, Haitian national identity was not internally coherent right away. “Frenchness,” as a political program, did not attract the majority of Haitians because it contradicted their primary objective: to oust (and exterminate) their oppressors and ensure the complete extinction of foreign invasion. In an effort to preserve their cultural and national cohesion, Haitians were relentlessly motivated to guarantee their identity as Negroes.

Charismatic and inspiring leaders of the Haitian Revolution, such as Touissant Louverture, were responsible for carrying out this insurrection’s mission. Louverture was a slave until he was 45, when he became the Gen-

13 James, Black Jacobins, 7.
15 James, Black Jacobins, 45.
eral Chief of the Haitian Army and Governor of Saint-Domingue. He was able to get these positions by profiting from the cultural advantages of the system he was attacking. Although he was surrounded by brutal working conditions and witnessed the backbreaking toils of slaves, Louverture was allowed a certain liberty by his master. The eldest of eight siblings, he also had exceptional parents and friends. His Catholic godfather—a free black named Pierre Baptiste—taught him how to speak the rudiments of French and Latin. Louverture, a very astute student, also learned to draw and was recognized as a coachman of his master’s slaves, a title that belonged to a small and privileged caste. All in all, his unusual means of comfort and self-education enabled him to intellectually confront this new wave of revolutionary spirit in an exchange most African slaves would not have experienced. Nonetheless, he detached himself from the fray and envisaged a society equal for all blacks. Soon, his utopian agenda gained a tremendous following.

In the midst of a balancing act, Louverture’s political negotiations contained language more attuned to the ears of Frenchmen, not Haitians. He recognized he had to connect with higher-ups in the metropole to realize his vision of equality. He stood first in the counsel and affection of the bourgeois governor of France because he was keenly aware that the salvation of Saint-Domingue lay in the restoration of agriculture—and not in the complete abandonment of brutal manual labor. Louverture was a unique figure because he was equally stern to all laborers, regardless of their economic status or skin color. This humanizing approach helped to advance the Haitians’ uphill battle, which was ultimately determined by the consensus amongst slaves—not the heroics of one individual. Despite Louverture’s diplomatic (and at times secretive) approach to power relations with France, many Haitian soldiers trusted that his leadership would pave the way for community and brotherhood. With freedom for all on his mind, he organized an army capable of fighting European troops out of the thousands of untrained black slaves. The insurgents had developed a method of attack, based on their overwhelming numerical superiority and uncompromising commitment to create their own destiny.

While slaves certainly possessed the same level of rationality as Frenchmen, their ignorance of politics and a Western European belief system led whites to doubt their legitimacy and potential. Whether
a slave was an accomplished butler or a born solider, the majority of whites looked upon their insurrection as a huge riot that would be put down in time. They did not believe in a slave group’s competence to mount a formidable challenge. In 1792, a colonist delegate named Millet confirmed this outlook and warned that “these coarse men are incapable of knowing liberty and enjoying it with wisdom, and the imprudent law which would destroy their prejudices would be for them and for us a decree of death.”\(^{16}\) However, slaves were not automatons lacking the capacity to organize. Louverture’s ability to galvanize Haitian army squads is indicative of a common theme during this era: organized violence was a necessary tool to ignite change in the eighteenth century. His presence certainly had that electrifying characteristic of many other great men of action.\(^{17}\)

On August 29, 1792, Louverture issued a signed declaration to rally the slaves. This proclamation had an energizing and commanding energy that leaped off the page and read:

> Brothers and friends. I am Toussaint L’Ouverture, my name is perhaps known to you. I have undertaken vengeance. I want Liberty and Equality to reign in San Domingo. I work to bring them into existence. Unite yourselves to us, brothers, and fight with us for the same cause.\(^{18}\)

Two spirits reigned supreme in Haiti: the horror of slavery and enthusiasm for liberty. It was a frenzy that won all heads and grew every day.\(^{19}\) This defined what French-ness meant for the majority of the insurgents. On an intellectual level, French-ness hardly meant anything in the enlightened sense of a philosophy advocating for equality before the law. As a group, Haitian warriors received French-ness as a means to shape their own future and return to a previous state of liberty. Their expectations, numerical superiority, and widespread use of violence mirrored a model that guided French revolutionaries. Both challenging groups

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16 James, *Black Jacobins*, 114. b
17 James, *Black Jacobins*, 147.
18 Ibid., 125.
19 Ibid., 120.
exercised short-term, wartime commitment to achieve a common end: the justification of plunder, which in both revolutions was fueled by the intent to eradicate a pre-existing order that had slowly lost control. The driven and steadfast initiative Haitians embraced did not guarantee the long-term goal of emancipation as a political right. During the heat of war, the motivations of the individual were reduced to rudimentary necessities and survival instincts.

While rebels held them captive, colonists alleviated their internal anxieties through writing. These first-person colonist narratives provide another avenue for interpreting these times. Jeremy D. Popkin’s *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Revolution* discusses the correspondence colonists had with their relatives in France. After experiencing sheer horror, helplessness, and shock, many sought to raise awareness of their captivity. Colonists’ responses to the reversal of power relations are an indicator of how extremely the black insurgents were perceived to have acted. Black slaves and maroons burned plantations, bit the white skin of their oppressors, and were overall characterized as brutal cannibals with a thirst for human blood. The common speech of white colonial orthodoxy emphasized the cruelty and destructiveness of the insurgents, whose actions were categorized as crimes against the paternal plantation owners.20 As for the colonial whites, they represented themselves only as innocent victims—making the violence a depressing paradox. As soon as whites were stung and paralyzed by their unwitting instruments, they were convinced that slaves only embodied dark sides of humanity. But dominance, violence, and irrationality were jointly exchanged between both the French and the Haitians. Needless to say, while this can now be viewed as a symbiotic process, the colonial perspective of this revolution is typically the only one remembered. Colonist narratives have been the most accessible for historians and represent nearly all of the primary sources recounting the Haitian Revolution.

Descriptions of the insurrection in political documents and the local press followed a rigid ideological formula exemplified in poems. In the inaugural November 1791 issue of the *Moniteur général de la partie français*, a colonist wrote:

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But what a horde of rebels
Rushed maddened to carnage.
In his cruel hands, the Slave
Carries the torch of death.
Stop, tool of parricide,
An invisible and perfidious hand
Guides you to horrible defeats,
And the only outcome of so much crime
Will be to weep for your victims
Under the weight of your new chains.21

Due to their inherently idiosyncratic and potentially destabilizing characteristics, first-person accounts of the events in Saint-Domingue were drowned out by the flood of propaganda unleashed by the colony's white spokesmen and French supporters of the permanent existence of slavery.22 This is significant because those who exaggerated and reinterpreted the first-person accounts had not experienced the insurgency's chaos. Therefore, violent interactions captured in writing are processed in different ways and one's interpretation of violence depends on the readers' personal exposure to turmoil. Neither colonists nor Frenchmen were well acquainted with the damaging effects of slavery. It is useful to compare these perspectives because all in all, the Haitians' heroics and colonists' rejection of their heroics speak to the inherent impulse amongst readers to stretch a wartime narrative's truth and shuffle key words around to fit their own interpretation of the source. Violent interactions profoundly move people and drum up emotional and rash judgments. This is magnified by the selective formulas of public propaganda (like newspapers) that circulated in France during the Haitian Revolution.

Whether white colonists were convinced by the slaves' attack methods or not, the success of the Haitian Revolution was inspired by violence and organization. This is clearly illustrated through the lens of colonists' accounts. Understanding modernity in Saint-Domingue is a relatable story that can be connected to other revolutions of its time. The logic behind modern revolutions was violent. In order for a marginalized

21 Popkin, Facing Racial Revolution, 8.
22 Ibid., 9.
majority to take destiny into their own hands, organized violence was the most practical engine to propel their independence. The idea that a slave could change his destiny by taking action and forming social groups fits with the beginnings of modern nationalism.

The weakness of viewing nationalism as a guiding framework with the case of Haiti is that, according to some theorists, nations did not exist until the nineteenth century. Nationalism, as it relates to the birth of involved participatory government, is a relatively new ideology. The roots of nationalism are difficult to pinpoint amongst historians because it is a controversial phenomenon. However, the emergence of the nation is often associated with the French Revolution and the establishment of the French First Republic on September 22, 1792. Eric John (E.J.) Hobsbawm’s Nations and Nationalism since 1780 provides a useful historical overview of nationalism’s subsets during eighteenth century Europe. While his perspective is Eurocentric, his inclusions relate to the goals of using violence as a vehicle for independence.

The definition of a nation is based on a combination of certain criteria such as language, common history, common territory, cultural traits, and ethnicity. Both objective and subjective definitions of a nation are never convincing or satisfactory for historians because they reduce the existence of human collectivities with fuzzy, shifting, and ambiguous traits. Hobsbawm believes that if we regard “the nation” as a recent newcomer in human history, we would expect it to occur in a few colonies of settlement rather than in a population generally distributed over the world’s territory.23 This is misleading, however, because people can identify themselves as Jews even though they share neither religion, language, culture, tradition, historical background, nor an attitude to the Jewish state.24 This shows that national identification can shift and change over time.

Hobsbawn offers a brilliant critique of nationalism as it is defined by an objective definition. The nation is objectively described as a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture.25 Often

24 Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism, 8.
25 Ibid., 5.
the implications of an objective definition of nationalism are fixed on the idea of oneness within a nation: its constituents adhering to one official language (in Haiti’s case, both French and Haitian Creole are official languages), one territory, and one collective sense of belongingness. While these objective criteria are misleading because of the many complexities of self-identity, the idea of a “nation” evolving in Haiti is an exciting prospect for scholars.

Similarly to the Haitian Revolution, the American Revolution aimed to create a nation bounded by constitutional frameworks. The Declaration of Independence (1776) confirmed that U.S. citizens were “absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown and that all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain was and ought to be totally dissolved.” This laid down the burden of British virtual representation and represented the first inklings of modern nationalism in the Western Hemisphere. Although Haiti is now situated in a relatively isolated part of the world, it once represented a stepping-stone for slave traders during the colonial era. This reminds us that territorial expansion and colonial trade networks allowed for people, goods, and ideas to travel faster than ever before. New levels of interaction and correspondence between the U.S. and Haiti allowed for leaders like Jean-Jacques Dessalines to legislate Haiti’s independence using the American Revolutionaries’ model.

Like their Anglo American counterparts, the Haitian Revolution’s conclusion was facilitated by two watershed documents: the Haitian Declaration of Independence and the Haitian Constitution. Both included nationalist rhetoric aimed to outline the Haitian Republic’s dominant values and goals, such as unity, brotherhood, order, racial exclusivity, and the supervision of leaders to guarantee the state’s growth. In their fight for independence, Haitians were guided by the following: a sense of belonging to their homeland—which was facilitated by language of difference and an emphasis on brotherhood; a united force of power driven by one goal; and convincing, persuasive leadership to maintain order and a loyal citizenry. These continue to be three interdependent forces fundamental for a nation’s solidarity.

Touissant Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines are the Haitian Revolution’s two most memorable leaders. Both men grew up in Haiti and had an inherent ability to lead mass groups. The crowds’ attachment to
their leaders is worth dissecting. On February 4th, 1801 Louverture pro-
posed his own laws for Saint-Domigue. He announced the convocation
of a “Constituent Assembly” that would draft a constitution for Saint-
Domigue. The time had come for Touissant to “lay the foundations”
for the colony’s prosperity by creating “laws appropriate for our habits,
our traditions, our climate, our industry.”

He used the language of difference deployed by the French government, but with a different intent. This sheds light on the willingness of militant leaders to conveniently use legal discourse to rally (and rile up) mass groups. While the French Revolution propagated a system of white supremacy, Louverture channeled this interpersonal oppression and promulgated a body of law that sanctified a new regime in which men of African descent were in command. Instead of waiting for France to send its laws, he decided to make his own and presented himself as the face of the Haitian Revolution.

There was a general sense that the French occupying forces in the colony were no good and that they were the only ones in the way of Haiti’s independence. While Louverture did not hesitate to employ charismatic rhetoric, he knew when to remain patient. Louverture was comfortable holding the power of negotiation and withstood the strain of the balancing act he had sustained for years—reaching out to neighboring Spanish Santo Domingo fleets in the east, British naval forces in the north, and French invaders from all directions. Eventually, Louverture’s fourfold diplomacy would run its course. Napoleon Bonaparte, the Emperor of France during the tail end of the Haitian Revolution, made it clear that his mission in Saint-Domingue was to disarm the blacks. He sent his brother-in-law, General Leclerc, with an army to suppress the state of rebellion against the Republic. Bonaparte was suspicious of Louverture because it seemed that his agenda behind the constitution of Haiti was contrary to the dignity and sovereignty of French people. In July 1802, he wrote to Leclerc, “Rid us of these gilded Negroes” and entrusted him to deport “all the black generals” to France by September 1802. Bonaparte vehemently aspired to restore French practices of capitalism and instill confidence amongst colonists to make commercial profits. He also wanted to restrict the access of former slaves to political power. Bonaparte had

27 Ibid., 242.
28 Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 254.
a political strategy in mind and was determined to highlight Louverture’s excessive power and abuses of liberty in the colony.

Leclerc issued a declaration of war in Port-de-Paix and stated he would teach the “rebel” Louverture about the strength of the French government. The French general encouraged “all the good Frenchmen to recognize the black general as a monster who preferred the destruction of his country to the surrender of his power.”

Despite Louverture’s eventual defeat in this war and his subsequent status as an outlaw, Haitians stood by his side and remembered his legacy. Leclerc wrote optimistically to Bonaparte that the “inhabitants of the land” believed Louverture had lost, that his soldiers were “deserting his flags” and his cultivators were returning to their plantations. He arrogantly proposed, “They all think we are the masters of the colony, and I think so too.”

However, Leclerc would be proved wrong by Louverture’s successor, Jean-Jacques Dessalines.

Dessalines was facing an uphill battle against a powerful French army. However, the turning point came when he was able to convince “the Congos” who fought with him that it would be a blessing if they were killed by the French, for they would “immediately be transported back to Guinea, where they would once again see Papa Toussaint, who was waiting for them to complete his army, which was destined to reconquer Saint-Domingue.”

To the Congos, the afterlife meant a return to Africa. Inspired by this prospect, the African fighters marched into battle “with a supernatural intrepidity, singing Guinean songs, as if possessed by the hope that they would soon see their old acquaintances.”

Dessalines inspired his comrades by vocalizing and posing a provocative image: Haiti embodied a New Africa. While African slaves originated from distinct villages, each shared a history of devastation. Haiti offered slaves a revival of African togetherness, complete with brotherhood, camaraderie, and black power.

29 Ibid., 267.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 269.
32 Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 295.
33 Ibid., 295-296.
In order to create a new nation of Haiti, Dessalines and his officers invented a new verb: “Le nom français lugubre encore nos contrées,” they declared. This phrase translates, roughly, as: “The French name still haunts our lands.” But it transformed a French adjective, “lugubre”—literally “gloomy”—into a verb. The declaration of which the phrase was a part meant simultaneously to depict the horror that French control had wrought on the colony and to exorcize this past. The declaration, issued on January 1, 1804, was a furious attack against the brutalities of the French, and a call for the members of the new nation to reject forever the past of empire and slavery.34

The document was modeled after the U.S. Declaration of Independence, as Dessalines admired the work of Thomas Jefferson. In the document Dessalines set forth all the rights of the black race, and the complaints that the population had against France. However, the document lacked the “heat and energy” required for the occasion and a young officer of color named Louis Félix Boisrond-Tonnerre declared, “In order to draw up our act of independence, we need the skin of a white to serve as a parchment, his skull as an inkwell, his blood for ink, and a bayonet for a pen.” With one last act of national authority, Boisrond-Tonnerre and Dessalines wanted to forever assure the empire of liberty in the country whose birth they had witnessed. In declaring independence, the people of Haiti had to reject their colonizers, who had left a stamp of France in Haitian towns, laws, and habits. Dessalines made it clear that Frenchmen were not their brothers, and would never be. The people of the colony swore to posterity and the entire universe to renounce France forever and to die rather than live under its domination. The nation’s cry came to be the “Anathema to the French name! Eternal hatred of France!”35

The followers of Louverture and Dessalines demonstrated that segregation could lead to the unity of a slave nation. The emergence of the Haitian Republic was made possible by the indoctrination of a sense of belonging to Haiti. Through song chanting, exclusionary proclamations, embracement of African brotherhood, rejection of French philosophy, and oaths to preserve the new nation, the slave insurgents cultivated their own dynasty. Ultimately, this resulted in an independent Haitian Em-

34 Ibid., 298.
35 Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 299.
pire on September 22, 1804, when Dessalines declared himself Emperor Jacques I. He successfully mobilized the masses by resurrecting hope and mounting new expectations for the army to follow. Despite Touissant Louverture’s exile to France, Dessalines finished what he started. These two leaders’ legacies remain in Haiti today, where their statues remind Haitians of their nation’s upbringing.

The goal of the Haitian Constitution was to implement a structure to the new state. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who had driven the last of the French army out of the colony, deemed himself the Commander in Chief of Haiti as well as Emperor of the Haitian Empire. He preached “eternal hatred of France” and was motivated to unite Haitians together, despite their long-standing segregation. To inspire national pride and oneness among Haitians, Dessalines swayed his followers that brotherhood would unite the country together against the prospect of France’s return. Article 12 states that, “No white man, regardless of his nationality, may set foot in this territory as a master or landowner, nor will he ever be able to acquire property.” This is a confirmation of Article 2, which assures that “slavery is abolished forever.” Jean-Jacques was aware that in order to drum up nationalist pride in Haiti, the presence of whites needed to be permanently barred. Exclusionary principles, fed by an impulse to resist invading forces, follow a pattern exemplified by many nations.

Nationalism is also associated with the uniformity of color. Article 14 of the Haitian Constitution stipulates “all distinctions of color among children of the same family must necessarily stop, Haitians will henceforth only be known generically as Blacks.” This unity requires the reduction of the complexities of Mulattoes, who were directed to favor their African origins and deny their European ancestry. Within a new nation, diversity of peoples gets swept under the proverbial rug, or in this case, the flag. Article 20 states that the “national colors will be black and red.” This casts a visual image of a nation’s collectivity and makes it convenient for its citizens to follow because all citizens fall under the same national colors. Citizens’ identification with national banners and flags is a voluntary vehicle to solidify one-ness.36

Haitians used color as a means to associate and reference their in-

individual existence to a common national identity. Upon his crowning as Emperor, Dessalines redesigned the national flag. To him, blue was associated with mulattoes whereas red embodied pureblooded blacks. Given the exclusive and color-coded rhetoric of the constitution, Haitian nationalists aimed to eradicate all things French. This included the demand for mulattoes to reject their European heritage. Thus, black appropriately replaced the blue half of the flag. This concept, birthed from the Constitution of 1805, has parallel symbolism to other early national movements—most notably the United States of America: a country mythically founded by “Americans.” However, the early colonists were actually just wealthy English-American males, that privileged English culture and language to Native American traditions.

One historical irony to note is that Haiti’s current national motto and first constitution are both strongly tied to France. Their motto is also France’s motto: Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité. Also, the Constitution of 1805 was originally drafted in French (as opposed to Creole). These are salient aspects of present-day Haiti because they challenge their revolution’s principal intention to inculcate permanent hatred of all things French. This reminds us that Haitians still face the legacies of slavery and that the process of undoing French colonial influence has not satisfied the constitution’s demands. Whether destined by French exploitation or not, this country’s past has deadlocked many of its current citizens, who face economic downturns, environmental disasters, and a lack of global visibility. These domestic issues did not appear randomly, as they are accompanied by a brutal past of conquest and slavery that still haunt this depleted nation. Despite Haiti’s current economic failures, their genesis hopefully will always be referenced as a story of hope and resiliency that produced an unmatched result.

C.L.R. James confidently preached the significance of the revolution: “The transformation of slaves, trembling in hundreds before a single white man, into a people able to organize themselves and defeat the most powerful European nation of their day, is one of the great epics of revolutionary struggle and achievement.” But the Haitian Revolution was not just a violent struggle with a happy ending marked by the emancipation of slavery, formation of a republic, and the drafting of a constitution.

37 James, Black Jacobins, 26.
The legacies of slavery are constantly confronted today and its lingering effects have been so detrimental that many are quick to label Haiti as a failed economic state. However, after examining the underpinnings of the Haitian Revolution, one may conclude that this is widespread belief lacking utmost truth. Haiti has tremendous opportunities for economic growth and development but its future transformation will depend upon the forces that suppressed this nation with hostility and exploitation since the discovery of the New World.

Laurent Dubois, a Professor of Caribbean Studies at Duke University, recently reflected on the call of Caricom—a 15-member Caribbean Community—for Britain, France, and the Netherlands to pay an undefined amount of reparations for slavery and the slave trade. This discussion around reparations might become an occasion to delve into history, to mourn but also confront the many ways in which the past continues to shape the present. Professor Dubois eloquently purported in a New York Times article on October 28, 2013:

What would it mean to truly rid our world of the legacies of slavery? In the Caribbean, it would mean undoing the divisions created by colonialism, through regional economic cooperation and reduced dependence on foreign aid and foreign banks. It would mean, above all, ending the continuing mistreatment and stereotyping of Haitians, who were the pioneers in the overthrow of slavery and have been paying for it ever since. In Europe and the United States, it would mean abandoning condescending visions of the Caribbean and building policies on aid, trade and immigration based on an acceptance of common and connected histories. It would mean, above all, consigning racial discrimination, exploitation and political exclusion to the past. That would be the truest form of reparation.

This passage reminds American readers that the slave trade and slavery were the economic bases of the United States. This is important to recognize because it situates the Caricom’s appeal in a historical context and reveals why they are currently issuing this international plea.

38 Dubois, “Confronting the Legacies of Slavery.”
The Haitian Revolution remains in today’s headlines and will forever represent a contentious subject. While many have erased its memory, Haiti’s national roots as an independent state were forever cemented by modern acts of violence, the drafting of a constitution, and the amelioration of slavery. Violence and agency created a radical way to form a modern nation. This connects with the memory of the founding of the United States of America. After all, Haiti is the second oldest democracy in the Western Hemisphere because it followed the lead of the first. Perhaps there are more commonalities between Haiti and its American counterpart than most are willing to admit. Notwithstanding, matter-of-fact interpretations will always encourage contrarian opinions. Despite the common narrative that links Haiti to backwardness and savagery, its emergence on the global stage belongs to the Age of Revolution, a time when Haitians shared a parallel story of independence with countries like France and the U.S. because all three are wedded to the beginnings of modern nationalism.
Bibliography


ALEXA DE LEON

Nuclear Power in Japanese Art: From Hiroshima and Nagasaki to Fukushima

Alexa De Leon, class of 2014, majored in Asian Studies and is now working for the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program in the Nagasaki Prefecture.
WRITER'S COMMENTS

The idea for this paper came from discussions with Professor Ucerler in my Asian Studies capstone class about the varied depictions of nuclear power and disaster in modern Japanese culture. After the triple catastrophe of March 11, 2011, I could not help but wonder why Japan had become so reliant on nuclear power despite being the only nation to ever face the destruction of the atomic bomb. I wanted to see if tracing the history of nuclear power in Japan, its applications, and the cultural responses to such applications would reveal anything about how Japan became set on this path. This paper gives an outline of this history, then it compares historical artistic responses to the atomic bombs with artistic responses to the March 11 disaster. The original paper written for the class had a wider scope and included films as well as literature. While these sources informed my research, in this version, I decided to focus specifically on visual art such as painting, photography, performance, and street art. I explore how artists were influenced by the nuclear disasters and ponder what, if any, influence such art will in turn have on the role of nuclear power in Japanese society. Ultimately, I question whether art has the power to change society, or only to reflect it as it is.

—Alexa De Leon

INSTRUCTOR'S COMMENTS

In this thoroughly researched and original piece of work, De Leon explores with great cultural sensitivity the highly complicated relationship that the Japanese people have had and continue to have with nuclear power. As the only nation to have suffered the effects of not one but two atomic bombs, Japan's choice to embrace nuclear energy in the aftermath of the war was as remarkable as it was contradictory. And yet many people continued to have misgivings about the long-term consequences of adopting such a potentially destructive technology. These underlying doubts and fears found expression in numerous visual and artistic media, which De Leon introduces and explains in an historical overview that is both informative and interpretive of post-war Japanese society. The author then compares and contrasts reactions to the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the “protest art” that marked Japan's response to the nuclear disaster at Fukushima.

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Nuclear Power in Japanese Art: From Hiroshima and Nagasaki to Fukushima

Introduction

From the atomic bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the ongoing Fukushima crisis, nuclear power has played an undeniable role in Japanese society. Following the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi plant, many people asked themselves how Japan could have been victimized by nuclear power again, after being the only nation to experience the utter destruction of atomic warfare. Before the Fukushima disaster, fifty main nuclear reactors provided thirty-percent of the country’s electricity (“Nuclear Power in Japan”). Understandably, Japanese and foreigners alike have struggled to reconcile Japan’s long history of anti-nuclear weapon activism with its modern dependence on nuclear power. From the source of ultimate despair, to a beacon of hope for the future, to the cause for renewed fear and confusion, the Japanese relationship with nuclear power from 1945 to the present day has been complex and conflicting.

As Japanese people wrestled with this crisis of faith, their complicated responses became a part of Japanese cultural dialogue. This paper proposes to trace how Japanese perceptions and attitudes toward nuclear power and nuclear weapons have been reflected through cultural products, particularly the arts. I will first examine the history of nuclear power in Japan from World War II until today, and discuss particular examples of nuclear power in postwar Japanese art. I will also consider what these art forms suggest about Japanese perceptions toward nuclear energy and how these perceptions have changed over time in response to the greater societal context of Japan. Finally, I will examine how Japanese artists today are responding to the Fukushima crisis and how they are attempting to reconcile the paradox of Japan as the only nation to experience the destruction of atomic warfare with the reality of Japan’s re-victimization by nuclear energy.
From Disaster to Dependency: A Short History of Nuclear Power in Japan

Following the onset of the Fukushima nuclear crisis, many wondered how Japan, the only nation to suffer the destruction of atomic bombs, began on the path of dependency on nuclear energy. Beyond the obvious reason of Japan being a resource-weak nation, there are complex psychological and political reasons for this turn of events.

Japan’s relationship with nuclear power began even before World War II and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Craig D. Nelson states that Japanese physicists and chemists, like other scientists at the time, paid close attention to the discovery of nuclear fission by Otto Hahn, Fritz Strassmann, and Lise Meitner in 1938. In fact, more than just following the research of others, “Japan was one of the few countries at the time with the material resources and scientific talent to pursue [nuclear] research, embarking on not one, but two research efforts to create an atomic bomb during World War II” (Nelson, 2011). These two secret programs, the Army’s Ni-Go Project and the Navy’s F-Go Project, were led by some of Japan’s best scientists and made considerable progress in nuclear fission research. Robert K. Wilcox in his 1985 book Japan’s Secret War: Japan’s Race Against Time to Build Its Own Atomic Bomb even argues that the Japanese Navy tested a nuclear bomb in what is now North Korea before the end of the war. However, there is insufficient evidence to support this claim; most scholars believe that the Japanese projects never reached the testing stage. As a result, Japan lost the nuclear race, and suffered the brutal atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

When the first bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, it was estimated that around 100,000 people were killed instantly (Cook, 2006, p. 283). In the unbelievably intense heat, some people simply vanished, leaving behind nothing but shadows. Three days later, a second, larger bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. An estimated 75,000 were killed instantaneously and a third of the city was destroyed (Cook, 2006, p. 283). Thousands died later from radiation poisoning and injuries sustained from the blast. Dr. James N. Yamazaki writes that, “The real mortality of the atomic bombs that were dropped on Japan will never be known. The destruction and overwhelming chaos made orderly counting impossible. It is not unlikely
that the estimates of killed and wounded in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are over conservative” (Yamazaki, 2007). Outside of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, however, most Japanese did not truly understand the terrible effects of the atomic bomb for many years.

The days following the end of the war, Japanese scientists with the secret nuclear research programs burned many of their records while the American Occupation Forces destroyed all of Japan’s nuclear research facilities and cyclotrons as part of their efforts to dismantle Japan’s military apparatuses. The Occupation’s General Headquarters (GHQ) banned any further nuclear research, including research intended for medical or power applications. Furthermore, due to censorship and restrictions it was nearly impossible to publish or share research related to the atomic bomb in the years immediately after the end of the war. This affected the ability of Japanese doctors to effectively treat atomic bomb victims. Dr. Issei Nishimori, a student at Nagasaki Medical College at the time of the bombing, researched the physical effects of the atomic bomb on the human body. He later wrote about the difficulties of doing such research in the Occupation era. According to Dr. Nishimori, “Research during this period soon after the actual bombings would have been important. The Americans did not order us to stop, but they imposed so many restrictions…that in practice we were prohibited from publishing” (Nishimori as cited in Braw, 1991, p. 4). Furthermore, all autopsy materials that Japanese doctors had collected, even preserved organs, were confiscated and not returned to Japan for thirty years. Eventually, some of these materials were returned to Japan due to the efforts of Dr. Nishimori (Nishimori, 1995). In addition, while the American-led Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC) conducted research on the effects of the atomic bomb, this research was never shared with Japanese doctors. Nishimori writes:

[T]he ABCC only did research. It did not try to cure. It kept many secrets. This made hibakusha [atomic bomb victims] feel that they were experimental animals. As a doctor I think it is common sense that when one finds something new during research one should publish it for the benefit of all human beings. But the ABCC did
not share its research. Had the Americans, with their higher knowledge in medical science, done that, many patients would have been saved. (Nishimori as cited in Braw, 1991, p. 5)

Because atomic bombs had never before been used as a weapon on human beings, doctors were unfamiliar with the effects of radiation and the best treatment methods. Despite the importance of such seminal research into the bomb's effects, the ABCC's results were not used to help the very people it studied.

Moreover, the press codes put forth by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) resulted in de-facto censorship of material deemed subversive or likely to upset public order. Any atomic bomb related material, particularly if it could be seen as critical of the Allied Powers' decision to drop the bomb, was likely to be censored. Shunichi Takekawa states that during the Occupation, very few books related to atomic issues passed the censors (Takekawa, 2012). “This averted gaze,” John W. Dower suggests, “was as psychological as it was political. Few Japanese wished to dwell on the madness and misery of the war, and the hibakusha were essentially stigmatized or ignored until the late 1950s and early 1960s” (Dower, 2008). Images of the destruction from the atomic bomb were not available to the Japanese public until seven years after the bombing, when the Asahi Graph magazine and Iwanami Shoten's pictorial book, Hiroshima: Senso to Toshi (Hiroshima: War and the City) first published photos of the destructions in 1952. Takekawa concludes that “the public was shielded from images and discussion of the real horrors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings throughout the occupation. As a result, the dangers of radiation were not widely known to the Japanese. In addition, with nuclear electricity still under development outside of Japan, potential risks of nuclear power were unknown to most Japanese” (Takekawa, 2012). Ultimately, few Japanese people truly understood the effects of the atomic bombs and radiation in the postwar period leading up to the development of Japan's nuclear industry.

In spite of the paucity of information, the Japanese public has largely denounced nuclear weapons and offensive warfare in general since World War II. Article 9 of the 1947 Constitution prohibited Japan from creating military forces for offensive purposes. Since 1967 Japanese nuclear policy has largely followed the “Three Non-Nuclear Principles,”
which rule out the production, possession, or introduction of nuclear weapons within Japan. At times, however, these principles have not been strictly followed. According to Nelson, “Recent revelations have made it clear that the Japanese government did regularly and knowingly allow American naval vessels armed with nuclear weapons to call at their ports” (Nelson, 2011). Although the violations occurred forty years earlier, the Japanese public was outraged when the violations were exposed, which suggested that they still value the pacifistic principles on which post-war Japanese nuclear policy was based.

Even more controversially, some scholars argue that Japan is both technically and technologically equipped to quickly develop atomic weapons, should it ever decide to do so. An internal document written by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1969 and kept hidden from the public until published by the Mainichi Shimbun in 1994 reveals a controversial nuclear strategy, stating: that while Japan will “maintain the policy of not possessing nuclear weapons” it will also “keep the economic and technical potential for the production of nuclear weapons, while seeing to it that Japan will not be interfered with in this regard” (as cited in Kato, 2014). In his New York Times article “Ambiguities of Japan’s Nuclear Policy,” Norihiro Kato says Japan’s policy of “technological deterrence” is “inherently ambiguous, and has been made more so still by the ministry’s insistence that the document was a research paper rather than a statement of policy” (Kato, 2014). Volatility in the Asia-Pacific region in the post-Cold War period, from land disputes with China, Russia, and Korea to the threat of a nuclear North Korea, has made the possibility of developing nuclear weapons in Japan increasingly relevant. The current Abe cabinet is already attempting to revise the Constitution to allow for an expanded role for the military. It is unclear whether Japanese policymakers will also attempt to revise Japan’s long-standing nuclear policy in response to perceived threat in the region.

Despite the Japanese people’s antipathy towards nuclear warfare, Japan began developing a nuclear energy industry soon after the end of the Occupation in 1952. In 1953, President Eisenhower gave a powerful speech to launch his “Atoms for Peace” program. Nelson writes that “Eisenhower laid out a grim future for the world, one dominated by nuclear weapons of ever increasing destructive capability. After first
scaring his audience, he pivoted and offered a solution: the development of civilian nuclear power” (Nelson, 2011). Eisenhower thus argued that rather than only destruction, atomic power could produce great benefits. Through Atoms for Peace, the United States would share nuclear technology and loan materials to its allies, fostering good relations. Eisenhower also hoped the program would provide an alternative use for radioisotopes, and as demand for nuclear materials for peaceful purposes grew, both the United States and the Soviet Union would dismantle weapons to provide fuel for nuclear reactors (Nelson, 2011). Eisenhower presented a hopeful alternative for nuclear power, one that could even perhaps save Japan from its energy crisis. Nelson (2011) continues, “As far as the Americans were concerned, Japan had a special place in this proposal. Since Japan had been the victim of the first and only atomic bombings, it would only be fair that Japan be among the first countries to benefit from advances in nuclear power.” Nuclear power was thus presented as having a dual nature, one of destruction, but also one of possibility and hope for Japan’s postwar future. This idea seemed to take hold in the minds of many Japanese.

The opportunity for atomic energy to redeem itself by creating a better future was supported by the Japanese government and media. In fact, Takekawa argues that “from 1945 to 1955, indeed, from the immediate aftermath of Japan's surrender, the Asahi, Mainichi and Yomiuri, the big three newspapers, unanimously... endorsed the peaceful uses of nuclear power, distinguishing it from nuclear weapons” (Takekawa, 2012). According to Takekawa, Matsutaro Shoriki, owner of the Yomiuri and founder of Nippon Television, worked with the U.S. government in encouraging the development of nuclear power for peaceful means through his media outlets and public exhibits for the “Atoms for Peace” campaign in the mid-1950s (Takekawa, 2012). The Asahi Shimbun also co-hosted Atoms for Peace exhibits, as did smaller newspapers, including the Chugoku Shimbun in Hiroshima. Takekawa argues, “The three newspapers hoped that nuclear power would be an instrument to realize a better future for Japan. That is, they viewed nuclear power as a symbol for the promise of science” (Takekawa, 2012). Japanese political leaders, as well as some members of the public, felt that they had lost the war because the United States was more technologically advanced and had developed the atomic bomb first (Takekawa, 2012). Thus scientific and technological development
was linked with a better future for Japan and perhaps redemption from the shame of Japan's loss. Interestingly, such sentiment echoes that of the Meiji period (1868 through July 1912), when some Japanese thinkers and political groups began promoting the Westernization of Japanese technology and military in order to make Japan stronger and avenge the humiliation of the unequal treaties inflicted on Japan by the West.

Perhaps with such thoughts of redemption in mind, Japan began its nuclear research program with support from the United States in 1954. That same year, however, disaster struck again when in the Lucky Dragon incident at Bikini Atoll, a U.S. hydrogen bomb test in the South Pacific caught twenty-three Japanese fishermen in radioactive fallout. Nelson says this of the Lucky Dragon incident:

Panic exploded in Japan with the revelation that not only were the fishermen affected by the fallout, but that their catch had already been sold at market before anyone thought to test it. The abstract threat of invisible atomic poison became all too real once people began to realize that it had infiltrated the food supply. The tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were still fresh. But it was the Lucky Dragon incident that provided the opportunity for a national discussion of the effects of radiation, which were not particularly well understood immediately after the bombings. (Nelson, 2011)

These fears of invisible radiation poisoning have been echoed by the public following the March 2011 nuclear disaster, even outside of Japan. After the revelation in August 2013 that 300 tons of contaminated water had leaked from the Daiichi plant, South Korea banned all fish imports from eight Japanese prefectures, including Fukushima. Japanese authorities assure that food regulation is extremely tight, but South Korean officials have upheld the ban—noting public fear and the lack of transparency about the leak. Even as far away as the West Coast of the United States, many people have voiced concerns about radiation in seafood. Articles like the Los Angeles Times’ “Is Our Seafood Radioactive, or Is It Safe to Eat?” question the food safety of fish off the West Coast, although the general consensus among scientists so far has been that there is not a significant cause for worry (Parsons, 2013).
In 1954 it was the Americans who sought to assuage the Japanese people's fear of radiation poisoning. Amidst public outrage over the Lucky Dragon incident, the Eisenhower administration offered an agreement to share nuclear technology with Japan, which Japanese politicians quickly accepted. From the mid-1950s, the energy companies and the Liberal Democratic Party-led Japanese government together presented a strong public relations campaign in which nuclear energy was reimagined as a clean energy source to power an ideal future. Matthew Penney notes that, "Mascot characters recalling the nuclear-powered manga character Astro Boy (known as Mighty Atom in Japanese) have been used to brand power stations as tourist destinations for families" (Penney as cited in Allemang, 2011). Furthermore, Japan's astounding postwar economic growth demanded increasing energy sources. In 1966 Japan began operating its first commercial nuclear power reactor, imported from the U.K., in Tokai and by the end of the 1970s, Japan had essentially established its own domestic nuclear power production capacity ("Nuclear Power in Japan," 2013).

The importance of Japanese energy independence was reinforced by the 1973 oil crisis caused by the Arab oil embargo. In the face of an extreme lack of natural resources, Japanese nuclear power has been presented as an almost patriotic endeavor. John Allemang (2011) notes that the "client-state" relationship between the United States and Japan since World War II has hurt Japanese national pride: "So any areas where independence can be expressed become more attractive, whether it's protecting rice farmers from cheap imports or developing a domestic energy network that stabilizes the Japanese economy and frees it from the unpredictability of the Arab world." The nuclear industry is proudly Japanese and in alignment with Japan's image as a leader of technology, an idea first promoted by the postwar Yoshida Doctrine. Yoshida Shigeru, Prime Minister of Japan from 1946 to 1947 and from 1948 to 1954, proposed that Japan focus completely on economic independence, especially through the development of a strong technological industry, rather than become entangled in complex and contentious international affairs. Nuclear power, says Nelson, fit this policy perfectly.

Nevertheless, public sentiment toward nuclear energy has often been very negative, especially in response to accidents and cover-ups at nuclear power plants. In the 1990s and early 2000s, several accidents and scandals
led to increasing concern over nuclear safety. In 1996, there was a sodium leak at the Monju Nuclear Power Plant in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture. In 1997 there was a fire and explosion at the Tokaimura processing plant and thirty-seven workers were exposed to radiation. Two years later, a criticality accident (an uncontrolled nuclear reaction), also in Tokaimura, exposed hundreds to radiation resulting in two worker fatalities. Then there was a major scandal in 2002 when it was discovered that Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) had falsified inspection records and attempted to hide cracks in reactor vessel shrouds in thirteen of its seventeen units.

Finally in 2007 the Niigata Chuetsu-Oki earthquake along a fault line close to the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant revealed the vulnerability of plants built close to geological fault lines. A government investigation to ensure plant safety “acknowledged that the government was responsible for approving construction of the first units in the 1970s very close to what is now perceived to be a geological fault line” (“Nuclear Power in Japan,” 2013). These incidents contributed to public distrust of the nuclear energy industry. However, Penney argues, nuclear power’s special role in a type of “economic and technological nationalism stifled debate and fostered a system that allowed warning signs to be overlooked” (Penney, 2012). The nuclear industry also enjoyed a close relationship with the Japanese political elite. In 2007, the communist party newspaper Akahata reported that all of the top managers at TEPCO had given personal donations to the Liberal Democratic Party. In 2009, companies related to the nuclear energy industry gave around $10,000,000 to the Liberal Democratic Party (Penney, 2012). Thus, despite troubling accidents and warnings, the industry largely maintained the status quo up until the Fukushima Daiichi crisis in March 2011.

The disaster that began on March 11, 2011, took 20,000 lives, created 315,000 refugees, made nearly 5,000 acres of land uninhabitable, and destroyed local economies (McCormack, 2013). While the tsunami was a natural disaster, the following nuclear crisis increasingly appears to be man-made. Gavan McCormack (2013) argues:

The triple catastrophe is often referred to as “sōteigai” (unimaginable) but we now know that was not the case. The Diet committee that investigated the accident pointed out last year that the disaster was structural, man-made, brought
about by the failings of the power company and of the national government. Even before Fukushima, the nuclear industry was known for data falsification and fabrication, the duping of safety inspectors, the belittling of risk and the failure to report criticality incidents and emergency shut-downs. Directly and indirectly, politicians, bureaucrats, industrialists, lawyers, media groups, academics also collaborated, constituting in sum the so-called “nuclear village.”

In hindsight, there were many signs of the precariousness of nuclear energy plants in Japan. Nuclear accidents and evidence suggesting the possibility of earthquakes causing nuclear disasters were ignored or covered up. However, Penney argues that the Japanese government had convinced itself and others of the supreme safety of Japanese nuclear energy, even in the face of earlier nuclear disasters. The Fukushima Daiichi crisis was the first nuclear event to be classified as a “Level 7,” the highest on the International Nuclear Event Scale, since the Chernobyl disaster in 1986. Despite the terrifying possibility of a nuclear explosion and radiation related health problems, the Japanese government at the time of Chernobyl remained confident that their nuclear plants were safe. Penney writes, “In 1986, the Chernobyl catastrophe sparked much debate about nuclear energy in Japan. It did not, however, become a turning point in considerations of Japan’s nuclear system...Chernobyl was not presented as a warning for Japan, but rather as an unsafe outside point of contrast with Japan’s rigorous technology of safety” (Penney, 2012). Thus, the Japanese reaction to the Fukushima crisis was one of disbelief and a rejection of the man-made element of the disaster. In the wake of Fukushima, TEPCO has claimed the disaster was “outside safety expectations,” despite reports to the contrary. Assumptions that Japanese nuclear energy was safe, Penney says, can be tied to “technological nationalism at the heart of Japan’s conservative political culture” (Penney, 2012). Because nuclear energy had become a part of Japan’s self-identification as a peaceful technological leader, to question nuclear energy became nearly unpatriotic in conservative rhetoric. In many cases, it is clear that politics and finances took precedence over safety at nuclear plants within Japan.

The trajectory of history which took Japan from becoming a victim
of the atomic bomb to becoming a victim of a nuclear crisis is complex. Despite of or because of the tragic bombings, Japan adopted nuclear power as an energy source in the post-war period with support from the United States. From the Lucky Dragon incident, to Chernobyl, to the accidents and cover-ups of the 2000s, Japan had many chances to reevaluate its nuclear power policies. However, the lack of transparency and free information in the industry, the desire to reinvent Japan as a scientific and economic power after World War II, the psychological need to find hope for Japan’s future, and the collusion of the mass media, politicians, and energy companies to push a pro-nuclear agenda made it difficult to criticize the industry leading up to the Fukushima accident. In the following sections, I will introduce several examples of Japanese artists’ efforts to understand Japan’s relationship with nuclear energy from 1945 until the present.

“Nuclear Art” in Japan

In this section, I will look at the origins of nuclear art in Japan from the post-Hiroshima and Nagasaki era, then examine some modern-day artistic responses to the Fukushima crisis. I will consider how early nuclear art has influenced these responses, and how the artworks differ. I have selected a few examples of historic and modern artwork based on how well they reflected what I perceived to be important themes in the works. The historic examples show trends such as an emphasis on exposing human suffering, narratives of Japanese victimhood, narratives of greater East Asian victimhood, and the destructiveness of nuclear power. The modern examples suggest a recurrence of some of these themes, with a clear awareness of Japan’s nuclear history and some radical new means of expressing their point of view. I will suggest that the new wave of atomic art consciously creates a link with Japan’s past nuclear tragedies to express a desire for a future Japan where such tragedies are not repeated.

History of Nuclear Art in Japan

In the years immediately after the bombings, while Japan was still under Allied Occupation, very little information or photography of the bombs was relayed to the public. However, after the Occupation ended, many
Japanese people not only learned more about the realities of the atomic bombs, but also began to process their experiences through artistic endeavors. Some efforts were more focused on accurately documenting the effects of the bombs, while others strove to relay a message about the suffering of hibakusha and the danger of nuclear power.

One of the best known examples of Japanese nuclear art is The Hiroshima Panels, a series of fifteen panels painted from 1950 to 1982 by married artists Maruki Iri and Toshi (Ikeda, 2013). According to Asato Ikeda, the pair of artists used their different talents to work together in a distinctive way. She writes, “The artists’ method of producing works of art was unique; they jointly produced paintings, one continuing to paint directly where the other left off the previous day. The completed paintings thus combine the impressionistic qualities of Iri’s ink dilution and Toshi’s careful rendering of human figures” (Ikeda, 2013). Iri used Japanese sumi-e (ink painting) techniques, while Toshi used more Western techniques. The folding panels also evoked the long tradition of Japanese folding screen art. The combination of techniques creates an emotional and striking image of the inhumanity of atomic war.

One of the panels, “Ghosts I” (Figure 1), depicted the aftermath of the atomic bomb as the artists had witnessed it in Hiroshima. Ikeda describes the painting: “Deformed, fragmented naked human bodies, most of them women and children, emerge out of the black smoke … Here, almost everything is colorless; bodies have become ashes and ashes cover bodies. Masses of people are walking, while some are lying on the ground and others are praying” (Ikeda, 2013). As a whole, the panels show individual bodies and individual tragedies blending into a grand mass of indescribable suffering. Ikeda continues, “The Hiroshima Panels evoke silence, a speechless moment of chaos. With no background, the specificity of the peoples’ experiences becomes ambiguous, and the painting represents Hell and human suffering” (Ikeda, 2013). The panels also portray the Lucky Dragon accident, suggesting the danger nuclear power presents to ordinary life even during peacetime.

The Marukis’ work differed somewhat from the standard narrative of Japanese atomic victimhood in that they chose to also include images of Korean residents and American prisoners of war who also perished in the bombings. Their decision to include these other victims demonstrates their desire to reveal the terrible danger that war and nuclear power
presented for all human beings. Thus, through their art, the Marukis express the danger of nuclear power as a matter of concern not only to Japan, but to all of humanity.

**Nuclear Photography: Domon Ken and Fukushima Kikujiro**

Other nuclear art was produced in the late 1950s and 60s by photographers such as Ken Domon and Fukushima Kikujiro. Domon shot his photographic collection, *Hiroshima*, in 1957 and it was published by Kenko-sha in 1959. Domon was a leader of the “realism” movement of Japanese photography. He captured scenes such as victims undergoing surgery at the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Hospital and war orphans playing at the Hiroshima Municipal School for War Victims (Ikeda, 2013). Ikeda states that “Domon confronts the viewer with photographic evidence of their continuing pain and suffering, presenting human bodies that are grotesque, abject, deformed, and severely injured” (Ikeda, 2013). Domon aimed to expose the common suffering of the Japanese people after the war, especially the innocent victims of the atomic bombings. Frank Feltens writes, “Domon regarded the necessity and goal of increasing the awareness of the atomic bomb’s aftermath…as a national responsibility of the ‘Japanese photographer’” (Feltens, 2011, p. 64). However, unlike some other artists previously discussed Domon focused on a conservative narrative of Japanese victimhood alone.

Like the Marukis, Fukushima Kikujiro extended the scope of war sufferers to include Korean and other Asian victims (Tanaka, 2011). Fukushima was an amateur photographer turned photojournalist. He served in the Japanese Army at the end of World War II and staunchly believed in the Imperialist cause. However, when he returned from the war he learned that even women and children had been trained to fight for Japan with makeshift weapons and “realized how lightly military leaders regarded the lives of women and children and their lack of qualms about sending defenseless citizens to be killed” (Tanaka, 2011). Through his amateur photographic work that he began while volunteering, Fukushima became acutely aware of the suffering endured by the hibakusha and war orphans. He often worked very closely with his subjects, and thus strove to “reveal the human dignity
of his subjects” while still presenting an “uncompromising and direct exposure of human suffering” (Tanaka, 2011). He worked extensively with Nakamura Sugimatsu, a severely ill and destitute hibakusha (see Figures 2 and 3).

Over eight years, Fukushima recorded in photos the “anguished life of Nakamura and the gradual breakdown of his family” (Tanaka, 2011). His photos continued Domon’s realism style, but unlike Domon:

Kikuiro never tried to portray these subjects neatly or artistically. Perhaps, this is partly because he was a self-taught photographer who never learnt techniques from professionals... His work may, therefore, be seen as “crude” and “rough” by professional photographers, yet the “directness” of the images conveys extraordinary power. There is no room there for prevarication. This is particularly so in the case of the photos of Sugimatsu with their uncompromising and direct exposure of human suffering. (Tanaka, 2011)

By expressing in terrible detail the sufferings of atomic victims like Nakamura, Fukushima not only brought attention to their cause but also gave a voice to their pain. Fukushima has used his photography for social commentary on atomic bomb victims, and also ethnic Koreans, Japan’s Self Defense Forces, the student protests of the 60s, the role of Emperor Hirohito in World War II, and even anti-nuclear activities following the accident at Fukushima Daiiichi (Ito, 2014). In August 2012, a documentary of the life and work of Fukushima called “Japan Lies: The Photojournalism of Kikuiro Fukushima, Age 90” was released in Japanese theaters. Now 92 years old, Fukushima continues to use his art to give a voice to the victims of war and social injustice, at a great personal cost. After working with Nakamura for a decade, he experienced a nervous breakdown and spent three months in a mental health facility. He has been physically attacked, his house torched by an arsonist, and has received death threats by ultra-nationalists. Nevertheless, Fukushima lives up to a promise he made to Nakamura—to take revenge for the bomb by showing the world his suffering (Ito, 2014).
Okamoto Taro and the “Myth of Tomorrow”

Another artist of the post-war period who responded to the atomic bombings and nuclear arms race was Okamoto Taro. His “Myth of Tomorrow,” painted for a hotel in Mexico between 1968 and 1969, depicted the important nuclear events in Japanese history and the dangers of the nuclear arms race. Like The Hiroshima Panels, the “Myth of Tomorrow” (Figure 4) depicts both the nuclear bombs as well as the Bikini Atoll accident, albeit in a very different style. The massive mural was lost for thirty years in Mexico, but is now installed in Tokyo’s Shibuya Station, one of the busiest train stations in the world. Okamoto’s art was heavily influenced by the decade he spent in Europe as part of the Abstraction-Création movement (Takahashi and Wood, 2013). He also met and was inspired by Picasso; one can see significant similarities in the abstraction of “Myth of Tomorrow” and Picasso’s “Guernica.” In “Myth of Tomorrow” Okamoto used shocking primary colors and bizarre alien-esque forms to express the destructive power of nuclear energy.

Despite the bright, in-your-face colors and odd forms, Takahashi Akiko and Donald Wood write that the mural “doesn’t threaten menacingly; it will only draw a person in for a moment, if they let it, then release them—perhaps changed, perhaps unaffected…Okamoto Taro didn’t produce his art to shock or titillate. He wanted the people of his home country to embrace change and to look to the future with bright eyes and the wonderment of a child” (Takahashi and Wood, 2013). However, this message was not heard and his hopes for Japan’s future were not realized; today Japan faces a new nuclear emergency.

Artistic Responses to Fukushima

Taking inspiration from the nuclear artists that came before them such as the Marukis, Domon Ken, Fukushima Kikujirō, and Okamoto Taro, contemporary Japanese artists have responded creatively and passionately to Japan’s recent nuclear crisis. These artists are consciously using art to connect the nuclear disasters of Japan’s past with the one Japan is now facing. Many of the artists are also explicitly critical of Japanese politicians and officials who did not prevent a nuclear disaster from happening in a country that had already faced two atomic bombings. As art-
ists they refuse to let the disaster be pushed aside and forgotten, and they are able to express their reactions and criticism in ways that the press and mainstream media cannot.

**Chim↑Pom**

The provocative Japanese guerrilla art group Chim↑Pom consists of members Ushiro Ryuta, Hayashi Yasutaka, Ellie, Okada Masataka, Inaoka Motomu, and Mizuno Toshinori. Chim↑Pom uses a variety of media such as video, installations, and performance art to challenge Japan’s status quo and particularly the nuclear energy industry. The group chose to address the Fukushima disaster in an unexpected way: they secretly attached an “addition” to “Myth of Tomorrow” done in Okamoto’s style. The new section depicted the damaged Fukushima Daiichi reactors and dark mushroom clouds (Figure 5). The stunt brought renewed attention to the masterpiece. After the installation, the addition garnered significant attention on Twitter, with some users questioning if Okamoto had actually predicted the Fukushima disaster (Frontline interview, 2011). The police removed the work the next day; Ushiro states, “We had no bad intentions. Yet in the Japanese media, it was called vandalism. For art to suggest new ways of looking at society is seen as a provocation” (Ushiro, 2011, in *The Atomic Artists*). Nevertheless, Chim↑Pom succeeded in bringing new attention to the work and connecting Okamoto’s vision of Japan’s nuclear past with the new disaster. In an interview with Frontline, Chim↑Pom’s leader Ushiro Ryuta responded that “the history of radiation seems to have been left behind by Japanese people in the 20th century. We had that impression for a long time, but with the recent disaster, [the] reality is that we have renewed this history” (Frontline interview, 2011). With the addition to Okamoto’s work, Chim↑Pom challenges Japan to recognize that history.

Chim↑Pom has responded to the Fukushima crisis in other, often irreverent, ways. The group traveled to Fukushima, collecting items, taking photos, and creating videos. They trespassed the boundary of the nuclear plant in hazmat suits to raise a Japanese flag with the symbol for radiation extending from the symbolic red center (Figure 6). Ushiro notes that soon after the disaster, the Japanese press had completely stopped going into the exclusion zone; instead they took photos from outside the affected area and digitally enhancing them. Ushiro thus touches on the
role that art should go where the media cannot or will not go. He says that he felt discomfort with the idea that human beings were working in the nuclear plants, and yet the media would not go in to film them (Frontline interview, 2011). Ushiro challenged the contradictions of the situation and asked, “Did you take the risks and go there to capture something, to feel the air and create an expression, or did you create something based on looking at something from outside the 30-kilometer [exclusion] zone? I think there’s a big difference” (Frontline interview, 2011).

Chim↑Pom and Ushiro suggest the important role that art should play in response to social crises where the media falls short. Ushiro states that in the days after the tsunami, “The images coming out of the real world, from the press, were so overwhelming. And the real sceneries that the tsunami left behind were so incredible, so not only video artists but artists in general felt a sense of powerlessness. But from there, I couldn’t accept that. Of course the reality was overwhelming, but I couldn’t accept that art was powerless” (Frontline interview, 2011). However, Chim↑Pom has also claimed that their art has no specific messages. In an interview with Shift magazine, Ushiro says, “Social issues exist in the reality and we are just witness of them. All we do is [take] off the filter that keeps you away from facing those issues which can be easily ignored” (Miyakoshi, 2011). Chim↑Pom suggests that part of the power and responsibility of art is challenging people to not look away from social issues.

281_Anti Nuke’s Street Art

Another controversial artist that became prominent since the Fukushima disaster is a man known only by his Twitter moniker, 281_Anti Nuke. John Mitchell says, “the way in which his subversively simple images force passersby to stop—and think—has led to comparisons with street artist, Banksy” (Mitchell, 2013). Mitchell claims that the power of 281_Anti Nuke’s images comes from their simplicity, comparing them to cartoons. He writes, “From simple smiley faces through Peanuts to modern manga, these images allow people to project onto them their own feelings. The more abstract the image, the easier this becomes” (Mitchell, 2013). Striking yet simple images by 281_Anti Nuke have been pasted around Tokyo. One such image depicts the black shape of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the dates they were dropped underneath.
ALEXA DE LEON

(Figure 7). Then to the right of the two bombs, in contrasting red, the TEPCO symbol and the date 3/11 follows. The implication is clear—the bombs (and the United States) were responsible for the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but this time the Japanese company TEPCO is to blame. This sentiment is echoed in images such as a bleeding Hinomaru flag with the overlaid text “Japan kills Japanese.”

281_Anti Nuke urges Japan not to forget the ongoing Fukushima crisis and not to accept the conditions which led to the situation in the first place. He is highly critical of top TEPCO officials and the government. Mitchell says, “One of his most scathing posters … depicted Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko and Katsumata Tsunehisa, another former president of TEPCO, locking tongues in a deep French kiss. Beneath it was the slogan, ‘Kizuna’ (bonds)—a word used by the Japanese government to promote a sense of national solidarity following the 3.11 earthquake” (Mitchell, 2013). In another piece, the black form of a kneeling Shimizu Masataka (who along with other top TEPCO officials had kneeled in apology to evacuees in Fukushima in May 2011) has only the condemning word “Liar” written below it (Figure 8). Like Chim↑Pom, 281_Anti Nuke has used unique methods of spreading his work among a wide audience. Not only does he post his image in public places (and on TEPCO property) he also makes his images free to download from his website. One can even use a code tweeted by 281 to print out a poster to post at any convenience store. Like Chim↑Pom, 281_Anti Nuke is unapologetically controversial and uses his art to protest the Japanese government’s position on nuclear power.

In the wake of the Fukushima disaster and the revelations of mismanagement both before and after the disaster by TEPCO, Japanese artists have begun to actively reflect on and challenge the conditions that led to the present crisis. While they use modern forms of expression and distribution for their art, the new era of artists continue the tradition of nuclear protest art that began after World War II. In both subject and emotional content, the new art creates a link with Japan’s past nuclear tragedies while expressing a desire for a future Japan where these tragedies are not repeated. Chim↑Pom, 281_Anti Nuke, and other contemporary artists illustrate the unique ability and the necessary role of art in understanding and confronting crisis. Drawing on the legacy of post-war era social protest artists, they express a sincere desire for change in Japanese
society, and point to the country’s history to demonstrate the urgency of making changes in order to prevent yet another nuclear disaster.

However the question remains: Does art have the power to produce change? Or does art only reflect reality, without attempting to change it? While art can provide inspiration, that inspiration needs to be put into action. Nevertheless, art is an essential tool for the Japanese people to reexamine the conditions which led to the Fukushima crisis and to suggest alternatives for the future.

Concluding Thoughts

In this paper I aimed to show the many ways in which Japan’s complex relationship with nuclear power has been reflected in Japanese art from the 1940s until present. I outlined the history of nuclear power in Japanese culture from World War II to today and highlighted the influence of energy companies and the Japanese government in establishing nuclear energy plants in Japan despite prevalent anti-nuclear sentiments within the Japanese public. I have illustrated the legacy of Japanese nuclear art with the humanistic and impressionist Hiroshima Panels by the Maruki’s, the painfully real photography of Domon Ken and Fukushima Kikujiro, as well as the abstract and avant-garde work of Okamoto. Finally, with the contemporary art of Chim↑Pom and 281_Anti Nuke, I have shown how Japanese artists have taken on the mission of the nuclear artists before them to question the status quo and warn of the danger of nuclear power.

Nuclear power has played a large role in Japanese culture from the bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the nuclear disaster at Fukushima, as expressed in social protest art which has attempted to resolve the enigma of Japan’s relationship with nuclear power. Artists have sought to both expose and find meaning in these events by tackling the multi-layered themes of transparency of information versus secrecy, Japanese victimization versus culpability, fear versus hope, and, ultimately, the conversion of suffering into a catalyst for change. Nuclear artists both past and present display a conscious understanding of the role and responsibility art must have—to convey suffering, call for responsibility, and perhaps inspire change. Whether art can change Japanese society today where it failed in the past will be revealed in the years ahead.
Appendix

Figure 1. Hiroshima Panels, “Ghosts 1,” 1950, Maruki Iri and Toshi. Accessed at: http://www.museum.or.jp/modules/topics/?action=viewphoto&id=338&c=1

NUCLEAR POWER IN JAPANESE ART


Figure 5. “Level 7,” 2011, Chim↑Pom. The addition to Okamoto’s “Myth of Tomorrow.” Accessed at: http://www.japanfocus.org/-Linda-Hoaglund/3802

References


SURFACE AND SYMBOL IN THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

KATHLEEN THAETE

Surface and Symbol: Aesthetics, Morality, and Discursive Power within Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray

Kathleen Thaete, class of 2014, graduated with a degree in English.
WRITER’S COMMENTS

What began as a paper I thought would simply consider the symbolism of flowers in The Picture of Dorian Gray, turned into an examination of the power structure of Victorian society. Even after developing this idea for my Gothic Novel class, I knew that I could dive much deeper into the implications of a Victorian writer, pointing out the disconnect between the façade of society and its motivations. While I had the desire to take these ideas into my senior seminar class, it was Professor Rojas, my exceptional thesis reader, who took my many tangents and helped me constantly refocus on the theme of a double reading. My seminar instructor, Professor Garcia Lopez, as well provided the motivation to make this project speak to an audience unfamiliar with Wilde but aware of discursive power. While my paper, through historical, analytical, and theoretical lenses, speaks to discursive power, the beauty of Wilde’s work is that this is a discussion that goes beyond the scope of an undergraduate thesis, and I look forward to continuing it.

—Kathleen Thaete

INSTRUCTOR’S COMMENTS

Kathleen’s essay skillfully executes a ‘double reading’ of Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray, emphasizing the literary text as both product of and response to social structures and cultural values. Specifically, she describes the interplay between aesthetics and morality in regards to Victorian society as well as the Aestheticism movement that emerged to refute the concept of morality in art. By examining the conflicts between these two approaches to literary style and function, which yield distinct readings of Wilde’s text, Kathleen invites us to become more conscious not only of the complex relationship between social ethics and literature, but also of a ‘duality of ethics’ in the text which resists the limitations of a single reading. Kathleen’s argument that in fact both “morality and aesthetics operate as vehicles of power” in The Picture of Dorian Gray reveals the always embedded relationship between language and the regulation of social order.

—Christina Garcia Lopez, English Department
Surface and Symbol: 
Aesthetics, Morality, and Discursive Power  
Within Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

“THERE IS NO SUCH THING as a moral or immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all.” So writes Oscar Wilde in the preface to his first and only novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). Wilde was an infamous aesthete, one who valued the intertwinement of art and life. Therefore, for Wilde, morality should be based on the beautiful; all principles moral or otherwise are subservient to the principle of what is beautiful. Wilde played a major role in literary and cultural history in promoting Aestheticism during the end of the nineteenth century. His place in society was solidified by the popularity of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and his public persona adored. The story of a beautiful young man who makes an unholy deal that allows for his portrait and not his body to render the casualties of his age and misconduct captivated not only his contemporaries, but also readers for generations to follow. His peers in the aesthetic school of thought would proceed to read the novel as one that promoted a higher value system than that of morals—one that judged art only by its surface. For them, how could an author who publicly valued the intertwinement of art and life write a novel as anything other than this? Yet, Aestheticism was a movement created in response to Victorian principles that valued strict morality. Victorianism refutes this aesthetic reading—finding that morality and art must be one and the same, since there can be no higher standard than the moral code. In the case of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, aesthetic readings find Dorian Gray’s failure to survive to be an aesthetic failure because he never fully interpellates, accepts, and applies the principle of Beauty above all. Whereas Victorian moralists interpret Dorian’s ultimate destruction to be justified, his end is the necessary destruction of a grossly immoral person.

And yet, with his preface, Wilde introduces the tools to uncover a different, more subversive reading. “There is no such thing as a ‘moral’ book,” he writes, adding, “All art is at once surface and symbol” (3). As his biographer Richard Ellman neatly summarizes, Wilde offers “in the most civilized way, an anatomy of his society, a radical reconsideration of its ethics. He knew all the secrets and could expose all the pretense”
The “ethics” Ellman refers to do not just constitute the stereotypical Victorian morals but also those of Wilde’s society. Wilde’s society was that of the school of Aestheticism, and it possessed another set of ethics. Ellman thus captures the duality of ethics—Victorian and Aesthetic—that surface both inside and outside of the novel. He also begins the foundation for decoupling these two ethics and reading beyond them. Aesthetic readings operate on a surface level of Beauty, a pretense occurs and anything “radical” Wilde writes becomes epigrams and pithy quotes: there is no depth. And because morality is but a veil for the complexities of society, moralizing the novel misses the actual agency of morality within the pages. Wilde “shakes an admonitory finger” and lays the blame on society (Ellman).

In the latter half of the 20th century, critical theorist Michel Foucault claimed in his work *The History of Sexuality* that power did not come through the law or regulation of the law, but rather through the language of that regulation. Oscar Wilde’s *Dorian Gray*, by the very nature of its placement within the archetypal Victorian society, teems with the language of regulation through the implication of a strict moral code. The language of regulation applies to aesthetics as well. For aesthetes, Beauty above all is the predominant standard, the principle to which all others are inferior. As Ellman concisely synthesizes, Wilde has purpose in his writing that lies beyond witty repartee. In spite of a history of critics who seek to either read the book as a paragon of aesthetics or as a moralizing tale, Wilde deconstructs Victorian society’s decadent façade as well as its moral codes to reveal that morality and aesthetics operate as vehicles of power. Through implementing the postmodern theories of Foucault, it becomes clear that the languages of Victorian society are used to regulate the social order; they are principles resting on a substructure of power.

**The Historicity of Reading Wilde**

The year Oscar Wilde published *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1890, saw the tail end of the Victorian era. Nonetheless, the ideal of social responsibility and the assortment of connotations that it carried would be a constant in the context of both the novel and Wilde’s life as well. As opposed to preceding British societies, the Victorians encountered a Britain that was
rapidly increasing in size, technology, peoples, cultures, and advancements in science and culture (Landlow). The only constant was change. The dynamic setting invited a static reaction. Since the many shifting spheres revolved outside the person, the vessel of this reaction became people themselves. If their outside environment was boundlessly expanding, they compensated by limiting their interpersonal selves, resulting in the archetypal Victorian moral standards that in retrospect seem stifling. In reality, rules and restrictions were the consequences of social mobility, shifting hierarchies, and the façade-worthy ideal of progression. The limitations of regulation were a necessary evil, moral standard-bearers would claim, in order to maintain some semblance of control.

However, Victorianism permeated more than just personal ethics. It was also a response to literature and the ideals of introspection as approached by Romantics such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Greenblat, et al). The growing popularity of the novel form and the rising ideal of the virtues of hard work became token features of Victorian literature. Yet, Oscar Wilde with his infamously flagrant and untraditional persona, did not conform to the necessity of virtue and hard work. His plays, essays, and speeches were well regarded and his lifestyle epitomized the dandy, designating him a celebrity of his day and age. Wilde’s nontraditional aesthetic approach to living, mirrored in his works, was not about separating his art from his life, but rather about uncovering their ties to one another. Wilde based his literary career on benefitting from the rise of Aestheticism in Britain.

Wilde’s style of living (and by extension his art) was highly influenced by Walter Pater, an essayist whose work The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry, most especially the work’s introduction and conclusion, which became the basis for manifestos for aesthetes and the bane of Victorian moralists. In his infamous work Pater synthesizes his many critiques of Renaissance and Romantic art to find, “Beauty, like all other qualities presented to human experience, is relative; and the definition of it becomes unmeaning and useless is proportion to its abstractness. To define beauty, not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible . . . is the aim of the true student of aesthetics” (Pater xix). For Pater, beauty was a surface that defined art. Art that sought to do more or attempt to define its beauty below the surface was not art, or at least not art aesthetics could value. His work influenced Oscar Wilde’s per-
sonal ethics, and in turn Pater became a fan of Wilde. Pater’s later review of _The Picture of Dorian Gray_, “A Novel by Mr. Oscar Wilde,” appeared in 1891 directly following Wilde’s republication of the story in novel form. This contemporary review of the novel finds little to critique but rather to admire. Pater finds his fellow aesthete Wilde to carry the same supernatural essence as Poe and the prose strong. He defines the aesthetic reading of the novel when he says that Dorian’s venture into New Hedonism, or the novel’s equivalent of Aestheticism, to be “a quite unsuccessful experiment . . . in life as fine as art” (380). Dorian fails to commit to a single principle, and by wavering between what he knows to be moral and what he should forget in pursuit of pleasure, he falters and begets his own downfall. This reading offers a manifestation of the aesthetic creed into a criticism. The book, for Pater, does not require anything beyond a surface reading because it depicts a concrete definition of beauty rendering, abstraction or symbolic readings unnecessary.

Yet, notably, even though he reads Dorian as an unsuccessful aesthete, Pater also finds the story to speak out about the corruption of the soul. Though mentioned after his initial claims, Pater implies that Dorian’s immorality makes even art ugly. Here a leading aesthete confirms that these principles of Beauty and Goodness operate similarly, and when his ideal principle fails to reconcile with a reading of the novel, he utilizes another. As Dorian Gray’s mentor, Lord Henry, says in the novel, “I admit that I think that it is better to be beautiful than to be good. But on the other hand, no one is more ready than I am to acknowledge that it is better to be good than to be ugly” (Wilde 161). While Victorian critics would agree with this aside from Walter Pater’s, this would be their main claim, and in fact dominates traditional moralist readings. Norbert Kohl claims that, “On the one hand it represents a powerful challenge to Victorian orthodoxy, and on the other never really breaks free from its ideological premises . . . theory is contradicted by practice, life overwhelms art, and the voice of conscience will not be hushed by aesthetics” (174-5). Therefore, the morally justified resolution of the novel, Dorian’s death and the portrait’s revitalization, never lives up to the aesthetic tone Wilde implies. Khol ignores the “Preface” and finds the book to preach a moral lesson no matter what Wilde disowns. The aphorisms, New Hedonism, and the character of Lord Henry and his influence on Dorian are all for naught as Victorian morals are the
determining factor of all. Dorian fails because while he can synthesize the two principles—New Hedonism and Victorianism—morality ruins him. Morality trumps aesthetics as the novel’s message. Kohl follows in the historical tradition of Victorian virtue-prominent readings, one even an aesthete like Walter Pater cannot help but admit. They are not alone. Roditi proposes, “The weaknesses [of the text] would suggest an unexpected mixture, in the author, of amateurishness and prudish guilt-feelings” (50). Because he does not read the style as conforming to a traditional narrative style, Roditi interprets this “weakness” in writing not just a flaw of the author’s skill, but a reading as to the author’s unwillingness to break away from the morality he seemingly writes against in the novel. As Roditi further clarifies, “Wilde’s unwillingness to handle to details of vice, crime, and the underworld as firmly and realistically as he does those of the world of fashion is indeed more than a mere concession to Victorian prudery. He shrinks from it, in his art not his life . . . as if from a confession” (52). Because Wilde shrinks from criminality, this must mean he knows that no matter the ways he includes aphorisms of aesthetics, morality will trump all. Roditi takes this one step further to propose the connection between art and life. The novel’s style, “Reveals Wilde’s ignorance and fear of a world of crime with which, in real life, he was doomed to become all too familiar” (53). This reading determines Dorian Gray’s purpose to be art above all, and yet is implicitly grounded by morality. And while aesthetics may be a wavering set of ethics, morality is stringent, static, and oppressive enough to control both the interior constructed life of Dorian and the exterior downfall of the author.

A Postmodern Reading

Wilde’s preface for The Picture of Dorian Gray was written retroactively, in 1891 right before the story was published in novel form. The twenty-four epigrams operate as entryways into the text, due to their location in the deliberately titled preface as well as a rebuttal to the year’s worth of criticism that had accumulated since the initial publication of the text in 1890. Defending aesthetics, Wilde declares, “All art is at once surface and symbol” (3). His words, the very words that greet the reader before they embark on a tale of the immoral actions of a hedonistic gentleman, could very well be the bread and butter of an aesthetic reading. That reading feeds off the
surface, and Wilde seems to continue to support this when he continues, “Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril” (3). For those who would only see a moral message in the novel, he disclaims any attachment to the reader's need to see anything more than the art of the story. For Victorian moralists, this cannot even qualify as a defense; it is merely a diversion. They find that Wilde opts out of declaring his work as surface or symbol because he is too entrenched into the moralist discourse; he is afraid people will see that he is not the rebellious aesthete he claims to be.

Aesthetics and morality are explicit surfaces within Dorian Gray. The principle of Beauty above all is touted throughout the novel by major characters such as Lord Henry and his protégé Dorian Gray. Their Aestheticism can only be viewed in light of the ethics they seek to replace, those implemented and revered by Victorian society. Thus, both are present, palpable surfaces and both have become the two sides taken in reading the novel. While it would be a risk to dive below them, art is both surface and symbol. Both are necessities.

Because Victorian and aesthetic readings require a binary split, to dive beneath the surface renders a postmodern reading necessary. To dive and deconstruct, it becomes clear that the two have a purpose in serving as surfaces. Wilde already confirms this: they are “both” surface and symbol. Almost a century after the novel’s publication, in 1976, philosopher and theorist Michel Foucault mapped out a theoretical History of Sexuality in which he examines how 19th century society was able to take sexuality and use it as a tool for regulation in the very language used to discuss it: in the power of discourse and in repression. In Volume I, Foucault states:

Calling sex by its name thereafter became more difficult and more costly. As if in order to gain mastery over it in reality, it had first been necessary to subjugate it at the level of language, control its free circulation in speech, expunge it from the things that were said, and extinguish the words that rendered it too visibly present . . . without even having to pronounce the word, modern prudishness was able to ensure that one did not speak of sex, merely through the interplay of prohibitions that referred back to one another: instances of muteness which, by dint of saying nothing imposed silence. Censorship. (1648)
Foucault uses his *History of Sexuality* to examine the relationship between knowledge and power. He finds that sex in the 19th century was something talked about or around, not done; however, in the act of talking around it, sex became an obsession. The conception of power came “without even having to pronounce the word” (1648). At the helm of this system of power reigned “modern prudishness” (1648). Society was able to cast a negative light over the act and its discussion, penalizing it without ever directly saying its name. Power therefore lies not in the act of regulation, but in the language of regulation and dissuasion. It was thought that by regulating the way sex was spoken about, it would diminish the focus on the act itself. However, by changing the discourse, there arises only interest and an incitement to discuss the act through these new languages.

Foucault’s theories on the agency of language in disguising discursive power provide a lens for diving beneath the surfaces of aesthetics and morality in *Dorian Gray*. Foucault’s “modern prudishness” corresponds seamlessly with Victorian morality. The knowledge of the true extent of Dorian’s crimes comes only in the form of a portrait; they are “expunged” from things said. Foucault’s theories only expand the idea that Richard Elliman presents when he describes Wilde’s narration as one that points an incriminating finger at society. The finger-pointing author in Wilde’s novel uses the two prominent “languages”—those of aesthetics and morality—to reveal to the substructure of power. Without this substructure, the two have no foundation from which to operate.

Wilde clearly knows the languages that regulate Victorian society. His own personal experiences, including an obscenity trial in 1895 that would condemn him using *Dorian Gray* as evidence, only confirm Wilde’s awareness of the discursive power granted through aesthetics and morality. As an artist and writer, though, he found the medium to engage these languages and explore their roles as regulating machines. Morality and aesthetics operate as mechanisms of power.

For Dorian, or Victorian society, neither morality nor aesthetics are the main antagonists; rather they must work in tandem with one another and serve as vehicles through which individuals are able to wreak their own influence on others and the social order. In spite of this, the historicity of criticism surrounding the novel as consists largely of a binary split between those who believe that it reflects the ideals of Aestheticism
or conforms to the limits of Victorian morality. However, these interpretations ignore the equal space shared by morality and aesthetics.

Reading the novel in binary terms as Victorian and aesthetic readings insist upon prevents the recognition of these tools of power. In fact, each sees their own guiding principles as the highest form of power within Dorian Gray. By not reading the symbol, the two fail to see a message beyond a surface message. But Wilde offers another way to read the novel, despite his warning. Using a Foucauldian lens, moments where regulation occur, where society and either principle, that of aesthetics, or that of morality, offers the material to decouple traditional surface readings.

Lord Henry, the hedonistic nobleman who influences Dorian’s own hedonistic journey, serves as the main entryway into a deconstructive reading. Throughout Lord Henry’s dinner parties at his aunt’s, Lady Agatha’s, table, the discourse is provocative, titillating, and yet Lord Henry, master of the public sphere, recognizes, as the provocateur, the separation between language and action. Mr. Erksine, one of the lunch guests, asks Lord Henry: “if you really meant all that you said to us at lunch?” (40). To which Lord Henry languidly replies, “I quite forgot what I said . . . Was it all very bad?” (40). His own insistence on forgetting what was said reveals both the contrived trivial nature of the things he speaks and his continual desire to cover his tracks and hide the power play underlying the speeches, aphorisms, humorous and passionate outbursts. By questioning him, Mr. Erksine suggests that he himself is adept at the workings of Victorian society since he recognizes what lies beneath the principles being spoken; he is not susceptible. He is not a young man in the first bloom of youth. However, Lord Henry’s target audience is young, beautiful Dorian Gray, his aesthetic project. He controls through dialogue; instilling, motivating, and destroying while never acting. Roditi clarifies that, “Lord Henry never acts and never falls” (55). While Roditi insists that the “table talk is paradoxical,” he nonetheless identifies the distinguishing feature of the table talk: the failure to act. The table talk, which Roditi claims disrupts the plot, is in fact Wilde at work in lifting the veil, pointing the finger, as Ellman would say. Lord Henry’s world is best depicted as a dinner party where he wields discursive power, has the ability to regulate the languages of aesthetics and morality, and operates these tools at his own leisure.

What Victorian readings dismiss as haphazard, awkward, and dis-
torting and aesthetic readings such as Pater’s ignore are in fact moments where the text permits the “both” Wilde claims in his preface. It becomes clear that despite his insistence on action over inward philosophies and strict standards, Lord Henry never once acts within the pages of the novel. His inaction, his Foucauldian silence, says more than any action could. He knows the regulatory agency of aesthetics and morality. Lord Henry’s static state yet position of power reveals the intrinsic properties of the ethics he promotes and those he speaks against and provide a deconstructive reading the ability to tear into seams that connect the surface of the novel and discover the symbol.

The Flowering of Aesthetics

Aesthetics and morality both operate at a surface level. Yet, even when examined separately, these surfaces of the two languages are motivated by discursive power. Rather than blatant dominion over another, aesthetics and morality provide veils for this control. Examining aesthetics within the novel, Wilde presents objects of beauty in order to lift the veil over the power struggle lying beneath. This is his “finger-pointing” as Richard Ellman identifies. The paragon lens through the text, Lord Henry is present for these moments of finger-pointing, and the weight of his words, the implication of the ethical codes he promotes and dismisses, and above all his inaction, make critical moments within the text that allow for the seams that divide the two typical readings to be torn apart.

Aesthetics’ role during the Victorian Age was that of an ethical code. Michael Patrick Gillespie finds that Lord Henry introduces an ethical model when he speaks of New Hedonism to Dorian. Like aesthetics to the contemporary Victorian, Lord Henry’s ethics deviate from traditional morality but hold their own as a mode of power in its purpose of pleasure of the senses as the highest good. The first moment the young, untouched Dorian Gray meets Lord Henry Wotten, Lord Henry fills his head with ideas about seeking pleasure above all and Dorian’s ability to capitalize on this given his youth and good looks. Lord Henry influences Dorian with this passionate call to the senses:

I believe that if once man were to live out his life fully and completely, were to give form to every feeling, expression
to every thought, reality to every dream—I believe that the world would gain such a fresh impulse of joy that we would forget all the maladies of medievalism, and return to the Hellenic ideal—to something finer, richer than the Hellenic ideal, it may be . . . Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind, and poisons us. The body sins once, and has done with its sin for action is a mode of purification. Nothing remains then but the recollection of a pleasure, or the luxury of a regret. The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. (19-20)

Lord Henry’s reasoning for New Hedonism as the ethical code of equal standing with Victorian morality is simple, but pertinent because that which is repressed “poisons us.” For aesthetic readings, New Hedonism is akin to Aestheticism. It responds to the “poison” of Victorian morality and serves as a reactionary standard. This assertion of ethics is Wilde’s assertion for Walter Pater and other aesthetes. He, through Lord Henry and Dorian, preaches a mode of ethics that the book will follow. In contrast, reading this speech from a Victorian moralist standpoint, this is the catalyst for Dorian’s undoing. Because Lord Henry advocates breaking the rules of society, this monologue achieves its purpose in contrasting New Hedonism against the temptation-filled, morally stiff Victorian society.

However, these readings avoid the agency of the language itself. While it owes Dorian’s compliance to the strength of Lord Henry’s rhetoric, the Victorian reading does not examine the power lying underneath it. Lord Henry recognizes the power that the repression and regulation implemented by Victorian moralists grants the implementers themselves. And so he follows suit, adjusting the ethical code. He suggests an extreme reaction, one of the purity of thoughtless action and pleasurable abandon. Lord Henry suggests that his ethics are the antidote to all the strife caused by morality; strife that dates back to medieval times, implicitly citing religion as a beneficiary of the tool of morality. He continues, his doctrine beats even the “Hellenic” ideal, one that predates the notion that “the unexamined life is not worth living.” New Hedonism, while different from these other ethical codes that focus on the regulation of the body and mind, still itself serves as a regulatory system that must be
followed completely or else it is worthless. There is either “temptation” or the removal of temptation through action. New Hedonism is the language Lord Henry uses in order to speak around the power he holds over Dorian as his aesthetic-putty. The very description of the principle is pitted with decadence: “luxury,” “finer,” “richer” litter the speech. They shape the discourse into one that seems to speak of living a life of appreciation instead of operating under the dominion of another.

And yet the very language dominates Dorian. While listening, “Dorian saw [the bee] creeping into the stained trumpet of a Tyrian convolvulus. The flower seemed to quiver, and then swayed gently to and fro” (Wilde 23). Wilde's implementation of the pathetic fallacy, the external environment mimicking the dramatic scene, relies on the act of pollination. An aesthetic reading of the scene grasps onto the “concrete” definition of the beautiful. If Wilde's presentation of Dorian Gray lacks, then nature provides a metaphorical comparison. For Victorian morality-induced readers, this scene depicts the fall; Lord Henry's influence is the beginning of the end for a soon-to-be corrupted Dorian.

Yet, from Dorian and Lord Henry's first meeting, Wilde provides an excuse to dive beneath the surface. The description of flowers in the first scene between Lord Henry and a young Dorian Gray presents a sexualized image. Here in the garden of the artist Basil Hallward, sex occurs through a discourse of language, the narrator's language of nature. Power undermines and controls through the aesthetics of the young man, the interaction, and the setting. Flowers cannot reject what the bees bring; as soon as the insect lands a process begins. Lord Henry sways the petals of his untouched young acquaintance, implanting wild ideas. Sex becomes a part of this scene in which a power-holding party exerts dominance over a static object of beauty. The beautiful serves a purpose, whether the flower, or Dorian: they become vehicles for power. This scene presents more than just the implementation of new ethics or the Edenic Fall; rather, when the seams are pulled apart, it reveals that dynamic role of power that works through the aesthetics of Lord Henry.

Eventually Dorian yields to the influence of Lord Henry, and this hyper-aestheticism becomes the ethical code, a tool of power. He caves to the draw of action as recourse and pleasure, as goal not, distraction. Wilde captures the moment of Dorian’s epiphany, and Lord Henry’s involvement in it:
Lord Henry went out to the garden, and found Dorian Gray burying his face in the great cool lilac-blossoms, feverishly drinking in their perfume as if it had been wine. He came close to him, and put his hand upon his shoulder. “You are quite right to do that,” he murmured. “Nothing can cure the soul but the sense, just as nothing can cure the sense but the soul.” (21)

Again, flowers completely encapsulate the pollination of Dorian’s mind; they are what he turns to as he interpolates the principle of Lord Henry’s New Hedonism: pleasure for pleasure’s sake. The flowers also reiterate the underlying theme of dominion; the lack of control Dorian has despite his desire to lead a life of pleasure. These are ideas imparted by Lord Henry, the one whose hand, a dominating image, rests on Dorian’s shoulder, leading him down a predetermined path. Lord Henry’s code of ethics replaces the archetypal Victorian moral standards for Lord Henry and Dorian. It provides a reaction to the bounds of morality just as Aestheticism became a reaction to Victorianism for the late 19th century school of aesthetes. Ethics are subjective (there is no universal set of values), although discursive power in the hands of the Victorians seeks to make them seemingly objective and oppressive. Dorian does not fail or lose his life because he dedicates himself to New Hedonism. It is his vacillation between society’s morals and New Hedonism, which reveals his inherent weakness of character or, to keep diving below, the overwhelming power that lies beneath both sets of principles. No matter the standard, someone or some group exerts control through the particulars of the morals or aesthetics. Dorian may think he has a choice, that by choosing to follow Lord Henry’s path of pleasure without moral repercussions he will escape the tight constricts of Victorian society, and yet he exists only for the machinations of these larger forces.

In this instance, aesthetics allow Dorian to become Lord Henry’s project: clay for him to mold. These scenes among nature allow for the lifting of the veil, an entryway to begin to deconstruct aesthetics as solely a surface; clearly aesthetics works for a greater purpose, not just principles of Beauty. This cycle continues when Dorian attempts to mold Sybil Vane, the actress Dorian believes he loves, using aesthetics to wreak his
own influence on another. Wilde makes sure to emphasize the wretched environment Dorian finds Sybil amidst; it is a “tawdry affair . . . a wretched hole of a place” (45). Victorian readings find these overstatements to be flaws in Wilde’s writing. To be so demeaning and make hyperbolic statements about the lower class status of Sibyl Vane seems to stick out against the ease that Wilde has in characterizing Dorian, Lord Henry, and the upper class. According to Khol, “What fascinates Wilde is the glamour of noble names and the luxurious lifestyle of a leisured class whose urbane ideals encompass exquisite manners, literary and artistic culture, witty conversation, and a sense of their elite position” (Kohl 147). For Khol, Wilde cannot help but be class divisive in his “tawdry” language concerning the poor compared to his individual, detail-filled descriptions of the “fascinating” upper class. In this reading, Wilde’s language is not wrong, but rather reveals the Victorian moral standards to which he conforms.

While in this instance Victorian readings may dive beneath Wilde’s language, they appropriate his language in their own terms. Yet, the overstatements are deliberate, not natural; the “tawdry affair” and the very nature of the base theater provide the ideal setting for fledgling New Hedonist, Dorian, to take a stab at using his newfound ethical code, and for exposing the true nature of aesthetics as a power mechanism. In characterizing Sibyl to Lord Henry, in between his descriptions of the “tawdry,” Dorian describes Sibyl’s character:

“‘To-night she is Imogen,’” he answered, “‘and to-morrow she night she will be Juliet.’”

“‘When is she Sibyl Vane?’”

“‘Never.’”

“I congratulate you.” (49)

Dorian provides Lord Henry a blank canvas much as he provides Basil with inspiration to paint. So too, Sibyl Vane serves Dorian because she exists only as an aesthetic object to his eyes. “Never” does she exist as a person for Dorian, rather a work of art, a constant performance. While she exists only as the roles she adopts, Dorian can mold her to be whatever he wishes. He uses the principles of senses above all else in dictating this. Seeing the power of his own influence over Dorian, Lord Henry
sees that “[Dorian’s] nature had developed like a flower, had bourne blossoms of scarlet flame” (49). Even as Dorian uses aesthetics to mold Sybil, he only acts due to Lord Henry’s own overpowering influence. While he may be gaining power over the life of another, he still lacks the initial agency over his own actions. Like the bee to the flower, Lord Henry has pollinated Dorian and now Dorian opens to the new status this grants him in society. These “blossoms of scarlet flame” are how Lord Henry recognizes Dorian’s own sexual domination and corruption of another. Dorian does not become the bee, which pollinates, but rather a model for aesthetic molding done well. Lord Henry noticeably only sees him still as “a flower.” Dorian’s role remains a passive one; he becomes a model for New Hedonism, Lord Henry the evangelist. Even the most infamous aesthete, Oscar Wilde, clarifies there is a limit to seeing only Beauty and nothing else. All art is surface, but also symbol and consequently, nothing beautiful in the novel is without its dark, revealing side.

The Rote Methods of Morality

Because of the novel’s indisputable setting within the end of the Victorian era, it cannot help but make Victorian moral standards a backdrop against which all character behaviors and principles are compared. This context becomes the crux of Victorian readings, and it is necessary to aesthetic interpretations as well because New Hedonism offers a response. Basil Hallward, the artist who first recognizes the potential for Dorian, is the avatar of Victorian morality in Wilde’s work. He occupies a middle class standing and as such comes out into society only on the whims of his rich patrons. For aesthetic readings, Basil’s role reveals the hierarchy of mechanisms at play. When his artwork cannot last, his morals are called upon to set the standards. Lord Henry’s quip, “It is better to be beautiful than to be good, but better to be good than to be ugly,” seemingly situates Basil amidst the middle class in both profession and system of beliefs (Wilde 161). Basil does not seem to be the ideal avatar; he is not of wealth, power, or social standing. And yet, the working class is the very motivation for Victorian ethics as both Peter Gay and Michael Foldy find. Basil possesses stalwart faith in the systems that surround him, yielding himself as a tool of the oppressive moral codes. As the so-
cially inferior counterpart to Lord Henry, puppet master of the tools of aesthetics and morality, Basil is their consumer. Gillespie offers the idea that “because Basil cannot perceive the condition of duality, he cannot revise his perception of Dorian, even when confronted with the horrors of the painting” (401). Basil accepts what the public sphere shapes Dorian Gray to be: beautiful, therefore good. But when he sees the “hideous face on the canvas grinning at him,” Basil finds that the principle of Beauty has failed Dorian through the disfigured painting (Wilde 130). Because of this revelation, Basil, reverts to the more certain principles of Victorian morality. To be so ugly, one cannot be good. Basil appreciates aesthetic standards until he finds that they fall short in light of good and evil. For Basil, Dorian cannot be good because he is not morally pure. The proof is in the painting.

Basil is a lens into the text because he lacks perception. He has taken it to heart the face value of morals. He does not see, as Foucault suggests about sex in history, that morality is a part of the attempt to “extinguish the words that rendered [sex] too visibly present” (Foucault 1648). While Foucault talks of sex and how unspoken the root of its power could be left undiscovered, it directly applies to the root of Victorian morals. Basil's last effort to save his art, both the painting and Dorian, is religion; synonymous with morality in any era. He tells Dorian, “Let us kneel down and try if we cannot remember a prayer” (Wilde 132). The motions matter to Basil. The attempt to ameliorate what is externally beautiful yet intrinsically ugly confounds him and instigates his desire to return to the rote motions of a pious morality. Basil exists as the observer. He does not partake in the relationship between Lord Henry and Dorian, rather he observes and he paints and he judges. And yet, when religion also proves unable to reconcile the private and public Dorian, when it appears to be just all surfaces and no symbol, then Basil too fails.

This shift from aesthetics to morality would be echoed in turn by a real life aesthete. Ironically, although he centers his praise and admiration for Wilde on his form and style, Walter Pater admits in his review of the book that he found a moralizing message. Dorian fails because he is not good. The aesthete who influenced Oscar Wilde and the school of Aestheticism reveals, like Basil, that since aesthetics is a reaction to morality, it cannot exist without it. Aesthetics cannot clarify Dorian's fate and so morality is called upon. Like Basil, Pater examines only the surface of the
novel, praising style, admiring Wilde’s aesthetic voice, and yet ultimately reverts to a Victorian reading because he does not dive below the surface. Surface readings, as Basil finds out too late, are perilous. The hierarchy of Beauty before Good, the solitariness of ethical principles, and the lack of duality, hide the greater agency of aesthetics and morality.

The Power of a Book

While Basil may embody the futility of the surface value of Victorian morality, we must rely on a book to relay the surface value of aesthetics within Dorian Gray. Lord Henry sends Dorian “the Yellow Book” along with the newspaper article on the death of Sibyl Vane, which was indirectly caused by Dorian. Dorian’s response to the article is vitriolic: “How ugly it all was! And how horribly real ugliness made things!” (Wilde 103). And so, instead of pondering the death and his role in the death of his once beloved Imogen/Juliet/Sibyl, Dorian bemoans that his stage affair has become more than a performance or a trial run at testing New Hedonistic practices. As recourse he turns to read what else Lord Henry sends to him:

After a few minutes he became absorbed... It seemed to him that in exquisite raiment, and to the delicate sound of flutes, the sins of the world were passing in dumb show before him. Things that he had dimly dreamed of were suddenly made real to him. Things of which he had never dreamed were gradually revealed. (104)

The news and printed “ugliness” of Sybil’s death make the relationship real; it becomes more difficult for Dorian to think on it as only a performance or a practice of his hedonism. And so he turns to the book, which holds a performance he would rather be real. In the book, “sins,” or the purity of action as Lord Henry would say, define the main character and his way of living.

The Yellow Book seems to uphold the aesthetic ideal that art belongs above or separate from morals. Here the tales and misdemeanors of a young Frenchman are something to find titillating and enticing.
Dorian’s response mimics that of aesthetes: admiration and inspiration. There is seemingly no room for judgment if a book can get away with immoral exploits. A Victorian moral reading of this scene would again just find Lord Henry to be inseminating Dorian with the seeds to abet his own growing gross immorality. Just because the words and deeds can be printed, does not mean they are excused from judgment. In fact, the book serves as a reminder as to why morals are needed.

Yet, the only reason the book holds an influence over Dorian is because it prints what cannot be spoken in society. Therefore, regulation’s one role is garnering power. Because Victorian morals condemn “the sins of the world” and even title them “sins,” they control the sins. The Yellow Book, as an aesthetic work, just re-appropriates “sins,” paints them in a different light, yet still uses regulation in the form of a physical book to disguise its discursive power.

Aesthetics and morality collide in a tangible source. The Yellow Book also reveals that neither act alone, through art itself. The book for Dorian: “was a poisonous book. The heavy odor of incense seemed to cling to about its pages and to trouble the brain” (Wilde 104). The book is a form of written art, and yet, like the portrait of Dorian, the Yellow Book takes on greater meaning for Dorian. It clings to him, not only because he allows it to influence his life, but also because it reflects how he lives his life amidst Victorian values. Lord Henry gives it to him as a form of influence, furthering his pollination of New Hedonism; inseminating the creed of pleasure and aesthetics.

The Yellow Book is, as Foucault theorizes, a heterotopia, or “a kind of effectively enacted upon utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within a culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (“Of Other Spaces” 3). Heterotopias allow an incitement to discourse. The Yellow Book reflects the sentiments and exemplifies the power of regulation in the language of morality while at the same time repurposing that language into an aesthetic medium, nonetheless still regulated by art instead of “sins.” The Yellow Book is real and yet no one place or time exists. It provides a glimpse beneath the veil that aesthetics and morality on their own seek to hide, but together in the form of a book they reveal. The discursive power the Yellow Book wields is substantial. Its influence on Dorian allows for “things that he had dimly dreamed of were suddenly made real to him. Things of which
he had never dreamed were gradually revealed” (Wilde 104). The revelations of the book operate as tools to uncover the hierarchy of principles in Victorian society. Things unmentionable or ignored in society become exciting, enticing material between the pages.

Art Mirrors Life

While the “Preface” warns of the peril of diving beneath the surface, Wilde by no means deters this reading. In fact, as has been explored, there are deliberate access points where going beneath the surface is essential. The Yellow Book serves as an access point to uncovering the operative roles of morality and aesthetics. Incidentally this medium is a book. In Umberto Eco’s theoretical work Role of the Reader, Eco claims that the text is a mode of communication between the reader and the author. Eco argues that the author can make his text communicate with the reader through the invention of the model reader within the text that allows for the reader to a greater extent to “uncover its meanings, its purposes, extract its wisdoms” (Eco 28). Could Lord Henry be the model reader? The model reader first must forge a connection to the external reader, and Lord Henry after all connects himself to the reader through a text of his own, the Yellow Book. And prior to this gift, after inflaming the sparks of New Hedonism within Dorian, Lord Henry “was amazed at the sudden impression that his words had produced, and remembering a book that he had read when he was sixteen, a book which had revealed to him much that he had not known before, he wondered whether Dorian Gray was passing through a similar experience” (Wilde 20). Lord Henry revisits his own experience, aligning it with Dorian’s, but also the audience’s. The readers, who also hear the monologues, have an even greater connection with the model reader, being the readers of a physical text much the same as young Henry.

Following Eco’s directive, this leaves the reader in search of what truths Lord Henry aids in extracting. Following Lord Henry’s directive, the reader finds he wields discursive power. For example, at his words New Hedonism becomes an ethical code. He speaks, yet never acts as his dinner party conversation reveals; and his avoidance of Dorian’s ghastly fate confirms. Lord Henry pounces on the bloom of beauty in Dorian, effectively utilizes Dorian as a blank canvas to create a code of ethics,
privately scorns Basil Hallward’s stalwart faith in systems, publicly conforms to them, and, as the bearer of the Yellow Book, permeates society with tales of misdeeds and scandal, all the while remaining an untouched societal figure. Lord Henry offers a point of tension for strictly aesthetic and strictly Victorian readings. While he may present himself as a paragon of Aestheticism’s ethics, the text fails to once portray Lord Henry seeking pleasure for pleasure’s sake or yielding to a temptation. And yet, he speaks out against Victorian society at every turn. From his initial meeting with Dorian he speaks on his recognition of society’s negative attributes: “The terror of society, which is the basis of morals, the terror of God, which is the secret of religion—these are the two things that govern us” (Wilde 19). He labels society a terror but never once acts on this or any of his epigrams. Dorian on the other hand, takes them differently:

“Never marry at all, Dorian. Men marry because they are tired; women, because they are curious: both are disappointed.”
“I don’t think I am likely to marry, Harry. I am too much in love. That is one of your aphorisms. I am putting it into practice, as I do everything you say.” (43)

The decoupled readings cannot help but avoid the problematic Lord Henry, or in their turns, diminish his role as an entryway into a deeper reading of the roles of both aesthetics and morality. Because he values neither one over the other (in spite of his many aesthetic epigrams), his status and views become relevant insight. Why does he not value either? Or purport to value one but abide by the other publicly? Because he recognizes the languages for the discursive power they contain. In forging other methods of wielding power in society, ethical codes become a means of regulating. Dorian blindly follows what he thinks Lord Henry follows, “putting into practice” the aphorisms and ultimately destroying himself because he cannot see past the surface of a life lived off pleasure alone. The literal power of Henry’s language, as well as the “language” of hyper-aestheticism ensnares him. Similarly, Basil reads the languages of both aesthetics and morality at a façade-level, but can never see them working in tandem together for a greater purpose, so he too falls subject to the mastery of discursive power. Lord Henry reigns as both the only living main character at the end of the novel, but also as the puppet-mas-
ter; he orchestrates these outcomes implicitly because he works to keep the vehicles of aesthetics and morality accessible for the substructure of power within society.

Unfortunately for Oscar Wilde, the novel’s points of accessibility would be misread for the duration of his lifetime. Eco’s claim of the model reader existing within each text is clearly in line with the critics well interpellated into the historical discourse of Oscar Wilde. As Reginia Gagnier mentions, in order to even begin an adequate analysis of *Dorian Gray*, she must situate the book in its historical context. Only look at the novel’s role in the life of the author, the agency forced upon it, and it becomes a logical argument that one cannot look at the novel without the context. The novel was forced into a “model reader” role only five years after it was first published. When writing his review of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Walter Pater set up two traditions of reading the novel: as an aesthetic triumph, and with his aside, as a moralist message from the Victorian age. Little did he understand the implications these claims would hold over the author’s own life. Wilde was seeing a young aristocrat, Lord Alfred Douglas, and while this relationship as well as Wilde’s homosexuality, was not a secret, it was uncontested by moral standards due to his popularity and high standing in society. Like Dorian, Wilde’s situation was an incitement to discourse, but one that aided and abetted him. But Lord Alfred Douglas’ father, the Marquess of Queensberry, decided to put an end to the relationship between Lord Alfred and Wilde, and so once the homosexuality encountered the bane of one more powerful, morality was invoked. Once the aristocracy was committed to bringing him down, Wilde’s adoring public became a scornful, literal interpretation of the power that underlies morality.

The trial’s prosecutor, Edward Carson sought to make the novel a manifesto, similar to the aesthetes. Except now, the manifesto became one, which in the spirit of Wilde’s work itself, exposed the aesthetics as a vehicle for power. By turning *The Picture of Dorian Gray* into a manifesto of hedonism, Carson took an aesthetic object and exposed the power that lay underneath (Hyde). Unwittingly Carson became a part of Wilde’s unveiling purposes though in a turn most unfortunate for the author himself. Wilde was tried by the morality and aesthetics of his own work. When Wilde’s art was found to not be “beautiful,” it became a tool used to punish. Aesthetics and morality worked in tandem, under
the agency of Wilde’s peers and social betters to find him guilty of obscenities. These same obscenities were a reality years before *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was published, yet since those who wielded the power that lay behind these forms of regulation sought to turn on Wilde, only now were the obscenities found to be morally reprehensible. Wilde’s trial was the ultimate lens into the reality of aesthetics and morality. They were contrived only to be wielded for societal gain, not piety or beauty. Ironically, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Dorian remarks about the Yellow Book and its influence: “The hero . . . became to him a kind of prefiguring type of himself. And, indeed, the whole book seemed to him to contain the story of his own life, written before he had lived it” (Wilde 105). The novel became a prefiguring type for Wilde. His model reader, Lord Henry, survives the machinations of society because he remains untouchable by never acting, just spouting the languages. Lord Henry is in fact one who controls the operations of the languages, instilling them whenever he desires. Whereas, because Wilde chose the “Love that dare not speak his name” as he recited to jury of peers assembled to judge him, and because he inspired a socially superior enemy, he became a victim to the very machinations that he “shakes an admonitory finger” at in his work. As Wilde’s life revealed, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is not radical because of its aesthetic approach. Rather, the “peril” of a deconstructive reading is its implicit implication of society.


CHARLES HAZZARD
MICHAEL CASWELL
NATE WILCOX

Analyzing Stock Price Movements in Response to Macroeconomic News

Charles Hazzard, class of 2014, graduated with a degree in Financial Economics.

Michael Caswell, class of 2015, graduated with his degree in Financial Economics.

Nate Wilcox, class of 2016, is currently pursuing his degree in Financial Economics.
WRITER’S COMMENTS

Our original assignment was to create a research paper in conjunction with an econometric model for Dr. Jonas’ Econometrics course. We took our project a step further, however, and with guidance from Dr. Jonas, we gathered over 15,000 points of data over the course of four months. Our research hopes to shed light on how assets are priced and how financial markets operate on a basic level. We focused on two issues: First, we wanted to test whether changes in macroeconomic conditions have any impact on stock prices; second, we wanted to test whether the Efficient Market Hypothesis is correct. (The hypothesis states that all stocks in the market are priced efficiently and there should be no additional returns an investor can earn for being exposed to the same amount of risk.) We tried to describe our methodology in terms anyone could understand. We would like to thank Dr. Michael Jonas of the Economics Department for his encouragement for our participation in USF’s annual Creative Activity and Research Day (CARD) and his help guiding us in the right direction with our research. We would also like to thank Dr. Nicholas Sze-Poh Tay of the McLaren School of Management for his guidance in pointing us to prior research.

—Charles Hazzard, Michael Caswell, and Nate Wilcox

INSTRUCTOR’S COMMENTS

Since the introduction of the Capital Asset Pricing Model, there has been a continuous flow of papers examining data for empirical evidence of the model’s predicted behavior of asset returns. Michael Caswell, Charles Hazzard, and Nate Wilcox add to this literature by testing the relationship between returns on a wide variety of U.S. equities and macroeconomic factors in the period following the financial crisis. In addition to expanding the original model to test for macroeconomic effects, the authors utilize an innovative dynamic econometric CAPM specification. The results provide several interesting contributions to the existing literature. Not only is the behavior of asset returns found to not conform to predictions of the original model, but the specific relationships between returns and macroeconomic factors found in the analysis will be interesting not only in theory, but in practice to market practitioners, investors, as well as regulators.

—Michael Jonas, Department of Economics
Analyzing Stock Price Movements in Response to Macroeconomic News

Abstract

Turn on the news and you might hear “Wall Street is up 2% due to positive gross domestic product numbers.” No matter the iteration of the statement, the results are the same. The U.S. stock market always reacts in response to changes in macroeconomic conditions. Our model will focus on changes in inflation, GDP, unemployment, money supply, and the federal funds rate. Our research will attempt to explain daily stock price movements in response to macroeconomic news announcements. Utilizing the Capital Asset Pricing Model (Sharpe, 1964), our results will attempt to explain which macroeconomic news announcements have the biggest impact of stock returns. Lastly, we will test the validity of the Efficient Market Hypothesis by analyzing any discrepancies between expected returns and actual returns. If the theory is correct, there should be no difference between actual and expected returns.
Introduction and Background

The purpose of this paper is to analyze actual returns of an asset portfolio against expected returns. Sharpe’s Capital Asset Pricing Model, CAPM, has become a fundamental financial model within the field of finance and financial economic research. First proposed by William Sharpe in 1964, it explains the relationship between risk and expected return in asset pricing.

\[ E(R_i) = R_f + \beta_i(R_m - R_f) \]

where:

- \( E(R_i) \) = is the expected return of an asset portfolio
- \( R_f \) = is the risk free rate. The risk free rate is an opportunity cost of an investment. Traditionally, the risk free rate is a U.S. government bond.
- \( \beta_i \) = is a sensitivity coefficient of systematic risk of an individual portfolio against the whole market.

\[ \beta_i = \frac{\text{COV}(R_i, R_m)}{\text{VAR}(R_m)} \]

Terms can be rearranged to measure a single asset premium against the market premium and beta.

\[ E(R_i) = R_f + \beta_i(R_m - R_f) \]

This final equation estimates the relationship between a single asset premium (difference between an asset return and the risk free rate) measured against the market premium (difference between the market return and the risk free rate) multiplied by the associated beta. The model controls for two factors for investor compensations. First, an investor must be compensated for the time value of money and risk. The time value of money states that an investor must be compensated for delaying consumption due to placing money in an investment over a period of time, instead of consuming today. Secondly, the CAPM model controls for systematic risk. The risk measurement beta determines the ad-
ditional level of compensation an investor should demand for exposure to systematic market volatility. Utilizing the CAPM model, if the single asset premium is smaller or does not equal then the market premium multiplied by beta, the investment should not be undertaken. The reason being, for the given amount of risk an investor can earn a greater return by investing in an index fund or “investing with the market.” Conversely, if the expected return of an asset is greater than the market premium (multiplied by beta), then the investment should be undertaken. This is because an investor can expect to yield greater returns than the market for any given level of risk.

Data

We obtained our data from two separate sources. The first source was the finance section of Yahoo.com. We used this source for gathering historical share price information for our selected stocks, which include Google, Microsoft, Apple, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, JP Morgan, BP Oil, Exxon Mobil, and Shell Gasoline. Our second source was the Federal Reserve Economic Database (FRED). We used this source to gather historical data on our Macroeconomic indicators. We sampled from April 28, 2008 through March 6, 2014. For simplicity of our research, the majority of our data is not adjusted nor seasonally smoothed. Many of our variables are not adjusted for skewness. Surprisingly, variables such as money supply, GDP, and inflation exhibit standard distributions. The only variable that needed to be adjusted was the federal funds rate (FFR). The data suggested undergoing a logarithmic transformation essentially, bringing the low values in our data set higher and bringing the higher values lower. We would do this transformation to make the mean and median values for the FFR closer together, giving the FFR data a more even distribution. However, given the time period we sampled and the unconventional monetary policy that had pushed the federal funds rate to the zero-lower bound adjusting the interest rates during this time seemed like the wrong course of action. This is because we have to assume every investor in the market is basing their decisions on the available information in the market. Adjusting the FFR might smooth over unanticipated changes the market did not predict, making it more difficult for us to reject our hypothesis. Lastly, since we are dealing
with time series data, auto-correlation was a minor problem (negative auto-correlation was a problem in our model). Auto-correlation can be problematic when working with time series data. A fundamental assumption when running linear regressions, according to the Gauss-Markov Theorem, is that any observed “error term” should be uncorrelated with another observed “error term.” It is crucial within any regression to have uncorrelated error terms, because any correlation between “error terms” will lead to an increased variance in our error terms. With an increase in a variance of our error term, the true value of our estimated slope coefficients increase, making our regression appear more significant than it actually is. To help eliminate auto-correlation in our model we eliminated any seasonal adjustments within the macroeconomic indicators such as inflation, unemployment, and GDP. Data smoothing, as it is referred to in the textbooks, averages the disturbances between time periods. Data smoothing accounts for cyclicality and seasonality within the macroeconomic environment. The last step we took was to use an Auto-Regressive (AR) stability coefficient. With the addition of the term, a bit of mathematical magic, and a “well-behaved” random variable, we were able to eliminate any negative auto-correlation in our model.

**Methodology**

The purpose of our research is to build upon existing research within the field of financial economics and expand our understanding and knowledge of asset pricing. CAPM is arguably one of the most researched models within the field of financial economics. We are attempting to join the ranks of Fama and French and their four-factor CAPM\(^1\) model and Jagannathan and Wang. While we are not expecting notoriety within our field of research, our model will seek to validate the research of previous works. Additionally, we hope to establish a Grainger causality with our testing variables which takes a step beyond correlation between share price and our testing variables. Our model hopes to establish an actual

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\(^1\) Fama and French are professors at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business and Economics. Their four-factor model is widely cited for its inclusion of four new explanatory variables. Their research has focused on replacing market return with two types of stock classes that add more explanatory power to the CAPM model. They added small market capitalized stocks and high book-to-market stocks.
“X causes Y” relationship. Previous work done by Douglas Pearce and Vance Roley of the National Bureau of Economic Research has laid the groundwork for analyzing how stock prices react to macroeconomic news announcements (Pearce and Roley, 1984). Their research has indicated that stock prices do move with unexpected changes in monetary policy. As Pearce and Roley state: “The empirical results support this hypothesis and indicated further that surprises related to monetary policy significantly affect stock prices” (Pearce and Roley, 1984). Additionally, they find that “there is also limited evidence of impact from inflation surprises” (Pearce and Roley, 1984). While their research was done back in 1984, we hope to prove their results, as well as test whether the efficient market hypothesis still holds during the 2008 Great Recession.

Econometric Model

We start with William Sharpe’s original CAPM model:

\[
E(R_i) = R_f + \beta_i (R_m - R_f) \]  

(1.1)

where

\[
\beta_i = \frac{COV(R_i, R_m)}{VAR(R_m)}
\]

We will use this as a starting point for building our theoretical model. To analyze the difference between expected return of an asset against the market premium, we used the S&P 500 as a proxy. If we derive the single asset premium as a function of the market premium multiplied by beta, we get

\[
E(R_i-R_f) = \beta_i (R_m-R_f)
\]

(1.2)

From this point, we will insert a constant variable that captures any ad-

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2 Previous work done by Jagannathan of the University of Wisconsin and Wang of Columbia University have focused their research on improving the popular Black-Sharpe CAPM model. Their research tests whether previous CAPM models need to be re-evaluated as being “non-static”—meaning that risk premium beta must not be static, but rather it will move with fluctuations in business cycles.
ditional return for a given beta value that the market missed. For the efficient market hypothesis to be correct, this constant variable (alpha) will be assumed to be zero. Adding this additional variable,

\[ E(R_i - R_f) = \alpha + \beta_i (R_m - R_f) \]  

(1.3)

where

\( \alpha \) = explanatory constant variable that captures extra return for a given beta value.

From here we will include our Macroeconomic indicators. Adding our new explanatory variables to the equation in (1.3) we get,

\[ E(R_i - R_f) = \alpha + \beta_i (R_m - R_f) + \Omega(\Delta\pi_i + \Delta\delta_i + \Delta\lambda_i + \Delta\mu_i + \Delta\theta_i) \]  

(1.4)

where

Macro Premium = (\( \Delta\pi_i + \Delta\delta_i + \Delta\lambda_i + \Delta\mu_i + \Delta\theta_i \))

\( \Delta\pi_i \) = Monthly changes in inflation (PCE = personal consumption expenditure). Since inflation data is released monthly, changes in share prices will be reflected on the day that the inflation data is released.

\( \Delta\delta_i \) = Monthly changes in money supply (M1). Since money supply data is released monthly, changes in share prices will be reflected on the day that the money supply data is released.

\( \Delta\lambda_i \) = Monthly changes in GDP. Since GDP data is released monthly, changes in share prices will be reflected on the day that GDP data is released.

\( \Delta\mu_i \) = Monthly changes in unemployment. Since unemployment data is released monthly, changes in share prices will be reflected on the day that unemployment data is released.

\( \Delta\theta_i \) = Day-to-day changes in the federal funds rate. Since the FFR chang-
STOCK PRICE MOVEMENTS IN RESPONSE TO MACROECONOMIC NEWS

es daily, we measure the changes from the close of one day to the close of the subsequent day.

Omega our new slope coefficient for the macro premium. We define the “macro premium” as additional compensation investors should demand due to changes in our testing variables.

\[
\Omega = \frac{\text{Cov}(R, \text{Mac}_{\text{prem}})}{\text{Var}(\text{Mac}_{\text{prem}})}
\]

For our hypothesis to be correct, the market will have anticipated each change in economic conditions and properly priced each share price accordingly through pure market mechanics. If however, our research results in any discrepancies between expected returns and actual returns, we can conclude that the market did not anticipate these changes, and that any unexpected changes would have resulted in additional yields. If our logic is correct, the results would contradict the efficient market hypothesis.

Results

After the tenuous process of setting up our model and dealing with the problem of negative auto-correlation, we ran each regression separately (meaning that each of our selected stock prices were tested individually to see if they react to any changes in our testing variables). Once complete we had nine separate regressions with varying differences. For simplicity, we separated each of the selected stocks into one of three categories: banking, technology, and gas and oil production. The reasoning behind the categorizations was twofold: first, we wanted to see which categories varied with changes in the macroeconomic environment; second, we had an intuition that each category would vary with specific changes in key macroeconomic changes. For example, since the FFR rate is the fundamental driving force behind interest rates in both the domestic and international economy, we would expect changes in the federal funds rate to have a significant impact on the banking category. Every major bank participates within the federal funds market (federal market place where US banks can trade unsecured loans of non-interest bearing reserves), and any changes in the FFR rate would affect its respective investment strategy. Since banks,
like many other firms, are “profit-maximizers,” any changes in the FFR would impact a bank’s investment strategy and would also affect their balance sheet, thus affecting its share price.

Listed in Table 1.0 is the co-efficient values and standard errors associated with each regression. Significant results in the table are bolded. We selected our critical region at 0.15 (meaning if we find any T-Statistic that falls outside of our critical region, we can conclude that the co-efficient is significant, and we have evidence that a given stock price has changed in response to a testing variable). For simplicity, we will present our findings in separate sections. First, we will list each of our hypotheses and later discuss our findings.

**Hypothesis 1:**
Changes in the Federal Funds Rate have no effect on share prices

We found evidence that changes in the federal funds rate did affect stock prices. As expected, the affected stocks fall within our banking category. Our evidence suggests that the stocks of JP Morgan and Wells Fargo changed in response to a change in the federal funds rate. What our finding mean is that a 1% change in the FFR yields a positive 0.24% and 12% (respectively) in share price. We found no additional evidence of the federal funds rate affecting any other stock price.

**Hypothesis 2:**
Changes in GDP have no effect on stock price

We found evidence that changes in GDP do in fact have an impact on stock price. As expected, all of our significant values come from our gas and oil category. Intuitively, this makes complete economic sense, because Gas and Oil are a major driving force behind GDP numbers. Our results show that a 1% change in GDP yields a 1.16%, 1.06% and 0.97% respective yield.

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3 Prior research by Bartolini, Bertola, and Prati of the New York Federal Reserve has noted that biweekly patterns within the interbank market caused by day-to-day changes in the federal funds rate.
Hypothesis 3:
Changes in unemployment have no effect on stock price

We were not able to find any evidence of changes in the unemployment rate affecting any of our selected stock prices.

Hypothesis 4:
Changes in inflation have no effect on stock price

Within this category we found our strongest evidence yet. Changes in inflation affected stock prices within five of our nine stocks. Even more exciting, the majority of the affected stocks come from the banking and oil and gas categories. Each industry can be severely affected by inflationary pressures. Investors, if they expect inflation to happen in the future, often sell their shares today to protect themselves against a real value loss (real value = nominal cash value – inflation). As expected, we found a negative relationship between changes in inflation and stock prices. Interpreting our results, a 1% change (positive or negative) in inflation yields either a positive or negative return. See Table 1.0 for results.

We were able to establish Grainger causality on each of our affected stocks. As noted earlier, Grainger causality places a statistical link between X and Y. We can safely say that changes in inflation cause changes in stock prices. The underlying assumption is that we proved a cause and effect relationship with this specific testing variable.

Hypothesis 5:
Changes in the money supply (MS) have no effect on stock prices

We were able to find evidence the money supply does not have a strong influence on stock prices. As Pearce and Rowley discovered, stock prices do vary with changes in monetary policy which we did not directly test as a whole. Money supply is affected through the Fed’s OMOs (open market operations) and LSAPs (large scale asset purchases). During our testing time frame, the Fed began QE (quantitative easing) and LSAPs. These Fed programs were aimed to stem deflationary pressures and prevent an even further recession. Since each of these programs required the Fed to purchase hundreds of billions of dollars’ worth of MBSs
and other toxic assets, we expected stock prices to change due to large changes in the money supply. We found weak evidence of change within two of our selected stocks. Both BP Oil and Shell Gasoline stock prices changed in response to change in money supply. We did expect to find more evidence of changes in stock prices within our banking category. Although we did not find any incontrovertible evidence, we suspect that is the case since the majority of banks are holding trillions of dollars on deposit at the Fed. Also because deposits in the Fed are not counted in the money supply, the true effect of fluctuations in the money supply might have been dampened by risk-averse banking firms.

**Hypothesis 6:**

The efficient market hypothesis is correct and there should be no observable alpha

This hypothesis was our most intriguing. Traditional economic thought dictates that it is impossible to systematically outperform the market. For example, sometime during the early 2012, *Forbes* published an article stating “Any Monkey Can Beat the Market.” The premise being, if you give a monkey 100 darts and a sheet of random stocks, on average, the monkey will either beat or match the returns of carefully selected stocks by professional investors. The crux of the efficient market hypothesis rests on the belief that all stock prices are priced efficiently. Each share price is reflected by all available information in the market place. To test the hypothesis, as stated earlier, we are looking for observable “alphas,” meaning additional returns the market missed. Excitingly, we were able to observe significant alpha values. Our research has pinpointed missed opportunities, meaning the markets were not operating efficiently. We believe these alpha values can be attributed to “unexpected” changes in our testing variables. Since the public is not privy to this type of data until it is released, investors rely on advanced forecasting models to predict for themselves what future values of our testing variables should be. Once they have forecasted these values, that information is used to drive investment strategies. We suspect that the majority of the market underestimated the depth of the recession—causing their forecasts to be wrong. Once more macroeconomic data is released, investors might realize their errors and see that they were forced to make irrational decisions, leading to missed
investment opportunities. This irrational exuberance caused the market to tip out of balance, exposing possible arbitrage opportunities, which many investors missed. We found evidence of significant alphas within 6 of our 9 selected stocks. (See Table 1.)

Conclusion

Our research attempts to explain daily stock price movements in response to macroeconomic news announcements. Utilizing the Capital Asset Pricing Model (Sharpe, 1964), our results attempted to explain which macroeconomic news announcements have the largest impact on stock returns. We have found evidence that changes in inflation, money supply, GDP, and the Federal Funds Rate do have an impact on stock prices. We are also able to say that changes in inflation lead to a Granger causality with stock prices. Lastly, we were able to find evidence of observable alphas in the market. Our research suggests that the market was operating inefficiently, and unexpected changes in our macro-testing variables revealed market inefficiency.
TABLE I

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**B** = Beta coefficient  
**C** = Constant  
FFR = Federal Fund Rate  
GDP = Gross Domestic Product  
I = Inflation  
**MS** = Money Supply  
U = Unemployment  
**SE** = Standard Error

* = Significant at .005%  
** = Significant at .005%  
*** = Significant at .05%

**Bolded numbers indicate most significant results**
Works Cited


“Transformed Utterly”: History and the Rebel in Yeats’ “September 1913” and “Easter 1916”
WRITER'S COMMENTS

This essay examines the relationship between poetry, history, and politics in two of W.B. Yeats' most famous poems, "September 1913" and "Easter 1916," each composed during the most momentous and violent events in Irish history. In the poems it is not just the historical actors, the revolutionaries at work against systems of oppression, that are sublime and untimely, but also, and more importantly for Yeats, the poet, whose work codifies, collectivizes, and crystallizes the meaning and symbolic structure of the event. Furthermore, the underlying mechanism at work within history, the thing that makes this movement out and above the unfolding of history possible in the first place, is Nietzsche's concept of will to power. The interlocution of these three things (history, the poet, and will to power) constitutes the essential thematic structure of these poems, ultimately showing the creative, affirmative possibilities immanent within historical moments of tragedy and destruction.

—Nicholas Pisanelli

INSTRUCTOR'S COMMENTS

Nicholas’ essay demonstrates impressive skill not only for its fine literary analysis of W.B. Yeats' poems, "September 1913" and "Easter 1916" but also for its powerful wielding of historical and theoretical concepts. This essay makes clear the complex relationship between literary texts and the historical and political contexts from which they emerge. Nicholas’ attention to the interplay between political history and the production of aesthetic forms reveals the layers of narrative meaning in Yeats’ work, but also in literary work more generally. Specifically, his focus on the ways in which the artist examines, critiques, and plays a role in the fostering of public mythologies regarding revolution invites us as readers to consider the reciprocity between cultural imagination and artistic production. Finally, the conscientiousness with which Nicholas develops his analysis only makes his argument for the potentiality of “radical creativity” to “transform our way of being in the world” all the more impactful.

—Christina Garcia Lopez, English Department
IN HIS ASSESSMENT of the shifts in Anglo–Irish poetry after the First World War in the essay “Modern Poetry: A Broadcast” (1936), W.B. Yeats notes one particularly harrowing change: “All civilized men had believed in progress, in a warless future, in always-increasing wealth, but now influential young men began to wonder if anything could last or if anything were worth fighting for” (“Modern Poetry” 499). The same questioning of the value of action, and sense of dread in the face of modernity, form the philosophic and political basis of two of his most important poems, “September 1913” and “Easter 1916.” These poems primarily correspond to two eruptive internal political events, the Dublin Lockout and the Easter Rising, which together rattled the economic and political foundations of Ireland, and gave rise to some of the country’s most famous rebels, namely Patrick Pearse, James Larkin, and James Connolly. In the short space of time between the composition of these two poems, however, Yeats radically reformulated his relationship as a poet to the historical process; specifically his relationship to Irish history and time itself with the introduction of Nietzschean philosophy to his system of thought. It is in this sense that the Easter Rising becomes for Yeats a rupture in the progression of history; rather than revealing that “Romantic Ireland is dead and gone,” Yeats instead interprets new possibilities of being through a reinvigorated imagining of Ireland. Like Patrick Pearse, Yeats offers a critique of bourgeois values and middle-class existence through the employment of Irish political poetics that melds Irish mythology, Christianity, modern philosophy, and psychology. History thus transforms within his poetry from a materialist, progressive unfolding, which reflects Nietzsche’s flower, the Sipo Matador, to a constant cyclical overturning of old values through the “overflowing” spirit of the Easter martyrs. Through their acts of martyrdom, and thus their exemplification of tragedy and other aesthetic forms, they demonstrate the potentialities of ‘becoming’ for the public at large, and the very essence of will to power. Yeats ultimately reworks the processes of mythification, by which the public raises rebels to cultural icons,
and moves these myths away from the material results of their dissi-
dence and toward the aesthetic value of their actions and sacrifice. In
“September 1913” and “Easter 1916” Yeats lays bare the intersection
of politics, philosophy, and aesthetics at work within his own thought,
showing the unique cultural consciousness and Nietzschean conceptual
framework with which he meets the cultural and political devastation of
the Easter Rising.

Though both poems respond in a similar fashion to radical moments
within a narrow historical framework, the refrains of each poem show
striking differences in Yeats’ approach to the given event. “September
1913” locates the passionate energies of the rebels in a romantic past,
and the disaffected public has no hope in resuscitating this type of revo-
lutionary spirit. In this poem Yeats characterizes the Dublin Lockout
as a jarring event that resulted in little for all the death and destruction
of the conflict, and the event exemplifies on a larger scale the arduous,
deading state of affairs ushered in by modernity. Though Yeats reori-
ents the mythologies surrounding the revolutionaries of the 19th century
to highlight their bases in aesthetics and dramatic form, their creative,
passionate spirit is definitively “dead and gone.” He has a radically dif-
f erent tone in “Easter 1916,” however, and the refrain is one of birth
and beauty, terrible as it may be. With the “drunk and vainglorious lout,”
Yeats shows the sudden emergence of the revolutionary spirit of ro-
mantic Ireland in the basest man he knows, reflecting the transformative
power of the “overflow” of the wills of great, revolutionary individuals
in their highest expressions of will to power. Pearse and Connolly repre-
sent for Yeats this kind of transformation in their sudden realization of
themselves through the revolutionary act and tragic fall. Though in both
poems Yeats does not employ a materialist conception of history, in
“Easter 1916” he no longer shows modernity as a deadened and empty
telos. History instead becomes a cyclical play of dramatic forms, driven
by passionate, revolutionary spirits that transfer their energies into the
collective. Yeats thus shifts the mythologies around rebels based in na-
tionalism, materialism, and purposeful action, to ones which emphasize
the tragedy and beauty in the rebels’ sudden transcendence in revolution.
Through their sacrifice they realize their highest possibility of being,
and show to the public their capacity to express the highest of aesthetic
forms within the historical and political sphere.
At the same time, these poems are not solely reflections on the transformative power of revolution on the rest of history; they also attest to the power and capabilities of poetry and the poet himself. In response to these two events, Yeats chooses poetry as the vessel through which he makes his intervention and statement about the conditions of existence during these events, and his role as a poet in organizing and codifying them. The events first filter through the creative imagination of the poet, in which he crystallizes their symbolic weight, and then places them back into the public as cultural markers. By synthesizing elegiac poetry, rhetoric, philosophy, psychology, Gaelic myth, Irish political history, and Christianity, in other words, he makes his poems commensurate with the act itself. Through this monumental act of versification, Yeats, brings the symbolic structures at work in the event to the fore, and makes the poems loci for the larger cultural evaluation and understanding of the events. In so doing, he simultaneously realizes his highest form of self as a creative being, “going over” the mere social and material contingencies of the events to their essential aesthetic form, and “going under” into his own self and poetic mind in which these aesthetic forms also flow beneath surface consciousness. Just as the Easter rebels bloom as the Sipó Matador in their revolutionary act and show the most authentic display of will to power, so too does Yeats in the creation of “September 1913” and “Easter 1916.”

1913 to 1916: The Dublin Lockout and the Easter Rising

The two momentous and violent struggles in Irish political history to which Yeats responds to, created a convergence of Irish socialist, republican, and nationalist causes, and mobilized the larger, Catholic working public. The Dublin Lockout occurred between August 1913 and February 1914 and was one of the largest strikes taken up by leftist groups during the era, ultimately setting in motion the Easter Rising some years later. The Irish working class was at the time the poorest and worst housed of the working populations of the United Kingdom, with over 30% of the population living in tenements, many of which “were unfit for human habitation” (Moran 10). Throughout August, James Larkin and the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (IGTWU), itself a hotbed of nationalist and syndicalist politics, organized tram workers and led violent
clashes when “Dublin’s leading capitalist” William Martin Murphy tried to put an end to the strikes (Foster 442; Moran 11). As Yeats witnessed these events, Murphy came to exemplify the bourgeois values he found so insipid, and his atypical stance alongside the workers, given his largely conservative leanings, reflected more his disdain for Murphy’s veneration of the values of the marketplace than any leftist belief (Stelmach 438–39).

On August 31st, later known as “Bloody Sunday,” over 500 people were injured and two men were beaten to death during riots throughout the city (Moran 12). By the end of September, over 20,000 workers joined the tram workers on strike, leading to James Connolly’s shutdown of the port, and a surge in violent conflicts between strikebreakers and striking workers (12, 14). When the strike reached its end six months later, over 1,700,000 working days had been lost, 656 trade union members were beaten, and five killed (14). Without aid from the British Labour movement, Larkin and Connolly could no longer consolidate efforts of the working class as a whole, and the struggle began to dissipate (15). Combined with the surplus of non-union workers to supplant the striking union members, and their inability to effectively shut down an integral industry, the strike failed (Foster 438). In “September 1913” Yeats captures this slow dissipation of revolutionary momentum, and the lines “they’re dead and gone,” in particular, reveal his own waning belief in the struggle. Yeats indeed left the country after the lockout in an expression of his frustration with these conflicts, heading to Sussex to collaborate with Ezra Pound (Stelmach 440). Whatever its effects on Yeats, the Dublin Lockout ultimately set the stage for the Easter Rising three years later by introducing the likes of Larkin and Connolly to the national stage (Foster 438). Connolly’s Marxist critiques of Irish history and labor, in particular, melded nationalism with socialism in a way that ignited the type of radical imagination which Yeats explicates in “Easter 1916” (439).

With the onset of World War I and the economic strains it placed on the United Kingdom, pressure began to mount amidst the Irish working class and its leaders, who were once again posed against the interests of the Empire (Curtis 406). At noon on Easter Day 1916, Connolly and Pearse finalized their plan, which had been in the works since January, and stormed the General Post Office where they hoisted the Irish flag (O’Connor 75). Pearse then read the Proclamation of the Republic and Declaration of Rights, promising civil and religious liberty to the people of
Ireland, and proclaiming the Irish Republic (76). After four days of bombardment and the landing of a significant British force, the majority of the over 1,000 rebels surrendered to General Maxwell after only one week of resistance (Curtis 406). He summarily executed Pearse, Connolly, and 13 other leaders and placed Dublin under martial law, putting an effective end to the uprising (406). Though 1,351 people were killed or wounded in the week following Pearse’s proclamation, the sudden rebellion recreated the revolutionary spirit of 18th- and 19th-century Ireland, and spread across other territories of the Empire (O’Connor 90). In his reflection of this resurgence of revolutionary energy, George Bernard Shaw wrote to the *Daily News* the day after Connolly’s death: “The shot Irishmen will now take their places beside Emmet and the Manchester Martyrs in Ireland, and beside the heroes of Poland and Serbia and Belgium in Europe, and nothing in heaven or earth can prevent it” (91). It is this sentiment, of the transformative power of the rebel, that Yeats responds to in both “September 1913” and “Easter 1916,” and in his exile he would formulate his own relation to the revolution, rebels, and history itself as a poet.

Yeats does not offer an entirely polemical response to the Dublin Lockout or the Easter Rising in “September 1913” and “Easter 1916”; instead he emphasizes these events as important markers in the Irish cultural and artistic consciousness. In his analysis of Yeats’ Memoirs, G.J. Watson details Yeats’ relation to these events and Irish political history as a whole as one based primarily on aesthetic sensibility:

> Romantic nationalism involves ‘passion’, then—always a good for Yeats. One can see here, however, the beginnings of that tendency in Yeats to subordinate political and historical reality to the demands of his aesthetic sense. Thus, the aims of nationalist struggle are less important than the motive and the cue it provides for ‘passionate’ living and thinking, and heroism becomes itself aesthetic, divorced from purposeful action, frozen and static, a head on a coin. [italics added] (Watson 91)

Politics and history become a site for the play of aesthetic forms, where tragedy, comedy, and beauty concretize in a lived public space. The titles of each poem, though they appear as simple historical markers, do not just mark dates of political history, but situate moments of
an individual aesthetic “passion” and creativity. “September 1913” and
“Easter 1916,” then, are moments for the creation of an Irish artistic
identity, where the revolutionaries live out dramatic and poetic forms in
moments of struggle, tragedy, and passion. The artist takes these events
and transforms them into cultural productions not only in a revival of an
Irish culture, but also as reflections of the artist’s “aesthetic sense” itself.
This transference of historical events and people into moments of lived
aesthetics is the essential process of mythification, replacing materialism
with “a higher kind of power . . . the power of poetry and romance and
idealism” (Watson 90). In both poems, Yeats examines and critiques the
public’s creation of myths around these figures, yet simultaneously myth-
ologizes them himself. By examining their display of tragedy, futility,
and strife, instead of the material realities and products of their strug-
gles, he adds to the cultural imagination and mythologies surrounding
these revolutionaries. History, politics, revolutionary struggle, and the
rebels themselves provide Yeats with forms for aesthetic examination,
in which he can realize the narratives of tragedy, passion, or comedy at
work within the event itself.

“September 1913” and the Death of Romantic Ireland

In both poems, Yeats juxtaposes romantic, revolutionary Ireland with
modern domestic and working class life, and “September 1913” begins
with an exposition of the conditions of labor in its monotony and isola-
tion. The structure Yeats employs throughout the poem begins with an
explication of a certain aspect of an Irish form of life in the first 6 lines,
which he then calls into question with the refrain, “Romantic Ireland’s
dead and gone / It’s with O’Leary in the grave.” He begins the opening
stanza with:

What need you, being come to sense,
But fumble in a greasy till
And add the halfpence to the pence
And prayer to shivering prayer, until
You have dried the marrow from the bone (“September 1913”)
The modern Irishman resigns himself to labor and religious practice, both of which dry “the marrow from the bone,” estranging him from his body in work and worship. The material conditions of modern life quell the capacities for “passion” and sensibility in the working class man, while also setting the stage for the heroic and tragic actions of the Dublin Lockout. Though this stanza decries the material conditions of urban life, the primary problem with urban conditions of existence is its suppression of the creative “spirit” within the working man. By including the refrain, “Romantic Ireland’s dead and gone, / It’s with O’Leary in the grave,” he provides a stark contrast with the unromantic and alienating conditions of life in modern Ireland. The struggles of “Romantic Ireland,” in which revolutionaries play out these passions in the public sphere, have passed, leaving the working class individual to the disafflicting conditions of work and religion. The private and public lives of the individual are both quelled into submission and quietude by religious and economic constructs, and through this type of assessment of the conditions of urban life Yeats focuses in on the subduing of the individual will in the rest of the poem.

The youth, however, possess a type of aesthetic vitality that presses against these deadening, often oppressive, forces. He further establishes this break between modernity and Ireland’s romantic past with his examination of the processes of the mythification of revolutionaries amongst the youth:

Yet they were of a different kind,
The names that stilled your childish play,
They have gone about the world like wind,
But little time had they to pray
For whom the hangman’s rope was spun,
And what, God help us, could they save? (“September 1913”)

The mythification of 18th- and 19th-century revolutionaries here occurs through the inculcation of their heroic and passionate deeds into the imaginations of the youth. The rebels are “of a different kind”; their impassioned natures, unbounded by the impotency of modern religious practice and the nihilism of working conditions, turn them into paragons for the youth. Their names mark their imaginations only because the
youth alone maintain the rebels’ passion and predilection for the aesthetic before their introduction into the economic and political status quo. Yeats further reflects the youthfulness and passion of the rebels by noting that they possess “little time to pray,” again detailing religion’s stagnation and inhibition of youthful passions and bodily drives. The final line, “what, God help us, could they save,” calls the success and meaning of their deeds into question, yet in so doing Yeats also transforms them into tragic figures. Yeats challenges the public’s veneration of rebels, yet by framing their actions in aesthetic forms, he mythologizes them on his own poetic terms. This maneuver establishes Yeats himself as a central arbiter in the discourse surrounding rebels, bestowing on his own voice a gravitas that produces a set of symbolic assemblages, which he then gives to the public in order for them to reorient and reengage these myths. The irreconcilable tension between their martyrdom in the name of Ireland and the futility of their acts provides for Yeats a means to explicate the function of aesthetic form, especially tragedy, in the mythology of the revolutionary, as well as his own poetic voice.

In the last half of the poem, Yeats embeds these qualities of modern Irish life and its romantic past in the natural landscape of Ireland. More importantly, however, he connects revolutionary intent and Irish nature, proclaiming:

Was it for this the wild geese spread
The grey wing upon every tide;
For this that all that blood was shed,
For this Edward Fitzgerald died,
And Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone,
All that delirium of the brave? (“September 1913”)

Yeats associates revolution and political with the veneration of natural Ireland, wherein revolutionaries grant cultural and political weight to their actions by acting in the name of the land itself. The natural space of Ireland consolidates Irish identity, and it is only through revolution for the sake of this space, that revolution gains meaning and concreteness. The landscape allows for the realization of individual passions that urban life and rote working conditions otherwise quell. Yeats then undercuts the revolutionaries’ actions by juxtaposing their courage with their “de-
lirium,” which in turn destabilizes the landscape’s function as a site for the rebel’s tragic martyrdom and mythification. He simultaneously contributes to the cultural myth of these rebels by replacing their function as brave, masculine martyrs fighting for Ireland, with one based in their tragic, Sisyphean engagement in revolutionary action.

With the conclusion of the poem Yeats ends his examination of the tragic nature of the rebels alongside a further indictment of the sterility and nihilism of modern Irishmen. Yeats expresses a loss of faith in the efficacy and function of rebellion in modernity, as he writes:

Yet could we turn the years again,
And call those exiles as they were
In all their loneliness and pain,
You’d cry, ‘Some woman’s yellow hair
Has maddened every mother’s son’:
They weighed so lightly what they gave.
But let them be, they’re dead and gone,
They’re with O’Leary in the grave. (“September 1913”)

Yeats again places the conditions and nature of the modern Irishman against the tragic figure of the rebel in order to explain their mythic status. He juxtaposes the exiles’ experience with bouts of “loneliness and pain” in their tragic, impassioned, and ultimately futile, resistance to English hegemony, with the dispassionate nature of modern men. Modern middle class values and ideology would lead them to vilify separatist movements, and reduce the independence struggle, in an allusion to Helen of Troy, to “maddened” young men at the sight of a woman. By employing this allusion, Yeats again associates modern Irishmen with impotence, frightened both by the feminine (exemplified by Helen) and the struggles of rebellion, each coded as locations for the display of and engagement with the passions. Their disillusionment with the insurrection emerges from the ideology of the marketplace, despite noting the “delirium” of revolutionaries and questioning the efficacy of their actions throughout the poem, working conditions under capitalism and religious practice all stifle the modern Irishman’s convictions and capacity to express an inner vital spirit. At the heart of this process of mythification lies a disconnect between the impotence of the public’s ideological
convictions, and the passions of rebels they venerate. Violence, tragedy, and rebellion all lose their substance and meaning because of the populace’s inability to rise above the stultifying conditions of modern life, and for this reason one must acknowledge that both romantic Ireland and the romantic revolutions of myth are “dead and gone.”

The rhythmic and formal construction of the poem only serves to reinforce Yeats’ explication of the fading away of Romantic Ireland to the conditions of modernity. The poem’s four stanzas adhere to an exacting rhyme scheme and strictly follow iambic tetrameter, formally echoing the monotony of modernity Yeats explicates in the beginning of the first stanza. In the third stanza he abruptly disorders this scheme by introducing the names of fallen revolutionaries, which break away from the formal structure of the rest of the poem. “Edward Fitzgerald,” “Robert Emmet,” and “Wolfe Tone,” each possess unique syllabic and metric qualities that disrupt the rhythm established in the rest of the poem. This deviation hints at new changes within the content and form of the poem. By structurally setting their names apart from the rest of the poem in this way, Yeats is marking out their unique space within the progression of Irish history, and the possibilities they provide for the construction of new Irish futures. In the next lines he immediately closes off these lines of flight away from the rest of the poem by imposing the same rhythmic and metric scheme with “All the delirium of the brave,” resigning again to the same poetic form. These metric disruptions formally mirror the narrative of Irish history: the revolutionary act destabilizes the smooth flow of history and opens up new possible futures for the country, only to be subdued and forced again into the same historical progression. And indeed the Dublin Lockout progressed in this same manner, as the dissipation of the striking workers’ revolutionary fervor only led them again into the same rote existence. Not only does Yeats close off access to “Romantic Ireland” and the reinvigoration of the era’s political spirit, but even new possibilities for being, new revolutionary acts, he shows to be incapable of breaking away from this monotonous and deadening march of history.

**Tragedy and Possibility: “Easter 1916”**

When composing “Easter 1916” three years later, Yeats established a range of family resemblances in the formal structuring of each poem,
and in doing so placed them into juxtaposition with one another. Again, he made use of iambic tetrameter, a four stanza structure, and the same rhyme scheme. Rather than use this form to reflect the dissipation of the unique spirit of Romantic Ireland, however, Yeats instead imbues the structure of the poem with numerological significance. The four stanzas of 16 or 24 lines signify the actual date of the takeover of the Dublin Post Office, the Easter Monday falling on April 24, 1916 (Dilworth 2). Where “September 1913” reflects the loss of revolutionary energy in both form and content, the structure of “Easter 1916” reinforces the sense of anxiety, made clear in the poem’s refrain, in the face of the overflow of often conflicting significances and meanings attached to the event. In other words, Yeats makes his impediments in assessing the political, aesthetic, and cultural value of the event clear by mirroring the range of significances and meanings of the event within the form of the poem itself. He makes a similar elegiac conceit in this poem by employing a date as the title of the poem, demarcating the event from the flow of history. The titles not only locate the composition of each poem in time, but also pull them out of the linear progression of history, and mark them as poetically significant movements within Ireland’s political sphere. Yeats’ goal in poeticizing these events is not only to translate these meanings for the public, but more importantly, to produce an aesthetic framework that can move through the trauma and tragedy of the event and make sense of the event’s implications for the Irish form of life.

In “Easter 1916,” Yeats follows a formal structure made up of four stanzas similar to that of “September 1913,” where he again juxtaposes domestic and working class life with that of impassioned revolutionaries. Like “September 1913,” he places a refrain at the end of each stanza that encapsulates the essential nature of the event, which here is the famous, “A terrible beauty is born.” In the first stanza, Yeats expresses the rote conditions of modern life, and the characteristic modernist sentiment of isolation amidst the crowd. The poem opens:

I have met them at close of day    
Coming with vivid faces    
From counter or desk among grey    
Eighteenth-century houses.
I have passed with a nod of the head
Or polite meaningless words,
Or have lingered awhile and said
Polite meaningless words … (“Easter 1916”)

The narrator again describes the middle class life under capitalism, where the estranging conditions of labor, “from counter or desk,” leave the populace disaffected. Communication between individuals breaks down, and the refrain at the end of the stanza, “A terrible beauty is born,” hints at the impending disruption of the monotony of these conditions by revolutionary struggle. This refrain in particular displays Yeats’ relation to revolution and history, and his rejection of a historical materialism. He understands revolution and the disruption of the conditions of modern life in aesthetic terms, where the “rising sprang from nothing in one wild blaze of ‘terrible beauty’ ” (Watson 112). The primary tension within this stanza is between the emptiness of social niceties with the sudden emergence of impassioned, tragic action in the political sphere. Though Yeats again undercuts the modern Irishman’s veneration of the revolutionaries by detailing the disconnect between the nihilistic conditions of their existence and the impassioned one of the rebels, he simultaneously adds to the cultural myth of the revolutionary by framing them with dramatic forms.

In the second stanza, however, Yeats creates a space for transformation of the modern Irishman into a romantic, impassioned rebel, instead of, as in” September 1913,” resigning them to the death of Romantic Ireland and the conditions of modernity. The poem continues:

This other man I had dreamed
A drunken, vainglorious lout.
He had done most bitter wrong
To some who are near my heart,
Yet I number him in the song;
He, too, has resigned his part
In the casual comedy;
He, too, has been changed in his turn,
Transformed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born. (“Easter 1916”)
In the sudden revolutionary moment, the “drunken, vainglorious lout” is likewise suddenly “transformed utterly.” The drama of the historical moment abruptly alters his nature, raising him from the emptiness of the cosmopolitan and into the romance of the rising. The emergence of this inner passion coincides with a tragic resignation to the “casual comedy” of life and death, where the impassioned figure of the rebel must romantically acquiesce to his fate as an ultimately doomed revolutionary. With this resignation comes his entrance into cultural myth, and Yeats feels forced to “number him in this song” with his sudden achievement of transcendence in the revolution (112). The juxtaposition of qualities in “terrible beauty,” between aesthetic transcendence and tragedy, reflects the necessity of the lout’s death in his realization of his will. Yeats here explores the sudden proliferation of dramatic forms in the revolutionary moment, in which the tensions between life and death, and revolution and its failure, galvanizes the cultural imagination surrounding revolutionaries.

He continues with an explication of the relationship between revolutionary struggle and nature, just as in “September 1913,” though here Yeats problematizes the logic behind revolution based in nationalism. He begins this stanza with:

Hearts with one purpose alone
Through summer and winter seem
Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living stream.
The horse that comes from the road.
The rider, the birds that range
From cloud to tumbling cloud,
Minute by minute they change (“Easter 1916”)

Revolutionary intent becomes associated with the fixity of a stone in a stream, where the flux of nature revolves around the stone as a fixed point. With the association of rebellion and nature, Yeats again expresses the ways in which revolutionaries carry out their struggle in the name of the natural space of Ireland. At the same time the consolidation of their efforts into “one purpose alone,” denies the realization
of the unique impassioned nature of each individual. The transcendence of the individual revolutionary, in other words, falls prey to the collective expression of nationalism and politics. The emergence of the individual’s aestheticized spirit and passion takes precedence over the material reasonings behind revolutionary struggle. Yeats employs the “heart” as a further reflection of the will of the rebel, which turns to stone with the subordination of the individual to the goals of the collective. He associates the true individualized and aestheticized revolutionary spirit with the play of energies in the natural world, both of which must necessarily remain unbounded by the codes and goals of the cosmopolitan and the group. Their actions, however, disturb the smooth flow of time and history, symbolized by the river, rupturing the predetermined movements and progressions of Irish history (Newman 146). Though these lines express Yeats’ tenuousness regarding the rebels’ steadfastness in their beliefs, they simultaneously testify to the transformative power of their acts, which disturb the flux around them.

In the final stanza Yeats transitions from the rhetoric of nationalist struggle to a direct engagement with the deaths of rebels and the results of the Rising. He transitions first with maternal imagery, as he writes:

That is Heaven’s part, our part
To murmur name upon name,
As a mother names her child
When sleep at last has come
On limbs that had run wild.
What is it but nightfall?
No, no, not night but death;
Was it needless death after all?
For England may keep faith
For all that is done and said.
We know their dream; enough
To know they dreamed and are dead;
And what if excess of love
Bewildered them till they died? (“Easter 1916”)

The public’s duty to the rebels is to enumerate “name upon name,” cementing their names in the collective consciousness through repeti-
tion and placement into poetic form. The listing of their names acts against their deaths by transferring them into cultural mythology. Indeed when Yeats asks “What is it but nightfall? / No, no, not night but death;” he employs a semicolon rather than a period, denying the finality of their death by showing their movement into the symbolic and cultural memory of the public. Though he poses the problematic question of, “Was it needless death after all?” he does not pose it to demean the revolutionary act. The question instead establishes the rebel as a tragic figure, who gives up his life in the face of material defeat and the elimination of his body in order to live out the “higher power . . . of poetry and romance and idealism” (Watson 90). The final lines in this quotation, “And what if excess of love / Bewildered them till they died?” testifies to this point. They lay down their lives in a display of their aestheticized, impassioned natures, and in the name of love for their country and countrymen. Their deaths occur in a “bewildered” state in which, for a brief moment, they achieve a sudden authentic expression of their individual wills. The overflowing of their wills with passion and love transfers these energies from the individual to the collective, necessitating the enumeration of their names in the poem and the larger cultural myths. Yeats thus foregrounds the displays of poetry and tragedy in the historical moment rather than the actual material results of the revolution, reframing history not as driven by materialist tension but by individuals acting in brief moments of self-realization.

Yeats closes the poem by moving from an explication of the deeds of rebels, to detailing his own role as a poet in the process of the mythification of the revolutionaries in the Easter Rising. He continues:

I write it out in a verse—
MacDonagh and MacBride
And Connolly and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born. (“Easter 1916”)

Yeats implicates himself in the larger cultural understanding in the first lines of this quotation, creating for the poetry the most important
role in understanding the historical moment through the enumeration of their names. The process of mythification occurs first in the poem, rather than in a political or national consciousness, and it is the poet that must determine the ultimate meaning of the rising. Yeats encapsulates the meaning of this rising “now and in time to be” with the closing refrain “A terrible beauty is born.” This line frames the rising as a birth, as an ultimately creative and not a destructive act. The beauty of the rising emerges out of the expression and realization of the individual will of each rebel, whose overflow of passion creates a larger, public moment of self-realization and creation. The moment necessitates their deaths, however, and as the rebels give up their lives they transfer into political history and, more importantly, Irish cultural mythology. This mythification, in other words, occurs by turning the historical moment into a poetic event, where by listing the names of the rebels the poet embeds them within a larger network of literary and aesthetic significance. They are no longer politicians, activists, or socialists, but impassioned and tragic men that manifest their will and individuality in the revolutionary act.

Overflowing as a Form of “Will to Power”

What remains to be clearly determined with this reading of “Easter 1916” is the precise meaning and movement of this act of overflowing. Though Yeats took inspiration from many religious, philosophic, and literary sources, his understanding of Nietzsche in particular plays a central role in both of these poems. Yeats began to familiarize himself with Nietzsche’s philosophy in the summer of 1902 when reading *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, which makes its way into his conceptualization of the will’s overcoming of the self through verse in “Adam’s Curse” written at the same time (Wenthe 32). A notable shift occurred later in 1912 as he immersed himself in the works of Freud, who also took on an integral role in his later poetry (37). The appeal of these thinkers to Yeats is clear: they both provided a vision of the self in “a state of flux,” reflecting back to Yeats his own fluid sense of identity, and allowing him access to the symbolic structures of the will or the unconscious mind (37). The influence of Freud can notably be found in *A Vision*, in which from 1917 to 1920 Yeats finds himself fascinated by his wife’s access to an animus
mundi, or pre-linguistic symbolic language through automatic writing and speech during sleep (A Vision 8, 14, 17). Though Yeats engaged with Freudian thinking before the composition and events of “September 1913” and “Easter 1916,” the Nietzschean imprint of thought is more noticeable and fundamental in both of these poems. Given the events of the Easter Rising in particular, in which the rebels express enormous feats of will, overflowing, and sacrifice, Nietzsche’s philosophy and understanding of will to power take on a distinct resonance for Yeats, and form the philosophic undercurrents of “Easter 1916.”

In Beyond Good and Evil, will to power functions as the basic constituent of movement and change within the world, and for Yeats too, the expression of will to power defines the overflowing acts of Easter rebels. In Nietzsche’s examination of the characteristics of the well-defined will in “The Free Spirit,” he lays the basic groundwork for will to power in his critique of the philosophies of the “levellers”:

We opposite ones, however, who have opened our eye and conscience to the question how and where the plant “man” has hitherto grown most vigorously, believe that this has always taken place under the opposite conditions, that for this end the dangerousness of his situation had to be increased enormously, his inventive faculty and dissembling power (his “spirit”) had to develop into subtlety and daring under long oppression and compulsion, and his Will to Life had to be increased to the unconditioned Will to Power. (Nietzsche 151)

The goal of will to power does not lie in the overcoming of an outside object or force in an act of destruction, but in an internal movement of the self as will, toward and above the self, toward unity. The “opposite ones,” those like Nietzsche who stand against levelling and the subdual of the individuated spirit, do not suffer meaninglessly under “oppression” or “compulsion,” but transfer the energies of their subdual into an expression of will to power. Indeed the will to power does not simply react to these outside forces to survive as a “will to life,” but actively engages and seeks them out, not to destroy them, but to differentiate and individuate itself as its own force (McNeill 190–191). Will to power thus
“constitutes the single source of all life,” the primal and dynamic force of being itself, which expresses the play and basic movement of these self-individuating forces (183). When individual subjects take up and express will to power, and move through and above themselves, they manifest for Nietzsche “the most remarkable way of being that we call ‘life’” in as much as it unfolds will to power and makes it visible and concrete to the subject’s consciousness (183).

Nietzsche’s understanding of will to power maps seamlessly on to “Easter 1916,” and is itself the essential element of the rebels’ act of overflowing. He sees in the Easter Rising not a destructive, reactive display of force in accordance with material causes or even philosophic principles, but a more basic and creative expression of the will through their resistance. It is through their revolutionary acts, in other words, that the rebels display their ennobled spirits as creative producers of a different way of being in the world. They “elevate themselves to their higher duties, and in general to a higher existence,” not only moving from politicians to exemplars of noble expression to the public, but moving within themselves toward their own highest form of being (Nietzsche 225). Through this movement and their overflowing they exemplify “those sun-seeking climbing plants in Java—they are called Sipo Matador—which encircle an oak so long and so often with their arms, until at last, high above it, but supported by it, they can unfold their tops in the open light, and exhibit their happiness” (225). This particular image encapsulates the significance of the actions of the Easter martyrs, and their relationship with the public. The public is not, as it so often seems in Nietzsche’s work, an entirely base and worthless throng always at work to inhibit the nobility’s expression, but rather an important base from which the seeds of the Sipo Matador germinate. It is only because of the support of the public, embodied as the oak, that the flower can reach toward the sun. At the same time, the rebels as the Sipo Matador reach “high above” the oak, and in their expressions of will to power “exhibit their happiness.” The overflowing of the rebels, as the blooming of the flower, thus moves in two directions: first toward and above themselves in a realization of their own highest, noblest possibilities of being, and second, downward toward the oak, opening these new ways of being for the public and conferring beauty upon the entire structure. The Easter Rising shows the most authentic expression of will to power, in which the rebels display
to the public and to themselves, their creative movement through acts of resistance.

Central to Yeats’ assessment of the actions of the Easter rebels, however, is not just their display of resistance, but the suppression of the rising and their ultimate tragic demise at the hands of the British military. Death is not an end to their specific expression of will to power, or exemplary of its failure, but built into the very mechanism of will to power itself:

Life’s momentary victories are predicated on obliteration, decay, degeneration—in a word: death. This implies, further, that there is a sacrificial, indeed self-sacrificial character to the self-overcoming that is will to power . . . Life itself must perish, go under, untergehen, in order to go over, in and as the very process of self-overcoming: it must sacrifice itself in order to be as will to power.” (McNeill 185–86)

The refrain throughout “Easter 1916,” “A terrible beauty is born,” is a direct expression of this interconnection between will to power and death. The beauty of the event lies in the rebels’ overflowing through their expressions of will to power, stylizing themselves as the Sipo Matador rising far above the oak. The paradox of the refrain, that the event is simultaneously terrible, is Yeats’ expression of the concurrent “going under” of the rebel which is always already included in their overflowing. The movement is circular: they unfold and overcome themselves toward their own highest form of being in “going over,” but in so doing participate in the larger cycle of differentiation and individuation that requires their expiration, their going under. The death drive of will to power, its ultimate and necessary movement into destruction, is intrinsic to its “active, expansive, and formative” aspect, and the Easter martyrs express clearly these movements of going over and “going under” (186). The beauty Yeats sees in the revolutionary act of the Easter rebels then is not only their expression of their happiness and highest self as the Sipo Matador, but their simultaneous recognition, acceptance, and engagement with the ultimate self-sacrifice necessitated in their act from the very beginning. They move above their own selves and bloom as the Sipo Matador, but know that the withering of their petals is intrinsic to their act.
Yeats, Nietzsche, and the Poet

Though Yeats clearly maps out these movements of will to power onto the Rising itself, his conceptualization of his own expressions of creativity in producing the poems remains far less obvious. The Nietzschean influence both runs out onto the state of affairs that Yeats places under scrutiny and into verse, and also inward into his conception of his own role as poet within “Easter 1916,” as well as “September 1913.” The poet works at the intersection of three forces in these two poems: the higher self of the poet, the lower self of surface consciousness, and the outside world (Wenthe 33). The act of versification is the poet’s expression of will to power, going over and above himself through force of will in an expression of his own stylization of the beautiful. In these historical poems, the act further includes a grappling with a specific configuration of political states of affairs, which the poet must pore over and stylize to bring out in verse the event’s essential aesthetic qualities and meaning. The weak self would simply avoid the labor of this process altogether, leaving the world of politics and history as base human constructs driven by material conflicts, rather than a site for the direct expression of aesthetic form (33). The poetic act of placing the world into verse and showing these forms at work in the world is Yeats’ own germination as the Sipo Matador, creating a space above and away from the public. It is from these heights that Yeats can lend his voice in organizing and codifying the intersecting literary, historical, and political traditions of Ireland.

This conceptualization of the duty and role of the poet further reflects the implicit Nietzschean, aristocratic, and conservative impulses at work within “September 1913” and “Easter 1916.” In both poems it is the poet who declares the conditions of existence for the entirety of Ireland, bestowing upon the public knowledge of the symbolic structures at work around them. When the narrator declares in “September 1913,” for example, that “Romantic Ireland is dead and gone,” it is the poet who not only makes the statement, but presents it with an aesthetic shape. In “Easter 1916,” when the narrator states that it is, “our part / to murmur name upon name,” it is the poet who leads in this duty; further, it is his own murmuring of the names through the poem itself that shows to the public the highest possible form of aesthetic thought. The poet in both cases takes on a cultured and ennobled voice, marking out the constitu-
tion of the highest form of an Irish way of being. This ennoblement of the poetic act and the poet himself is not just a strictly abstract conceit, but a reflection of Yeats’ own participation, and continued production of, the Protestant Anglo–Irish Ascendancy (Garratt 34). He identifies himself as a poet with a long line of Anglo–Irish cultural voices, from Swift, Tone, Burke, and Emmet, set against the Catholic middle- and working-class public (34–5). The aristocratic implications of Nietzsche’s philosophy thus make their way directly into Yeats’ conceptualization of his place within the historical, political, and artistic traditions of Ireland. His role as a poet, raised high above the majority, is to transfer this artistic aristocratic tradition into modernity, even amidst the nightmarish, stultifying conditions of “September 1913” and the Easter Rising.

Contained within his association with this aristocratic lineage, however, lies Yeats’ conflicted sense of identity and understanding of the poet’s position within society. As a part of a maligned, if prominent, minority, Yeats’ identity is lodged amidst tensions between Catholicism and Protestantism (and their respective cultural traditions), and between Ireland and England themselves, shown in his movements between the two countries. His identity as a poet is even further embedded in these tensions, as he draws from Catholic and Gaelic sources of artistic inspiration, while simultaneously separating himself from modern Catholic middle class in order to place himself among the Anglo–Irish Ascendancy. These particular tensions make their way into “Easter 1916,” in which Yeats finally, and reluctantly, admits the heroism of the “vainglorious lout” John MacBride. The sheer magnitude and importance of the Rising consolidates these identities, as Yeats establishes reverence for the rebels despite his own previous misgivings about them. More importantly, however, the event of the rising directly engages and activates his identity as a poet, shown in the close of “Easter 1916”:

I write it out in verse—
MacDonagh and MacBride
And Connolly and Pearse
Now and in time be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly
A terrible beauty is born. (“Easter 1916”)
It is Yeats the poet who forever marks the future remembrance of the rebels by “writ[ing] it out in verse,” making his own poem the primary site of memorialization, and the origin point for future cultural productions surrounding the rebellion. The poet does not map these symbolic values onto the event through the poem, but realizes the primordial symbolic structures at work in the event itself. Yeats reaches into these symbolisms and myths, places them into verse and poetic form, and transforms them into a concrete reality. In this way the poem is commensurate to the rising itself by realizing the structure and meaning of the event, and expressing it through the broad range of interrelated symbolisms of Christianity, Ancient Gaelic Ireland, Literature, and, of course, Nietzschean philosophy. “Easter 1916” is thus Yeats’ most authentic expression of will to power, in which he expresses his own highest form of being as well as those of the rebels. It is at the same time his “going under,” into the higher consciousness of verse and the poet, wherein these symbolic structures also ebb and flow. The poem becomes the “going over” and “going under” of the poet.

Conclusion

In the transition from “September 1913” to “Easter 1916,” Yeats radically reevaluates his conceptualization of time, history, rebellion, and his own position as a poet within these structures. In “September 1913,” Yeats explains the deadening conditions of modernity, juxtaposed against the romantic, revolutionary spirit of “Romantic Ireland.” Though the rebels become tragic figures that incite poetic examination, aesthetic thought, and mythification, the impassioned nature of the era is definitively “dead and gone.” The rebels’ expressions of will during the Dublin Lockout remain tied to material struggles, inhibiting the type of “going over” and overflowing that define authentic expression of will to power. The fixation with the specifically structural and quantifiable effects of the revolutionary act detracts from their capacity to realize and display their highest form of self in their act of resistance. With “Easter 1916,” however, the trauma of the event destabilizes the conceptual framework with which he meets the world of Irish politics. Yeats sees in the revolutionary acts of the Easter martyrs the expression within the material world of will to power, the most basic movement of being itself. In their “going over,”
and acceptance of their sacrifice in “going under,” the Easter rebels demonstrate the most authentic form of human expression, and the realization of the highest possible form of being available to the individual. The rebels exhibit their happiness over and above the public, just like the Sipo Matador blooms on top of the oak. Latent within Yeats’ analysis is his own privileging of the poet's versification of a state of affairs, which, when done in response to an event with the magnitude of the Easter Rising, is commensurate to the revolutionary act itself. Yeats ultimately lays a groundwork for the possibilities of being available to any individual, even the most base, “vainglorious lout,” in response to the characteristic modernist questioning of value: “if anything could last or if anything were worth fighting for.” Yeats lays bare in these poems the knowledge that while events as traumatic as the Easter Rising contain within them the destructive capacity to tear apart the very fabric of a form of life, they can, more importantly, maintain the possibility for a radical creativity that opens and utterly transforms a way of being in the world.
Works Cited


Confronting Pity Aid, Poverty Porn, and Voluntourism

Sofia Marbach, class of 2016, is an International Studies Major.
CONFRONTING PITY AID, POVERTY PORN, AND VOLUNTOURISM

WRITER’S COMMENTS

The educational environment of the University of San Francisco has blessed me with a beautiful starting point for social analysis. The interdisciplinary nature of my studies presents me with a range of perspectives on the challenges we face as a global community, from which I am constantly developing my own lens for critical reflection and praxis. The intersectionality of privilege and moral responsibility is something I desire to explore and question on a both personal and societal level. In this piece, I dig into the dehumanizing nature of poverty porn, question the intentionality and implications of band-aid charity and the role of the voluntourist, and call for an ideological and structural change in our systems of international aid. This is examined through portrayals by the American media of African people, and the ways in which these generalizations stereotype Third World suffering and perpetuate First World elitism. I am eternally grateful to Professor Dempster for his guidance in confronting these issues through the written word.

—Sofía Marbach

INSTRUCTOR’S COMMENTS

Sofía Marbach’s final essay in my year-long course, Rhetoric 130-131, Written and Oral Communication, demonstrates the growth of her skills as a critical thinker and academic writer. Drawing from Susan Sontag’s work and other sources, Sofía offers a thoughtful critique of Western “pity aid” and the dehumanization of African people by the American media. As Sofía asserts, these problematic portrayals, combined with the attitude of “voluntourism,” perpetuate an elite image of America and stereotypical view of Africans. Sofía skillfully nuances her argument by reflecting on her own academics and service at the university, by acknowledging those who engage in effective assistance efforts, and by exploring the role of governmental and fiscal policy in the international aid phenomenon. This piece is a model example of mature, socially conscious writing, a rigorous examination of charity aid through the lenses of the global and domestic, the theoretical and personal.

—Brian Komei Dempster, Department of Rhetoric and Language
Confronting Pity Aid,
Poverty Porn, and Voluntourism

TURN ON YOUR TELEVISION. If you watch long enough, chances are you’ll find yourself looking into the eyes of an impoverished African child running without shoes through the unpaved streets of a dusty village over a toll-free number imploring you to “Donate Now.” Have you ever questioned if this form of charity is the most effective way to address problems of poverty in the developing world? Have you ever questioned what is driving you to pick up that phone? “Only you can help,” the ad will plead. Is this form of charity completely guilt-driven?

This essay will address “pity aid” and explore some of its complications through the lens of several texts. I argue that international aid and charities are in desperate need of corrections of mindset and procedure, and that being a recipient of aid and retaining one’s independence and dignity should not be mutually exclusive.

Responding to Texts on Pity Aid

This essay responds primarily to six texts. In Regarding the Pain of Others, Susan Sontag addresses the graphic images projected by Western media and the human obsession with suffering. Ali Heller, in “The Race to the Bottom and the Superlative Sufferer,” attacks the hunt for the third-world suffering. Magatte Wade slams the pity rhetoric surrounding aid in her provocatively titled article for The Guardian, “African aid: no more ‘pity shit.’” In an article for The Huffington Post, Emily Roenigk examines America’s infatuation with “poverty porn.” Al Jazeera’s Rafia Zakaria calls attention to the ills of “voluntourism” in “The White Tourist’s Burden.” Zambian economist Dambisa Moyo gives a comprehensive political critique of structural adjustment policies and African aid, as well as offering insight into a future of effective development policy. Andreas Widmer joins her in proposing a new direction for development.

First, let’s consider the use and dissemination of graphic images, which, in our world, are a click away. Although some of these disturbing images are even presented to us by commercial news outlets, there is still a great degree of censorship in what we watch (including both govern-
ment and self-censorship). A strong sense of “good taste” is demonstrated most frequently when victims are Americans. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, for example, primary news organizations withheld horrific pictures of the dead in the name of good taste. And during the height of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, images of dead or injured American soldiers were seldom widely publicized. It is, and has always been, taboo to show, as Susan Sontag says, “the naked face” of a U.S. soldier (55). During the tragedies of World War II, images of dead soldiers were always shrouded and their faces concealed. The predominant pictures we see of our soldiers’ sacrifice today are images of caskets nobly covered by a flag. However, as Susan Sontag voices in Regarding the Pain of Others, “this is a dignity not thought necessary to accord to others” (70).

In contrast, however, consider what you’ve seen of sub-Saharan Africa in the media. We are slammed with images of entire families struck by AIDS, graphic photographic accounts of the Rwandan Genocide in 1994, hacked off limbs in Sierra Leone shortly after, and the current horrors in the Central African Republic. “The more remote or exotic the place,” says Sontag, “the more likely we are to have full frontal views of the dead and dying” (56). We must, then, ask ourselves if the death of a United States citizen is somehow nobler or more dignified than that of a Rwandan. Why is it somehow acceptable for naked emaciated bodies to be displayed regularly on our screens for the sake of donation when decorum would prohibit the very same display with American bodies? This fundamental disparity in what gets broadcasted and how such images are used is what I’d like to explore here.

“Poverty Porn”

Western media, it seems, competes to broadcast the most pitiful cases of the developing world’s suffering. Ali Heller, a researcher in Niger, recently wrote a condemning article, “The Race to the Bottom and the Superlative Sufferer,” in which she confronts CNN journalist Morgan Winsor. Winsor’s piece, “A Fate Worse than Death,” details the lives of African women suffering from obstetric fistula, known as a “disease of poverty” as it is a condition that results from severe or failed childbirth when proper medical attention is not accessible. According to Heller, media organizations like CNN and numerous nonprofits partake in what
Heller calls “the race to the bottom” because, as critic Diana George points out, “organizations must constantly convince audiences that they are dealing with the most needy” (qtd. in Roenigk). Winsor’s CNN article, according to Heller, seeks to paint an image of an African woman with fistula, shunned by her entire community, abandoned by her husband and family, and entirely isolated. This pitiful generalization unfairly leads the reader away from identifying with the sufferer as someone trying to lead a normal life. It is inappropriate to generalize and stereotype the situations of complex and difficult medical conditions, let alone the condition of poverty. Heller attacks Winsor for making her image of the fistula sufferer the traditional archetype of the African woman in Western media, namely “young, powerless, and pitiable” (Heller). Men, women, and children from all corners of the continent of Africa suffer this “poverty porn” and dehumanizing stereotype perpetuated by Western media.

CNN is far from the only culprit. The Norwegian Students’ Society and Academics’ International Assistance Fund recently released a video last year that satirizes and calls attention Africa’s portrayal in American media as a charity case. African men, women, and children are portrayed too frequently as victims of merely “being African” (Heller). “African people,” bemoans Magatte Wade, “are either portrayed as corrupt, evil or pathetic.” The satirical video produced by the Norwegian organization follows the production of an ad campaign for a fictitious charity called “Save Africa,” starring Michael, a well-paid, well-fed young “charity actor” whose specialty character is a “sad African.” His character walks down a long, dusty road with a thin woman carrying a rusty bucket of water on her head (Norwegian Students’ and Academics’ International Assistance Fund).

Fundraising campaigns, like this video parodies, contribute to the media-driven “savior” mindset so institutionally prevalent in economically developed nations. Emily Roenigk, of The Huffington Post, argues that this media practice ultimately “empowers the wrong person” (Roenigk). Objectification of human beings in the media, the simplification of men and women “down to the characteristics that can be used to prove a point, elicit a high emotional response and generate profit” (Roenigk), is a controversial and offensive issue. “We need to pause and ask ourselves,” suggests Roenigk, “whether it is ethical to depict the graphic qualities of a human
being to Western audiences for the sole purpose of eliciting an emotional experience and ultimately, money” (Roenigk). Poverty porn sparks guilt and sympathy that drives us to donate. NGO (non-governmental organizations) marketing teams use this technique due to its effectiveness. “Audiences,” says Roenigk, “are more likely to make a financial donation when an ad shows a child that is suffering, rather than happy and healthy.” At its roots, poverty porn has become an effective fundraising tool that organizations deploy with the best of intentions; however, in their pitifully narrow representations of developing nations they “perpetuate dangerous ideologies” (Roenigk). Poverty porn harmfully champions charity over activism and encourages individuals with a savior complex.

“Voluntourism”

Next, let’s consider the problem of what Rafia Zakaria of Al Jazeera calls “the burgeoning white-savior industrial complex.” To illustrate this problem, consider the Norwegian satirical video mentioned earlier. In this video we meet a motherly Caucasian experiencing her “first time in Africa” who could not be more excited to “meet the little angels” (Norwegian Students’ and Academics’ International Assistance Fund). She finds joy in feeding the kids danishes and giving them long hugs. Her character underscores several important aspects of race and privilege that deserve a great deal of attention. She might be seen, then, as the quintessential voluntourist. “Voluntourism” is a phenomenon that puts incredible strain on the meaning of charity. As Zakaria notes in her article, more young people of the United States and European Union are looking to do hands-on work abroad. What many of these youth of the economically developed nations are in search of is “a deliberate embrace of poverty” that provides them truly “transformational experiences” (Zakaria) as blossoming young adults. Zakaria describes the operational equation of the voluntourism industry, now the fastest growing sector of tourism worldwide: “wealthy Westerners can do a little good, experience something that their affluent lives do not offer ... [and] have a story to tell that places them in the ranks of the kindhearted and worldly wise” (Zakaria). AIDS orphanages in South Africa, for example, are hotspots today for voluntourists. The condition of the orphan under the voluntourism industry, as Zakaria discusses, is being capitalized upon by nu-
merous groups and transformed into a “boutique package” that yields a profit from affluent tourists. This “Western ‘caring’ for Africans,” says Magatte Wade, “is just as objectifying as old-fashioned racism” (Wade).

What is to be done?

As an International Studies major, these articles are particularly troubling. I have encountered many voluntourists, marked by a classic social media profile picture of their embrace with a smiling, brown-skinned child. I grew up admiring their philanthropy, and beyond that, found myself jealous and perplexed by their privileged ability for frequent exotic vacations. I remember wanting those opportunities to do “good.”

In Fall of 2014, I will be a part of the Erasmus living-learning community at the University of San Francisco. Over the course of the academic year we will study the interconnections of service, ethics, and justice on a global scale. The program offers a culminating two-week trip to Cambodia to experience policy in action and learn from NGOs the issues of poverty and human trafficking. The accusatory tone of articles like Zakaria’s strike a fear in me: What if I’m a part of the problem?

This has prompted me to take a step back and examine myself. Though guilt, charity and voluntourism are serious issues, as Zakaria acknowledges in her article, there are countless people making a genuine impact on their trips and in their work (Zakaria). Those who have dedicated themselves to global service are not necessarily elitists nor voluntourists. Being a young, white American does not seal my fate as being an ignorant person of privilege. I choose my path because I am passionate about education in international policy and being part of a new era in global development.

International policies on aid that are deeply concerning are highlighted by economist Dambisa Moyo in an article for The Wall Street Journal called “Why Foreign Aid is Hurting Africa.” “Whatever its strengths and weaknesses,” she says, “charity-based aid is relatively small beer when compared to the sea of money that floods Africa each year in government-to-government aid or aid from large development institutions” (Moyo). More than $50 billion of international assistance goes to the nations of Africa yearly (Moyo). Much of this comes from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, largely funded and controlled by he-
gemonic world powers like the United States and the European Union. The neoliberal policies of structural adjustment and trade liberalization that these institutions demand of their debtors perpetuate the problems of poverty and national debt (Shah). Domestic problems of corruption and embezzlement plaguing many African nations keep aid money from reaching the poorest it is intended for. “A constant stream of ‘free’ money,” Moyo says, “is a perfect way to keep an inefficient or simply bad government in power.” Instead, she calls for a change: Western powers need to end “the cycle of giving something for nothing” and African governments need to adjust tax policies and ease harsh regulations for new businesses in order to attract real foreign direct investment (Moyo). Africa is filled with human capital. Putting capable men and women to work making beaded bracelets for charity money is not the way to lift Africa from the culture of pity aid. Magatte Wade, from The Guardian, states: “I want to be engaged in relationships with people who believe that I’m worth struggling with, not just pitying.” Andreas Widmer from Poverty Cure, proposes a new direction for development. He sums up the need for a change this way: “Africa is 12% of the world’s population, yet it receives 29% of all aid in the world, yet only 1.4 percent of foreign direct investment. Africa doesn’t need more aid. Africa needs more investment” (Widmer). Investment and governmental changes are the real solutions to poverty in developing nations; until these changes can take place issues of poverty aid, “poverty porn” and voluntourism will continue to arise.

The desensitizing nature of the news coverage of African disasters creates a media culture in which nonprofits must compete for the position of helping the most needy in order to receive proper attention and funds. Poverty porn, however well intended, dehumanizes receivers of aid and perpetuates the savior complex that has resulted in the problematic “voluntourism” industry. Diligent minds in global development are calling for a necessary change in the structure of world economic institutions and a shift from a culture of aid to one of investment. Let us listen.
Works Cited


Call for Submissions

Writing for a Real World

Issue Thirteen

We announce our call for submissions for our thirteenth annual
Writing for a Real World anthology, which will be published in Spring
2016. Undergraduate writing completed during the 2015–2016 academic
group is welcome. WRW reviews not only essays and research papers but
also scientific, business, and technical reports.

The deadline for submitting work is Monday, May 18, 2015. Students
may submit two pieces written throughout the academic year.

First, please see our guidelines here: http://usfca.edu/wrw/

Then enter your two best papers here:
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Notifications take place during Summer 2015.

Manuscripts will be edited and put into layouts during the Fall 2015
semester in the Writing for a Real World Editing Workshop (RHET 325/
ENGL 325), a 2- or 4-unit course taught by WRW’s Faculty Editor,
David Holler (dholler@usfca.edu).

Each published writer will receive two copies of the journal and an
individual award; winners and their guests will be invited to an awards
reception in Spring 2016.