

Penumbra

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF
CRITICAL AND CREATIVE INQUIRY



Issue 5, Summer 2018

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Penumbra is the official, refereed, scholarly journal of Union Institute & University's Ph.D. Program in Interdisciplinary Studies. The journal is published at regular intervals and dedicated to challenging traditional academic and creative disciplinary boundaries in the context of social change.

Penumbra's purpose is to promote theoretically informed engagements with concrete issues and problems. The journal publishes socially engaged, innovative, creative and critical scholarship with a focus on ethical and political issues in the humanities, public policy, and leadership. *Penumbra* is a peer-edited and peer-reviewed journal committed to spanning the divide between scholarly and creative production, and to fostering work from graduate students, junior scholars and emerging artists, in addition to more established critical and creative voices.

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Penumbra invites scholarship of all kinds, creative nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and visual works that address any aspect of the journal's mission and scope. We seek submissions from graduate students, junior scholars, and emerging artists, in addition to more established critical and creative voices. All submissions undergo double-blind peer review. We do not accept previously published work. Simultaneous submissions are acceptable, but the editors should be notified immediately upon a work's acceptance for publication elsewhere.

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Editor's Note

Many an interdisciplinary researcher will question themselves, and rightly so. Altogether, disciplines are merely puzzle pieces, that when combined, lead to a bigger picture. As suggested by Allen Repko and Rick Szostack in *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory*, to ignore one or more of the other pieces would make for a fairly haphazard puzzle by denying “the focus [on the particular] problem or issue or intellectual question that each discipline is addressing” (7). In order to construct the larger picture, there are calls for unbiased research. Not surprisingly, interdisciplinary can, at times, be confused with neutrality.

Even if neutrality were attainable, it might not result in good research. As Katrina Griffen believes, “preferences and inclinations can fuel a person’s enthusiasm or provoke attempts to comprehend the facets of the universe” (3). When taking a biased stance toward research, it's a sort of driver. Understandably, too much bias is bad, but a nugget of bias can be beneficial to research. A certain kind of bias guides passion

for knowledge. If everyone were neutral all the time, their dispassion would lead them nowhere.

Perhaps *neutral* or *objective* is not a word that should be placed alongside *interdisciplinary studies*, but rather, an *open-mind*. The terms might seem similar, but they are different. Neutrality or objectivity is assuming a stance from a distance, and how can anything be learned from a distance? However, keeping an open-mind allows for proximity, while utilizing the nugget of bias necessary for research results. Admitting to and assessing disciplinary and personal bias can help toss out the bulk of it. Yet, Griffen contends that it's impossible to get rid of bias, and scholars should avoid pretending it's not there. Not taking all the facts into account is a sort of bias all by itself. It is the mission of *Penumbra* to encourage transformative ideas and storytelling, which means calling for greater interdisciplinarity of research.

Interestingly, there is a bias towards interdisciplinary scholarship, which as Tom McLeish notes, is often seen as a periphery concern. Scholars should strive to synthesize foundational knowledge with multiple facets, to lead them to a larger and illuminating summation. Indeed, identifying bias allows for richer interdisciplinary conversations, and a niche from which to begin research.

This issue of Penumbra includes seven critical articles, two essays, two short stories, and various poems. The work comes to us from scholars in academe and out, established and emerging writers and artist in the U.S. and abroad, individuals using traditional and experimental styles to explore the power of critical and creative expression as it relates to the interdisciplinary approach.

In his essay, “The Power of Poetry: Story, Symbol, and Incantation”, Robert Ratliff examines three elements fueling the healing power of poetry: story, symbol, and incantation by breaking down the meanings of these basics, and shedding light on how poets who possess an understanding of them can use this knowledge in making their own poems more powerful. Similarly, Dr. Dana Kroos’s “How to Find a Blackhole in Your Kitchen” is an all-encompassing series, condensed with emotion and beauty, including photographs of enthralling carvings, with accompanying poetry. “Harry’s Last Trick”, by Dusty McGowan, echoes the epic narrative as shown by Kroos, and places it in short story format. In another deviation on

storytelling, Matt Grinder offers his essay, “Discourse on Anxiety: An Analysis of Gilman’s ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’.” His research suggests the rift between men and women has been a social construction that began taking profound roots in the nineteenth century Western conception of what social spheres men and women should occupy, as exemplified in Gilman’s work.

Rollin Jewett’s poem, *Junk and Treasure*, focuses on the unwanted material possessions, and the true meaning of treasure. Another poem collection by Jose Duarte, is untitled, based on the work of C.S. Lewis to examine imagination and form. Sherri Moyer reviews Magdelana Kubow’s article, “Women in the Church: A Historical Survey”, to assess the arguments made about why women are not ordained in the Roman Catholic Church today.

In keeping with perception and change, Jose Duarte shares his untitled poetry collection based on the work of C.S. Lewis. Next comes a fictional piece from Dr. Matt Weber, who combines science fiction variations and post-apocalyptic themes to underscore the use of

weapons in this timely satire of violence and the police.

In conjunction with domestic affairs, Jacinda Lewis proposes new methods for dealing with sex offenders in “Trends in Substance Abuse Treatment and Applications for Sex Offenders.” Likewise, Dr. Kendra Preston Leonard offers political commentary about her year in Syria in her poetry collection, including the piece *Highway Drone*. More on domestic policy comes from Ola Leigh in “America’s Drug Policies: What Works, What Doesn’t.”

Once again, Robert Ratliff shares his writing, this time in the form of a poignant creative non-fiction, “The Dead Television.” Picking up on the emotional elements of Ratliff’s work, Dr. Sandy Feinstein’s poetry collection boasts strong selections, such as *Learning to Write in Two Languages* and *40 Martyrs Church*.

Danielle Johnson writes of the need to study magical ruralism in “No Place Like Home: Magical Ruralism as Cultural Discourse.”

“Mr. Big Stuff” is the last short story featured in this issue, written by the illustrious Alex Pilas. Likewise, the last poetry collection comes from Michael S. Begnal: *Five Homage Poems*.

The last critical article underscores philosophy and a need for a post-structural analysis in “Kant We Hegel Our Way Out of This? The Problem of People in Postcolonial Studies” by Charlie Gleek.

Adding greater perspectives is the mission of this journal. Indeed, the above submissions encompasses a myriad of disciplines, such as art, history, literature, education, law, and more.

Overall, by distilling issues among different perspectives, the spectrum of possible solutions and/or theoretical approaches becomes clearer. Additionally, the formalities of methodologies and epistemologies will help to sharpen learning skills, and narrow focus by acknowledging and moving past bias. Part of that focus is what Repko and Szostak term “telescoping down”, which is a “strategy that forces us to think deductively, to move from the general to the particular,” and then later we will understand “how the parts interact, and [...] identify gaps between the disciplines.”

As emerging scholars, the ultimate goal should be to see what has not yet been seen, to explore what has been missed.

—JONINA STUMP

The Powers of Poetry: Story, Symbol, and Incantation

The healing power of poetry has been apparent to many throughout the ages. Arguments to this effect can be made by informed poets at the drop of a feathered quill. The complications we face in life: the suffering associated with failed relationships, sickness, the deaths of love ones, and so on represent, in a sense, the beginning of the healing process. Writing or reading poetry can mark a commencement to such healing. Healing through poetry begins, as Gregory Orr contends, “when we ‘translate’ our crisis into language—where we give it symbolic expression as an unfolding drama of self and the forces that assail it” (4). That is, by putting our suffering to page, we have given it a healthy distance from us as well as allowed a sort of reshaping rather than bearing it in an unresponsive way. A single step marks the beginning of a journey. Probing more deeply, however, it becomes evident that collective elements within the personal lyric serve to enhance and fine tune a poem’s healing power. In the following investigation, I will consider the questions of what these poetic rudiments are and how they work, both independently and cooperatively. Orr has it that “there are three abiding and primordial powers that shape language into poems: . . . story, symbol, and incantation” (94). The journey from the chaotic effects of trauma to an ordered understanding, or making meaning, is accomplished through setting symbolic stories to incantatory rhythms. I would argue that a study of these fundamentals may reveal some instructive possibilities concerning the making of lyric poems. Following Orr, I shall explore the poetic essentials of the power of story, the power of symbol, and the power of incantation.

The Power of Story

An examination of the element of story may offer clues as to how we can create our lyric poems to be more powerful. Perhaps the most revealing and persuasive means of communication between people is the relating of stories. For instance, I could tell you that my Uncle Larry is a great car salesman. At this, you might shrug as if you are not convinced. Or I could tell you the story of how he sold twenty cars in one day, two of them to passersby who did not even know how to drive. In this case, the focus of the story is Uncle Larry's prowess as a salesman, and *focus* may be the central element of story. This story not only lets us know something about Uncle Larry, it also lets us know a little something about the world in which we live, of our societal values, of how we in the U.S. tend to honor those who perform well in their occupations. As the theorist Jerome Bruner might say, it helps us to "make sense of the world" (qtd. in Orr 95), which is another way of saying that through storytelling, we are establishing an ordered mindset in the face of disorder. In writing lyric verse, opposed to prose, the focus of our poems is particularly important because, as Orr points out, all that does not reflect the focus is "stripped away, and meaning is compressed into action and detail that reveal significance" (95). The final version of the lyric poem, then, is a scaled down portrait of the poem's thematic focus.

While maintaining focus is imperative, conflict is another essential element of story. In personal lyric, nearly always there is conflict, often with someone. Someone close to us has hurt us in some way, is sick, or has died. This conflict does not have to be that *outlaw meets sheriff at the O.K. Corral* kind of dramatic action. In the words of Orr, "Merely introducing two pronouns into the opening line of a poem creates the tension essential to story" (95-6). That "I" and "you" tends to have the effect of drawing readers in because they naturally place themselves and their own situations into the equation. Cindy Goff's "Turning into an Oak" is a good example of the merging of focus and conflict:

I looked down at my husband leaving me.
I'm seventy feet taller than he is now.
The bones in my arms splinter into thousands of twigs;
my legs grow together and twist
into the ground. It doesn't matter
where my car is parked or where my house keys have fallen;
I no longer care what I weigh.
I am sturdier than a hundred men.
From up here I can see Cape Cod,
shaped like a lobster tail.
I watch my husband become a speck

and consider how I'll miss
being touched. (108)

Nearly anyone could relate to the “I” and “you” in the first line of this poem; that is, any lover who has suffered the pain of a breakup. The conflict becomes apparent in line 1 and lies with the speaker and her husband. The focus begins to reveal itself as the message from each of the following lines meld into a single shattering idea: that empty, disheartening feeling we get when we are suddenly alone after having become used to being together with someone. Not a single line or word in this poem veers from this focus. If one did, as Aristotle reasons, it should never have been there in the first place, “for that which makes no perceptible difference by its presence or absence is no real part of the whole” (1463). The conflict between speaker and husband is not resolved in the poem; rather, the conflict merges with the focus. The husband becomes “a speck” and is gone. That which remains is the speaker with an inner conflict, which could well describe the true nature of the heart of all personal lyric.

It is true that the focus of a lyric poem is usually on an idea, but this idea, however tragic, would do well to be grounded on a metaphoric center. While it is true that the story in a lyric poem evolves in a narrative fashion, it also, as Orr insists, “wishes to disclose meaning by focusing on something central and leaving out peripheral details unless they reinforce the central subject” (98). Goff’s title, “Turning into an Oak” offers a barefaced clue as to her metaphoric focus. In line 2 of Goff’s poem, her speaker has suddenly grown to an enormous height. In line 3, her arms transform into branches. In line 4, her “legs grow together and twist / into the ground” (108). Goff’s thorny language, that of splintering arms and nothing matters anymore confirm that she considers the metaphor of becoming an oak to equate with the hardhearted nature of her speaker’s newly found single situation. In reflection, Ariel, in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, was not turned into a tree, but was confined “into a cloven pine; within which rift / Imprisoned [he] didst painfully remain / A dozen years” (1.2.77-79). I bring up the Bard because of the possibility that becoming a great oak could be seen as a metaphor for a good thing; however, this is not the way I read Goff.

While abstract ideas have their merit in certain forms of narrative, it is the concrete details that give lyric poems their power. William Blake emphasizes this idea in verse: “Labour well the Minute Particulars:” he writes, “attend to the Little Ones; / . . . / He who would do good to another must do it in Minute Particulars. / General Good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite, and flatterer; / For Art and Science cannot exist but in minutely organized Particulars” (Blake). It is usually crucial that lyric verse be written using specific details from title to the

final line. Goff's title is not only precise, but it suggests the metaphoric center of the entire poem. As for concrete sensory details, her depiction of seeing "Cape Cod, / shaped like a lobster tail" presents a visual image that is novel and unique. As Orr notes, the "who, what, where, and when" (100) is organic to most all good writing. This includes lyric poetry! Goff shows in very specific detail the who: speaker and husband; the what: husband left speaker lonely as a tree; the when: the present; the where: at their house near Cape Cod. All these minute details merge to form a cohesive, barebones, and stirring portrait of experience. But they do so much more: such as, fill with affirmative narrative the place where silence might turn into shame or fear and rob us of our present experiences.

The Power of Symbol

While story is often the primary vehicle that carries lyric verse right through to its ending, the narrative is commonly rife with symbolic meaning. Some poems, however, seem to state only the trauma of an experience, offering no solution, no enlightened realization, no healing. In fact, these personal lyrics would seem to affirm the disorder, letting it into our minds and lives. Yet Orr insists "that it is precisely by letting in disorder that we will gain access to poetry's ability to help us survive. It is the initial act of surrendering to disorder that permits the ordering powers of the imagination to assert themselves" (47). In essence, the mind, when it confronts chaos in narrative, begins to allow compensation to occur, like a person who loses one eye, and the remaining one compensates naturally by developing a wider peripheral range of sight. As Fox asserts, there may be some growing pains to deal with here, but "poetry can be a safe guide, a wise presence, so you don't feel alone while moving through the inevitable dark place in life" (29). Bottom line, in lyric poems, such recompenses happen due to the symbolic language in the narrative. Marie Howe's "The Dream" is a good example of just this kind of personal lyric:

I had a dream in the day:

I laid my father's body down in a narrow boat

and sent him off along a river bank with its cattails and grasses.

And the boat (it was made of skin and wood bent when it was wet.)
took him to his burial finally.

But a day or two later I realized it was my self I wanted
to lay down—hands crossed, eyes closed

—oh, the light coming from down there,

the sweet smell of the water—and finally, the sense of being
carried

by a current I could not name or change. (83)

In Howe's poem, the speaker dreams of sending her father off on a watery burial, but the conflict becomes apparent when, "a day or two later [she realizes] it [is her] self [she wants] / to lay down—hands crossed, eyes closed" and cast off upon the river of expiry in that small boat. The speaker and her father exist in a state of dramatic tension, connected undeniably by the poem's focus: the idea of letting go to that impenetrable death experience. As far as the narrative alone is concerned, this is all we have to go on. However, to come to an understanding concerning the healing effects of the poem, we can look to the symbolic language for clues. The biblical story of baby Moses comes to mind. As an infant, in order to save him, he was placed in a small boat and hidden among the grasses and cattails "beside the bank of the Nile". (*Complete Bible*, Exod. 2.3). Is Howe's poem, then, about saving the speaker's father? I think not because it is the speaker herself who desires death, so she really wants to save herself, but from what? The symbolic language Howe uses to describe the father's death ark may provide clues: "(it was made of skin and wood bent when it was wet.)". This wood covered in skin could be symbolic for the body, and the fact that it is wet and bent could describe some form of trauma (both *wet* and *bent* tend to possess negative connotations) which would explain the speaker's obsession with death, both her father's and her own. The death Howe describes for the speaker is not a dark and scary death; on the contrary, it is one of surrendering to a state of illumination accented by the sensory image of "the sweet smell / of the water." Howe's speaker puts her faith in an afterlife myth associated with being carried along safely on a river of patriarchal benevolence, an experience she had not found in life. So, the poem confronts a trauma associated with the speaker's father and fills the vacuum of silence allowing her to regain her identity, or create one. Having reinterpreted her trauma metaphorically centered on a slow ride down the tranquil river of death, the trauma now has less power over her. The writing or reading of the poem stands in the place of an actual death. The speaker is free to live and write another day. What sort of trauma is Howe really writing about? I'd say there is not enough information to say for sure. Abuse, neglect, the father not living up to the speaker's expectations of what a father should be? Who knows? In basing such speculation on a few symbols, it would be entirely possible to get off the mark concerning Howe's meaning. Symbolic meaning tends to vary from reader to reader, and readers tend to respond to symbolic language in accordance with their own unique experiences.

It is very likely that most any given symbol will possess more than one meaning, or that the meaning remains ambiguous. The small boat

among the reeds and grasses is an ancient symbol, one that could hold a multiplicity of meanings. “All the meanings,” Orr writes, “do not and cannot emerge; they lurk still in the object/symbol, refusing to give up all their mystery to the need for understanding and explanation” (104). There could be a hidden meaning within an ancient symbol that we cannot recognize, or, moreover, meaning of which society no longer makes use. For instance, Isler, et. al point out that poetic incantation has been used throughout the centuries for not only relief of headache, but for the general maintenance health of all the body parts. Here’s a poem from an 8th century monastery at Lake Constance in Switzerland:

O King, o ruler of the realm,
o friend of Heaven’s hymn,
o persecutor of turmoil,
o God of the Heavenly Host!

In the first stanza, the poem repetitively and rhythmically invokes and calls on the Christian God. Today’s society certainly has a very good idea of the symbolism connected with God, but our ideas are very contemporary. The 8th century Westerners were very likely, as a whole, way more conservative in their outlooks concerning dogmatic Christianity, and so the symbolism, from their points of view, would necessarily be interpreted differently than most conservatives would interpret it today. Not to mention our societal liberal progression. I’ll move ahead to stanza 2 where God is called upon to cool “the noxious fluxes / that flow heated in my head.” We do know something of the symbolism concerning the “fluxes,” those excessive and flowing discharges associated with various health problems. But, again, medical conditions are looked at differently today than they were in past centuries. The third stanza of the poem takes the healing theme beyond the headache to other parts of the body:

that he cures my head with my kidneys,
and with the other parts afflicted:
with my eyes and with my cheekbones,
with my ears and with my nostrils. (Isle, et. al)

God is beseeched to heal and protect the individual parts of the body. Today, doctors would check all these parts but rely on scientific medicine rather than the spiritual for healing. I wonder if we have, in following science exclusively, found ourselves off the mark. At any rate, no one knows what all the body parts may have been symbolic of for the people who used this poetic remedy. Such symbolism is no longer needed. As society evolves, the minds of the people expand. As we learn more about the past, old meanings may become increasingly clear. New meanings will be discovered throughout the generations. Bottom line, we do not know all there is to know about symbols, but grappling with a

poem's meaning in light of its symbolic language is certainly one way of coming to a subjective understanding of it.

The Power of Incantation

While story and symbol merge to make powerful and healing expressions, it is through implementing incantation into our lyric poetry that we, like our ancestors, can confront the more serious traumas that come our way. Incantation, that rhythmic replication of poetic reverberations, according to Orr, "is like a woven raft of sound on which the self floats above the floodwaters of chaos" (106). The incantatory effects of a poem have to do not only with repetitive language, but also with rhythm. Rhythmic or musical verse alone can be described as incantatory, but when the element of linguistic repetition is added in the spirit of high emotion, the personal lyric becomes forcefully and dramatically puissant. American poet Edward Hirsch observes that "Incantation [is] a formulaic use of words to create magical effect" (Hirsch). "Healing Incantation," performed by Mandy Moore in the Disney movie *Tangled* is a good example of incantatory verse:

Flower, gleam and glow
Let your power shine
Make the clock reverse
Bring back what once was mine
Heal what has been hurt
Change the Fates' design
Save what has been lost
Bring back what once was mine
What once was mine (Healing Incantation)

In the movie, the animated character Rapunzel, voiceover by Mandy Moore, uses this incantation to heal the character Eugene's injured hand. I deliberately chose it because it presents an unobstructed view of incantatory verse; that is, it possesses no story and very little symbol and can be a universal panacea, effective in healing just about any trauma one could name. With her opening line, "Flower gleam and glow," Moore summons the healing light; common in many of the light religions such as Paganism, the light is representative of an omnipotent healing force. Right away, readers sense the rhythm or musicality evident in the prosody of the metered lines. Flower, of course, is symbolic of beauty, so the poet healer confronts trauma with the combined powers of light and beauty. "Make the clock reverse" seeks to bring the injured person back in time to where the trauma had not yet occurred. Here I get a sense that this poem could be used as a charm against aging. Many feel traumatized by the effects of getting older, our beautiful bodies sagging and wrinkling before our eyes. The poem

probably would not stop this natural process, but it could possibly help to slow it down and certainly help a poet or reader to make the psychological adjustment to the change. After all, is it our young bodies that we miss, or is it really our youthful outlooks? We come to the beginning of the repetitive incantatory effect of the poem with “Bring back what once was mine.” Here, Moore is referring to ownership of wholeness. Things were good before, and she wants them to be good once again. The following lines all reiterate that which has already been stated: “Heal what has been hurt,”/“Change the Fates’ design,”/“Save what has been lost” are all just other ways of claiming that ownership of wholeness that was the norm before the trauma set in. In a sense, the repetition occurs throughout most of the poem, and then we get toward the ending with the reoccurrence of “Bring back what once was mine.” And then the final haunting, echoing ending: “What once was mine.” As powerful as Moore’s poem is, I cannot help but wonder if it would be all the more prevailing written in concrete terms and ripe with symbol.

Many popular poets write in just this rhythmic, incantatory style, Walt Whitman among them. Further, many of Whitman’s poems are also written in story form and packed with symbolism. Here is scene 18 of *Leaves of Grass*, which inspired Martin Espada’s latest book, *Vivas to Those Who Have Failed*.

With music strong I come—with my cornets and my drums,
I play not marches for accepted victors only—I play great marches for
conquer’d and slain persons.

Have you heard that it was good to gain the day?
I also say it is good to fall—battles are lost in the same spirit in which
they are won.

I beat and pound for the dead;
I blow through my embouchures my loudest and gayest for them.

Vivas to those who have fail’d!
And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea!
And to those themselves who sank in the sea!
And to all generals who lost engagements! and all overcome heroes!
And the numberless unknown heroes, equal to the greatest heroes
known. (18.353-63)

In the area of story, Whitman celebrates not the “winners” as many do in the U.S.—America, it is said, does love a winner—but the losers. The way I read Whitman, he does not celebrate the losers of battles because

he believes such people are ethically or morally superior. Rather, he celebrates them because he has realized the value of seeing everyone as being the same. He sees men as being the same as women, a very enlightened concept for his time, 1819-1892. He sees the so called physically normal as being the same as those with deformities. Those of color being the same as those of no color. Those of same sex sexual orientation being the same as those of opposite sex orientation. The list goes on and on. The man was a social justice warrior! I believe he realizes this sameness not because we do not have our differences, we do, but because, when we look to our likenesses, we begin to heal our differences.

Whitman's sketch is also packed to the brim with symbolism. Cornets and drums are symbols of music, that marching band sort of music played as a call to battle. Whitman describes it as strong music. Marching bands at sports events play fight songs to rally the spectators for the benefit of the home team. During the American Civil War both the North and the South used drummers and buglers on the battle field. Those sounds had the power to move soldiers emotionally to the place where they were willing to kill or be killed with musket, sword, or bayonet. In modern warfare we no longer bring marching bands onto the battle arena. But in the ceremonies before and after, those bands are still playing those celebratory songs. All this from Whitman in one symbolic line. Whitman, of course, gives us a new slant on old symbolism. His idea is to raise readers' spirits for the benefit of those who lost their battles, that ship of a person's life that sank into the sea of oblivion, that forgotten soul. Whitman seems to believe that the losers of battles are just as important to remember and celebrate as the winners, that, effectually, those who lost are the same as those who won because they share a commonality of spirit.

The incantatory effects of Whitman's verse begin in the first lines with the rhythmic ordering of words. "The presence of rhythmic patterns," according to Harmon, "lends both pleasure and heightened emotional response, for it establishes a pattern of expectations and it rewards the listener or reader with the pleasure of a series of fulfillments of expectation" (416). Whitman seems to very generally use a rising rhythm beginning with his own combination of iambs followed by anapests, terms which refer to particular schemas of stressed and unstressed syllables. I would say this rising rhythm works so well in this case not only because of the repetitional effect of the metering but because those reoccurring couplets also raise the scene to a final climactic quintet. And, in that last stanza, Whitman uses actual repetitive language: *And to those, And to those, And to all, And to* accented by

three exclamation points drives the incantatory effect of the entire scene to an explosive peak.

Conclusion

I have followed Orr throughout this inquiry, and it seems on point to relate, in conclusion, his personal statement concerning the healing effects of poetry. Early in his life, he experienced a great trauma; being responsible for his brother's death. Of course, he suffered emotionally for a number of years before he found poetry. On finally finding his way to poetics, he gives the following account:

I wrote a poem one day, and it changed my life. I had a sudden sense that the language in poetry was 'magical,' unlike language in fiction: that it could create or transform reality rather than simply describe it. That first poem I wrote was a simple, escapist fantasy, but it liberated the enormous energy of my despair and oppression as nothing before had ever done. I felt simultaneously revealed to myself and freed of myself by the images and actions of the poem. I would certainly argue that such liberation from the energy of despair could only promote healing. Continuous worry without reprieve seems like a sickness in itself. This might well be another topic to take up in a future study citing healing poems from various sources.

At any rate, in considering story, the question comes to mind of which comes first, the abstract idea or the concrete details describing it. Good poems possess both. Perhaps this is not an either/or question. Perhaps in looking through the prism of our poet-self, it is essential that we remain open to discovering a priori ideas as we experience life in the concrete. I think, however, that every particular experience, no matter how seemingly trivial, is in reality central and necessary. It is the poet's job to understand this and help others to understand as well. With an idea and a set of details in mind, as we write within the scope of some particular metaphor, those rudimentary symbols will appear quite naturally. In revision, we can shift those raw stones of symbolism into likely places where they can be polished to a glossy finish. Last, as we set our verses to a rhythm for incantatory effect, it may be helpful to be familiar with the various metering techniques, but it is through sounding out our lines that the arrangements are composed. We must write in a solitary cave in order to do this else we be thought insane by passersby.

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DR. DANA KROOS

ARTWORK/POETRY

How to Find a Blackhole in Your Kitchen



Seating for Four Series: How to Find a Black Hole In Your Kitchen Table; How to Understand Acoustics, How to Drink Tea in the Colonies, How to Fix Broken Toys, How to Know God at the End of the World, 6' X 8' X 27", stoneware, 2008

I.

My brother's fourth grade science report:

*A black hole happens when a large star dies and becomes as small as a pin, but still has the big-star stuff.
Its gravity is so great it will suck you in.*

Even light can't escape.

Beneath, a drawing:

dark marker bleeding into lined paper, fibers saturated and separating like cloth.

II.

Two a.m. our mother
the kitchen, darkness
arms raised expecting
to catch the sky.

This is what the end looks like: sepia tones,
fish-like, Vaseline film with the sheen of
metal, sleeping.

Breath. Robe.

A quiet distance at two in the morning.

III.

Come.
Standing in the center of the room. *Shut your eyes.*
Spread your arm Fingers comb the air.

Feel the cold rising to your skin, heat condensing at your center,
the air sucked from your lungs.

These sensations may be slight. A black hole in the kitchen is
necessarily small, but no less destructive.

13

IV.

From afar, my brother calls.
He won't talk,
Best not to bother now.

She speaks of him, fourth grade,
the way she had to search his
room
night after night so that in his
sleep a black hole would not
inhale him into darkness and nothing.

She has a knowing smile.



Seating for Four Series: How to Find a Black Hole In Your Kitchen 28" X 8' X 24", stoneware, 2008



V.

When you are too weak to stand, you
can also find a black hole like this:

Sit where you can rest your head,
close your eyes, slow your
breathing.
Your heart will beat in your
ears. Your muscles will tense,
feel gravity pulling from the
center of your body.

Then it will draw you in.

KROOS

THE BURGEO GUT

When I was dying
You spoke to me in low whisper,
a tremble, the shadow of a city sunk
beneath a swallowed coastline, in dammed reservoir.
Above: the trample of industry, diesel motors, electricity.
Below: the ebb and flow of breath and migration.
I should have been thinking of survival, flight,
but I was enchanted by the sun
slivered into shards so small.

You waited.
You called.
The womb-shaped bay, the strangled umbilical chord
choked before it reached the sea. I heard you
though your words were only song.
It did not matter what they said,
the meaning was ours

Who would have thought we would travel so far
to meet an end in shallow water?
The majesty of the deep released
in last exhale, a curse
upon those who took so much,
and blessing for a humble shore.

Seating for Four Series: How to Understand Acoustics

BurgEO Gut detail 11" X 13", slip-carved stoneware, 2008

KROOS

HOW TO KNOW GOD AT THE END OF THE WORLD

I.

Wait.

In silence a pulse rises.
Breath solidifies.

Feet wash in numbness.

A voice:

*This is how it
feels to walk on
water.*

You will fall;

You will think you are falling.
Sky and earth collapse.



16

II.

1999, religious cults predict apocalypse—
the promise of the new millennium.

But I am in Australia—a forgotten land.

Sydney prepares for the Olympics.

I hope for computer failure to erase student debt. Surfers
paddle out to sea. The Blue Mountains burn—

a children’s game gone-wrong. Oil-
filled trees erupt. Smoke spreads the
smell of peppermint and wet fur.

Amid chaos a Canadian tourist vanishes
Rescuers find a trail in the Outback—
one sock, the other.

When they discover his
bible, they predict: he is
dead.

III.

Posted.

If lost: 1. Stay still

2. Preserve energy
3. Wait

IV.

I had nowhere to go. At an age— too old
for home, too young to find a way.

I wandered the beach collecting glass shards like seashells, poking
jellyfish—helpless and deadly.

I should have been looking for jobs.
I was watching the way shadows
flowed from the downtown traffic, to
the lilt of strand, then out to sea.

V.

Things are heavier in the desert.
The desert opposite the moon—buoyancy an anchor.



*How to Find a Black Hole In Your Kitchen Series: How to Know
God at the End of the World, 13" X 13" X 27", stoneware,
2008*

17

A towel over the head shields the sun.
Boots covering ankles protect against snakes.
Keep your eyes away from the sand.
Breathe through your nose.
Stay clean.
Carry only what you need.

VI.
Recovered, the tourist carried a likeness.
Desperate. Euphoric. Thin.
Ghost-like. Made of clay. Hollow.

I thought of a man I'd seen years before
standing waist-deep in cold water, his
business suit clinging like a second skin.

The whale, beached in his arms.
Their breath escaping together—
steam at the water's surface.

VII.
I left Australia before the New
Year, before the end of the world,
before explosions of fireworks,
stocking of water, hoarding of food,
building of shelters, praying to and
forgetting God.

I thought of the man who
could not move the beast.
The beast who could not
comfort the man.

This is how we are cast-out
and dragged-in.

HOW TO FIX BROKEN TOYS

I.

If the paint scraped away leaving an eye without definition, or a hinge loosened a limb, or “the head popped off,” these things are readily fixed:

Sharpie, paperclip, twist of hand.

If it is something more: translucent plastic cracked, hair torn from pin-sized follicles; eyes gouged in or out—this requires different care.

II.

When my dad remarried he began sending our childhood belongings in cardboard boxes softened with mold and damp. He included messages: “Here you go,” “Thought you might want these,” “Hope things are great.”

He needed to make room, we knew, for his new wife, her children in their twenties, but still younger than us. They didn’t want our toys.

My brother and I did not want them either—childless, nomadic, city-dwellers short on space. We left the boxes seeping smells of our once-upon-a-time home.

III.

A friend comes to stay.

In tow: a three-year-old left by her mother.

They arrive with the clothes on their backs, a favorite stuffed frog, a book about a dinosaur, a princess crown.

“They let anyone have children,” says my friend. I present boxes of toys.

IV.

Our father did not forget, but never knew which toys were mine, which my brother’s.

In the mail my brother receives the china tea set;

I find the Marvel figurines.



Dysfunctional Toy Series: Express Yourself;
8" X 5" X 14"; stoneware, moveable wire
parts, screws, decals; 2005

KROOS

20

The three-year-old cradles
Wolverine and Spiderman,

“This is the mommy, this is the daddy.” By afternoon she
has snapped leg from body, an amputation below the knee.
After years of battle-

play, Spidey is bettered by a toddler. In jest my brother will
smash my teacups, pink flower-patterned china in shards.
We have long abandoned these,

run from our house— before our father kicked us out.
Before he remarried.
Before our mother died.

We are Hansel and Gretel, raised in the woods, in the
gingerbread house, by things more misguided than wicked.

Such a strange delight to be malnourished on candy, how
jealous was everyone we told, but also: the entrapment,
slavery, seduction. And worse,

the things we did: telling lies, playing tricks, pretending to
be what we were not, escape through that push into that
firey oven.
We emerged from the woods scorched and starving.

V.
“Fix it,” the three-year-old says to me,
Spiderman in one hand, leg in the other.

Some broken toys cannot be repaired. New stories must be
told.

A hero is born: one-legged, lighter, impeccable balance.

“Look at him,” I say. He stands like a bird.
“Now he can fly.”



*Dysfunctional Toy Series: Treatment
Options; 12" X 16" X 34"; screen-printed
stoneware, screws, wire, railroad stakes,
2005*



22

As much as it is about offering the right thing at the right time— predicting type, purpose, preference, need or desire—it is about being offered anything at all,

being considered, being known,

encountered by a stranger who says, “I knew you would be here,”

“I thought you might like this,”

“You look like you could use a good

_____.

21

VENDOR

In the one-seater at the bar in Deep Ellum, Dallas the vending machine takes the space of sink and toilet combined, offering tampons, condoms, BJ blast, clit ticklin’ bunny, pink-opal mini vibrator, purple feather nip clips, But no change.

It makes sense: everything you need for a night-out at a venue occupied by twenty-somethings serving both beer and wine in plastic cups.

So different than the machines in the entrance to the grocery store. Stacked, hip high, holding gumballs, stickers, temporary tattoos, plastic charms in opaque plastic eggs to occupy any two-to-eight year-old for the duration of a shopping list.

In the hotel lobby beside the ice dispenser the machines are in categories: “caffeinated beverages,”

“stuff you only eat on vacation,” “smaller versions of things you forgot at home.”

The pleasure of dropping coins through the slot, the privilege of selection, the anonymity of the machine, the magic of the correct arm twisting to release.



*Carved Urn Series:
Enough, 13" X 13"
X 31", stoneware. 2003*

HOW TO WALK ON WATER

I.

If it is frozen. Or shallow. Or thick with reeds.

Also, by dispersal of weight over space less than the pressure
of surface tension: Tension (T) =

_____ Force (F) _____

Length over which the force acts

(L)

II.

Devastating to see the world clearly, when the shore
becomes a marsh, eroded, beaten by storm and sea;
the piers of plank and metal; the house on the hill—
overtaken by mold— never enough for what we
needed.

Once we needed next to nothing.

“You eat like birds,” they told us. Proof
that we were avian waiting to grow
wings.

We played this was our island alone, the dock a concept
on the verge of completion, the house learning to grow
like a tree.

You believed it wholly. I
believed it also.

26

III.

Gerri·dae Pronunciation: \ˈjerə,dē\ Phylum: arthropoda Class:
Insecta Order: Hemiptera Suborder: Heteroptera

1. a family of insects with the ability to run atop the water's surface.
Sometimes called water bugs, water striders, pond skaters, water
skippers, Jesus bugs.

Always in summer

the water bugs,

legs outstretched

above to corners of a cross, bodies hovering
still reflections.



This is why

the stones skip, the glass overfills
without spilling.

Water

not one thing, but
many things
attracted;

children

holding hands,
singing,

Red Rover, Red Rover;

the brace

before impact,
the breath in unison.

You said, "magic."

You said, "hold your breath."

27

IV.

Some places exist in time rather than space.

Certain memories are constructed in collaboration. In the
city the rain hits the only window. My apartment floods.
The carpet sodden. I think of you.

You would have loved the outside
flowing in. You would have imagined
we were at sea.

You would have claimed

we could live an entire life treading water.



KROOS

Half-way above. Half-way
below.

But
the touch
so delicate
to that thin film of surface;

the stone never settles
long enough to sink.

V.

I could never hold when it mattered,
your palm clenched in my
palm. *Red Rover, Red Rover.* I
feared

the collision; the pain of
the chain broken so much
greater than that of release.

I promise, this is not a coffin, but a
boat; beneath the ground there is a sea
with islands the shape of clouds racing
across the water.

Harry's Last Trick (Or the Death of Magical Thinking)

1.

The most innocuous way to begin this story is to tell you that I hit a dog. This happens to hundreds of people every day with not much recourse. Yet, I had somehow avoided this sad fate for forty-three years. The requisite guilt was intensified by all of my years as a non-dog killer. The morally upright person that walks around during the day doesn't hit animals. The only marginally aware, emotionally consumed, and half blind idiot apparently does. I don't know if this story has any clear "moral," but that might be a good one.

2.

I started this story off in a manner that I referred to as "innocuous." Now I would like to fill in that skeletal portrait with a few (possibly) hard to believe details. I will begin by describing the car that I was driving on the particular night of the accident. This would be a standard issue 1975 Volkswagen Beetle. (These, obviously, are better known in popular language as "Bugs." The cars that were shamefully clunky and unloved until Walt Disney gave one of them a human consciousness and mediocre cast mates). My "bug" was originally the conventional color of yellow.

Many years ago, I had repainted the hood and body to look like a person wearing a tuxedo. The hood was the bowtie, shirt, and jacket while the rest of it was the body of the suit wearer. A black “top hat” I had fashioned out of Plaster of Paris completed the “suit”; this was secured to the roof of the vehicle. I had wanted to finish this transformation by attaching a mannequin arm holding a magic wand to the passenger door. This had been done, and resulted in a rather costly ticket because the city court was convinced it was a “hazard.” (I even spent an hour arguing with a judge about that arm. My defense entailed me stating that it “brought joy” to the thousands of city dwellers I passed ever day. This was clearly not successful, and the arm came off the next day. I would add that my suggestion to perform a few card tricks in the court room was also very poorly received.)

The arm with the magic wand should be a tip off to my profession. For the last twenty years, I have been a professional magician. The kind you see struggling to entertain children at various birthday parties, or laboring at “gigs” in the back of bookstores and libraries. If I am unduly lucky, I might get a slot at the depilated theater that holds events for “charity.” (I have never figured out who is benefiting from these said “events.” I just know that I can go home with a cut from the store. I can lay in bed and stare at the door money stuffed in my hot little hand and ruminate about having finally “made it.”)

The car had lived for much longer than I ever thought it would. Unfortunately, it was currently serving as my home when I ran mercilessly into my four-legged friend. The evening before I had returned to the place where I was staying and found the lock had been changed. I had been bunking in a friend’s magic shop (sleeping on a couch in the storage room). I have come to believe that this unhappy outcome was far beyond my control. I looked in the window after struggling with the door with several minutes. Everything was gone and the room was covered in a sickly white color from a nearby streetlamp.

You now have a solid picture of what the car looked like. Now I need to tell you about the beast itself. The mongrel in question was well over a hundred pounds. The pitch-black night obscured many other details (the most obvious one being the actual breed). The one detail that can’t be overlooked; the dog completely demolished the front of my car. There was an inescapable dent and a very large plume of smoke that followed the metallic crunch.

The damage is not the remarkable thing about this story. The fact that the dog looked directly in my eyes and then walked off very much alive is. I didn’t see where he went, but I got out of my totaled magic mobile with a purpose. I was off to find what was left of the dog.

3.

Here are a few details to consider as “setting the scene.” This was one of the coldest nights documented in a very long time. I got out of my car and realized that I was in a part of the city that I didn’t even recognize. Typical “urban” elements like telephone polls and brick buildings were contrasted by dirt alleys and unpopulated roads that led out of town. I was to discover that very few of the citizens of this area believed in leaving their lights on. (My imagination conjured up every explanation from devil worship to shameful nudity to explain why all the windows were dark). I was dressed in my “uniform” for shows. I had invested in a highly tailored suit that I had horizontally outgrown (my gut burst over the pant line). A back length red cape made out of velvet that collected asphalt as I walked had always complimented the suit. The red from the cape was most likely the only detail that the occasional driver could see with their headlights.

I always have painfully clear insights after a car accident. They don’t always have a logical succession, but they do have a sick sort of staying power. The first major one; my “career” in magic was probably over. My trademark (the bug) was permanently damaged and my income was not going to provide for a replacement. The very thing that got from one gig to another had committed suicide by dog. I might be able to salvage the material from the back of the car (old props, costumes, and the same “how to” books I had studied since childhood). All of that stuff was now horribly dated. When I was still living in the magic shop, I had caught a ritzy cable special of a much younger and hipper magician. The idiot had toys I couldn’t even imagine, not to mention a fully articulated light show behind him at all times. This was the sort of example I had been seeing lately of talent being only “optional.” The crowd was sedated by memorization and distracted by charm and showmanship. I just had the same old jokes followed by the plethora of tricks for eons now.

That is what led to another realization; there was nothing extraordinary about me. Magicians all over the country were doing various versions of my act right now. They were far from plagiarists, because every good magic show should have an element of the familiar. I just began to wonder if I had ever done anything completely unique. I wasn’t just talking about my show...I was turning over every unexamined aspect of my meek little existence.

My eyes kept scanning for the dog as I walked into the darkness. As I continued walking, the question: “Why?” popped into my head. I thought I could ignore it and move on. To make matters worse, I started imagining the word: “Why?” appearing like a neon sign

in front of me. The sign in my head would point to a formerly unspecified destination that would contain all the mythical answers I could possibly desire. What was the “why” really asking?

I didn’t even have to ask because I inherently knew. “Why magic?” I was about to discover when I turned another corner that I had become lost on a back road. Nothing looked even remotely familiar to me at this point. I started to turn around and walk back in the direction I came from. I found myself thinking: “Fine. I clearly have a walk in front of me. Why magic?”

4.

My very first memory has to do with a soup can that was on my mother’s kitchen counter. I was all of about two and a half years old; I can remember thinking that if I concentrated hard enough the can would move. The next image that comes into my mind is of the can being in a completely different spot. This wasn’t like watching a ghost drag a inanimate object across the counter. The can had very much been transported by what I saw as my own willpower. I know that any rational person can shoot this full of holes and I don’t need a believer. This was simply my own experience of what I thought I saw. This led to other incidents; causing the TV to turn off and on, causing the school bus tire to blow out, and even willing a black out during one of my bored school days.

I might not have thought I was directly responsible for any of it, but I couldn’t help but forge a connection in my mind. I was dreadfully bored during that school black out and just as my frustration reached its zenith: “Pop!” The bus incident was also similar; this was after I had grown to hate going to school. My younger psyche had been filled with various escape plans and a nagging, eventually all-consuming dread. What could be done to ensure that the bus didn’t arrive at school when we hit the end of the line? After all of the grotesque children had been collected, and the bus door shut for the final time...there had to be an escape. The moment I brought that thought into my consciousness the tire exploded and the bus was barely maneuvered to the side of the road.

What about the TV switching off? That mostly had to do with a leak my family had in the roof. I walked by one night feeling flushed with power and a giant torrent of rain came storming through the leak. The TV had been displaying a particular program I didn’t approve of and I took this as more circumstantial evidence.

These brief examples are all just previews for the main attraction. I have large chunks in my memory leading up to making this

decision. However, when I was sixteen, I decided that I desperately wanted to end my own life. There was a crumby bridge by my house that overlooked a marginally crowded intersection. I had written some self-indulgent poetry (in lieu of a suicide note) and stuffed it in a pocket. I figured that whoever found my mangled corpse might be able to read whatever was left decipherable. (There clearly wasn't strong logic operating inside me at this time). That particular night I arrived at the bridge around one a.m. and teetered on the edge. I read my bad poetry to the world and then got up the gumption to make the descent.

The miracle happened when I decided half way through the jump that I wanted to live. This is what I swear to you happened; a breeze came and redirected my ninety pound frame into a row of bushes. Don't get me wrong; I still attained several serious injuries (broken bones and a long gash across my forehead). That wasn't the point to me. I had once again willed myself to circumvent fate and ended up alive. That meant that I had some particular destiny here on the planet. I was supposed to do a 'GREAT THING' that I perhaps had yet to discover. (The phrase "GREAT THING" might as well be another one of my directionless, neon flashing signs.)

Then, after the bridge incident, I had to go away for a while...

5.

I was jolted out of my pleasant recollections by my first sighting of what I would refer to as: "The Mongrel." I suddenly spotted the dog hobbling towards a giant empty space in front of me. The space was populated by what looked like dark and misshapen structures. (I had a distant memory of a TV program I had seen once about elephant graveyards.) I stuck my hand up (almost as if I assumed the animal could see me) and started to run after it. As I approached the empty space, my eyes spontaneously adapted to the darkness surrounding me. I realized I was in the middle of a large dirt lot. The "dead elephants" turned out to be circus tents. I was in the middle of a traveling show that had obviously closed up for the night.

The Mongrel was nowhere to be found as I walked around the perimeter. I saw a couple of the carnies wandering around the corner and decided it was best to hide. I didn't want to go into a long explanation of what I was doing or why. I found a particular (and perfectly sized) spot to hide at the exit of one of the tents. That is when I noticed a smaller tent directly in front of me. The word MAGIC was displayed proudly on the roof and the tent was illustrated with pictures. There were magic wands, cards, dices, and a rather pitiful looking rabbit popping out of a hat.

I couldn't believe it; my "GREAT THING" was staring me right in the face. I knew the tent probably housed another performer. (One I assumed was infinitely more talented than I was). That didn't prevent me from walking into the unprotected entrance. I found myself in a relatively cozy environment with only about thirty seats and a small stage. The stage displayed a coffin and a saw (without the lovely assistant). There was an oversized deck of cards on top of an ancient picnic table. There was also a velvet backdrop that hardly covered the canvas wall. I was home, and I decided to perform a few tricks.

I leapt up onto the stage and bellowed: "For my first trick..."

6.

"For my first trick..."

That was a very old line in my life from when I first started doing tricks. That was after I went away for a while to The Place Which Shan't Be Named. I found myself surrounded by human beings in various stages of emotional turmoil. We were all constantly on watch by a man I liked to call "The Specialist." The Specialist was a dry humored, bald, and overly diplomatic man that we all had to spend at least an hour a week with. The other half of the time was spent with the Specialist and the rest of us seated in an awkward badly formed semi-circle staring at each other. I was never quite sure of how any of this was supposed to translate into anything productive. I wonder if we all were led to believe that a cure would present itself at just the right time. The good news was that we had the evening (mostly) free and there was a wide selection of books.

I was having one of my bouts of sleeplessness when I decided to go wandering the halls. There were various bookshelves tucked away and completely ignored in just about every corner. The books and shelves collected more and more dust as they were spread further out. I eventually got all the way to the end of one of the hallways and found a case with a single book. By this point, I was in almost complete darkness with nothing but a bit of moonlight shining through the venetian blinds. I attribute that fact to my motivation for picking up this oddly orphaned volume. In any other circumstance, I would have turned a blind eye and kept on walking.

The moonlight fell on what I perceived to be a diagram that held little appeal. That was before a bit more study illuminated the fact that it was instructions for a card trick. That was enough for me to tuck the book under my arm and walk away with it. I was fortunate enough to have a room to myself. (That had to do with my last roommate having an unfortunate encounter with the ceiling and his shoelaces.) I could

flip on the light at random and read for many hours on end. I found entire nights vanishing under the influence of obscure “magical spells” and slights of hand. This allowed me to sleepwalk through just about everything else.

The final culmination in becoming a magician was to give my first real show. I was pleasantly surprised that the Specialist was all for this “opportunity.” He even donated me an hour or so on the cafeteria stage after our “medicine” break. I found myself performing magic tricks in front of a bunch of zonked out patients. There were two sizable takeaways from this particular experience. The completely unreceptive members of the audience were hazing me for the future. I also did a full out stumble when I first took the stage that brought down the house. This was the unintentional creation of a personae; the bumbling idiot that was at least marginally competent. I would go about pretending that I didn’t know what I was doing. That would make the pay off of each magic trick a surprise. All of these events seemed accidental until I thought about it later.

My mysterious streak of self-appointed “luck” was continuing. I was “approved” to leave The Place Which Shan’t Be Named. I was never to lay eyes on the Specialist again. He might not have been visibly present, but he was forever in my thoughts in a nightmarish way. The voice of unintentional deterrent is a pleasant way to refer to him. I always have his voice in the back of my head saying: “Is that really such a great idea?”

7.

The small stage I stood on was now consumed with a wash of magic supplies. I had found a stack of boxes stuffed in a corner. Each one of them had been badly taped together and was clearly overflowing with the tricks of the trade. I had started to perform almost on autopilot. I was only dimly aware of stage lights slowly rising on me as I did my usual “competent idiot” act. I didn’t even notice a dark figure seated at the end of one of the aisles. That might have continued if I hadn’t heard oddly incongruous applause after one more card trick. I looked out into the darkness.

That is when I saw a familiar face; the Specialist was watching me intently. I couldn’t mistake the face or the antique pair of spectacles. The only thing that had changed was that he was wearing a clown suit. There was even remnants of white make-up around his eyes (he didn’t finish cleaning himself up). I looked directly at him and he exaggeratedly clapped again. I was so dumbfounded that I had to wait for him to speak.

“You’ve gotten better,” the Specialist said.

“Was I bad before?” I said as I walked towards the edge of the stage.

“You were...unformed,” the Specialist told me.

He got up and walked towards the edge of the stage and I helped him up.

“Why the clown suit?” I asked.

“Sort of a childhood ambition,” he said.

I had never noticed a beach ball that was rolling around on stage. (I fully acknowledge the fact that it might have always been there I just hadn’t noticed it. That is a completely unimportant detail to me). We started to pass the ball back and forth in a standard game of catch. That was until the game mutated and the Specialist must have grown a new set of limbs. The man was infinitely more agile than I ever could have imagined. He would dart from one point to another and I could never quite locate him. I would toss the ball into the darkness and watch the clown suit materialize out of nowhere. The ball would plummet back into my arms and simultaneously release itself. I found that I could dash away just in time to catch the ball at another location.

The ball finally landed and my feet and I didn’t have the inclination to toss it again. The Specialist appeared out of the darkness and started to cradle the ball like a baby.

“When did you ever want to be a clown?” I asked, out of breath.

“More of a direct route to happiness,” the Clown informed me.

“How so?” I found myself sitting down.

The Specialist sat down next to me, still holding the ball for dear life.

“What I did,” he started to explain, “There’s theories and techniques. There’s charts to follow. But clowns make people laugh.”

The Specialist smiled, which was also something I didn’t know he could do. He eased the ball into my lap and pushed it down with his hand.

“I thought of a final trick for our act,” the Specialist said.

“What act?”

“The one we were doing just now.”

I wanted to push the ball away from, but found the same kind of paralysis.

“Okay,” I said, “What is the grand finale?”

The Specialist looked me dead in the eye: “I want you to make this ball disappear.”

I placed my hand on the ball and concentrated. Wasn’t the ball just like my childhood soup can? I closed my eyes for a fleeting moment and felt the strangeness of the rubber. The ball wouldn’t recognize my

willpower. I didn't feel the cold air that my imagination desired. The emptiness that would signify that I was just as powerful as I had always assumed. When I opened my eyes, I found the dead looking beach ball staring back at me. The Specialist, however, was completely gone from the stage.

8.

I had vague ambitions when I got out of The Place Which Shan't Be Named. The title "magician" was wonderfully evocative but aimless. This trade, if you can call it that, doesn't have a clear path. There aren't clubs that people join or signs that sprout up on the side of the road that say: "Magicians Welcome." I didn't go to school; I just read many books and slept out in parks at night. That same crazy faith was with me at all times. The faith was made worse by the various wild and almost tangible daydreams. In my head, I had reached the absolute zenith of success.

Here is a sketch of that particular doubled headed monster. I had somehow found an abandoned house in my wanderings. The door was open when I found it and everything was relatively clean. This, in my crazed state, was now a wonderful place to "rehearse." This was directly after I had decided on my new nome de plume: "Harry the Magnificent." Have you ever created an alter ego? They give you a wonderful excuse to blame everything on a ghost. The skeletal, hungry version of me could say that "Harry" stole the candy bar out of the convenience store. "Harry" could have a total disregard for sleep when I spent all night pouring over magic books.

"Harry" was the person who transformed this house. "Harry" found various bright colors of paint in the garage and mercilessly splashed them on the white walls. "Harry" decided that he needed a bonfire in the living room to stay warm. "Harry" painted crude pictures on the walls of what should have been the children's rooms. Little by little, I imagined that the entire home was my stage. The original home started to fade away as "Harry" entertained his millions of adoring fans.

I would also tell you that "Harry" was the person who chased off the people who showed up to reclaim the house. I believe that "Harry" rushed at them and yelled at the top of his lungs: "Now I will make you all vanish."

9.

"Harry" was with me tonight. "Harry" was the one who started to decorate the stage. He pushed the coffin and saw in the center of the

stage. He was the one who made a vain attempt to clean the debris off his stage with his foot. “Harry” was setting the stage for a certain person to show up. I had rather ambivalent feelings about her, but “Harry” needed her to come. The question was how long both of us were willing to wait.

10.

I found myself wandering again after having to leave my house/auditorium. “Harry” would appear to me from time to time as the laziest travel guide who ever lived. He would be my guiding instinct when it was time to eat, sleep, or move on. I only have dim memories; there is a traveling circus, a few children’s birthday parties, and a disastrous appearance in the back of a bookstore. The wisest thing would have been to stay in one area and try to truly establish myself as a “name.” This just didn’t suit my dual personality. The best way to deceive myself (and “Harry”) of my mysteriousness was to show up as a foreign object in each new environment. I would perform (many times illegally) on various street corners. There was even a few times when my fear of the law got so great that I gave “late night shows.” The various non-human and human vermin would gather around me as I used streetlights as stage lighting. On some nights, there might only be five or six audience members. That mattered very little to “Harry” or myself because the applause always sounded deafening to both of us.

This was around the same time that I discovered that joy was an oddly tradable currency. People would take me in with no questions asked. There would be the opportunity to shower and stay two or three nights. My trademark suit appeared because I met a tailor with a few extra pieces of clothing. (The cape was his idea and it fit me just right with the exception of a few inches that trailed behind me. He even offered to correct it but I absolutely refused. This was, in my mind, part of the “Harry” gag. How does this idiot even walk around without tripping on his cape?)

My sense of time completely eroded while I was traveling. I can’t tell you precisely how long I was out roving. There was only the exact moment when it stopped cold. I had found some other anonymous city to wander through. I was right in the middle of scouting my spot for tonight’s late night show. I was crossing a bridge when I saw a pale skinned, black haired girl standing a tad too close to the ledge. She was wearing what looked to be a ball gown. This was not the most important detail; she had an elaborate pair of angel wings strapped to her back. The logical part of my mind knew this was just a costume. “Harry” was the one who saw her, as she would like to be

seen. The fact that it looked like she was about to jump off the bridge had not escaped either one of us.

11.

The inside of the tent felt like it had expanded. There were new rows of chairs that I hadn't noticed before. The stage grew in size; the interior of the tent (which had originally felt cramped) was now oddly cacophonous. The canvas on the back wall was slipping down and starting to reveal some kind of poster. I walked away from the coffin and saw towards whatever the piece of the art was. I was about to find a piece of artwork that I had fashioned years before. The woman I just told you about stood on the bridge with her wings. She faced the onlooker with a radiant, death-defying smile. I had illustrated her standing under a streetlamp just in the way I used to. The younger version of me stood next to the woman. That's when I was reminded of the unfortunate truth that I was once considered handsome. The obscene handsomeness canceled out the over all ludicrousness of the magician's costume.

Bold lettering at the bottom of the picture read: "Amelia Flies!" I checked to see if I could find a date for this performance. (The date of the original performance had long escaped from my memory). I finally found the date hidden at the very bottom of the picture. That is when I found tonight's date staring at me in the face. There was no other way than to see that as the final sign; Amelia was going to be here soon. I had started to feel my anticipatory nervousness when the picture shifted. The reflection surface of a mirror replaced the two figures and the magic proposition of flight.

I can't remember when I had made the habit of intentionally not looking at myself. Perhaps I had begun to assume that a youthful profession would keep me from the ravages of age. That was not going to be the case; I could only see remnants of my formerly handsome visage. Everything had unfortunately dropped or receded to an uncorrectable degree. My suit was severely distorted by weight gained over the long course of a life filled with health related neglect. The most disturbing thing to look for me was my own set of eyes. They have oddly changed to a darker, battle weary color of green. I looked like a person who physically couldn't stand waiting for another second.

How much longer would I have to wait?

12.

As you have no doubt gathered, Amelia was the woman on the bridge. The heroic piece of me felt the need to somehow intervene. I approached her and magically made a bouquet of flowers appear in my hand. I handed it to her and she accepted without giving me eye contact.

The very first thing Amelia ever said to me was this indicative statement:

“My dear, I’m not sure your magical flowers will ever quite be enough.”

“What would, then?” I asked.

Amelia turned her face to me and said: “Make me fly.”

Amelia was a classically beautiful woman with one minor exception. She had a long scar that ran from the top of forehead to the bottom of her nose. As I was going to find out, her explanation would change constantly for why she had this.

“How am I supposed to do that?” I asked.

“With your magical powers,” she retorted, “You do have powers, don’t you?”

“I would like to believe so,” I said.

“Use them now!” she exclaimed.

That is when Amelia hoisted herself off the bridge into the shallow body of water below. There was at least a brief moment I could have sworn that her wings organically flapped. I did everything I could to concentrate (much in the same way that I had on the soup can from my youth). I can’t really attest to how much help I was. The worries over my true abilities were canceled out as I rushed down to help the woman I had just met. I even went as far as to jump into the water without any concern for my suit or cape. Amelia surfaced from the water with any superficial injuries and an eerie smile. This was a regular practice for her (as I was about to find out).

I dragged Amelia out and set her on the ground.

“Magic doesn’t exist!” she proclaimed, before passing out cold.

That one line might have been enough to cement our history together. Disproving it became more than a hobby; it slid into the world of a deeply sick obsession.

13.

I realized the surface of the mirror at the back of the tent had faded. I was watching my first encounter with Amelia in front of me like some dreadful movie. I’m still not sure where the mirror shifted back and I could see the inside of the tent. The night was still very much in tact outside. The arena was cast in dull shadows that just seemed

senseless to me at this point. That is when I saw the mongrel I had hit wander into the space and to the edge of the stage. I bolted around to confront it and just saw a sad dog smile. The animal was still mobile and almost didn't look damaged. The only hint of the accident came in the form of blood dripping out of the mouth. I wanted to utter an apology and found myself unable to do it.

Then the dog was gone from the space. I walked slowly around the room looking for any sign of it. I walked back up on the stage and found the mirror flickering again.

14.

Amelia and I had found each other during another one of my bouts of homelessness. She offered to let me sleep on a dilapidated couch in her living room for an indefinite amount of time. I assumed that she wanted intimacy; instead, I was going to be subjected to months of not being touched by her. The constant denial of any kind of physical bond just made me more desirous of her. Whenever I made overtures, she would push me away and say: "No, I care about you too much."

Over the next few months I was going to discover that Amelia had "gentleman callers." They would show up at her home; each one looking more hopeless than the last. They were the absolute dregs of society; men with unsightly skin conditions, amputees, and those with an almost unfathomable sadness. She would pull them into her tiny closet-sized bedroom. If I didn't want to hear the sounds of their encounters, I would have to retreat to the hole in the wall diner below her apartment. There was a pretty waitress there who would take pity on me and give me free coffee. I would let it seep into my very being as I seethed about what I was denied. The fact that the waitress was paying me attention was completely lost on me at the time. (Sometimes when I can't get to sleep, I find myself thinking about the waitress and what become of her. I have invented numerous scenarios in which she has nothing but infinite security and happiness. The thought that someone is at peace helps me rest a bit).

What kept me there? That would be the nonsense of what was to be deemed our "project." Perhaps I should explain how Amelia's mind worked. She was haunted by a singular childhood dream about flying over a range of mountains. This was done completely without any kind of assistance (the way many of us fly in our dreams). She had a similar GREAT THING in mind to me. This led to a childhood full of near accidents; higher and higher surfaces from which to plummet off of. Somewhere in her lost years she started wearing the angels' wings as a trademark. The fundamental difference between Amelia and myself

was relatively simple. She had stopped believing, and I didn't understand how that could happen.

On the second night at her place, I found myself vowing to give her a functional set of wings. That led to months of scouring libraries for every kind of book on aviation. I discovered that I was capable of doing very complex mathematical problems. I even was to discover that I had somewhat of a gift for elaborate construction. I had to find a way to conceal all of the mechanical inner workings of the wings in the right amount of feathers. The wings, in turn, had to look naturally attached to Amelia's tiny body. The last pair I was ever to produce was almost credible as a real set of angelic limbs.

I was to discover that this was mostly "baptism by fire" work. Each new pair of wings had to be subjected to a number of rigorous tests. Amelia would hurl herself from a high surface with frantically flapping arms. I would use this as an excuse to "catch" her. By the time we developed the last set of wings, a strange and miraculous thing occurred. Amelia stopped flapping and flew for a magnificent thirty seconds. She glided to a safe landing on a nearby piece of dirt. I had closed my eyes and concentrated as hard as I possibly could; this time I let my desperation bleed out into the atmosphere. When Amelia and I looked at each other, there was a silent understanding that magic had been achieved.

The next few weeks were spent plastering the town with our "Amelia Flies" posters. This mystical event was going to take place on the same bridge where I met Amelia for the first time. I have forgotten most of the details of the actual day. I wish I could tell you how many people showed up. I even wish I could repeat word for word my introduction. My distorted memory would have me believe that it was one of the great oratory performances of all time. Truth be told, I can't even the sensation of giving it. The words left my mouth and then Amelia took her position on the ledge.

The next few minutes always expand in my mind to be longer than they were. Amelia flapped her wings, glided, and then crashed into the ground next to the water. I heard gasps from the audience as she became motionless. Her eyes closed, and I found my first impulse was to run. That's right; I didn't stick around to see what happened or how I could help. No one chased after me because there was a dying woman on the ground. The armchair psychologist could tell you that I didn't want my naïveté shattered. My steadfast dedication to belief in magic would have taken a severe blow. Was that really it? The fundamental truth is that I have no earthly clue why I bolted.

I stopped looking in the mirror after the last image of Amelia on the ground faded. The theater remained empty, and the stage remained silent. I could feel the sensation of disappointment as a knot in my stomach. I started to head towards the exit. That is when the tent was swamped with light. The seats were instantaneously filled with a crowd of well-dressed spectators. The sounds of wild applause deafened me. Through no action of my own, I found myself back on stage with a confidence I hadn't known before. The marginally competent "Harry" was nowhere in my body.

My voice boomed as I said: "We've all had impossible dreams! Dreams that haunt us with their impossibility. What would you do if nothing stopped you? Maybe you would fly!" As the last line bellowed from me, I saw an elderly woman with a pair of wings begin to flutter down from the ceiling. I would have recognized her anywhere at any age. This was Amelia; but her black hair had turned grey and her distinctive scar had gotten longer. Amelia's style of dress had gone from revealing dresses to what respectively looked like a hospital gown. The crowd loudly voiced its approval as Amelia whirled around the top of the tent. There were moments when she would just vanish into darkness only to emerge triumphantly in light. The vanishing act was supplemented with elaborate summersaults and mind numbingly excellent flips. The final trick consisted of Amelia coming to a dead stand still in mid-air. I could physically feel the audience holds its breath until she descended down to the stage. She bowed to wild applause that I thought would never end.

The entire time I watched Amelia's flying out with a professional distance. Her wings were even more realistic than anything I could fashion. They moved with organic grace and precise birdlike timing that I couldn't help but marvel at. I even found myself wanting wholeheartedly to believe they were real. They even folded up as Amelia went into a second bow for her delighted audience.

The lights shut off we were covered in complete blackness.

16.

I found Amelia and I engulfed in a floodlight that made very little else visible. I realized in the moment that a person's smile never changes. Amelia's was just as paradoxically distant and warm as it had always been. I felt my smile plaster onto my face as tears welled up in my eyes. She stole the exact thought from my mind as she began to speak.

"I was finally able to fly," she said.

“You fly beautifully,” I answered, “No thanks to me.”

“That’s unimportant now,” she said, reaching for my arm.

We walked together in the darkness for a while.

“Was it everything you expected to be?” I finally asked.

“I wouldn’t necessarily say so,” she stopped walking.

“Why?”

“The most satisfying feeling came after I landed for the first time. The knowledge that I could finally look back and know that some kind of miracle was achieved. You can’t spot a miracle when you are right in the middle of it.”

“I’ve been trying to my entire life.”

She laughed gently and touched my face.

“Have you still not done it yet?” she said, laughing.

“I keep thinking that I’ll be able to spot it. Be able to look around at the world transforming around me while smiling. I’ve spent so much time imagining it...shouldn’t I just be able to freeze time and know it when it comes?”

“No,” she said, “you should feel it in your gut. Here...”

She grabbed my hand and set it on the wings. This was just as I imagined it to be. There was no separation from her flesh; the wings moved underneath my nervous fingers. That was when she started to vanish from my sight.

“Wait,” I said, “how is this possible?”

“I stopped wishing,” she called back, “and then it happened.”

After that, Amelia was completely gone. I could just hear her laughing from somewhere in the pitch black. I suddenly realized how long it had been since I heard her distinct brand of chuckle. The one that accompanied every single part of our flying “work.” She would laugh at every single fitting of a new pair of wings. She would even chortle after thousands of rough landings. There was nothing that would ever stop her from a certain pleasing ironic distance. Was that why I did it all? Just to hear a beautiful woman laugh? The women that I just let vanish again from my sight.

The Specialist appeared out of the darkness dressed in his clown suit.

“Should I have just been a comedian?” I asked.

The Specialist just raised his eyebrow and snapped his fingers.

17.

I was back on stage again with the Specialist with the house lights up. I could see every one of the joy filled faces as they applauded. The

Specialist stood at a microphone stand off to my left and gestured at me wildly.

“Please applaud Harry,” he proclaimed, “Please applaud Harry the Magnificent in his final performance.”

Two words were clearly etched in my memory; and they were *final performance* I wanted to ask The Specialist: “Is this really it?” I knew from personal experience that I wouldn’t get anything back but a non-answer. I turned to another direction, and that is when I saw the dog again. The dog was laid on its side and breathed in a terminal sounding shallow manner. I turned around to see the Specialist nod at me to approach the dog. I turned my back towards the Specialist as I heard his authoritative voice boom through the microphone.

“For his last trick ever,” the Specialist said, “Harry will save the life of a dying dog.”

I found myself crouching down by the dog and putting my hand on its midsection. Hadn’t my entire life trained me to do the impossible? The journey that began with an innocuous can of soup was about to end. The crowd was relying on me to save this animal that my Beetle had such an unfortunate run-in with. I closed my eyes and tried to imagine the animal well. I attempted to imagine its entire life as the most blessed existence a dog could ever have. I extrapolated that this was a life the dog wanted to return to desperately. The only way to do that was to rediscover his vitality that was right at my fingertips.

Nothing happened.

I opened my eyes to discover that the dog was even more distant. The dog’s eyes were now closed and the body was even stiffer. My magical touch was not being summoned; I suppose that would lead more logical people to realize that it was never real. I was so much concerned with the discovery of my own delusions at the moment. If I couldn’t save the dog, what could I do in this moment? I took off my cape and covered the dog. I gave it one final pat on the head and then stood up to face the crowd.

“I couldn’t save it,” I cried out, “But I could make it disappear.”

I heard the crowd laugh approvingly and then begin a loud applause. The Specialist walked up behind me and put his hand on my shoulder.

“That was exactly the right answer,” the Specialist told me.

The crowd rose to its feet and I waved one last time and began to exit the stage. The lights snapped off again and I found myself in an empty tent. The space was back to its tragically original size. I could detect a few early morning sunrays streaming through the cracks in the canvas. My cape was still on exact same spot that I had left it when I covered the dog. At any other time in my life, I would have hurried to

pick it back up and reattach the thing to my suit. I knew that I wouldn't do that again as I continued to study it. That is when I realized that I wasn't alone.

A burly, tattooed carny was staring straight at me with a combination of confusion and menace.

"Old timer," he said, "I'm afraid I am going to ask you to leave."

"Just one moment longer?" I asked.

The carny shook his head and pointed to an exit. The frown was the most prominent thing I noticed as I took off my top hat.

"Maybe what you need most," I said, "is a top hat."

I jumped off the stage and placed on the hat on his head before he could protest. Then I rushed out the exit into the burgeoning sunrise.

Discourse on Anxiety: An Analysis of Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper"

Stories exist to act as a sort of virtual reality of the mind allowing readers to interact with various ideas and concepts that may require alteration. Altering the definition of what it means to be a woman in any society has become an important arena for consideration. In her short story, "Yellow Wallpaper," Charlotte Perkins Gilman captures the essence of this anxiety of definition in narrative journal format allowing a first-person view of the inner struggle and thought the process of self-identity. Discourse, in the story, can be observed to be divided in a very Platonic way in the conception of two social spheres representing the enlightened men and the ordinary women, doctor and patient, and husband and wife. Rather than placing women in a position to explore a self-realized identity based on education, Gilman's story divides men and women into distinct categories where dialog becomes the means in which to explore women's identity.

To streamline the examination of Gilman's dialog this essay will be divided into three distinct parts. First, the historical context of the place of women in the nineteenth century will be reviewed to better understand the place of the narrator as well as the purpose of the diagnosis. Secondly, a review of previous interpretations of the story will be considered in light of a Platonic interpretation of the story. Finally, the essay will examine discourse as a means of

understanding the place of women as being the domestic sphere which acts as a metaphorical cave.

Historical Context

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of reading any work of literature is to understand the social and cultural contexts in which of a story is set. While autonomous projection can serve a useful purpose for a contemporary interpretation of “The Yellow Wallpaper,” understanding the place of women in the late nineteenth century can also provide insight into understanding the story. Essentially, it is important to keep in mind that the story was not written directly for a contemporary audience, and that can change the overall meaning within the story.

The story, published in 1892, during an era that promoted the concept of “separate spheres” where men and women were moral, ethically, and politically divided (Hughes). The ideology tended to rest on hard definitions of “natural” characteristics of men and females. Women were considered physically inferior to men, but they were also considered morally superior to men as they never left the domestic environment (Hughes). Moral superiority was the quality that best-suited women to care for the “domestic sphere” where women would raise children, care for the home, cook, and clean. They also acted as a ballast to ensure that when men came home, they would not also bring the taint of the immoral public sphere with them (Hughes). Along with the duty of raising children, a woman who may have been middle or upper class would ensure that the servants were doing an adequate job in taking care of the domestic environment.

Women’s rights did not exist in any meaningful way during this era. Both law and public opinion supported the family as a patriarchal institution in which the husband, and father, was considered the only legal “person” in a household (Goodsell 13). While this may have operated to make the family a robust and coherent unit, it also legally recognized men as the land owners, property owners, and the owner of his wife and children (Goodsell 13). In fact, women’s rights could only be considered within the framework of separate spheres. There were many tracks, embellished with easy to remember poems, which encouraged the subservient behavior. It was audaciously titled “Women’s Rights.” These rights consisted of:

The right to be a comforter,
When other comforts fail;
The right to cheer the drooping heart
When troubles most assail.
The right to train the infant mind,

To think of Heaven and God;
The right to guide the tiny feet
The path our Savior trod.
The right to solace the distressed,
To wipe the mourners tear;
The right to shelter the oppressed,
And gently chide the fear...
Such are the noblest women's rights,
The rights which God hath given,
The right to comfort man on earth
And smooth his path to heaven. (Hughes)

Women's rights, then, were solely guided by the domestic sphere, and their foremost duty was to their husbands as they "smooth his path to heaven" in a "cheerful" manner (Hughes). It also highlights an economy where the woman's cares and concerns come last. Her first duty is to her husband, next to her children, then to God, and, finally, the oppressed. Not having any time for herself, the woman acts as a slave to her husband and the domestic environment.

Apart from being enslaved by social and cultural norms that dictated their vocation as raising the next generation, it was assumed that women did not seek sexual or emotional satisfaction. As William Acton declared, "the majority of women (happy for them) are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind" (112). When young women were finally married, they were united with men who were at least five years older. This served a dual purpose. First, it allowed a man to pursue an education that would provide a foundational income for raising a family (Hughes). Secondly, the age difference reinforced the perception of the natural hierarchy between the sexes allowing the man to maintain headship over a younger woman (Hughes).

While these marriages were essentially the enslavement of women, many women believed that they belonged in the domestic sphere. Graves wrote in 1841 that, "Fathers should be the patriarchal sovereigns, and mothers the queens of their households...The sanctuary of domestic life is to her (the wife) the place of safety as well as the 'post of honour'" (45,60). The French thinker Alex De Tocqueville was greatly impressed by the fact that in America, "the independence of women is irrecoverably lost in the bonds of matrimony" (245). While the single girl "makes her father's home an abode of freedom and of pleasure; the wife lives in the home of her husband as if it were a cloister" (245). Overall, women could be viewed as little more than property designed for the particular purpose of serving a husband as a nun might serve God.

Masculine Definition of the Narrator

Within the framework of the two spheres dichotomy, Gilman's story becomes a recognition of two separate worlds in the form of the physician or scientist, and patient. Contained in the title of "physician" is the complete history of Western Civilization. All man-made philosophy has elevated John, and all those who remain unblessed by Enlightenment education are those who live in Plato's cave watching shadows on the wall. It is from his position as a "physician of high standing" that allows John to authoritatively diagnose and, thus, define his young wife. He diagnoses the narrator with "temporary nervous depression" with "slight hysterical tendencies," but found nothing physically wrong with her (Gilman 138). In the absence of physical evidence of a malady, John subjected his wife to the "rest cure" pioneered by Weir Mitchell and applauded the world over for its innovation, seemingly only for men who would have dominated the medical field. The "cure" would only work, however, if key elements were followed:

...isolation, complete physical rest, a rich diet of creamy foods, massage, and electrical stimulation of disused muscles, and complete submission to the authority of the attending physician. All physical and intellectual activity is to be prohibited. A patient is to be lifted out of her own social and familial milieu and transported to a neutral environment tended only by a nurse and her doctor. (Mitchell)

Based on the conception of women as inferior in every way to man, the concept of the rest cure was designed to provide respite from regular domestic duties that had become a source of stress and anxiety. The removal to a neutral environment was intended to take all that was stressful from the woman's life. However, by the second page of the story, the narrator already feels helpless and frustrated in light of her husband's diagnostic declaration:

If... one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression- a slight hysterical tendency-what is one to do?...I take phosphates or phosphides- whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to 'work' until I am well again. Personally, I disagree with their ideas. Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good. (Gilman 138-139)

John has defined his wife, apparently, very publicly, and he has done so in such a way as to veto any self-identification from the narrator. If the unexamined life is not worth living then, John has examined the narrator's life for her and has decided that she requires more restriction

to heal. Further diagnostic definition becomes necessary on John's part to restrict the narrator as a thinking and creative being to relieve her anxiety.

Despite the fact that the narrator may know what is best for herself, she allows her husband to exercise his authority over her out of social obligation to her husband but also out of a sense of inferiority. Given the public nature of the diagnosis as being both declaratively professional and masculine, the narrator must adhere to the regiment despite the fact that she feels that something is wrong, but she is unable to contradict her husband. The narrator then becomes “unreasonably angry,” but she reminds herself that she is overly sensitive given her condition further allowing her husband to tighten the chains that enslave her to his person (Gilman 139).

The narrator reacts to the diagnosis by striving to define John. Her definition of her husband describes him as extremely practical to the point that he has no patience for faith, and he also has an “intense horror of superstition” (Gilman 138). She initially identifies him as a cold scientist, that believes only observable fact and cares nothing for feelings and less for imagination (Gilman 138). While John is representative of early modernist Enlightenment thought, he also embodies all of the Western philosophy. He is the Platonic prisoner set free from the cave through education, and he no longer looks at the world as shadows cast on the wall (Bloom 194). John can look at and contemplate the light of the sun believing he pursues the source of all knowledge (Bloom 195). All is illuminated and bright for John, and he is the enlightened man of science.

John's diagnosis of his wife's sickness as a nervous disorder is indicative of Enlightenment concepts of women. Her disorder is a product of the very fact that she is a woman and not a man. Rousseau said of women, “Consult women in all bodily matter, in all concerns of the senses; consult men in the matters of morality, and all that involves understanding” (59). Women, according to Hegel, also lack self-conscious reflection which would necessarily mean that women were weaker than men both intellectually and self-consciously as they would have not a human consciousness (Kant 78; Hegel). Finally, Kant describes women, while beautiful, as being intellectually inferior to men and not cut out for the work of exercising logic or engaging in complex thought (77-79). All of these definitions of women serve to illustrate the belief that not all were designed to crawl out of Plato's cave, and, in fact, only a handful of men would achieve the prestige of coming into the light.

As John is dedicated to reason, he decides to remove his wife from the stressful environment of the home and moves her out to the

country. However, his choice of location for respite is worth exploring. John rents a “secure ancestral hall for the summer” that the narrator also describes as a “colonial mansion, a hereditary estate” and, even, a “haunted house” (Gilman 138). Considering that women are part of the domestic sphere, it would stand to reason that remaining at home where everything would be familiar would have been a healthier choice. The narrator does not seem to appreciate the new surroundings, and she believes that there is “something queer about it” (Gilman 139). John shrinks her world to a minuscule cocoon meant to envelop and heal, but in so doing he has condemned her to the impossible task of recovering without thought or vocation enshrouded with the vestiges of the shadow of patriarchy.

The “hereditary estate” can also serve as the idea of secluding the narrator in the darkness of Plato’s cave. To this point, John has provided every definition by his education and gender. Now, as she has a kind of existential crisis he prescribes a remedy that would take her away from her home and into the country. Like the cave, the colonial mansion represents repression for those who are too uneducated or unworthy to be left to the steady upward slope toward the light of truth. The ancestral halls embody the shadow of patriarchy that casts shadows upon the wall to allow the narrator some little understanding of why the rest cure is necessary.

Not only has John chained her to a metaphor for the cave, but he also uses condescending childish language as a way to explain why she must stay in the house. He belittles her as a thinker and writer as he explains:

...that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency. (Gilman 144)

He also, out of frustration, reminds his wife of the domestic hierarchy:

My darling...I beg of you, for my sake and for our child’s sake, as well as for your own, that you will never for one instant let that idea enter your mind! There is nothing so dangerous, so fascinating, to a temperament like yours. It is a false and foolish fancy. Can you not trust me as a physician when I tell you so? (Gilman 147)

John not only controls the light of her life, but he also manipulates the statues that cast shadows upon the wall to help his wife understand what is best. She is not to imagine, but to be practical and willful, both tendencies that suit the masculine. When the narrator claims she is not feeling better, he tells her that she must get better, not for herself, but for him, their son, and that she just needs to trust him as a doctor. There is

no appeal for his sake as a husband, and she must become more like him if she is to heal.

The majority of healing in the narrator's case also means identifying within her domestic sphere. She is anxious and stressed because she may be trying too hard to be selfish and independent. The diagnostic relationship, rather than being therapeutic, serves to reorient her to the established social order. She does not belong to herself, and John not only continues to remind her that she does not belong to herself but he also never refers to her by name. He refers to her by very simple pet names such as “blessed little goose” (Gilman 141), “darling” or “dear” (Gilman 145,147), and “little girl” (Gilman 146). By not using her name, the narrator’s identity must attach to John to have an identity. Treating her as a child also serves to allow John the advantage of continual definition to the point that narrator can only identify herself by John’s dictates. While the narrator reacts negatively to these definitions, they still make self-definition much harder as she has undergone extensive re-description by the light of her life.

Self-Identity

While John defines the narrator using scientific language, the narrator fights to understand her personal identity. Given the rigid definition of women in her day, the narrator struggles to understand who she is. The conflict makes any definition bipolar as she swings from one extreme to the next in the space of a few sentences. One moment she describes how much she disagrees believing that “excitement and change” would be better than resting (Gilman 138-139). Above all, however, she strives to conform to her husband's wishes, but there is no rest in conformity. At first, she aims to become the expectation of her society, but the exertion is overwhelming:

... I take pains to control myself- before him, at least, and that makes me very tired...Nobody would believe what an effort it is to do what little I am able- to dress and entertain, and order things... (Gilman 139, 141)

The act of conformity to please her husband is a heavy burden that contradicts John's edict as a physician, but the narrator seems to recognize that it is the only way she will be declared cured and released.

However, no matter how hard the narrator strives to conform, she has nothing to occupy her mind except the contradiction and confusion of defining herself. The narrator allows the contradictory nature of her husband’s definition to oppose her desire for self-actualization. Ford notes that “but,” the conjunction of contradiction, is used fifty-six times in the short space of the story (311). Other words such as “and, so, only, besides” are also used as substitutes for “but.” Even though her thoughts

are written secretly on “dead paper,” the narrator seeks a small internal rebellion as a means of identifying separately from and contradicting her husband (Gilman 138). Having nothing else to occupy her time, the narrator begins to study the wallpaper as it reflects the confusion she feels.

With no other stimulation, however, the yellow wallpaper covering her room becomes her focal point. She reads it as she might read a book, and she wishes to interpret it as she is interpreting her life. However, she finds that neither makes sense. Just as the narrator is to be domestic, so too is wallpaper domestic and humble used to decorate a room or hide drywall or cover blemishes. Outside her domestic environment, however, the wallpaper becomes a nightmarish symbol of being trapped in her domestic life. Both become:

Repellent, almost revolting; a smoldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight. It is dull yet lurid orange in some, a sickly sulfur tint in others (Gilman 140).

Just as the yellow wallpaper has been warped and faded, so too has the narrator personified and projected her confused feelings onto that wallpaper. She feels repelled, revolted, and she smolders against the definition that John has assigned her, but she still finds no self-definition since she can only describe what she is not as John provides her singular self-conception.

Confusion over who she is can also be examined in the simple nature of her confinement. Her prison is a nursery, with rings on the walls, and bars on the windows (Gilman 140). The only piece of furniture in the chamber is a large bed that is immovable as it has been nailed to the floor (Gilman 144). Here rests another absurdity suggesting that she is a child, but the bed fixed to the floor also defines her sexual life regarding being beholden to her husband. The nursery has become a place of childishness as well as sexual slavery designed to keep her ignorant and subdued making her recovery an extreme return to Plato's cave.

Given the contradictory nature of her existence, and having no intellectual stimulation, the narrator studies and observes the wallpaper: ...by daylight, there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind...it changes with the light. When the sun shoots in through the east window- I always watch for that first long, straight ray-it changes so quickly that I never can quite believe it...by daylight it is subdued, quiet...in the day time it is tiresome and perplexing. (147,148-149)

While the sun subdues the wallpaper, it also becomes confusing to behold. What makes the pattern complicated may stem from two similar reasons. First, it could mean that the narrator is being exposed to the light of knowledge too soon and has no idea how to self-identify apart from John. Just as in Plato's cave, exposure to the light too soon may cause disorientation and confusion as the prisoner's eyes are not yet accustomed to the light and must only receive definition from her husband. Secondly, the wallpaper may be the narrator's confusion as she realizes that she is a separate self, and is uncertain how to proceed without a voice. During the day, in the absence of her husband, she can relax, her journal serves as her voice, and she writes with some certainty of opinion. There is no burden to conform in the same way as when John is present. In John's absence, the narrator seems to use the wallpaper to reflect on her identity and what it means to be an individual. In any case, the wallpaper becomes tiresome and perplexing as the narrator tries to force a definition of conformity upon it so that she may subdue it in the same way that she is subdued and wishes to overcome herself (Gilman 149).

While the narrator is unable to make sense of the pattern of the wallpaper under the light of the sun, she does discover that under certain dimmer lights she can make out a pattern. The moonlight, however, becomes the most helpful light as it reveals the true nature of the pattern:

By moonlight- the moon shines in all night when there is a moon- I wouldn't know it was the same paper. At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candle light, lamplight, and worst of all moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind them is as plain as can be. (Gilman 148)

Just as in Plato, Gilman uses the moon to illuminate what cannot be observed during the day. The narrator, then, can see the truth of the wallpaper, and the wallpaper's true nature is that of a prison. It may be the prison of her identity or freedom of choice based on the concepts of family and social structure that trapped so many married women of the nineteenth century. The moonlight unveils the nature of wallpaper identifying by night what becomes impossible to fathom by day.

Besides the bars imprisoning the woman, the yellow wallpaper is also festooned with other designs. The first designs that she makes out are the heads of many women, strangled, necks broken, and bulbous eyes that stare at her (Gilman 142). Those women who tried to escape the bars by forcing their heads through it were strangled and killed. It may be that this accounts for the rancid smell connected to the "yellow" of the wallpaper:

It is the strangest yellow, that wallpaper. It makes me think of all the yellow things I ever saw- not beautiful ones like buttercups, but

old foul, bad yellow things. But there is something else about the paper- the smell! I noticed it the moment we came into the room, but with so much air and sun it was not bad. Now we have had a week of fog and rain, and whether the windows are open or not, the smell is here. (Gilman 149).

The smell and the color may be tied to the idea of Gilman nodding to the mad woman in the attic in *Jane Eyre* as the segregation of the “other” where “yellow” can mean anyone who is not white (Lanser 428; Owens 77). While this is an excellent interpretation of the color yellow, I would suggest that the color yellow becomes so pervasive because it is emanating from the narrator. It’s in her clothes, her hair, and she notices it even when she is out riding in the open air (Gilman 150). Perhaps it has always been her natural smell, and it was accepted because she took her role and definition in society without question. Understanding that her definition does not come from her self-consciousness has allowed her to realize that she is part of the “yellow.” Perhaps the whole world is yellow apart from the patriarchs of the West who form the definitions of not just their society but the world. Women, ethnic minorities, gay and lesbian, and any who do not fit John's misogynist definition may be yellow.

While this may generalize the color yellow, it also includes all those who would continue to be yellow even today. Rather than making it a single group such as women or designing a concept of the Orientalization of the world from the color, it seems that any whose definition could be inhibited by a rhetoric of conquest and definition would fall into the category of the wallpaper. In the case of the narrator, just as in the event of all who may be yellow, a new self-conception takes drastic action. When the author finally does tear down the wallpaper, she liberates the shadow woman behind it, and they are united. She becomes so convincing that she bends John to her will. Having been out all night, John returns home to find the door locked, and no key. He calls for an ax, but the narrator stops him:

“John, dear!” said I in the gentlest voice, “the key is down by the front steps, under the plantain leaf!” That silenced him for a few moments. Then he said- very quietly indeed, “Open the door my darling!” “I can’t,” said I, “key is down by the front door under the plantain leaf!” And then I said it again, several times, very gently and slowly, and said so often that he had to go and see, and he got it of course and came back. (Gilman 154)

Being free of the norms represented by the wallpaper, the narrator can stay the hand of her husband from destroying the door with an ax. While it takes a repetition, John eventually leaves to find the key and uses it to open the door.

Finally, the door open, the discourse ends when John observes his wife creeping around the room. Creeping is an interesting word that means to go without being noticed. Throughout the story, the women of the wallpaper have crept, sometimes on all fours, but always the creep. They do so, it would seem, in order not to be noticed. Once they escape their prison and realize that they are human and intelligent, they have no desire to return. However, lacking a definition, the narrator seems to have gone mad. Finally, she has come from the cave, but she is just as confused as when she was confined, "I've got out at last...in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper so you can't put me back" (Gilman 154). John faints. Patriarchy has been temporary reversed, but she creeps over him (Gilman 154). She must continue to creep over him until he wakes. There is the idea that he will wake at some point since he's only fainted. Patriarchy is only temporarily suspended, and while he cannot put her back behind the bars of the wallpaper, at some point, she will have to be contained to return her to the healthy society of her day.

Practicality

Gilman's story represents an ongoing struggle for women as they seek to identify themselves separately from preconceived notions of the masculine social convention. Language can become the chains that constrain and require conformity to social conventions. One area that is rife with a similar dialog as Gilman's is the concept of extreme complementarianism. One such example is John Piper and his conception of living as a Biblical man or woman. On his radio show, he was taking phone calls answering questions and providing a view of what it meant to live as a Biblical man or woman. Piper accepted one particular call that interested me, and that was a woman who was interested in becoming a member of law enforcement.

Piper listened to the young lady, but his response to her was similar to reading the dialog of John as he berated and belittled his wife in his sarcastic, condescending fashion:

At the heart of mature manhood is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for, and protect women in ways appropriate to man's differing relationships. The postman won't relate to the lady at the door the way the husband will, but he will be a man. At the heart of mature womanhood is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive, and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to woman's differing relationships. (Piper)

Just as the wallpaper reflects the confusion of the narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper," so too does Piper use a language that confuses the

identity of women trying to live in the public sphere. Just as the poem "Women's Rights" suggests, Piper draws a list of acceptable behaviors for women as, "the heart of a mature woman is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive, and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men" (Piper). Piper seems to suggest that all men are entitled to if the postman, who is not the woman's husband, has natural authority over a woman because he is a man strikes me as being very similar to the way in which John belittles his wife as if she were a child.

Despite the fact that Piper began his comments with a disclaimer that he would never make a declarative category that would divide people into distinctly male or female groups, he still felt that there was a difference between masculine and feminine jobs. Police officers, doctors, lawyers, or, basically, any position where a woman would have authority over a man was unacceptable:

Some influence is very directive, and some are non-directive. For example, a drill sergeant might epitomize directive influence over the privates in a platoon. And it would be hard for me to see how a woman could be a drill sergeant- hut two, right face, left face, keep your mouth shut, private- over men without violating their sense of manhood and her sense of womanhood. (Piper)

Again, Piper uses words to bind the authority and ability of women. A woman should never have authority over man as "it would violate his sense of manhood makes men seem weak in the first place" (Piper). However, his language is also the language of definition intended to shape the future.

Patriarchal language begins developing the minds of people when they are mere children. Lately, my ten-year-old daughter has experienced subjection to afore-mentioned language and practice of patriarchy. She loves to play sports, but recently she was told by a group of boys at school that boy's sports were all that mattered because their dads said so. They told her that nobody cared "about girl's sports." She came straight home and asked me if that was what everybody thought. When I explained to her that was not what everybody thought, she seemed happier, but she informed me that she was going to prove all those boys wrong. She would outplay any of them any day if they let her play.

Gilman masterfully captures these ideas in her story. John embodies the social conception of women as being substandard. Much like Piper and the boys at school, John mostly treats his wife as if she were complaining, and Rousseau suggests, "Women do wrong to complain of inequality of man-made laws; this inequality is not of man's making, or at any rate it is not the result of more prejudice, but of reason" (571).

Even more than just complaining, however, Gilman represents the flawed logic of her day as well as the advice given by Piper. There is a suggestion that men are necessary as logical beings to bring definition to women. Piper's language is indicative of the same linguistic category suggested by Gilman, namely that the justification for dominance over women through medical definition, family position, and social roles is due to women being merely creatures rather than fully formed adults that can reason and desire without outside definitions.

The dialog between John and his wife oversimplifies women. He treats her as a child using language that would be more appropriate for a child. He lords his scientific prowess and high reputation over her as if he were a god and her his creation. The narrator strives to fit into the conception of what it means to be a woman for her husband. She struggles to admire him, she obeys his orders as a doctor and a husband, and she struggles to appease him even when she has done nothing wrong. The dialog has changed since Gilman wrote this story, but it has not changed so drastically to erase the image of the yellow wallpaper from out of the hearts of women in Western society. The urge to perform according to the social standards still exists, and that desire can still be tyrannical.

Altogether, "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gillman provides an astounding commentary on the desire of women to define themselves as individuals apart from social convention. Just as masculine identity does not depend only on a profession, so women should not be defined by the social tendency to categorize women as "other." The concept of what it means to be a woman must not continuously and continually find definition through patriarchal cultural institutions; instead, women need the freedom to explore and identify who they are without the interference of so many overarching interpretations. In the end, an institutional definition serves to confuse individual identity both socially and privately. The idea of the yellow wallpaper provides a discourse on how women can be trapped desiring to know who they are and how they should act or be.

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Junk and Treasure

Every now and then
I go through my “junk drawer”
and choose the things I want
or don’t want any more.

Now, here’s a rusty key
that fit an ancient clock
and when the key was turned
the clock would go “tick-tock.”

And here’s a perfect stone,
so round and smooth and hard.
Can you believe I found it
right here in my back yard?

And here’s a little troll,
his hair is blue and white.
And don’t his eyes look almost real...
so shiny, big, and bright?

And look, what’s this I’ve found?
A little soldier boy...
To think I played for hours
with this simple little toy.

And here’s a foreign coin
my uncle sent last year.
I tried to spend it once...
but they won’t take it here.

And look, what's this I see?
A seashell from the shore.
A crab once lived inside it...
but doesn't anymore

And here's a handsome button
It's green and smooth as jade...
It came off of a jacket
that I wore in seventh grade.

And here's a magnifier
to look at ants and flies.
It has a tiny crack in it...
but it still magnifies.

And here's a little ribbon
that's made of satin lace.
I got it at a Spelling Bee
for winning second place.

I'll take these things and others
and put them in a crate...
and leave them for the children
outside the garden gate.

For I have kept them many years
and now I set them free...
I know they don't mean anything
to anyone but me.

But though they might seem useless,
they still could hold some pleasure...
For what I now consider "junk",
some child may view as "treasure."

“Women in the Church? A Historical Survey” Review

“Women in the Church? A Historical Survey”
Magistra 21.2 (Winter 2015): 51-80

In her article, *Women in the Church? A Historical Survey*, Magdalena Kubow begins her conclusion with “the argument that women have historically participated in sacramental orders does not wish to eliminate the apostolic tradition; however, it does not regard the exclusivity of males to the apostolic tradition as a timeless truth. It sees it as purposeful exclusion, acceptable in the past but no longer acceptable in the present” (76). This is a succinct, yet pithy summary of her work. Her premise is that women were, along with men, founders and leaders of the early Christian Church, and the focus of her survey is to demonstrate how this process of exclusion developed over time, slowly eroding away the female role until all traces of it disappeared by the Middle Ages. Unlike other writers on this topic, Kubow does not spend much time looking at what Scriptures say about it but concentrates on examining the historiography of more current Church documents and teachings. The primary underlying factors to which she attributes this erosion include the shift of church ministry from the private to the public sphere, the development of market economy, and the influence of Roman law on the formation and establishment of Church law. All told, this is a good overview of a variety of influences that led to the demise of female leadership roles over the first few centuries of early Christianity. And it is the perfect resource for an audience who knows enough theology, history, philosophy and cultural development to understand the implications of what she covers in it.

While I found the majority of Kubow’s composition interesting, creative and well-founded, her opening six pages were not as strong as they could have been. First, she offers an opinion that misconstrues a

foundational Church document. Then she presents several of the Church's current arguments against women's ordination to the priesthood, to which she simply counters with historical evidence that women had once participated in the diaconate. And, to support a later argument, she includes a citation that misrepresents the theology behind a major liturgical element of the Catholic mass.

To my first point, that she misconstrues a foundational Church document, Kubow offers an opinion taken from someone else's work in such a way that it is clear she shares it. She references *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII's papal encyclical of April 1963, which she notes was interpreted as "opening just a crack the door to the priesthood for women" (51) based on his conclusion that man and woman have a right to "follow a vocation to the priesthood or the religious life" (51). In my opinion, either Kubow or Margaret Sittler Ermarth, whom Kubow cites, or both, are stretching to construe that the Pope's comment refers woman-to-priesthood in this statement. Although Pope John XXIII often wrote about the Church looking to the future, and the Church is always referred to in the feminine, the correlations in his statement are meant to be read as man-to-priesthood and woman-to-religious life.

To my second point, that Kubow offers evidence that women were ordained to the diaconate in the early Church to counter the current arguments against women being ordained to the priesthood today, she is not comparing the same role. There is a major difference between being an ordained priest and being an ordained deacon in the Catholic Church, and while that has not always been so, it has been for most of the Church's history. A priest holds the second highest position in Holy Orders, with the bishop taking first place. He assists the bishop, serves as a mediator between God and the human person, and confers all sacraments except for Holy Orders (only the bishop can do this) – which includes celebrating Mass and the Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Baptism and Holy Matrimony. The deacon holds the third position in Holy Orders, serves to assist the priest but reports directly to the bishop. Seminarians become transitional deacons on their way to priestly ordination, and as of Vatican II, laymen selected by the diocese can become permanent deacons. Their primary responsibilities include proclaiming the Gospel, preaching homilies at Mass, ministering the Eucharist, and serving the parish. They can baptize, as well as marry and perform funeral rites that do not include a celebration of the Eucharist. Consecrating the Eucharist is the realm of priests and bishops alone, and it is this action that renders the Mass Heaven on Earth.

As I continued to read, it occurred to me that Kubow may have been trying to make the point that evidence exists of women being ordained as deacons, or more accurately deaconesses, during the time

before the structural hierarchy of the Church was established, when the only role of formal ministry that existed was that of the diaconate. And as the hierarchy strengthened, the role of deaconess met its demise. I chose to give her the benefit of the doubt, although I hesitated when I read the next few pages, as she cites dates that do not directly support the points she is trying to make. This tends to cause a bit of confusion and leads the reader to wonder which side of the debate she is advocating. This sense of uncertainty is disorienting and detrimental to the trust that should exist between reader and writer.

Kubow states in her opening paragraph that “the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith justifies their position by arguing that women have never been ordained into sacramental orders and that this has been the unbroken historical practice for the last two thousand years” (51). And she counters, but not for several pages, that “the *constant* tradition of which the Congregation speaks did not originate two thousand years ago, but was born in the twelfth century when the exclusion of women from the diaconate was formally established in canon law” (53). While her citations are factual, they are confusing as any student of Church structure knows the hierarchy was in place well before the twelfth century. And it is this hierarchy that eliminated the role of deaconess earlier than the twelfth century.

To my last point, that Kubow includes citations that misrepresent the theology behind a major liturgical element of the Catholic mass, she writes that women are not able to invoke the Holy Spirit for the celebration of the Eucharist in the Catholic Church. She also states that the Church teaches that women are “incapable” of doing so as if to suggest that we lack the actual capability. She rightly clarifies that it is the Holy Spirit “who alone transforms the bread and wine into the Eucharist” (54). But then she quotes Fr. Bernard Haring as questioning, when speaking about invoking the Holy Spirit, “‘how are women inferior to men?’ Saying ‘this is my body’ has nothing to do with the priest’s own masculinity as he is not speaking in his own name; therefore women ‘can cultivate Eucharistic memory as well as a man’” (54). What Kubow has done in this one paragraph is cobble together a series of thoughts that do not belong together, and I will attempt to untwist them.

To her statement about the Church teaching that women are incapable of calling on the Holy Spirit, incapable is not the correct word. The Church teaches that this is not a question of capability but a question of role, which is evident in Kubow’s correct statement that transubstantiation – the change of the substance or essence of the bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ – is the doing of the Holy Spirit. Then there are Fr. Haring’s quotes which look as if they are

mixed in with Kubow's own thoughts, and that makes me question whether she is trying to tie together bits and pieces of what he has said to support her point. The Church does not teach that women are inferior to men. While society may have been responsible at one time for that interpretation, bolstered by the misinformed teachings of a few church leaders, the idea of male-female complementarity – God's deliberate design of male and female, which *together* comprise the covenant of redemption – is evident from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation. The inclusion of Haring's rhetorical question is as baffling as it is and distracting.

When a priest recites "this is my body" during the Eucharistic liturgy, he is quoting the

words of Christ to his apostles during the Last Supper. Throughout the whole act of consecration, the priest is serving *in persona Christi*, in the person of Christ, and because Jesus was a man when he was on earth and charged his apostles, who were all men, with the power to sanctify, we believe the role of *in persona Christi* is inherently male. There is a reason God created men and women differently, but as that topic exceeds the bounds of this paper, allow me to simply say that as we are different, so are our gifts. To wrap up the dissection of the preceding paragraph and answer the last sentence, yes, women have the capability to cultivate Eucharistic memory, but it is simply not their role. The theology is deep and wide beyond this statement; suffice it to say those who protest to the contrary are not giving that theology the authority and detailed study it deserves. It is inaccurate to say what the priest is doing during the liturgy is merely reminding us of the Last Supper, when, in fact, what he is doing is calling on the Holy Spirit to bring us into the sacrifice of Christ.

Why did I keep reading after plowing through Kubow's first six pages, which were wobbly at best? Because right in the middle of all of this, she made a statement that is at the heart of this and many other issues in Christianity: "Only since Pope Pius XII's encyclical letter, *Divino afflante spiritu*, issued in 1943, have Catholic biblical scholars been liberated to use the tools of historical criticism to assess the biblical foundations of church teachings. This suggests that the question of the ordination of woman has been considered in its modern formulation for no longer than 63 years" (54). Bingo! So, while I would approach any commentary she presented on theology or liturgy with skepticism, I felt her command of history might prove to be stronger.

Kubow's historiography focuses on two historical assertions of the Roman Catholic Church, also known as the Western Church: that a female diaconate did not exist, or, if it did, it was not authentically sacramental. To address the first, she reviews the destruction of the

wealth of ancient libraries over the centuries, which is enough to make any historian cry. And she points out that much of what has been used as source material for the Roman Catholic Church's contention is what it decided to adopt when the Catholic Church split in 1054 A.D. The richness, the details, and most of the writings of the Early Church Fathers come from the Eastern Church, which is a subtle but important detail when one examines the history of the relationship of the two churches over the last millennium. At this point, Kubow gets into some of the New Testament evidence in support of the female diaconate, and also cites a bit of what the Early Church Fathers wrote in support of it. Then she reaches 325 A.D., when Christianity was established as the religion of state under Constantinople. At this point, "the Church began attracting members of municipal ruling elites who were professionally trained for public life and experienced in public politics... the new leaders of the church were not as comfortable with women's leadership in the churches. By shifting church practice and ministry obligations from a largely private sphere into the public sphere, which was largely patriarchal in belief, practice, and law, the role of women was drastically reduced" (60). This is a rather unique thread.

Kubow then follows a path I have seen elsewhere, which nonetheless intrigues me and is bound to provide rich detail on closer examination. "Roman law in effect during the time of Jesus shaped much of Church law in the Catholic Church... As the Church became publicly institutionalized, it adopted Roman law as its own and in spite of a slight relaxation in laws (in later years)... the overall inferior status of women remained in place" (61). She makes a pivotal observation that "during the Middle Ages priesthood was redefined as a role of privilege, power and authority, not a life commitment to ministry and service" (77). And as we enter the medieval era, when religion was the underpinning of daily life, we see the "changing social status of labour and a shift from a generally private to public economic market" (64), which impacted both the role of women in society and the practices of the Church.

The change in the market economy and its impact is an interesting dynamic to ponder. She writes that "the primary purpose of mentioning these complex changes in labor, production and gender dynamics occurring in the secular sphere... is to provide a general understanding of the framework in which misogyny has been built into the very foundation of the symbol systems of Western civilization, that the subordination of women comes to be seen as natural, hence it becomes invisible" (65). And Kubow ties up this section with "It was medieval thinkers who constructed the theological framework that underpins the structures of ministry and hierarchy that society continues to uphold.

They moulded the sacrificial focus of the priesthood, the feudal power structures of the Church, the exclusion of women from all authority based on Roman law which they had made the basis of Church law” (67).

The rest of Kubow’s survey consists of familiar ground, covering some of the ancient texts and a bit more of the primary evidence. Within the *Apostolic Constitutions*, circa 380 A.D., we see that “the female ordination rite, when juxtaposed on the male ordination rite, is essentially identical. This aspect is crucial when addressing the question whether in fact the female diaconate was fully sacramental rather than a service which was merely blessed” (70). Thus, Kubow observes, “it is evident that the exclusion of women from sacramental orders is based on patriarchal tradition, which was strengthened by Roman law, rather than a clear and convincing argument based on historical tradition, Scripture, or theology” (72). She goes on to write about St. Olympias, St. Hildegard of Bingen, and St. Catherine of Sienna, women she sees as having been particularly influential within the Church during their time (400A.D., 1098 A.D. and 1347 A.D., respectively). While none were deaconesses, the latter two are Doctors of the Church, a rare and distinguished title conferred to saints recognized by the Catholic Church as having particular importance, typically in their contribution to theology and doctrine. There are thirty-six Doctors of the Church, only four of whom are women (the others are St. Teresa of Avila and St. Thérèse of Lisieux, both Carmelite mystics – the former from the sixteenth century and the latter from the nineteenth century).

Kubow offers that “patriarchal religion supports and perpetuates patriarchy” (79). She concludes that “without the wisdom and collaboration of women in leadership roles, the church, a sign and instrument of unity with God and among all people, is diminished” (80). This echoes my sentiments exactly when I have written in earlier pieces that without the inclusion of women in significant, material leadership roles within the Roman Catholic Church, something will always be lacking.

In this article, Magdalena Kubow reiterated threads I am familiar with and introduced new ones. As this article is meant to serve as an overview, there is plenty of detail to uncover in the course of digging deeper. My only surprise in Kubow’s work was the absence of any commentary on the impact of ancient Greek philosophy on Roman law and society, as well as on the thinking of the Early Church Fathers. Regardless, Kubow introduces her readers to a handful of wonderful sources and authors, as well as presents several areas to consider when examining why women are not ordained in the Roman Catholic Church today.

Untitled based on C.S. Lewis

Note: Part of the poems sent are from an erasure of C. S. Lewis' *A Grief Observed* (1961).

14.

All reality is iconoclastic.
I must stretch the arms and
hands of love to the
phantasmagoria
of my thoughts.

I mustn't sit down content
and worship my idea. Yes,
we often make this mistake.

Talking and acting to
the picture before we even
notice the fact.

In real life there's
always a reason for
assuming that we've
got one another

this time once more
I have to be finally
given up as hopeless
forever.

16.

I shall have substituted
for the real woman a
mere doll to be
blubbered over.

I did it for the
sheer pleasure
of being exposed.
Except at my job.
Even shaving.

They say an unhappy man
wants distractions.
A door slammed
in your face, and a
sound of bolting
and double bolting
on the inside. After
that, silence. There
are no lights in the
windows. It might be
an empty house.

“Successive approximations to the ideal force prescription”

Theme

“Cop cams are inextricably tied to Taser, by far the dominant supplier, and the company will likely shape whatever the devices evolve into... Founded at one national moment of police angst, the company is using another such moment to transform from a manufacturer into a technology company. From a business perspective, body cameras are low-margin hunks of plastic designed to get police departments using the real moneymaker: Evidence.com, which provides the software and cloud services for managing all the footage the devices generate...”

—Karen Weise, “Will a Camera on Every Cop Make Everyone Safer? Taser Thinks So,” Bloomberg BusinessWeek, July 12, 2016

Variation I: The endocrine safety

The widespread adoption of body cameras was followed by a wave of high-profile indictments for police misconduct, generally considered a mark of their success—a success qualified, of course, by the only somewhat smaller wave of high-profile exonerations following the indictments. From that success and that qualification came the *endocrine safety*. This was a trigger lock yoked to an optical sensor monitoring the pituitary gland, which would allow the gun to fire only when the officer’s brain released adrenaline and cortisol in volumes indicating a genuine sense of danger to the self or others.

Venture capital drove the technology to the public eye; opinion-makers and legislators of the technocratic Left kept it there; and initial skepticism crumbled as lab and field evidence showed conclusively that the endocrine safety was, in fact, exquisitely sensitive to an officer’s perception of threat. Body cameras could be used to create like-for-like control simulations: After an officer had successfully fired a “pit-locked” weapon, she could be taken back through the same experience,

from the body-camera footage, and directed to shoot in the simulation where she had shot in life. With the same sensory stimulus, but the absence of danger, the safety engaged every time.

There followed a string of satisfying prosecutions, a spate of drops in police violence correlated with regional adoption of the technology. “Neuroscience,” wrote the editors of *Nature Neuroscience*, “now promises to inform something like an ideal force prescription: If not a clear, then at least a less blurred delineation of the circumstances that justify violence.”

The endocrine safety could exculpate as well as implicate, of course. An officer able to fire a pit-locked weapon was, almost definitionally, acting in self-defense—even when hindsight would reveal that there was nothing to defend against. The issue came to a head as a Trenton grand jury declined to indict Troopers Michael Leblanc and Francisco Barraja, who together sent five dozen bullets from pit-locked sidearms through the flesh of Zora Farrow. Ms. Farrow had been stopped on the street, searched for drugs, and handcuffed, kneeling, to a bike rack while the officers called the stop in from their cruiser; an epileptic, she had begun seizing, and the officers had opened fire. Restrained and known to be unarmed, a dozen feet away, she had apparently kindled a terror in those two men that the endocrine safety and an army of expert witnesses pronounced utter and mortal.

Device error was investigated—prayed for—and ruled out. All evidence indicated that Leblanc and Barraja’s fear had been real.

Variation II: The aperture safety

The promise of what was then called “big data” enchanted weaponsmiths as much as it had everyone else. Local wealth and crime rates, the time of day and year, the trails of text and tissue and found light that everybody in a surveillance state left in its wake like footprints in new snow: How could such things fail to pertain to the decision to kill?

And they did not fail. The studies were clear on that: In situations where officers could be agreed, in hindsight, to have erred, statistical models trained on real-time situational information consistently recommended a better course of action. The open question concerned the interface. An algorithm could simply apply weights to the data, compare to a threshold, and decide; for a human officer, no such integration of computed factors and her own judgments could be done in the moment.

Or not consciously. But the machinery of perception, by this point, was in play; law enforcement worldwide was experimenting with improvements to sight, hearing, smell, with new senses for electromagnetism and radiation. Estimates of danger could be fed

directly into the inferior temporal lobe, subtly shaping the officer's visual experience to differentiate high- from low-threat targets. This was called the *integration* or, more stylishly, the *aperture safety*.

To support split-second decision-making, the safety tapped into the most entrenched visual archetypes of menace. Dangerous places became darker, closer, more jagged-edged; dangerous people became larger, more graceful, more brutish. Darker-skinned.

Machines are not the only things that learn. Officers from “bad” neighborhoods complained that they were unable to go back, even off duty, the safety disabled; the sense of lurking danger was too great. More saliently: By tightening the association between true threat and swift grace, large size, dark skin, the aperture safety made life more dangerous for non-threatening persons in possession of those features.

This danger was studied, quantified. Biological anthropologists projected that, within two generations, the average size of men in several distressed urban neighborhoods would decrease by several percentage points, their skin lighten by several shades. The ideal force prescription, it seemed, was a Darwinian influence.

Interlude: The peppered moth

From a contemporary vantage, looking back, such a claim is absurd on its face. No matter their bias, no matter their intentions—how could officers of the law kill enough people to exert a visible selection pressure in a population of any size?

The peppered moth, *Biston betularia*, comes in two colorations—*typica*, white peppered with black spots, and *carbonaria*, all black. In 1811, *carbonaria* was unknown in England. As the nineteenth century progressed, the frequency of *carbonaria* increased, until by 1895 its prevalence in the species was 98%. This is due to the interaction of two factors: The “differential bird predation hypothesis,” a compression of the intuitive idea that birds find it easier to find and eat black moths on white backgrounds and white moths on black backgrounds than the reverse; and the increasing frequency, as industrialization took hold in England, of finding light-colored trees whose bark had been darkened by soot.

From those data, J. B. S. Haldane estimated that *carbonaria* had a 50% fitness advantage relative to *typica*. What advantage would it take to enact a smaller shift, in fewer generations?

Do the math. That is how it was. That is how it had come to be.

Variation III. The empathy safety

The Dallas police department, lauded for its strong relationship with the community it served, collaborated with neuroscientists at the

Max Planck to prototype what they termed an *empathy safety*: A tool that would scour and digest the target's digital history, injecting relationships, hopes, accomplishments, and a life's high and low moments directly into an officer's brain in a split-millisecond dream before he or she could pull the trigger. Proponents reasoned that such a thunderbolt of familiarity would restrict the use of lethal force to the absolute height of necessity; opponents countered that it would cripple enforcement, clouding officers' judgment with the emotions and contradictions of a relationship that was not even real. The fifteen officers who agreed to a live test of the device revealed a more complicated truth.

Although the empathy safety drastically reduced the test cohort's use of violence, three of the fifteen did indeed freeze up on their first violent encounter, twice fatally. From the rest, one had to be dropped from the program after taking an intense interest in the family of one man he had spared—slipping extra cash to the almost-victim's wife at her workplace, fund-raising for a motorized wheelchair for his disabled son, intervening with near-cataclysmic results in the admittedly disastrous love life of his daughter.

Two more were terminated from the force after it emerged that they were threatening innocent people expressly to gather their biographies. In one case, the officer used the information to convince the suspects' associates that she was psychic, a conviction she used to sell tips on stock prices and the outcomes of sporting events. The other officer was discovered recombining and altering the lives he extracted into short stories, none of which he succeeded in selling.

The death blow to the empathy safety was struck by Nina Abousalem, an officer in the test program whose metrics had shown no change. She worked a dangerous beat in West Dallas, on the other side of the river from where the money was. Internal and external evaluators, both then and after her death, found that she drew her sidearm frequently but judiciously, and that her use of force on the job was essentially without flaw.

One spring morning, months after she had joined the test group, Abousalem's three-year-old son, Ibrahim, refused to go to daycare. A neighbor of theirs, Hunter Strickland, described what followed:

I was on my way out to get the mail and I heard Ibrahim shouting, and Nina talking back at him. Nothing I hadn't heard before—I think the whole street knew by then that Ibi didn't always like to leave the house in the morning. But then I heard a different kind of scream. I looked to see what was going on, and I see Nina standing over Ibi in the driveway, talking at him while he holds his shoulder and screams his head off.

He's clearly in pain, and she's just calmly flaying him—I only caught what she said when he stopped for breath, but stuff like, “If you hate school so much, why don't you just drive to the station and do my job instead?” And then Yusuf comes out and asks what's going on and Nina fires on him. She keeps her eyes on Ibi, doesn't even look at Yusuf, just sort of points the gun in his general direction and pulls the trigger. He jumps, covers his head with his arms, then looks at her and starts to say something. And she says “Fuck off,” and points the gun at Ibi. At that point Yusuf ducks inside, to call the cops, I guess. But she don't shoot Ibi, just motions him to the car with the gun and says “Get in the car.” And he does. But she don't, she just pushes the buttons on the key fob that close the door. It don't take long for the cops to get there, and as soon as she gets a clear line on a cop car, she opens right up --

Sgt. Felicia Garza, also outfitted with an empathy safety, fired the killing shot. On the stand, she claimed the safety had revealed to her, in an instant, what Yusef Abousalem had seen only in hindsight: That Nina Abousalem had withdrawn from her relationships, had grown cold and distant from even her closest friends and family. Photos and video with loved ones waned, then ceased; in disputes where Abousalem would normally have been a peacemaker, she was the first to the knives. “The safety didn't teach her not to shoot people because she knew and loved them,” Garza testified. “It taught her to look past that knowledge, and that love, and shoot anyway.”

No experts confirmed the plausibility of Garza's diagnosis. It didn't matter much. Empathy was officially excluded from the ideal force prescription.

Coda: The failure of alternatives

At no point during this technological evolution, it should be said, did citizens cease to suggest the usual methods for reducing police-involved violence. There remained heartfelt calls to train police in de-escalation and nonlethal subdual, to draw new officers from the communities they would protect, to abandon broken-windows policing and the “warrior mindset” and using citations as an income stream. Some of these were tried, sometimes with seriousness; results or no, none were widely implemented.

A plausible guess at the reason nearly writes itself. As wealth concentrated around a smaller and smaller cadre of the fortunate, an increasing share of law enforcement budgets came from a decreasing population of constituents. That population was technically gifted and optimistic about technology; they had strong networks and platforms for influencing voters and decision-makers.

Very few of them had spoken to a police officer about anything other than a moving violation. Technology was something they trusted and understood. Police were not. But, as their fortunes mounted and the rest of the country stagnated, they needed the police to protect them from a majority with less and less to lose.

In these circumstances, a mandate to protect the golden goose was natural, if not inescapable. The increasingly violent tactics this mandate entailed were both a response to and an accelerant of a mounting conflagration of class rage, like using a fan to blow flames away.

Postlude

In the decades and centuries that followed, a young man from the green country might venture among the black streets and their gutted palaces. If he returned, he might do so having been bestowed, by the native tribes, a weapon more and more likely, as time went on, to be called “blackwand” or “fire-thrower” or “killer-that-shouts.” And, rarely, such a weapon might be endowed with a special property that nearly demanded to be spoken of just before sleep, seated in a circle, around a fire—for example, the “just” weapon of Demetrius the Square-Dealer, which would fire only in defense of his person; or the “discerning” wand of Martin Sky-Eyes, which allowed him to see who was his friend and who his foe.

The wielders of such weapons often rose to prominence among their people as warlords or rangers, mercenaries or homesteaders. Yet their stories—or, in any case, those that were remembered and repeated—partook of a certain sameness. Martin Sky-Eyes was neither the first hero nor the last to kill a well-loved foe and die at his minions’ hands, when parlay (the storytellers assure us) would have saved them both; Demetrius the Square-Dealer was just one of a long line of heroes who had, drunk or new-awakened, mowed down loved ones in a moment’s mistaken terror. And as that long dark age trudged on, a story grew around the stories, to account for their sameness. *The men who walk the black streets understand the treachery of magic, it went. There is a reason that they let their treasures go.*

END

Trends in Substance Abuse Treatment and Application for Sex Offender Treatment

Introduction

Interest in sex offenders and their treatment has been the subject of study since 1886 (Schwartz & Cellini, 1995). Since then, many changes have been made in the treatment of sex offenders. Current treatment for sex offenders includes: cognitive behavioral therapy, relapse prevention, behavior modification, harm-reduction, and self-regulation. Specifics in the type and time-frames of treatment are based on the program or clinicians approach, risk level, and community support available (Bumby, 2006). While there are many treatment options available, it is difficult to determine the success rates of these treatment methods. One study determined that out of 130 previously conducted studies on sex offender treatment, only 25 of these studies met the minimum quality control guidelines established for scientifically reliable research (Brockett, 2012).

While sex offender treatment has been compared to other methods of treating mental health issues, there is limited research available comparing sex offender treatment to the "lifelong" treatment model utilized in treatment for substance abuse. Treatment experts have identified a combination of group psychotherapy and a twelve-step program as the "gold standard" in substance use treatment (Korshak & Delboy, 2013). Currently, twelve-step programs provide fellowship, resources, and support. This model was developed by Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), which originated in 1935. AA currently has two million members' worldwide and 200,000 weekly meetings (Galanter, 2014).

According to the rational model, policy makers seek to gather and examine all relative data, and after analyzing all the alternatives,

construct a plan. This model is sometimes called “means-end” thinking, and is built on the premise that problems can be solved by examining and choosing the best method to reach a goal. Often the solution that is deemed the “best” is based on cost effectiveness and maximum total welfare (Stone, 2011).

On the surface, this model appears to be the most logical. However, humans are not rational decision makers. This phenomenon can be described as the "human problem", which asserts that humans are never truly rational because of personal bias, emotions, and world views we are never able to make purely rational decisions (Clemons & McBeth, 2009). An example of policy making that is not considered "rational" are policies surrounding sex offenders and their treatment.

In an effort to construct a more rational approach to treating sex offenders, I will be comparing and contrasting the models of treatment used for sex offenders and substance users and offering alternatives to current treatment models used for sex offenders.

Policy Implications

There are currently 747,408 registered sex offenders in the United States (National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2012). Since 1994, we have required that these offenders make their address, crime, photo, and physical description public record, and thus easily accessible to the general population.

The Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offender Registration Act of 1994 required that offenders of sex crimes against children be registered with law enforcement after release from confinement (Comartin, Kernsmith, & Miles, 2010). Subsequently, Megan's Law of 1996 stipulated that this registry is made available to the public and included community notification policies. Other legislation, such as The Pam Lychner Sexual Offender Tracking and Identification Act (1996) and the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act (2006), increased registration periods for sex offenders and made community notification rules more stringent (Wagner, 2011). By invading the privacy of a sex offender, the general population feels safe. However, studies have shown that allowing public access to the sex offender registry discourages compliance with the registry (Murphy, Fedoroff, & Martineau, 2009).

The passage of these, and other pieces of legislation, has had a negative impact on registered sex offenders. Increasingly, research has shown that sex offenders have been plagued by problematic housing restrictions (Levenson & Cotter, 2005), harassment by the communities in which they live (Pogrebin, 2004), lack of accessibility to forms of public assistance (Travis, 2002), and employment (Wagner, 2011).

Additionally, research has illustrated that perceptions and attitudes towards sex offenders are overwhelmingly negative (Olver & Barlow, 2010; Elbogen, Patry, & Scalora, 2003), with one study finding that participants thought it "acceptable" for sex offenders to be physically injured (Wagner, 2011, p. 267).

Some have suggested that the media has assisted in reinforcing myths and stereotypes about sex offenders by over-generalizing them as sexual predators (Katz-Schiavone, Levenson, & Ackerman, 2008). Morrison (2007) aptly summarized that much of the public thinks that registered sex offenders are "incurable, resistant to treatment, and all but certain to offend again" (p. 24). Perhaps not surprisingly, studies examining the public perceptions of sex offenders have found that stereotypes are often not congruent with accurate information related to this population (Church, Wakeman, Miller, Clements & Sun, 2008). In an ideal world, the media would portray objectivity, truth, balance, and accuracy. Unfortunately, there is little evidence to show that the media can live up to these expectations. Regardless of the apparent bias of the media, the general public continues to regard news stories as the "political watchdogs" or "guardians of the public interest" (Schnell, 2001, p. 186).

In the case of Jacob Wetterling and Megan Kanka, there was significant media attention which led to increased emotions surrounding these events. These news outlets play a vital role in drawing attention to political issues and deciding what is "news" and who is "newsworthy." This attention is a powerful weapon in creating public interest in an issue and can be crucial in generating momentum behind policy issues. Altogether, "some scholars find that the media exert substantial influence in deciding what problems will be given attention and what problems will be ignored" (Oswald, 1994).

Media coverage is also an essential part of bringing the issues to the attention of policy makers. Some problems, no matter how large, are unable to generate enough attention, while other crises events generate enough focus and public support to be placed on the policy agenda. Robinson (1999) calls this phenomenon the "CNN effect". The basis of the "CNN effect" is that news outlets and media can shape policy. Some argue that political elites influence the media to report stories in a way that is favorable to the political agenda. Alternatively, media reports weigh heavily on emotional response and this emotional response impacts voters and lobbyist (Robinson, 1999), and due to the irrational nature of humans, these emotions play a large part in irrational policymaking.

While the majority of citizens desire to be active political participants, studies show that the majority of the population is not

consistent with political participation and is often uninformed. Additionally, even when individuals attempt to be more engaged in the democratic practices like attending political events, voting or researching legislation, they are often swayed by the media. The issue of sexual violence is clearly and easily understood by the general public, and requires no expertise on the subject. This issue is also one that is closely followed by the mass public and, like many political issues, is highly emotionally fueled and fear driven. Also, this issue has the potential to polarize interest groups, who play a dynamic role in effecting policy changes. These specialized groups attempt to influence policy changes in two major ways: insider strategies, and outsider strategies. Insider strategies appeal to our emotions by providing personal stories and expert testimony to influence legislation. Alternatively, outsider strategies attempt to enlarge the scope of conflict and political discourse. Often, this includes media coverage of the issue which may or may not be accurate and can be easily manipulated by the media outlets (Schnell, 2001).

To influence true change, it is vital for policy makers to strive towards a common goal, and work together to provide solutions to current issues. One of the ways to encourage alliances among policy makers is to merge disagreements into a more common goal (Stone, 2011). Reducing the prevalence of sexual violence is a goal I believe we can all agree on. However, the approach to achieving this goal is the subject of much debate. On one end of the spectrum is the punitive approach to managing this problem, and at the other end we have the treatment and preventative approach. While both methodologies have their merits, it is important to assess their individual feasibility.

Background of Sex Offender Treatment

Interest in sex offenders first peaked in 1886 with the release of *Psychopathia Sexualis: eine Klinisch-Forensische Studie* (Sexual Psychopathy: A Clinical-Forensic Study). This work by Richard von Krafft-Ebing proposed consideration of the mental state of sex criminals in legal judgments of their crimes. During its time, it became the leading textual authority on sexual pathology. Works by Krafft-Ebing depicted all sex offenders as pedophiles and demented strangers. After this work, Freud (1893) and Schrenck-Notzing (1895) published pioneer works in the area on sexual abnormalities (Schwartz, & Cellini, 1995).

In the 1930's through the 1960's, the view of sexually deviant behavior was thought to be a product of a mental disorder and that the offenders were too "sick" to be punished. As a result, the sexual psychopath laws were created as alternatives to the criminal justice system. Sex offenders were involuntarily committed to state hospitals

for as long as the individual was deemed a threat to society. The purpose was to cure sex offenders in a shorter time than they would serve in prisons, and to protect society against the sex offender population (American Psychiatric Association, 1999).

In 1954, California's Atascadero State Hospital became the leader in inpatient sex offender treatment, with the primary treatment method being assertion training. The thought that sexual offenders have difficulty relating appropriately to adults led to regression techniques which were believed to meet their sexual needs. This treatment was conducted by psychiatric technicians rather than professionally trained clinicians and did not have a consistent treatment philosophy or protocol.

In 1981, Theodore Frank was released from Atascadero State Hospital. Within three months of his release Frank kidnapped and murdered a two-year-old girl who was playing in her front yard. This crime unleashed a public outcry against the inpatient treatment model for sex offenders, state legislature quickly declared the inpatient treatment model a failure and repealed the sexual psychopath laws. The view that sexual deviance was connected to mental disorder was discredited, and by 1990, all but twelve states had repealed their sexual psychopath laws (California Coalition on Sexual Offending, 2009; Schwartz, & Cellini, 1995).

The 1990's marked a turn in the management of sex offenders as treatment programs were transferred from hospitals to prisons. Washington became the first state to recognize sex offender treatment as a mental health profession and to begin the certification of sex offender treatment providers. The Association for the Behavioral Treatment of Sexual Abusers, now known as the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, was formed and became the national organization for sex offender treatment providers around the world (Schwartz, & Cellini, 1995).

Recently treatment for sex offenders has attempted to implement a more holistic approach. These methods utilize a multitude of approaches including; cognitive behavioral therapy, relapse prevention, behavior modification, harm-reduction, and self-regulation (Bumby, 2006).

Background of Addictions Treatment

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), approximately 8.2% of Americans meet the criteria for a substance use disorder (Bergman, Kelly, Nargiso, & McKowen, 2016).

One of the most prevalent approaches to treating substance use disorders is the Cognitive Behavioral Model. This model encourages

mastery over one's environment and internal experience by identifying triggers and how this influences their internal experiences and external reactions. This method also teaches assertiveness skills, identification, and avoidance of high-risk people, places and situations, with ways to examine positive and negative consequences of continued substance use. Using this model, therapists and clients work together using problem solving and communication skills to identify, construct and implement a treatment intervention plan (Bergman, Kelly, Nargiso, & McKowen, 2016).

An example of a behaviorally based intervention is AA's 12-step program. This intervention encourages belief in a Higher Power, recognition of helplessness, the importance of sustained motivation with social support, and complete abstinence. These philosophies have been deeply rooted in substance use treatment in the US. However, the 12-step program has been subjected to criticism when compared to other evidence-based practices due to the reliance on internal rather than external motivators.

Opposite the behavioral model is the method of medically assisted treatment. This model attests that substance use is an illness that is largely outside of individual control and should be treated in the same manner as other medical illnesses. The US Food and Drug Administration has approved several medications to facilitate medically assisted treatment starting with the approval of disulfiram in 1951. Other approved medications include methadone, acamprosate, naltrexone, and buprenorphine. However, medically assisted treatment does not indicate isolation from therapeutic treatment methods. Ideally, medically assisted treatment would be utilized in conjunction with other psychosocial treatments. However, due to its reliance on chemicals, the medically assisted treatment method could be seen as adversative to behavioral and abstinence-based models (Edmond, Aletraris, Paino, & Roman, 2015).

While abstinence is a large proponent of many substance use treatments, lifelong abstinence is not necessary. In one study of alcoholism recovery, it was discovered that three years of abstinence increased the likelihood of a stable recovery. Another study suggested that five years of abstinence from any substance should be standard practice and that after five years of abstinence the risk of relapse is no longer greater than that of the general population. While the precise duration of abstinence from any substance is still a topic of debate, it has been indicated as an essential part of the recovery process (DuPont, 2015).

In the past, there was a significant stigma attached to treatment for substance abusers. More recently this stigma has been reduced, and access to affordable treatment services has increased. Contributions to

these changes can be partially attributed to the implementation of multiple health care reforms within the federal, state and private sectors. Examples of this are, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (Parity Act). These pieces of legislation require health insurers to cover, and health care organizations to provide, prevention, screening, brief interventions and treatment for substance use disorders. Due to the expansion provided by the ACA, an estimated 1.6 million Americans with substance use disorders have gained insurance coverage in Medicaid expansion states (Abraham, et al, 2017).

Together, the Affordable Care Act and the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act assure that care for substance users has the comparable type, range and duration of services as other medical conditions. Additionally, this legislation mandates that financial burden for patients seeking substance use treatment be comparable to patients seeking treatment for an equivalent physical illness. Illnesses considered "comparable" to addiction are acquired, chronic illnesses. Equally important, this legislation has mandated accessible care delivery such as treatment available within mainstream health care settings including primary care (DuPont, 2015). Implementation of the ACA and its expansion to substance use disorders is still new, and as such, we are unable to determine how it has impacted long-term changes in substance use treatment.

Comparison of Treatment Models

Substance use treatment and sex offender treatment have similar backgrounds in that they both were previously addressed in a punitive manner. More recently, access to substance use treatment has been addressed, and these treatment options have become more affordable with the passage of the ACA. While there are medically assisted options for both substance use and sex offender treatment, this option is deemed more acceptable for substance use than for sex offender treatment. Both models utilize group treatment, however, in the case of sex offender treatment these groups are time limited and follow a strict curriculum. Groups for substance treatment utilize an "open-ended" model which allows for participants to be in different stages of recovery, this allows for better peer accountability. Another significant difference in sex offender and substance use treatment is that sex offender treatment is primarily provided in prison settings whereas community-based options for substance users are readily available.

Alternative Treatment Design

Bardach (2011), provides many definitions of "alternatives", and the definition most appropriate for this paper is "alternative strategies of intervention to solve or mitigate the problem" (p. 16). For this paper, the identified problem is the prevalence of sex offenders and the possible shortcomings of current treatment. Attempts to mitigate this problem include examining possible alternatives to current treatment and designing approaches based on harm reduction.

Studies on the topic of treatment return conflicting reports. In one study, combined cognitive-behavioral treatment and relapse prevention was shown to reduce the recidivism rate by 40% (Losel & Schmucker, 2005). In a comparison study of treated and untreated sex offenders, 10% of the treated offenders were rearrested as compared to 17% of untreated sex offenders (Hanson, Gordon, Harris, Marques, Murphy, Quinsey, & Seto, 2002). However, another study found no difference in the arrest rates of treated sex offenders as opposed to untreated offenders (Marques, Wiederanders, Day, Nelson, & van Ommeren, 2005).

Notably, policy changes rarely take place by constructing a plan from scratch (Clemons, & McBeth, 2009). While there is no easy solution to the problem of sex offender treatment, we can use the positive pieces of current models of substance use and sex offender treatment to construct a more complete approach. A primary issue is the limited access to sex offender treatment. While treatment for substance abuse has recently been addressed as a health issue, sex offender treatment continues to be addressed from a punitive approach. To increase the success of treatment, it is imperative that we increase the accessibility to these services. One way of doing this is mandating that health insurance cover these services in the form of prevention, screening, brief interventions and treatment for sex offenders.

As an alternative to the current treatment model for sex offender treatment, I propose that more funding is allocated for researching alternative treatment models. Currently, data has not indicated that changes occur within these groups and research has not been done to compare this model with other types of treatment (Wakefield & Underwager, 1991).

Preliminary Implications

In this day of advanced knowledge and research, it seems alarming that there is such limited research on the effectiveness of treatment for sexual offenders, and that the research conducted yields such mixed results. However, current treatment programs were not developed as clinical trials with control groups and scientifically measurable outcomes. As a result, there are no specific standards used to measure success and failure rendering clinical trials nearly impossible to develop.

Another limitation to the development of treatment models is the ability to determine success. One measure of success is relapse rates. While this measure works well for substance users it is more difficult for sexual offenders. For substance users, the ability to measure relapse can be as simple as a drug screen, however with sexual offenders you must rely on complete honesty from the participants. Other measure that is commonly used for sexual offenders is rearrests rates. While this measure can be useful at times, it is hard to determine how many sexual offenders may reoffend without being caught, which is further compounded by the number of sexual assaults that are never reported.

Conclusion

While substance use and sexual offending are community health problems that impact multiple individuals and families, there are stark differences in the approaches for treating these populations. On its surface, substance abuse may seem to be harmful to self, while sexual abuse is harm to others. However, this view does not account for the community, family and public health impacts of both these issues. There are many similarities and differences in treatment models for substance use and sexual offender treatment and the political influences impacting regulations for treating both populations. Currently, there are limited studies to illustrate proven success rates for sexual offender treatment, and this is an area that requires more extensive research and development. While there are apparent correlations for treating these two populations including cognitive behavioral therapy and group interventions, there are still significant differences in the accessibility and funding for treatment. To comprehensively address this issue, it is imperative that more attention and funding be allocated for research in this area.

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Moscow's Rejected Margaritas

Before they found Margarita Nikolaevna, Koroviev and Azazello did most of the searching.

Behemoth did some searching too, but was distracted by altogether too many things to be of much use—

chess matches in the park
a pawn shop (with a set of excellent dueling pistols for sale)
a polka band, which he changed into flamingoes
a stray child
tulips
a very nervous poodle
and
fish.

Hella stayed home with Messire
(we think)
where she did embroidery
(we think).

One does not ask
what Messire does
when he is out of view.
(We are quite certain of this.)

Sixty-eight Margaritas had no royal blood, not even a drop,
not a smidgen, not a hint,
despite twenty-three of them thinking they did
with eighteen hoping for a restoration
two planning to leave for France
three being staunch Party members
and all of them terrified
that someone would find out.

Six Margaritas were under the age of twelve.

Three Margaritas took the appearance of
Azazello and Koroviev at their doors
to be proof
that their neighbors had been poisoning them
and that they had in fact become delirious
as a result of the toxins.
Neither man undertook to disabuse them
of this notion, although Koroviev did take a
glass of pear juice from one woman
and left the other two with oranges
and pocketknives.

Two Margaritas were being poisoned by their neighbors,
but were not hallucinating.
They were merely unpleasant
and agitated
and too ill to leave their beds.

In addition, one Margarita was in fact
poisoning her neighbor,
a cruel but celebrated man
who died instead of tripping over
a poodle (not the one Behemoth saw)
and breaking his neck.

Four somewhat elderly Margaritas
and one very young one
entertained thoughts of becoming nuns.
Perhaps they were delusional.
In any event,
they were ruled out as a matter
of suitability, although their spiritual states
did offer some amusing if entirely imaginary scenarios.

Eight Margaritas were already witches;
two were also literary critics;
none were appropriate
for various reasons
including
fear of heights
poor hygiene
an allergy to dust
and gout.

Seven Margaritas said that cats
made them sneeze,
although one,
a large, older lady,
cuddled him against her
voluptuous bosom—
in which he fit quite well,
given his own large stature—
for quite some time,
fed him cream and (definitely illegal) caviar,
and brushed his coat with her
own silver-backed (possibly fake)
hairbrush.
Behemoth argued for her
but no one
listened to him.

One was a sculptor
whose eyes burned so intensely
Koroviev was certain she had already
met their master.

One was a ballerina
whose talent was so clearly
derived from diabolical sources

that she too
was passed over.

One was a Jew, living alone,
writing under an assumed name.
The searchers, feeling compassionate,
whisked her away to
an entirely different
country
for her own safety.

Four Margaritas brandished ancient-seeming ikons,
pulled out from beneath layers
of sweaters and cloth and memories
at them. Two more threatened them
with bronze heads of Lenin
and one drew, clattering it in the scabbard,
breaking bits of rust onto the polished floor,
a cavalry sabre
of a war
long past.

One Margarita called the demons her sons
and was so pleased that they'd come to visit.

One served them tea with jam
but could not speak—she'd lost
her tongue
and toes
and fingers
and husband
and daughters
to purges and pernicious cold.

Five Margaritas were ecstatic
and screamed yes
and yes and yes
and circled about the rooms
that they were never allowed to leave.

and four Margaritas simply,
perhaps wisely, perhaps foolishly,
said
no, for we do not believe in devils.

Lady, Maid, Invocation

I have raised up my arms to console her
and I have given her
all of the soap.

I have tried to sing her to sleep,
brought her draughts
of nightshade and herbs.

I have brought the doctor

PRESTON LEONARD

who can do nothing at all
and I am afraid
when she walks.

The new moon holds the old moon
in its arms,
a sickle of light that gives her
her path.

I follow
as I must
where she wanders,
but her galled-up brains
are trapped
in a room
of her own
bloody decoration.

The chamber
her mind inhabits
is wet
and thick
with the dust of night,
with spoor
from the ride,
with the taste
of wool and iron.

In it she has
but one job
and easy one:
to leave behind
what should have been left behind
before.

I leave behind
her room
where her bed has been empty
for weeks.
I leave behind
my own sleep
which she has unknowingly
killed.

I know
her secrets.
And I will borrow her
cloak and call
for the raven,
the wolf,
the sightless
substances
to preserve my sanity
by bringing her end.

PRESTON LEONARD

Come, you spirits!
Tend to me and this my charge,
this cruel and murdering woman.

Make steel my bones
and smoke of hers
that she will be
gusted away
over the parapets.

Come, you spirits!
I give you my purpose:
Take now this woman who
owes you, and return to me
my innocence. Let me be
the flower that knows not
the serpent.

Come, you spirits!
Claim her unnatural body,
and give me rest
for the nights and days to come.
Cleanse my conscience, and
let me wake to the
cold air in which she
as left this plane
as a single exhalation.

The queen, my lord, is dead.
My own tomorrow
is now again my own
and I shall sleep
not tempest-tossed
but charm-wound
with peace.

Highway Drone

Emptiness full of sky
and grass and long road,
heat lines, ocular tricks.
Sun glare and the radio
stream into hot air,
black plastic,
drowsy eyes and ears.
There must be cattle
nearby
somewhere;
coyote and armadillo
patrol the black top,
crossing and lazing,
tiny flyblown specks
by the vast retreating
land.

America's Drug Policy: What Works, What Doesn't

Background

Our current policy mix is not working the way we want it to. The ease with which drugs can be obtained, the price, the number of people using drugs, the violence on the border all show that. We need to rethink our responses to the health effects, the economic impacts, [sic] the effect on crime. We need to rethink our approach to the supply and demand of drugs (U.S. Senator, James Webb, 2008).

For over a century, America's drug policy has been from a law enforcement perspective. This approach, has led to a circle of violence across America, particularly in the inner cities. From a policy stand point; the enforcement centric approach has not worked. It produced some unintended consequences. By defining the mission as a war on drugs, the psychology follows that we treat every drug incidence as a war. In wars, there are casualties. Cash strapped cities, drug victims needing help, and over policed minorities are the unintended casualties of the war.

War involves weapons, force, killings, and enemies. War involves an us vs. them approach. This is hardly beneficial or effective because criminal elements tend to adapt. As a result, policing adapts by escalating the "war." Since our ability to end all drug abuse or supply is unlikely, there seems to be no clear end in sight for the drug war. Worse still, a chunk of the critical dollar is channeled toward prosecuting the drug war, as opposed to increasing drug education, treatment, and rehabilitation programs.

Historically, drug enforcement has tilted toward minority citizens,

since the 1870s anti-opium war, which was largely a race-centric policy, specifically targeting Chinese immigrants. The various drug law enforcement regimes have predominantly targeted minorities disproportionately for drug enforcement and felony sentencing. The Harrison Narcotics Act of 1914 was targeted at what was then referred to as the cocaineized blacks (Sterling, 2001). Likewise, the subsequent anti-marijuana policies around the same time in the West were directed at the immigrant communities of Mexican descent (2001). As a result, minorities have been disproportionately targeted for drug enforcement and felony sentencing. These policy proposals will seek to address these problems.

The First World War ended in 1914, and the Second war ended in 1945. War ultimately ends, and combatants eventually retreat. When will the drug war end? One issue that this policy proposal will address is the way the drug problem is being approached. Defining the mission as a “war on drugs” promotes violence between the law enforcement community, the peddlers, and the user community. What policy proposals might we put in place to address the circle of violence on America’s streets as a result of the war? If there is a war going on, will a truce be apt?

This policy paper will recommend policy alternatives that will replace the old enforcement regimes with emphasis on treatment and decriminalization. The policies' outcome will also be measured against their cost effectiveness or cost benefits. Treatment and decriminalization as potential replacement policies will be analyzed. A review of much of the issues associated with treatment and decriminalization will be discussed. The problem will be defined, questions will be raised, and finally, various policy proposals will be made.

Key Terms: Definitions

Terms such as Drugs, War, and Minorities will surface in this Policy memo. To avoid confusion, there is need to define them relative to this proposal since these terms and concepts sometimes have multiple connotations. For example, since the term drug is interchangeable with medication (as in medicine), a distinction has to be made with regard to its usage in this policy memo.

Drugs. For the purpose of this policy brief: “Illicit drugs are those that are illegal to make, sell, or use” (Mara et al, 2014). Drugs refer to illicit drugs of abuse. See Appendix for a breakdown of drugs according to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

War. For the purpose of this policy memo, war applies narrowly to: “Terrorism, coordinated riots, a high crime rate, brutal policing, or

criminal predation” (MUELLER, 2009, p.299). I define it as legal use of force or violence by the agents of the state against perceived criminal elements over a period of time (usually years). For example, the war on drugs as lasted over 44 years since President Nixon launched it on June 17, 1971 (Drugwarfacts.org, 2007).

Minorities. This policy brief views a minority as: “A subordinate group whose members have significantly less control or power over their lives than members of a dominant or majority group” (Schaefer, 1979, p. 5-10). In the United States, racial minority groups include Blacks, American Indian, Asian Americans, and Hawaiians. Note: There is often systemic unequal treatment of these groups in the criminal justice system (Schaefer, 1979).

Theoretical framework and principles

- a. We must do away with ideologically driven drug policies. New drug policies must hinge on facts and evidence. Policy makers must understand what works and what doesn't? Drug policy must be measured based on reduction of violence (harm reduction)—including law enforcement induced violence—treatment, and overall wellbeing of communities.
- b. Policies must de-emphasize labels by focusing on bringing drug users from the periphery of society into the core by ending marginalization and criminalization (i.e., decriminalization). This policy brief adopts the “patient not criminal” (i.e., treatment) approach.

Problem Definition

The United States spend more money as a percentage of its GDP on drug law enforcement in comparison with other enforcement:

Between 1981 and 2008, federal, state, and local governments are estimated to have spent at least \$600 billion (adjusted for inflation) on drug interdiction and related law enforcement efforts; factoring in costs associated with treatment and rehabilitation, the overall total rises to around \$800 billion. If one were to also add in 'invisible' losses brought about by curtailed job opportunities and reduced workplace productivity, the true cost would be far higher. (Chalk, 2011)

This policy brief will reveal that despite U.S.'s astronomical spending on the drug war, it has yielded little to no result in terms of reducing overall harm to society. In fiscal year 2011, when Chalk conducted his study, U.S.'s national drug control budget (NDCB) was \$24,365.4 (in billions). By fiscal year 2015 drug enforcement costs ballooned to

\$26,336.7 (see Figure 1 for illustration). In FY 2016, the President requested \$27.6 billion to fund the “2015 National Drug Control Strategy (Strategy) effort to reduce drug use and its consequences in the United States” (Office of National Drug Control Policy [ONDCP], 2015)—an increase of \$1.2 billion or 4.7% increase (2015). The NDCB is also expected to increase beyond fiscal year 2016.

Figure 1: Drug Control Resources by Function; adapted from ONDCP, 2015.

Federal Drug Control Spending by Function			
(Budget Authority in Millions of US Dollars. Source: ONDCP, February 2015)			
Function	FY 2014 Final	FY 2015 Enacted	FY 2016 Request
Treatment	9,481.8	10,267.8	10,960.5
Percent	36.9%	39.0%	39.8%
Prevention	1,316.9	1,306.2	1,381.9
Percent	5.1%	5.0%	5.0%
Domestic Law Enforcement	9,340.5	9,367.0	9,736.6
Percent	36.3%	35.6%	35.3%
Interdiction	3,948.5	3,805.0	3,880.3
Percent	15.3%	14.4%	14.1%
International	1,637.1	1,590.7	1,613.0
Percent	6.4%	6.0%	5.9%
Total	\$25,724.9	\$26,336.7	\$27,572.3

Clearly, based on the historical and future budgetary allocations and spending, the current policy of enforcement, incarceration, and prohibition has produced dismal success. Common wisdom would

suggest that drug control cost should be reducing yearly, but that has not been the case given the yearly budget increase.

Along with increased budgetary spending on the drug war, there is a social cost. There has been an explosion in incarcerations as a result of the reliance on the law enforcement and prohibition model of drug control policy. According to the report by Sabol et al (2007) of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the U.S. is the leading nation in terms of the number of people serving time behind bars for various offenses (2007). The U.S. is the global leader when it comes to the number of individuals imprisoned for drug offenses.

In addition, the same BJS report noted that there are two million incarcerated Americans in the federal, state, and local correctional facilities (Sabol et al, 2007). One quarter of those serving time, are doing so for various drug offences. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2015), approximately 6.8 million Americans suffer from drug addiction. Drug addictions continue to drive the increase in the number of incarcerated Americans serving time for various drug offenses. The law enforcement and incarceration model is unsustainable and unaffordable in the long run because it diverts dwindling resources from other government—i.e., federal, state, and local—programs into prosecuting the drug war.

Racial disparity in incarceration

The findings of racial disparities in incarceration due to drug related offenses threaten to unravel America's criminal justice system. A foremost democratic and multi-ethnic nation like America should exhibit equity in its criminal justice system or risk long-term social and political chaos. According to Carson (2015), in a BJS report, out of the approximately 208,000 individuals serving sentences for various drug offenses in 2013: "67,800 were non-Latino/Hispanic white (32.6%), 79,900 were non-Latino/Hispanic black (38.4%), 39,900 were Hispanic (19.2%), and the remainder were unaccounted for or not specified in the report" (Carson, 2015). These findings fly in the face of the knowledge that minority Blacks make up 13.2% of the U.S. population, Hispanics, 17.4%, and Whites, 62.1% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). A federal household survey in 1998 found that Whites make up 72% of illicit drug users, Blacks 15%, and Latino 10%, but 37% of arrests are Blacks and 58% of drug convictions are Blacks; Latinos making up 21% (SAMHSA, 2013)

From the available data cited above, it is clear that:

- 1) The law enforcement model (i.e., the drug war) and prohibition is costly, ineffective, and socially and fiscally unsustainable.

- 2) There is a healthcare crises because of the over reliance on the law enforcement model as against the treatment model.
- 3) Minorities have been disproportionately targeted for drug enforcement and felony sentencing.

Methods

This policy analysis utilizes a multi-strategy approach. That is, a combination of rational (cost benefit analysis) and non-rational approach (normative approach based on the principle of equity). This memo utilizes cost-benefit analysis giving the new era of budgetary and fiscal constraints (i.e., post great recession climate). There has to be judicial use of limited resources. Alternative strategies (i.e., decriminalization and treatment) to the current regime of prohibition and incarceration will be considered based on cost to benefit ratio.

Yes, numbers speak but reason must also prevail. Aside from the fiscal portion of the analysis, this proposal adopts a normative strategy by addressing the question of: What is and what ought to be? What is the right thing to do in the face of the inability of numbers (dollar) to solve the problem?

Issue analysis

The discussion within the country over the issue of drug policy reform is divisive among policy analysts, law enforcements practitioners, and lawmakers—at all levels of government. There are those who advocate for doubling down on the existing policy regime by arguing for the allocation of more funding for law enforcement (U.S. Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration, 2015).

Overwhelmingly, the advocacy for the doubling down of the status quo is from the political right and law enforcement intelligentsia (Freiburger, 2014). One argument that pro prohibition and criminalization employ is the “Flouting Federal Law” (FFL) argument (Stimson, 2010). Proponents of the FFL argue that: “Supremacy Clause of the Constitution of the United States, the Controlled Substances Act, is the supreme law of the land and cannot be superseded by state laws that purport to contradict or abrogate its terms” (2010, p. 7). As such, the current marijuana legalizations in the states are illegal (2010).

There is also the health risk argument for the continuation of the current drug policy. Proponents of the health risk (HR) argument point to scientific finding that “marijuana use during the teen years can permanently lower a person’s IQ and interfere with other aspects of functioning and well-being” (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2014). On the other hand, a report of the national survey on drug use (between

1975-2013) revealed no concrete evidence on the effect of drug use (i.e., Cannabis) on adolescents (Johnston et al, 2013, p. 401). However, as more states decriminalizes (e.g., marijuana), it is expected that adolescents' use will increase (2013). By and large, proponents of the HR argument asserts that marijuana (i.e., poster child for pro legalization and decriminalization arguments) is “addictive and that its use significantly impairs bodily and mental functions” (Stimson, 2010).

In addition to the health risk argument, there is the crime escalation (CE) argument for retaining the current policies. The proponents of the CE argument assert that: “Even where decriminalized, marijuana trafficking remains a source of violence, crime, and social disintegration” (Stimson, 2010). This policy memo argues that behind the CE arguments lies the silent “broken window theory” (BWT). BWT is the notion that societies can prevent big crimes by “checking” small crime (in this case, possession of marijuana).

This policy memo does not discuss the argument for change because that is essentially what this whole memo is all about. However, there is clear evidence that public opinion is moving away from the status quo towards decriminalization, treatment, and regulation. It is appropriate to say that the public appears ready to call a truce and bring an end to the drug war. According to a Pew Research Center (PRC) survey:

67% of Americans say that the government should focus more on providing treatment for those who use illegal drugs such as heroin and cocaine. Just 26% think the government's focus should be on prosecuting users of such hard drugs. (PEW Research Center, 2014).

Policy Alternatives and Proposed Solutions

Recently, the stasis in policies is starting to show signs of movement. Since 2012 when Colorado passed the law legalizing the recreational use of marijuana, a wave of anti-prohibition initiatives has been proposed at the state level. States across America have flirted or weigh policy alternatives to current policies but there are still no agreements on what courses of action to take. This policy memorandum shall examine alternatives to the status quo (i.e., criminalization and incarceration). As noted above, studies show that the current enforcement regime is ineffective.

As a result, alternatives must consider fiscal sustainability and harm reduction. Harm reduction principle is based on the notion that society can reduce the damages that drugs cause individuals, family, and societies in general by emphasizing treatment over incarceration (Ciment, 2006, p. 579). Basing alternatives on fiscal sustainability and

the principle of “harm reduction” will ensure that facts and evidence, not ideology, drives policymaking. The alternatives to the policy problems are decriminalization, regulation, and treatment over incarceration.

Alternative 1: Decriminalization.

The law enforcement or criminal justice model to the country’s drug epidemic lacks efficacy in preventing drug abuse. It is unsustainably costly and counterproductive. Criminalizing (i.e., prohibition) is costly because it drives up the cost (both monetary and nonmonetary) of the drug. High drug cost, in turn, means that more suppliers will enter into the drug economy (law of demand and supply).

One effect of criminalizing the drug problem is the never ending circle of violence. According to the findings by Jensen (2000), decriminalization:

Would decrease violence associated with attempts to control illicit markets and as resolutions to disputes between buyers and sellers. Moreover, because the perception of violence associated with the drug market can lead people who are not directly involved to be prepared for violent self-defense, there could be additional reductions in peripheral settings when disputes arise. (p.33)

Stopping prohibition would improve the “violence-scape” of the American society.

Additionally, a research conducted by Miron and Waldock (2010) revealed that:

Legalizing drugs would save roughly \$41.3 billion per year in government expenditure on enforcement of prohibition. Of these savings, \$25.7 billion would accrue to state and local governments, while \$15.6 billion would accrue to the federal government. Approximately \$8.7 billion of the savings would result from legalization of marijuana and \$32.6 billion from legalization of other drugs. (p. 1)

No doubt, the fiscal situation of the government (federal, state, local) would improve considerably. Better still, the savings could be deployed into drug treatment and counseling.

Alternative 2: Regulation.

Aside from decriminalizing drugs, drugs should be regulated like other pharmaceutical drugs. Regulation (i.e., targeted at usage, sale, and age restriction) will bring the market out of the underground economy into the open regulated market. Drugs in the open regulated market will eliminate the need for violence. Regulation would also normalize drug price and reduce potential profit margin (Insulza, 2013).

In addition, regulation will potentially reduce overall demand

“because legal sellers face a stronger incentive to obey such regulation than underground sellers, who are already hiding their actions from authorities” (Miron & Waldock, 2010, p. 53). The underlying assumption is “that the marginal costs of evading tax and regulatory costs is zero for black market suppliers who are already conducting their activities in secret” (p.53).

Another important impact of regulation is the potential tax revenue accruals from taxation, which is estimated to be:

\$46.7 billion annually, assuming legal drugs were taxed at rates comparable to those on alcohol and tobacco. Approximately \$8.7 billion of this revenue would result from legalization of marijuana and \$38.0 billion from legalization of other drugs. (Miron and Waldock, 2010, p. 53)

Regulation will greatly reduce the vices associated with illicit drug trade and increase government revenues. The revenue accruals from regulation can channeled into treatment and prevention programs.

Alternative 3: Treatment.

Between January 1994 and December, 2000 the government of Switzerland conducted a study of 1969 drug dependent individuals on treatment, and the result was a resounding success. The result concluded that:

Heroin-assisted treatment programs are cost-beneficial to Swiss society, since patients often show great improvements in medical and social variables, including criminality. In other words, the financial benefits from less criminality, less health-care use, and improvements in social variables are higher than the costs of treatment. (Rehm et al., 2001, p. 1420)

An analysis of the Swiss findings revealed that for treatment participant, criminal infractions fell by 60 percent (2001). For participants, incomes generated from illegal sources also dropped from 69 to 10 (2001). Use of illicit/ illegal drug declined. Participants of the study also showed an improvement in gainful employment (i.e., from 14% to 32%) (2001). Overall health improved and incidence of HIV infection declined among the controlled groups—i.e., those who stayed in treatment program (2001, p. 1418). There were no deaths from overdoses, and no prescribed drugs were diverted to the black market. A cost-benefit analysis of the program found a net economic benefit of \$30 per patient per day, mostly because of reduced criminal justice and health care costs (2001).

According to the Justice Policy Institute (JPI), treatment is more cost effective than incarceration (JPI, 2008, p. 3). The result of the policy brief by JPI showed that for every increase in funding (+14.6%

between 1995-2005) for drug treatment there is a corresponding decline in violent crime by twofold (-31.5% between 1995-2005) (p.3). For every +14.6% increased spending, there is a +37.4% increase in drug treatment admission rate (p.3). Clearly, the cost advantage is in favor of treatment because +14.6% expenditure yields -31.5% and +37.4% in violent crime reduction and drug treatment admission rates respectively (p. 3). By and large, community based drug treatment is comparatively more beneficial and cost effective than incarceration (Aos, et al, 2007). For every dollar spent on drug treatment in the community is estimated to return \$18.52 in benefits to society” (JPI, 2008, p. 16).

Evaluating the alternatives using the decision matrix (DM).

The evaluation was conducted using six criteria (narrowed down) that were determined to be more socially beneficial. Weights were assigned to these criteria based on the importance of policy outcomes of the alternatives. The alternatives were scored based on their effectiveness at achieving policy outcomes (i.e., meet criteria). The scores were then multiplied by weights to determine ratings per alternative, which were tallied to determine total rating. The alternative with the highest total rating will be recommended (or at least will top the list of recommendations).

Decision Matrix				
Criteria	Weight	Alternative 1: Decriminalization	Alternative 2: Regulation	Alternative 3: Treatment
Reduce violent crimes	5	3 X 5= 15	5 X 5= 25	5 X 5= 25
Reduce drug abuse	1	1 X 1= 1	1 X 1= 1	5 X 1= 5
Overall harm reduction	5	1 X 5= 5	3 X 5= 15	5 X 5=25
Reduce overall cost	5	5 X 5= 25	5 X 5= 25	5 X 5= 25
Reduce incarceration	3	3 X 3= 9	3 X 3= 15	5 X 3= 15
Wage gain	3	1 X 3= 3	5 X 3= 15	3 X 3= 9
Total Rating		58	96	104

Score: 5= fully satisfy

Weight: 5= High Importance

(Score X Weight= Rating)

3= substantially satisfy

3=Medium Importance

1= partly satisfy

1= Low Importance

CBA Matrix of Most Desired Alternative vs. Status Quo. (Source of data: Justice Policy Institute)

Benefits		
Benefits	Status quo: Incarceration	Desired Alternative

Reduction in the cost of drug-related crimes		-\$4.00 to -\$7.00
Violent crime rate (California)		-11.2%
Costs		
Costs	Status quo: Incarceration	Desired Alternative
Addiction treatment programs		+\$1.00
Incarceration per year (per person)	\$24,655.00	
Number Treatment facilities (California)		+25.9%

Strategic Recommendations

The data analysis conducted in this policy brief show a preponderance of evidence (qualitative and quantitative, see DM and CBA) suggesting that the government should adopt Alternative 3, Treatment as an alternative to incarceration for low level non-violent drug offenders. Alternative 3, is most effective at a) reducing violent crimes, b) reducing drug abuse, c) reducing overall harm to society, d) reducing overall cost, e) reducing incarceration, and f) improving wage gain among drug users. Therefore, I recommend alternative 3 (i.e., treatment) for this committee.

Alternative 2, Regulation, is second most effective alternative but it can only work if alternative 1, Decriminalization, is adopted because it will eliminate the underground—criminal—economy for drugs. The market for illicit drugs can then be regulated and taxed like any other commodity. Behind this idea is the notion that demand drives supply. As such, as long as there is a demand for drugs, criminal elements will continue to occupy the supply chain. The concomitant effects are—as has been—violent crimes and overall harm to society (e.g., HIV and Hep-C infections). Regulation and decriminalization will reduce and eliminate the need for violence as a means for guaranteeing procurements and supply. Better still, regulation would buoy the tax revenue of the government and ameliorate the fiscal dilemma that it faces.

Therefore, in the order of effectiveness, this policy brief recommends the following as the alternatives to the current law enforcement approach:

- 1) Treatment.
- 2) Regulation
- 3) Decriminalization

It is my opinion that if these recommendations are adopted and implemented, the overall wellbeing of the society will improve. There

will be a significant harm reduction as a result of the illicit drug problem.

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The Dead Television

Who Was Jeanne?

I was Jeanne, Jeanne was I,
my friends called me Moon Pie,
but now I'm dead, deceased, at rest,
though I still hate my ex.

My husband Mick, he always won,
I'd love to beat that prick,
but love I did, I did, as well,
I loved that Beatle John.

I laid a guy once underneath
the bleachers at my school
then came my daughter Emily
and god I loved her too.

Jeanne seemed asleep lying in her coffin. Her face was appealing, glowing—her hair golden like sunshine. I cried when I saw her. Couldn't help it. She somehow looked more beautiful than I had ever seen her. There she lay, all tension of life now absent. I fumbled forward, forgetting the formal setting of the funeral home. My fingers ran through her curls, twining, becoming entangled. I kissed her, wetting half her face. Maybe a minute went by, maybe an hour. I only know that Jeanne's sister, Marianna, at last, pulled me from her.

"Are you done?" she asked.

I stared at Mariana and said nothing. I bent forward one last time and nibbled the tip of Jeanne's nose.

Mariana gazed inside the coffin through bothered eyes. She nudged me out of the way and fixed Jeanne's makeup, that death mask she would wear to the crematorium. She prodded at her dress, a blue frock with lace. She combed her hair back into place.

Jeanne had always hated Mariana. I never knew why until that day at the funeral home. Mariana had hired a priest to preside over the ceremony. One noted to possess knowledge of a secret door to Heaven, through which those who had died under questionable circumstances could enter. I suppose the details of Jeanne's death had given Mariana pause. Mariana's hiring of such a guy gave me pause. But what could I do? Mariana was running this show. She had all the rights.

Jeanne and I had shared the stage many times before her final performance. We were actors, working for the Old Stage Players. We were a traveling troop and did as many as six performances a week. We were doing *A Christmas Carol* one December in Colettesville, NC, and that's the night I first kissed Jeanne.

After the show, Jeanne and I were the last ones left outside the theater. Everyone else had headed back to the motel because it was freezing cold. But Jeanne was in the mood to talk.

"I've met Elton John," she said.

"No way."

"Yes, I have. I'm the one who turned him gay."

"No, you didn't."

"Yes, I did."

"How'd you do it?"

"He fell for me and I turned him down."

"I don't think that's how it works," I said.

"Well, it seemed like it at the time."

We were bundled up in fur parkas, our breath freezing like cigar smoke. Jeanne was clinging to me to keep warm.

"I know everything about John Lennon," she said.

"You couldn't."

"Yes, I do. Ask me anything."

"What's his favorite color?" I asked.

"Brown."

"How do you know?"

"Well, it's not blue. That's how."

"How do you know it's not blue?" I teased.

"Because blue is everybody's favorite."

"So, maybe it's John Lennon's too."

"No, John's too cool to be like everybody else."

"That makes sense."

"I always make sense."

The night got colder and Jeanne and I walked toward the motel. The wind picked up and we ducked into a store front to shield ourselves. We window shopped until Jeanne got bored looking at tools and coveralls and horse feed.

“You want to help me practice my kissing scene?” she asked.

“Sure, why not?”

“Thought you’d say no.”

“Why would I say no?” I wanted to know.

“Because.”

“Because why?”

Jeanne was clinging to me and our frozen breath mingled and rose like a mist. She stood on her tiptoes and we kissed.

“Because of Mick. Most guys won’t let me practice on them.”

“Was that one just practice?”

“Yeah.”

That one wasn’t just practice for me. I was crazy about Jeanne ever since I first saw her. I talked to her every chance I got during work. She called on me to practice lines. We always joked around. We had great times. But she was right about Mick, her husband, the owner and artistic director of the troop.

Mick was a tyrant. Most of the guys were afraid of him. He seemed to enjoy humiliating those with whom he was at odds. He had his fun with the rest of the troop at their expense. For those guys he fired, he topped it off with a poor recommendation. If Mick had a beef with you, watch your back. He was both mean and sneaky. He had no mercy.

I was willing to be just friends with Jeanne until Mick began to treat her as badly as he had some of the others. I was shocked one day when she was away from the theater and Mick had the entire troop laughing at her.

“You just can’t fix stupid,” he’d said.

“Neither can you fix a cliché,” I told the stagehand, Terry, a local, whom we’d picked up to help move the sets during performances. Terry was one of the few who hadn’t laughed at Mick’s cruel joke.

Things got worse between Jeanne and Mick. I became her confidant. She told me a few times that she was afraid of him, and that she didn’t know what to do. I didn’t know either, but Mick seemed to know. He stuck to his usual pattern of berating Jeanne to the troop every time he had the chance. He referred to her as “our idiot blonde” once right in front her. The troop had laughed dutifully.

The great blowout in their marriage happened a year later when we were doing *A Christmas Carol* once again. Mick had cast Jeanne as young Ebenezer’s wife. Jeanne had always played the female leads, and

to her, being cast in this inconsequential role was the absolute affront. I'd never seen her so angry in all the years I'd known her. I had the night off and was hanging out with Terry when Jeanne came by my apartment.

She was crying so hard she shook. It was several minutes before she could tell us what happened.

"Mick locked me out," she said.

"No way!" Terry said.

"Yes, way! He told me to go outside and wait on him. We were going to talk. But then he locked me out."

"Somebody needs to have a talk with that man," Terry said.

Terry was right. That was no way to treat anyone, especially Jeanne. We all stayed at my place that night, and I decided to have a talk with Mick the following evening.

When I got to rehearsal, Mick had left word for me to come and see him. *That's convenient*, I thought. I found him back stage and we went into the box office to talk.

"I've decided to cast you as Charles Dickens," he said. "It's the best role you've ever had. Do a good job and who knows where you'll go. I've been keeping up with what you're doing. Consider this your big break."

"Tell me one thing first," I said. "Why'd you lock Jeanne out of the theater last night?"

"That's not your concern," he said. "I've fired Jeanne and she'll never play another role here or anywhere else if I have anything to say about it."

"But she was badly traumatized."

"How do you know that?"

"Because she told me. She came by my place."

"You have a choice to make and you'd better think hard about it. You have a chance to play a great role, but if you continue to see Jeanne, you will never play another theater role again. Take my word for it."

"Jeanne is a friend," I said, "a real friend, and that's something you know nothing about. You're a pathetic bully, and I'm ashamed that I've worked for you as long as I have. Find yourself another Dickens."

Outside, I told Terry what happened.

"Well, I'm quitting too," he said.

"Tell him about me." The voice came from a pickup truck parked nearby. I could see a brunette woman sitting there.

"That's my girlfriend, Jane. She just started in ticket sells and she's quitting too."

"I couldn't ask you to quit your jobs that way. How will you live?"

"Jane just got a settlement check." Terry's grin was catchy. "We're set for a year. Besides we like Moon Pie, right Jane?"

“Yeah, we want to be her entourage.”

I thought that was just splendid. We headed off to tell Jeanne about it, and the four of us partied at my apartment that night. Jeanne played piano and sang show tunes. Terry and Jane had a slapstick comedy routine they performed, which kept us in stitches all night. I confided that the reason I had gone into show business in the first place was because I could neither sing nor dance nor act. So, naturally, there was nothing else I could possibly do.

Terry and Jane rented a place nearby. We all became friends, and, more often than not, prepared our dinner together on the grill. Terry was a winemaker, and he shared many bottles of his special blackberry. Jane possessed the talent of coming up with a joint of good smoke. Jeanne would entertain us on piano.

I bought a rattly old van, and the four of us often road-tripped together. One night during dinner, Jeanne had the idea of traveling to Wilmington to chase Hurricane Fran. She had been following this storm on the weather channel, and, given that we all had seen *Twister*, this seemed like the perfect idea. An hour later we were on the way.

Wrightsville Beach was deserted. Many of the hotels were boarded up. Others demolished totally. The storm had blown through just before we arrived, and the few people we met were scared or angry.

“Did you have your premiums paid up?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, they’ll pay, then.”

“They better.”

“They will.”

“Well, by-god, they better!”

The hurricane tide had left the beach strewn with debris. After a long walk, Jeanne got a phone call. I figured it was Marianna. Had it been Emily, Jeanne’s daughter, she would have been smiling and laughing. But, Jeanne wasn’t smiling or laughing. In fact, she was quiet and shaking. Not angry shaking but something else. She was horrified.

“What’s the matter?” we asked.

No answer. Jeanne just started walking back toward the van. “I’m going home,” she said.

We finally got her to tell us what happened. Emily had attempted suicide. Jeanne and I had visited Emily many times, and she us, so I knew she had suffered from depression. And I knew she had been in the hospital for it. Jeanne had talked about this more than a few times.

I liked Emily, but she wasn’t like Jeanne. She was analytic, always trying to figure people out. Figure an angle with people. How to have her way with them. She and I talked for an hour once before I figured out that she had wanted me to pay her water bill. Jeanne, though, was the

essence of creativity. She rarely thought outside of how best to play a theater role or how best to teach her piano students or how best to prepare a rack of ribs.

Back at home, Jeanne spent the next weeks visiting Emily. They let her out of the hospital after a week, but Jeanne stayed on. She was driven, on a mission to save her daughter. And she wasn't about to leave her until she knew she was better.

When I went up to visit, Jeanne's appearance stunned me. She seemed withered, dispirited, as if her character had dried up and blown away on a hurricane. She had aged ten years. She seemed to care about nothing other than keeping tabs on Emily. She seemed obsessed, looking for some "in" into Emily's psyche. She had taken on her daughter's persona, her habit of analyzing.

Back at home, Jeanne's spirit continued to decline. She gave up teaching the piano. She spent her days staring at the weather channel. That light that had been so apparent in her, and had been the core of her character, had faded. Her smile and her laughter seemed nowhere to be found.

Terry, Jane, and myself were on the porch one evening having a glass of wine when Jeanne came out. Her face was animated, and I believed at that moment that she was okay again. I think Terry and Jane thought so too. It had never occurred to any of us that she would never be okay again.

"The television's dead," was all that Jeanne said. And she went back inside.

It was Jeanne's eyes that had died. On that desolate beach in NC, her bright, enchanting eyes were destroyed. The beauty of those eyes was shattered and left lifeless by the dreadfulness of the thought of losing her precious child.

I wondered, even before Jeanne's decline, how she would be able to manage. She had lost her position as an actor. She had little hope of continuing her career. She had lost her marriage. I imagined that the two of us would marry one day, and I suppose I thought we'd live happily ever after, like in the shows we performed. But some shows depict the tragic nature of life through their twists and reversals, and such was the nature of mine and Jeanne's experience.

I came home one day to find Terry waiting for me on the porch.

"Is he here yet?" Jane's voice drifted from inside.

"Yep," Terry said. He gazed at me, right steady.

"Did you tell him?"

"Not yet."

When they told me that Jeanne was dead, that she had committed suicide, all I saw was the porch floor rising toward my face. Terry and Jane picked me up and brought me inside.

~*~

Jeanne's brother, Mark, rescued me from Mariana. He brought me to a seat in the chapel and we sat. Jeanne had loved her brother and I understood why. Unlike Mariana, he was patient and caring. I thought he might hold my hand there in that chapel like I had seen him hold Jeanne's, but he didn't.

I stared at the yellow carnations on green wires standing around Jeanne like sentries. I willed them to die. But they remained triumphant and leering. They reminded me of Mariana. I decided to take Jeanne's hatred of her sister upon myself. I took on her love for her brother as well.

The minister rattled on for twenty minutes and, finally, secured a place for Jeanne in Heaven. He claimed that despite Biblical references to the contrary, Jeanne should be admitted because her depression was responsible for her death and not herself.

In spite of this message of reclamation, and Mariana's gratified eyes, the ceremony put me off. I wanted a celebration of Jeanne's life and of her beauty and of her brilliance. I understood that everyone has to die, and that many of us do so before we reach that mind-failing age when our bodies fall into disrepair and ruin. I understood that depression is just as surely a disease as any of a physical nature. I just could not understand relegating ourselves to the place where we have forgotten about the excellence and the grandeur and the sublime wonder in our loved ones in favor of living in the shadow of religious doctrine.

After the service, the minister was shaking hands with the crowd, and I stood in line. But I never shook his hand. Instead, I told him that Jeanne did not need his message.

"She owns a heaven more accessible than yours," I said. "In her heaven, everyone is invited without exception. The only ones who do not come are those who are too fearful, too mired in their smug little worlds to imagine the possibility."

~*~

Overall, I can only imagine that Jeanne had tried to take Emily's condition onto herself through transference, and then carry it to the grave where it could harm her daughter no longer. Such healing was typical in the West before the onslaught of the Enlightenment, when

science came to the fore and religion took a backseat. I wonder, if, in following science, we have strayed further off the mark than where religion had us. At any rate, it seems that Jeanne's style of healing worked, for Emily seems much better.

The Suicide of Jeanne Little

Jeanne, you asked me once how long
I'd remember you when you died.
I smiled and said, a day or two.
You shook your head and cried.

You really should remember me
much longer than that, you said.
I smiled and shook my head and headed
tiredly back to bed.

A little spirit came to me
as I was driving in my van,
a little spirit like a comet
buzzing all around my head.

Go away you little spirit,
must you be so bothersome?
Go away and leave me be,
I have work to do today.

Then I learned that you'd been found
lying dead behind the door,
prescription bottle by your hand,
tablets scattered on the floor.

Alone on Christmas Day, I sat,
staring at the dead TV,
in my blue rocking chair with her
blue chair now empty there with me.

Jeanne, you got me good this time:
you've rearranged my world,
left me reeling in a daze,
lost in a hazy maze.

Then you appeared in apparition
radiant there in front of me.
You laughed and said, I got me too,
and then you flew inside my eyes.

I now see through your eyes, Jeanne,
I learn and laugh for two.
When darkness reigns in my cruel world,
I often seek out you.

40 Martyrs Church, Aleppo

A deacon points to each saint,
identifies well known iconography in cracked French:
St. John with his head on a platter, St. George and the dragon,
Mary with Jesus and the Baptist, St. Joseph, the Last Judgment,
the altar and the pulpit.
The patriarch, Gregorius, severe Armenian,
as if he expected to bear crosses
unknown,
buried beneath his feet,
the fourth-century entombed
strata below these medieval stones
and the rest massacred.
Once remembered here.
Near the door, a vase of flowers riffled for one red carnation
handed to me without apparent thought for history.

Aleppo's Citadel

Early March haze barely hides the sun
strong enough to make a donkey blink
as it climbs the ramparts of the castle and bows
its head under a pannier full of cola bottles
prodded from behind to find the rough grid
meant for Arabian stallions passing by two pairs
of stone lions, one laughing and one crying
at the ceremonial casket laid in state, St. George
taken from the crusades and entombed;
having risen to heaven, he's left an empty box
draped in green silks, woven in local looms
perhaps on the main avenue of the castle's
now shuttered souks beside empty cisterns
bleak as prisons. Arrows at right angles
mounted, difficult to imagine flying as torture
in the porcelain pots shaken from earthquakes
and excavations. Scattered pieces, catapult
with cannon and there the eunuchs' quarters,
like Allah inscribed in stone as witness
to what's been done and can't be restored.

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Learning to Write in Two Languages

English requires space, asserted autonomy
in separate seats expected to fit average knees

and arms kept an understood distance
from neighbors, untouchable,

a caste kept to the exit rows on airplanes
assumes the necessity for order

before dislocated rivets and bones
break from bodies arbitrary as letters

standing alone in Arabic: A not S, O not N
set apart by design revealing where they are

not where they're going. L nudging B or T,
squeezes their sides, physicality

taken for granted like bumping into people
and boys holding one another's pinkies.

Elba in June Without Tourists

would have been preferable to Jehovah digging in his Old Testament heels,
nodding at the pillar of salt and spousal disobedience in Sodom, as if history
didn't make Assad nervous enough, this pile of stones as read by an Italian
archaeologist could be the very stuff of war, or at least guerilla action,
the Massad sneaking across the border and scooping out new territory,
carrying off armfuls of Syria and rewriting it as if it were Roman.
All those clay tablets, records of what came in and what went out, words.

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This Year's Living Legend

Mario Vargas Llosa
bows his head
for a thick ribbon
with a shiny medal,
accepts applause,
and says,
“I do not want to die dead,”
the weight on his chest
not to be mistaken
for his working heart.
He's eighty this week--
his new novel
a gauntlet.
It's no December Dean.
But discreet, like his hero
with plans, a rebel
to epitaphs of praise
for what's past.

No Place Like Home: Magical Ruralism as Cultural Discourse

Introduction

The iconic film *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) begins with Dorothy (Judy Garland) desperately wanting to escape from Kansas. At its core, *The Wizard of Oz* is a film about a magical journey from rural Kansas to the gleaming Emerald City. This basic narrative of a young person leaving his or her rural home for the intoxicating promise of urban opportunity underlies many works from the canon of modern American literature. Since the colonial era, negotiations of rural and urban, country and city, have been central to the shaping of American nationalism. In the United States, perceptions of countryside influenced settlement and colonization, Jeffersonian ideology, visions of the frontier, agrarian fantasies, the aftermath of the Dust Bowl, and a host of other historical developments and attitudes. Essentially, American history reflects shifting attitudes about rural cultures and landscapes with contemporary rural culture struggling, in a sense, to define itself against urban-oriented cultural paradigms.

Characters like Dorothy Gale are commonplace in modern American literature. During the first half of the twentieth century, canonical, widely known literary works by Sherwood Anderson, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, and others portrayed rural American life as essentially alienated from modernity. Theodore Dreiser's *Carrie Meeber* and Sinclair Lewis's *Carol Kennicott* yearned to escape small town life in favor of the opportunities and excitement promised by the city. Jay Gatsby, arguably one of the most famous characters in all of American literature, sheds his Minnesota identity to remake himself into a sophisticated, wealthy Easterner. Gatsby's lavish mansion is Oz-like in

its colorful extravagance and absurdity; he is so obsessed with the pursuit of urban excess that his fantasies ultimately destroy him. Gatsby's dream hinges on a complete departure from his rural origins—to win Daisy, he must become a wealthy, sophisticated Easterner. This narrative of departure works as a kind of twentieth century rural “grand narrative” in that canonical works of American literature legitimized and codified the inferiority of rural culture within the broader context of modernity. This rural grand narrative hinged on presenting rural life as stifling, boring, and lacking in opportunities.

The question of how rural culture has responded to this grand narrative throughout the late twentieth century and beyond requires further scholarly attention. While various theories of postmodernism address what Frederic Jameson calls the “cultural logic of late capitalism,” work on rural narratives and culture from the postmodern era is sparse. In *Knowing Your Place: Rural Identity and Cultural Hierarchy* (1997), Barbara Ching and Gerald W. Creed argue that postmodern scholarship and society as a whole tend to marginalize rural culture and suggest that “the urban-identified can confidently assume the cultural value of their situation while the rural-identified must struggle to gain recognition” (4). This “struggle to gain recognition” is a defining feature of rural cultural discourse from the postmodern era and beyond. In his recent study of Midwestern regionalism, *From Warm Center to Ragged Edge* (2017), Jon K. Lauck describes how dominant culture in the twentieth century turned away from once-celebrated rural regionalisms: “For the past half century, the prevailing forces and trends in high and popular culture and in the American academy have not been conducive to the study of midwestern history and have cut against a focus on the Midwest as a particular region” (2). I argue that re-enchantment emerges as the means through which rural culture has attempted to “gain recognition.” A study of postmodern rural narratives and cultural artifacts reveals historical re-conceptualization wherein marginalization of rural space is acknowledged and transformed through magical rural imagery. The conditions of multinational capitalism form the driving force behind the marginalization of rural culture, and postmodern rural narratives respond to these conditions through re-enchantment of pastoral images, forms, or other rural symbols. I call the cultural discourse that emerges *magical ruralism*. In the discussion that follows, I describe how place has functioned in pastoral and modern rural narratives as a way to show how postmodern rural literature and culture more generally can be read as responding to the conditions of postmodernity through re-enchantment of mythical, pastoral, or modern (often industrial) forms. I trace how postmodern texts by Tim O’Brien, Stephen King, Louise Erdrich, E. Annie Proulx and others exemplify the

use of magical ruralism in literature. Various cultural artifacts, including roadside monuments, are surveyed as a way to show how magical ruralism is a discourse evident in both literature and culture more broadly.

Rural Grand Narratives

Because magical ruralism surveys a broad range of examples not limited to literature, a broad definition of “rural” informs my analysis. The Oxford English Dictionary (2011) provides multiple definitions of “rural,” including “as living in the country as opposed to the town or city” and “of, relating to, or characteristic of peasants or country people; simple, unpolished; rustic.” Definitions of “rural” consistently characterize “rural” as alienated from sophistication. As described above, many grand, canonical narratives of the early twentieth century reinforce the idea that one must abandon rural life in order to achieve modernity and sophistication. In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), Jean-François Lyotard argues that postmodernism involves the collapse or revising of the grand narrative. Attempting to understand the tension between rural and urban culture is a kind of grand narrative in itself. As Raymond Williams explains in *The Country and the City* (1973):

On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light. Powerful hostile associations have also developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness, and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation. A contrast between country and city, as fundamental ways of life, reaches back into classical times. (1)

The qualities Williams assigns to the country—peace, innocence, and simplicity—are familiar elements of what might be termed the primary rural narrative form: the pastoral. According to Terry Gifford, a pastoral narrative features a rural or country setting, often juxtaposed in some way with an urban setting (2). A traditional pastoral work represents the rural country environment as idyllic, simple, and desirable. Of course, the pastoral narrative is familiar when viewed in the context of the grand narrative underlying American history and nationalism. In *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964), Leo Marx explains that rural landscape figured prominently in how early America was imagined as a garden of unlimited potential:

Beginning in Jefferson’s time, the cardinal image of American aspirations was a rural landscape, a well-ordered green garden

magnified to continental size. Although it probably shows a farmhouse or a neat white village, the scene usually is dominated by natural objects: in the foreground a pasture, a twisting brook with cattle grazing nearby, then a clump of elms on a rise in the middle distance and beyond that, way off on the western horizon, a line of dark hills. This is the countryside of the old Republic, a chaste, uncomplicated land of rural virtue. (141)

As Marx documents, land was a crucial factor in how the early American republic defined itself against Europe. Fascination with “unsettled,” remote landscapes spurred westward expansion as individuals searched for arable land, gold, or other early symbols of the American Dream. Rural life occupied a prominent position in the cultural hierarchy of the early American republic as evidenced by its role in both the formation of a national mythology and in its ability to inspire the general population.

At the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, Frederick Jackson Turner famously declared the closing of the American frontier. This is a crucial moment in that Jackson’s speech symbolically suggests that the promises of happiness and riches linked to the pastoral and frontier myths are no longer accessible. Modernity and modern literature would only confirm this, and a number of fundamental examples of the modern American novel can also be read as rural grand narratives. In his book *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing* (1992), Ron Weber notes that many seminal works of modern American fiction were penned by Midwestern authors and made use of Midwestern settings as microcosms of “American life.” Weber points out that the pinnacle of this “Midwestern ascendancy” was the awarding of the Nobel Prize in Literature to Minnesotan Sinclair Lewis in 1930. In the canonical texts that Weber addresses in his study, including Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925), Sherwood Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), Lewis’s *Main Street* (1920), *Babbitt* (1922), and *Arrowsmith* (1925) and others, the Midwest is portrayed as “cut off” from civilization and as hopelessly conformist. *The Great Gatsby* suggests that Gatsby’s dream is of a kind of sophistication not available in Jay Gatz’s Midwestern home. Similarly, in *Winesburg, Ohio*, George Willard as author and artist must flee Winesburg—a town portrayed by Anderson as a place where dreamers turn into “grotesques.” In L. Frank Baum’s novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), which is especially important to the forthcoming discussion of magical ruralism, Kansas is described as a colorless, exhausted world. Like the urban areas in *The Great Gatsby* and *Winesburg, Ohio*, the Emerald City appears as a place where dreams supposedly come true and wherein the “drab” qualities of small town Midwestern life might be countered.

These rural grand narratives provide context for how rural space has assumed a marginalized, inferior position in the postmodern cultural hierarchy. As foundational examples of canonical texts, these novels also position marginalization of rural space and culture as a central narrative within the field of literary studies. As Max Weber argues in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), the modern condition is one of disenchantment. The canonical modern narratives discussed above present rural landscapes and communities as disenchanted and lacking in sophistication. Magical ruralist texts use re-enchantment as a strategy for countering this cultural marginalization. Ching and Creed identify a “radical embracing of that marginality by many people in order to contest the late twentieth century’s hegemonic urbanity and its associated socio-political structures” (5). Magical ruralism surfaces as the cultural discourse where this “embracing of marginality” takes shape, with the supposedly boring and ordinary elements of rural life transformed into something spectacular.

Magical Ruralism

Importantly, a major figure in postmodern literature has pointed to a famous rural narrative as a significant factor in his development as a writer. In his 1992 essay “Out of Kansas,” Salman Rushdie describes the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz* as the text that inspired him to write. The similarities between the film and Rushdie’s use of magical realism are obvious, and Rushdie acknowledges the prominent green hues in the movie as a source for the “green and black” dreams of Saleem Sinai, narrator of Rushdie’s 1980 novel *Midnight’s Children* (17). The links between magical realism and postmodern rural literature extend beyond Rushdie’s essay. In her excellent discussion of the elements of magical realism, Wendy B. Faris writes that “magical realism has tended to concentrate on rural settings and to rely on rural inspiration—almost a postmodern pastoralism” (Zamora and Faris 182). In both well-known magical realist narratives and in postmodern rural narratives, rural or “village” life is often threatened by the forces of late capitalism. Magic and fantasy emerge as means through which characters manage the anxiety associated with existing in such an environment.

Both magical realism and magical ruralism are discourses of marginalization, but to equate magical realism and magical ruralism would be to overlook the significant differences that emerge when tracing the sources of marginalization. Whereas the forces of capitalism have contributed to marginalization and displacement of indigenous populations and villages worldwide, colonialism and its legacy play a significant role in how magical ruralism and magical realism differ. In suggesting that both magical realism and magical ruralism are discourses

of marginalization, I am not suggesting that the sources or effects of marginalization are equal. In his article “Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse” (1995), Stephen Slemon describes magical realism as a postcolonial discourse historically associated with the Third World (Zamora and Faris 408). Slemon points out how overuse of “magical realism” can prove problematic: “the concept of magical realism itself threatens to become a monumentalizing category for literary practice and to offer centralizing genre systems a single locus upon which the massive problem of difference in literary expression can be managed into recognizable meaning in one swift pass” (Zamora and Faris 409). Magical ruralism offers an alternative lens, related to magical realism, through which cultural responses to the marginalization of postmodern rural space and culture can be approached. Magical ruralism differs from magical realism in that magical ruralist texts enchant or re-enchant decidedly rural forms and materials, both natural and unnatural. Like pastoralism, these rural “raw materials” are largely Western, often secular forms and concepts. As with many magical realist texts, ordinary forms and materials assume magical or supernatural powers in the magical ruralist text. In her article “Scheherazade’s Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction,” Faris explains that “magical realism combines realism and the fantastic in such a way that magical elements grow organically out of the reality portrayed” (164). Magical ruralist texts tend to draw from a more recent past than magical realist texts; although this is not true of all magical ruralist texts, many of the examples I survey below reveal a re-enchantment of machinery, commercial imagery, or other post-industrial material. Magical realist texts often make use of a more distant, pre-industrial past, including “non-Western cultural systems that privilege mystery over empiricism, empathy over technology, tradition over innovation” (Zamora and Faris 3).

Magical ruralist literature typically reveals a central anxiety concerning rural life and/or rural landscapes. Re-enchantment of rural raw materials functions as a response to that anxiety. In Tim O’Brien’s *In the Lake of the Woods* (1994) and in Stephen King’s story “Children of the Corn” (1977), rural raw materials are re-encharmed in a way that both re-conceptualizes history and manages anxieties concerning rural space. In both texts, enchantment is linked to commodification, in the sense that tourism plays an important role in both narratives. In *In the Lake of the Woods*, the Lake of the Woods in Northern Minnesota—a definitely “remote” location—is presented as a locus of subjectivity, mystery, and supernatural power linked to re-enchanting of rural Midwestern landscapes. “Magic” works in the novel as a depictive re-conceptualizing of the dominant, popular constructions of remote

Midwestern space as empty and vacuous—in the novel, remote space as empty and vacuous is aligned with rural space as landscape of spectacle, which is in turn related to the hyper-violent nature of postmodern society. Importantly, the lake is also linked to protagonist John Wade’s apparently “magical powers”—Wade, a Vietnam veteran and probable PTSD victim—is nicknamed “Sorcerer,” and the novel details his ability to make people disappear. The subsequent disappearance of Wade’s wife conjures ghostly imagery and references, calling to mind relevant moments in *Winesburg, Ohio* as George Willard looks upon the deserted fairgrounds in “Sophistication” and notes that “there are ghosts all around,” and reminiscent of the ghostly voices that permeate Masters’s *Spoon River Anthology*. Enacting a pastoral journey to the lake forces Wade and his wife into a confrontation with anxiety that eventually culminates in an unsolvable mystery potentially fueled by rural magic.

In King’s “Children of the Corn,” two Eastern tourists, Burt and Vicky, are driving through Nebraska on their way to California. The story makes clear that Burt and Vicky are anxious about their encounter with rural landscapes—they point out how “boring” and monotonous the surroundings are, for example. Importantly, the story complicates whether or not the couple’s eventually horrific discoveries and experiences are even real, as Burt at one point wonders whether he might be dreaming (King 267). Quantic and Hafen describe the Great Plains as a “state of mind” (xxi) which informs the dreamlike quality of Burt and Vicky’s confrontation with rural space. Just as the ghost-like baseball players in Phil Alden Robinson’s film *Field of Dreams* (1989) seem to originate in the corn field, so too do the beings that torment Burt and Vicky. Like O’Brien’s novel, the story revolves around a confrontation with remote space; unlike the modern rural grand narratives discussed earlier, *In the Lake of the Woods* and “The Children of the Corn” assign magical properties to rural space. Burt notices that the corn is “perfect” and “impossibly” free from weeds. The corn also takes on a supernatural, intoxicating quality, as Burt “became aware of the corn fragrance in his nose now, all around him. The wind through the tops of the plants made a sound like voices. Soothing. Whatever had been done in the name of this corn, it was now his protector” (King 269). Upon getting lost in the cornfield, Burt oscillates between feelings of comfort and feelings of intense fear, with the sacred and the profane coalescing in the image of a crucifix made from corn husks, which Burt describes as “fabulous art” and which Vicky describes as “hideous.” Again, the marginalized status of the Midwest is re-conceptualized. King presents the rural Midwest as a landscape of spectacle and as a re-encharmed, postmodern Arcadia of sorts where rural raw materials assume magical properties.

This re-encharnted Arcadia is also populated by species of images, to borrow garden terminology, that are both natural and mechanistic. As Leo Marx points out, the “garden myth” is bound up in the idea that gardening represents a kind of ideal fusion between nature and machinery. This is perhaps best symbolized in the work of Willa Cather and in the famous image of the shadow of the plow in the setting sun that Jim Burden describes in *My Ántonia*. Relatedly, Marx explains that Ralph Waldo Emerson saw “genius” as stemming from uniting the nature and the machine. Texts invested in magical ruralist discourse tend to engage with these ideas and to revise related images through postmodern strategies of historical re-conceptualization (Hutcheon) and pastiche. In the postmodern world the “rural,” like the notion of “wilderness,” is largely illusory or simulated, and it is difficult to posit that an ideal harmony between nature and machine can truly exist when nature has grown increasingly difficult to separate from “the machine.” In the work of E. Annie Proulx and Louise Erdrich, Cather’s image of the plow in the setting sun is revised and re-worked in ways that evidence the inseparable nature of “the rural” and “the machine” within the postmodern world but that also attempt to expose the unique, magical nature of the rural machine.

In Erdrich’s *The Beet Queen*, Karl describes an air seeder as “a miracle” (101); the novel also presents the local beet refinery as “Oz.” Importantly, both the air seeder and the beet refinery are machines in the garden; neither is a natural form, yet both are clearly symbolic of rural culture. The novel engages with the difficult place of the rural within the postmodern world, as the butcher shop where Mary Adare works and which unites all of the characters in the novel is threatened by an increasingly apparent desire for “one stop shopping” and the “big box store.” Although Quantic reads the novel as evidencing the “unbearable” nature of the “closed garden” (98-99), I argue that Erdrich’s work is actually invested in a kind of re-enchantment of the uniquely rural materials that do remain and that do serve as important ways in which rural Midwesterners understand their own identities, even when these objects—air seeders and local beet refineries—are related to machinery.

A similar strategy of historical re-conceptualization and recycling of familiar “garden” images is used by E. Annie Proulx in her collections *Close Range: Wyoming Stories* (1999) and *Bad Dirt: Wyoming Stories 2* (2004), wherein remote Wyoming landscapes are juxtaposed with often strange, fantastic imagery that is often related to a revision of “machine in the garden” imagery. In her essay “Making Space: A Notebook,” Sandra Lim describes remote Wyoming landscapes as a way to reflect on the relationships between time, place,

and poetry. Lim writes, “To arrive at any one place in a poem is like witnessing the poet come to his or her own senses: you see a vivid and reasonable hallucination before you” (Lessley and Snider 77). This “reasonable hallucination” evokes the blending of rural reality and magic typical of magical ruralism and illuminates this blending as it surfaces in Proulx’s stories. In “The Bunchgrass Edge of the World,” Aladdin, a rancher, is given a magical moniker as a result of a green-shaded lamp arriving in the mail from Sears on the day of his birth. In this way, the rural rancher is a product of both a kind of frontier landscape but also of a capitalistic commodity. The symbolic space where these two factors meet overlaps with the space of enchantment. The story also details Aladdin’s sister Ottaline’s conversations with a run-down John Deere tractor. Both Ottaline and the tractor are presented in the story as similarly “ugly,” marginalized, and “broken”; the voice of the talking John Deere, not dissimilar from the voice in *Field of Dreams*, essentially voices the concerns of both the tractor and Ottaline as outsiders. Giving the tractor a voice, although the story later reveals that the tractor cannot actually talk, works as a kind of re-enchantment of a symbolically “outdated” rural machine. At one point in the story, Ottaline asks the tractor, “Are you like an enchanted thing? A damn story where some girl lets a warty toad sleep in her shoe and in the mornin the toad’s a good-lookin dude makin omelettes?” (138). Ottaline demonstrates a clear awareness of herself within a broader narrative. The quotation also draws on fairy tale imagery and situates Ottaline as a character within her own fairy tale.

Proulx employs magical ruralist strategies in blending re-enchantment and postmodern narrative technique. In her stories “A Lonely Coast” and “The Trickle-Down Effect,” Proulx engages in a kind of pastiche of Cather’s plow image that, I argue, inverts and re-enchants that image that, on its own, is no longer a viable ideal in the postmodern world. “A Lonely Coast” begins with a question to the reader as to whether or not he or she has ever seen a burning house off in the distance while driving at night on a remote highway. “A Lonely Coast” goes on to describe the spectacular, unique qualities of that image, emphasizing that it is unique to the type of landscape found only in Wyoming or in similarly remote areas:

You ever see a house burning up in the night, way to hell and gone out there on the plains? Nothing but blackness and your headlights cutting a little wedge into it, could be the middle of the ocean for all you can see. And in that big dark a crown of flame the size of your thumbnail trembles. You’ll drive for an hour seeing it until it burns out or you do, until you pull off the road to close your eyes or to look up at the sky punched with bullet holes, see them trying

for the stairs, but mostly you don't give a damn. They are too far away, like everything else. (189)

"The Trickle-Down Effect" makes use of a similar image. Deb Sipple is hauling a load of hay bales back to Wyoming, driving through the night and throwing cigarette butts out the window. Unknown to him, the cigarette butts are actually landing in the hay, igniting the bed of his truck. Proulx describes the image of Sipple piloting the rig back into town as "the closest thing to a meteor ever seen in Elk Tooth" (54). These images can be defined as magical images. At its most basic level, a "magic" entails a power or happening contrary to natural law or logic. Additionally, the Oxford English Dictionary (2011) defines "magic" as "an inexplicable and remarkable influence producing surprising results; an enchanting or mystical quality; glamour, appeal," and further as "the art of producing. . . apparently inexplicable phenomena; conjuring." Both images from Proulx characterize isolated rural landscapes as theater for spectacular phenomena; the burning house and ignited hay bales are extraordinary to the point of conjuring illusions of oceans and meteors.

I argue that both images represent a kind of re-working and re-enchantment of Cather's plow in the sun image in that they depict fantastic, distinctly postmodern, distinctly rural juxtapositions of nature and machine. Postmodern rural space is constructed through the discourse of magical ruralism not as a resurrection of the "real" pastoral garden or of the frontier, but as a re-enchanted, postmodern space of spectacle. Indeed, part of the value of the work of Erdrich and Proulx, for scholars, is in how both authors' narratives cast postmodern rural culture and space as inherently different and perhaps even strange in the presence of experiences and imagery that are not available in urban areas.

Giants on the Earth: Rural Landscapes of Spectacle

"If you build it, he will come." In the film *Field of Dreams* (1989), this message from an unknown, disembodied voice drives Kevin Costner's character Ray Kinsella to plow under his corn to build a baseball field. Kinsella is anxious about his rural life; originally from California, Kinsella has moved to his wife's home state of Iowa to try his hand at farming. Despite mockery from his fellow farmers, Kinsella follows the voice's advice and watches in disbelief as dead former baseball players, including Kinsella's father and Shoeless Joe Jackson, inexplicably emerge from the cornfields to play baseball on Kinsella's "field of dreams." By the end of the film, the baseball field has become an impossible portal of sorts, where those who believe in its magic can travel through time and space. However, the film ends with a clear

message: the magical baseball field and the family farm can simultaneously survive only if the Kinsella family starts charging admission. Young Karen Kinsella, the voice of a new generation, prophesizes that “people will come,” and the closing image of the film shows a long trail of car headlights piloting through the dark Iowa countryside toward the magical farm.

Implicitly, rural life can persist only if it is willing to re-cast itself as a landscape of magic and spectacle to be consumed by urban outsiders. Many actual rural communities have embraced “re-enchantment” as a way to spur tourism and economic activity. In her book *The Colossus of Roads: Myth and Symbol Along the American Highway* (1984), art historian Karal Ann Marling studies the cultural significance of various Midwestern roadside attractions, including the Paul Bunyan and Babe statue in Bemidji, Minnesota; the Jolly Green Giant statue in Blue Earth, Minnesota; and Pierre, the Talking Voyageur Statue in Two Harbors, Minnesota. The Blue Earth Jolly Green Giant functions as a bricolage of mythical, modern, and postmodern. As a completely green, towering figure, the Jolly Green Giant resembles various mythological characters, including the Green Man, the Green Knight of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and, to a contemporary visitor, perhaps even the Incredible Hulk. Built in 1978, the Blue Earth Jolly Green Giant statue contributes to characterizations of the rural landscape as a landscape of spectacle. The statue re-conjures the magical, idyllic conditions of Fitzgerald’s “green breast of the new world”; this is evident on the company’s present-day website, which currently features a video of the Green Giant happily strolling through green rolling hills while a family eats Green Giant vegetables (*GreenGiant.com*). Marling describes how the statue is also imagined by the community of Blue Earth, MN as a way for the community to assert its uniqueness to a largely urban audience: “Like the Paul Bunyan of 1937, the Jolly Green Giant of 1978 is a resonant mark of local presence, a magnet drawing the traveler off the highway, into the mythical realm of the American Midwest” (4). This example shows how magical ruralist artifacts often paradoxically respond to the conditions of postmodernity while simultaneously appropriating capitalistic and/or commercial forms or agendas. As a kind of secular “god” figure, the Blue Earth Green Giant is a pastoral image in that the character is literally made of green leaves. However, the statue also glorifies a processed commercial product. Unlike magical realist texts, which are often read as “writing against” or challenging hegemonic forces, the Blue Earth Green Giant seems to satisfy these forces through re-enchantment of pastoral and commercial imagery. Countless other unusual monuments and roadside attractions exist throughout rural

America and function as examples of magical ruralist discourse: like the baseball field in the film *Field of Dreams*, these texts attempt to characterize rural elsewhere as unique destinations worthy of interest. Geographer Jeffrey Hopkins argues that the kind of “place promotion” evident in such roadside monuments functions as a “postmodern imperative” (66) for many rural communities. Re-enchantment works as both an imaginative and commercialized narrative strategy.

Implications for Scholars and Beyond

Even as the digital age has closed the gap, to some extent, between rural and urban space, the differences between rural and urban culture continue to shape not only artistic and popular imaginations, but also the everyday lives of individuals throughout the United States. As Minnesota-born Mark Wunderlich writes in his essay “Famous Mushroom,” “Growing up queer in the rural Midwest, I knew there was no life for me there; I would have to leave, and I would most likely have to move to a city. In an urban place I could make friends, find a society in which I belonged, and live a life of culture and books and like-minded comradery” (Lessley and Snider 269). A quick glance at the 2016 United States Presidential Election electoral map reveals distinct trends in the voting patterns of “red states” versus “blue states.” The electoral map is a useful symbol for understanding the intriguing position of rural studies in the twenty-first century. While general cultural, ideological, and socioeconomic differences certainly persist between rural and urban spaces, these differences are complex, shifting, and shaped by narrative and historical forces. Negotiating the challenges that can come with growing up in a rural area with the natural affections and nostalgia linked to one’s sense of “home” is often both bewildering and transformational. In turning to the rural, scholars will encounter a trove of examples for how rural culture has responded to its perception, both self-defined and externally defined, in the era of late capitalism and beyond.

Specifically, Midwestern and Great Plains literary studies continue to explore the concept of Midwestern regionalism. Magical ruralism provides a theoretical pathway for new scholarship on rural cultural discourse. In defining magical ruralism, I have chosen texts situated in rural Midwestern settings and published squarely within the postmodern era; the surveyed texts call into question how both individuals and communities make sense of postmodern rural existence. In focusing on Midwestern and Great Plains texts, I hope to advance discussions of the nature of Midwestern and Great Plains regional literatures in the era of late capitalism and beyond. While situating magical ruralism within the context of rural American literature as a whole is beyond the scope of

this article, the discourse is grounded in yet not confined to Midwestern and Great Plains literature. Indeed, rural, agrarian landscapes and cultures exist throughout the world, and magical ruralism can provide a lens through which scholars might examine cultural responses to the conditions of postmodernity from various perspectives and regional contexts.

Magical ruralism is also relevant to broader discussions of urbanity, scholarship, and the management of human resources within the field of literary studies. While rural states house some of the most prestigious English programs in the country, including the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop, rural colleges and universities simultaneously struggle to attract and keep quality faculty who may not want to live in a remote location. Scholars from rural states may feel pressured to leave their home regions for large and/or urban universities in other states, where both prestige and opportunity are more plentiful. Ching and Creed explain, "In the West, few intellectuals have deep rural roots, and for those who do, education often severs these connections. The traditional pedagogical agenda, with its emphasis on enlightenment through the liberal arts, has long been opposed to the supposed essence of rusticity—lack of cultural sophistication and a preference for practical know-how over erudition" (10). The goal is not to generalize practitioners of education at the college and university level as hostile to rural concerns and citizens, but rather to point out the real implications, for our field and beyond, of the popular attitudes toward rural space and culture in the postmodern era and beyond. For any scholar who has ever discounted a job due to its remote location, or for any rural student who has wondered why no courses in "local" literature appear in a curriculum, the question of how the academy shapes, contributes to, and historicizes rural culture is relevant.

Finally, magical ruralism is borne out in real economic and community development strategies. As Hopkins demonstrates, "place promotion" has emerged as an economic strategy for many rural and remote communities. In examples like the Blue Earth Green Giant, "Oz" has become an economic strategy intended to bring tourists to rural communities. Karen Kinsella's prediction that "people will come" reflects a strategy of survival for rural communities: magical ruralism is a theoretical lens for approaching rural literature, but also a broader cultural logic wherein magic and re-enchantment collide with and often attempt to counter historical forces.

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Mr. Big Stuff

The crackling fire filled the silence among the group of strangers. Shadows danced around the surrounding forest, smoky embers rising into the cloudy night sky.

“This should do for now,” said a tall, strong-jawed man. He dropped a few twigs onto the fire and then settled down, pulling his long coat tighter. He cast a glance at a couple beside him, who smiled back. They had seemed to be the most useful so far, knowing how to start the fire and keep it from burning through the forest.

The rest of the group remained silent. Little had been said for some time.

It had been a few hours since their bus had crashed on the highway, swerving to avoid a deer. Although no one had seen the deer except for the driver, who had died sometime later. The only casualty. Now all that remained were the nine strangers. The bus was a turned-over wreck, and no cars appeared on the dark highway, so all that remained was finding shelter and keeping warm. They just had to survive the night, then find a way back to civilisation.

“Does anyone have any stories?” said a young girl huddled beside her boyfriend. Her wide eyes sparkled in the fire light.

A rotund man with a goatee shook his head, smiling. “What a good idea. It’ll help pass the time.” He looked around the fire-lit group. “Anyone have anything?”

Another man shook his head. “You don’t wanna hear my stories, man.”

The strangers looked between each other; some looked away.

“I have a story.” This came from an old, white-haired man who had yet to speak since the crash. “One of magic, immortality, and eternal tragedy.”

“What, like a fairy tale?” someone said.

The old man shook his head, his frown creasing his wrinkled features. “Not a fairy tale. This is the story of a man named Mr. Big Stuff.”

Snow fell over the small mountain town. White roofs were highlighted by the wavering lights coming from hundreds of little windows. The wind howled upon the cliff top, but I was numb to the bitter chill that night.

I stood there now, like I had stood many times before, overlooking the snowy town, my boots on the edge of the cliff. A moment that had once brought a serene bliss had now become a hollow, bitter resentment.

I have gone by many names in my hundreds of years, chained to this world as an immortal being. While my birth name has long been forgotten – if I was even born – the name that has stuck with me the longest is Mr. Big Stuff. A strange moniker, for sure, but one that came from a special person, so long ago.

The origins of immortals like me, of which there are few, have become lost throughout time. Some stories have been told of us, however, from the few that have seen more than our quiet human costumes. Those who have witnessed a bloodied battle, magical spells, or our heightened agility, have re-written us as fantastical beings. Some call us Vampires, although I have never sucked blood or turned into a bat.

My sigh blew a puff of smoke into the wintery air. I brought out a vial, its luminous blue liquid a beacon of light in the darkness. The light illuminated the specks of blood on my hands.

This is what I have struggled for, I tell myself. *Everything has led to this potion.* Drinking this will make me mortal. Make me killable. I cast another look down over the cliff, at the darkness below.

I could finally end it all, so easily. Return to the darkness that had likely spawned me.

What good is this life I have been given, if I can never truly live it? Despite the love I’ve known, the love I’ve given, it all ends the same way – me alone. *But this vial can change that.*

I look over my blood-stained hands, and the specks sprayed over my dark coat. So much death, so much hatred.

The horrified faces of my foes still flash through my mind. Ripping through their flesh, tearing limbs, I was a whirlwind of blood and death. Seven beings, once-immortal, were now a pile of mutilated flesh.

At least I know that this potion actually works.

The liquid was synthesised from a fabled crystal, known as a God Killer. A crystal that, when eaten, could turn an immortal into a mortal who would age and die. It had been a decades-long task of mine to find and bring the crystal to those men.

They had been so happy when I finally brought the crystal to them, not knowing that I'd synthesised a part of it into a liquid – which I had dropped into their wine.

I admit to taking pleasure in their shocked faces when they realised something was wrong. There was also pleasure when I attacked them, and they discovered they were mortal. Sprayed blood was highlighted by the flashes of sorcery thrown about. Decades of resentment and hatred unleashed on them.

I had to do it, I tell myself. Their hold on me was too strong, and I had caused so much destruction for them. But now I was free.

Not that it mattered anymore. My love had passed away, just a month ago.

“No more pain,” she had said to me. Her frail form was nestled in bed, her light slowly fading. “No more pain for me. And, promise me, my love, no more pain for you.”

I gripped her hand, feeling the loose skin of her wrinkled fingers. Six decades together had not been enough.

“Peace, Lucas,” she said quietly. “Let my death bring us both peace.”

Melina was the strongest, most special person I had ever known. Far greater than this world deserved. I had told her everything about me, and she accepted it all. When we vowed to spend our lives together, it meant turning our backs on civilisation. We moved to an old castle of mine in the Carpathian Mountains, only visiting the nearby towns and cities on occasion. No one could really know us, and see that I was not aging.

“Please, do not return to those men,” she said, pausing to cough and grimace.

“I promise,” I whispered. “Once you pass, there is nothing more for me.”

Melina smiled weakly. “Never use it, for any purpose. Please. It can do no good.”

We both knew that she spoke of the crystal, the God Killer, and of those evil men I was bound to.

“It will remain with me, I promise. There is no more vengeance left in me.” Even back when I said those words, I knew I was lying.

Melina turned away slightly, her eyes slowly closing. “I will tell the angels of Mr. Big Stuff. And they will tell me they have heard of you.”

I held her hand tighter, sorrow tightening my throat. Despite her aging, her mortal shell withering over the years, she remained the same person I loved. It was a remarkable thing.

“I will see you some day, my love,” I said, fighting back the tears.

Her expression softened, a small smile remaining. Then she became still.

The tears finally fell, and I remember strangely regretting not crying earlier, so that she could see my tears. But she would remember me being strong, and that was a good thing.

We had both come a long way since we first met, which had been strange circumstances indeed.

It was during a battle with a great enemy of mine. My foe and I were bounding through the city streets in an uncommon public display of our powers. Our darting forms must have been dark blurs in the night, although no one could miss our magical bursts.

A car was thrown into the air, hurtling towards a woman in the street below. I dove off a building, streaming down to catch the car just before it crushed her. Despite the moment – my physical exhaustion and the on-going battle – my breath was taken by Melina’s bright green eyes. Oddly, I remember smiling at her.

The heat from an oncoming blast of sorcery brought my urgency back, and I spun and caught the energy with the car, which melted in my hands.

My enemy landed in front of me, her hands blazing with the purple fire of Fie magic. She extinguished the flames and stepped forwards. Behind me, the shocked woman ran for cover.

“It doesn’t have to be this way,” I told the sorceress, Alryan.

A heavy cloak flowed behind her, revealing the tight combat clothing beneath. A streetlight showed her long face, firmly set, her dark eyes shining. Her shoulder-length hair fluttered in the wind – much shorter than the long, sleek look she had when I last saw her. She raised her gauntleted hands and shook her head.

“Look around us, Mister,” she said, her voice breathy from the fight. “It’s too late for it to be any other way. It was always going to come down to this.”

I sighed and shook my head. “I never wanted it to, Alryan,” I said, frowning. “Not like this.”

My shirt was ripped and mostly hanging off me, smudges of dirt over my arms and trousers. Her left shoulder was bloodied. How did it all come to this?

I darted into the air, pushing off a window sill and landing onto a rooftop. At this time of night the streets were mostly empty, although I knew that several people were watching us and I wanted to take the fight away from them.

While Alryan wasn't an immortal, she possessed superior magical abilities to me. But she was still mortal. While she was planning on overpowering me, likely intending to chain me up or keep me somewhere far away for eternity, I knew what I had to do.

The fight took us across the rooftops to a nearby riverside. I managed to barge into her, gripping her tight as we fell through the air and crashed into the water.

She struggled to throw surge after surge of sorcery, but we plunged further into the dark depths. Although breathing under water was not a problem for me, she only had minutes left. Her expression grew pained, her eyes widening, but I held on to her and dragged us down further.

I would never forget her face at that moment. Somewhat pleading, shocked, and something sorrowful. I'd like to think it was regret, a plea to start over. But it was too late. Alryan was taken from me. I had taken her from this world.

I know there was no other way.

But it wasn't always like that, between her and me. We were lovers for many years, drawn together under the strain of tragedy. We were the best of friends before she changed. No, that wasn't true. Maybe I changed. Maybe we just grew apart, because it wasn't the same for a long while.

When she found out a dark truth of mine she erupted with fury. Sorcery entered our arguing and she attacked me then. Her anger brought the building down around us, and while I escaped, she was crushed under the rubble. Or so I had presumed for many years, until she returned, far more powerful, and tried to kill me.

I have never known anyone to possess as much passion and perseverance as Alryan Aldobrasse. She was a descendant of an ancient race of witches, and one of my greatest loves.

Before we became enemies – before we became lovers – we were students under the same mentor.

We trained and studied in a monastery in the mountains, under the mentorship of Yenophis Creel. As a young woman, she witnessed the murder of Yenophis. That face she made when I drowned her was similar to her horrified expression as Yen was killed, torn apart by a figure wreathed in shadow. I could never forget either of those expressions.

It was clear why Yen had been killed, for he possessed the only remaining God Killer crystal in the world. The only one that was known

of, anyway. The dark creature took the crystal as it departed, never to be seen again.

Yen was the closest to a father figure I had ever known. I trained under him for many years, discovering the ancient art of Fie sorcery and gaining mental and spiritual strength. He was the wisest, most sincere man I have ever known. While Yen was an immortal like me, he was of a kind that could be killed by conventional means. That he had lived for over four hundred years was a testament to his abilities and strength, and it took a very dark creature to take him down.

Alryan became a student of Yen's at nine years old; an orphan who had somehow stumbled upon the monastery in her wanderings. Yen saw this as fate, and agreed to bring her under his tutelage.

It was strange at first, me a grown man, learning alongside a young girl, but Alryan and I eventually became friends. I watched her blossom into a young woman, strong willed and fierce. We shared many great times together, visiting the mountain villages, sailing off the coast. Yen and I both marvelled at her feats in conjuring magic. It would be later that we'd learn of Alryan's magical heritage.

One night, she and I stumbled upon a hidden room within the monastery. We were in awe of a small chest hidden in the ground. It was there we found the God Killer crystal. Yen appeared, full of bluster and anger, but he explained the crystal's power to us. When swallowed, it could turn an immortal into a mortal, who would grow old and be killable. The crystals once belonged to his people, he told us, and this was the last that remained. I later wondered if his people's prolonged exposure to the crystal was what had caused them to become killable immortals. Perhaps they were like me, once. But no one had those kinds of answers, as far as I knew.

I was a far different man when I first entered that monastery. Homeless, aimless – a wreck. I had heard of Yen and his teachings and was greatly relieved when he agreed to help me.

My time in that monastery contained some of the most pleasant and enlightening experiences of my life.

That all ended the night Yen was killed. Alryan ran away, and I was left all alone.

Alone, like I should be. Like I deserve to be.

I never wanted my life to go in the direction it did. I have owned many lands and properties, seen the world shift and communities grow and dissolve. I have possessed a great wealth, as well as lived without a penny to my name.

It seemed that those evil men knew just the moment to find me. How they knew of me, I couldn't say. But there I was, a bum in the streets, having given up on life. I was ashamed at how weak I was, but

could see no other way to go. A depression had taken hold of me. Several lifetimes of experiences and memories weighed me down.

They came to me as businessmen in suits, but I knew immediately they were more than that. When they took me in, they revealed they were immortals also. They had existed for almost as long as time, or so they claimed.

They offered me a deal. Do one thing for them, and eternal wealth and happiness would be mine. I was a fool to believe them, but I had no other choice as far as I could see. All I had to do was kill a man, and return a crystal to them.

Before I made the vow, I had to promise my soul to them. Until I returned the crystal, I would be bound to them. Once they found me, they could take away all that I loved, and all that I have ever loved before. They would burn my entire history if I went back on my word. I believed they could do everything they said.

Kill a man. Give them a crystal. It seemed simple.

I could never imagine that this man would become a father figure to me; a mentor I would love and respect above all others. While I tried to go back on the deal, once I had inserted myself into Yen's life and seen what a great man he was, I found that there was no going back. Those men would take Alryan away from me, and take all that I have ever known and cared for. I had to do what I did. I was just glad that she didn't know that dark figure was me.

Well, she didn't know until many years later. But even our love couldn't stop us from becoming enemies.

This was all so long ago, however. As I stood there now, on that cliff top, I had a choice to make. It seemed simpler now that I'd had time to reflect.

True happiness came from being with loved ones. To truly love and be loved. That meant sharing your life with someone. Someone who you can trust without question.

I removed the stopper from the vial and swallowed the blue liquid. The remainder of the crystal I kept with me, just in case I'd need later.

My body warmed and tingled almost immediately. The synthesised God Killer worked its way through me, turning me into a mortal. I was overwhelmingly tired, as if a great weight had come over me, and at the same time I felt lighter. Cleaner.

I looked over the snowy mountain town, knowing that somewhere out there was the monastery I once trained in. I had come to this cliff edge with Alryan many times, and had even brought Melina here a couple of times.

I studied the darkness below me. That was the last time I would look into that darkness, I told myself.

I turned from the cliff edge and began the rest of my life. Perhaps to love again.

“Whoa, that’s some story,” said the young girl who had requested a story.

“It’s nice alright,” said a man around the campfire. “But I call bullshit. Ain’t no one like this Mr. Big Stuff ever been around.”

The old man smiled, though his eyes were sorrowful.

“Hold on,” said the large man with the goatee. “Just how do you know all that?”

A gasp came from the group. They all stared in awe at the old man.

“You’re him,” the young girl said quietly.

The old man just smiled.

Five Homage Poems

Four for Shepp

1.

Gatefold album covers of orange
inside of which Archie Shepp manifested
statements of art,
social responsibility, tradition—

serious texts to accompany
a serious music
a fire music forging
socio-aesthetic felt fabulae

2.

poems propounding pleasure and protest (both),
a tone propolict, gooey,
propitious in its guttural—
it's gonna be a good night—

to lay down those scratchy slabs
of vinyl, their heavy covers,
their heavy register finding
the ingate then the path

3.

“[James] Joyce went back to the Druids.”
—A.S.

which is to locate the spirit
in the word and wail, the recitation
of knowledge—be it mystic or felt,
felt textures, a texture of foal's fur

a text, printed or pressed in wax,
the bees fly us there then erase it,
wind out of a horn, born once more blow
the location of a spirit underneath the mind

4.

“This is a black music. It is a form that black men have
given to America . . . have *given* to America . . . out of love!”
—A.S.

acknowledgment or reference to tradition

back/front-garde, thing *nouvelle*
revolving to a gutbucket beat or
no beat where the wail warps itself

in a pome tenor-throated, of the stage
or in the studio threaded with tapes
revolving and tender, impressions
of birth, and by which art

« murderers
« they shall be destroyed »

and for which art—
for what it's worth,
I offer my humble
acknowledgment

Archie Shepp: 1960s-70s free-jazz saxaphonist and poet.

Bill Evans (Juxtapositions)

Swirls of notes and
shimmering rolls,
or the bittersweet note,
the sad simplicity of
the out-of-key jab—

not always entirely in the blues,
the complexity of bop and
the lyricality of something
I don't know,
be it fast, or
s l o w

—you listen to Bill Evans
in those places in
your chest or mind you didn't know
were there, yet there
are those weird places,

a vein
you both share

Bill Evans: Mid-late-twentieth-century jazz pianist.

For Richard Realf

RICHARD REALF
doomed as Burns and Byron,
stabbed and wandering

whose guesses at the beautiful,
whose petting lissome ladies
whose draggled torn-up pages

to Five Points, then to Kansas
to fight against the slavers

—guerrillas American of the soil,

militant rhetorics of poetry
composed upon the prairie ground
at night, or daylight in the leaves

Realf, secretary of state
in John Brown's provisional govt.
in secret meetings and orations

his Jesuitical responses
to Jefferson Davis
in the federal inquest committee room

and in the outright war
fuck the South, its "chivalry,"
bullets, bullets galore

Realf, post-war wandering
city to town breakdowns,
Pittsburgh panic and poverty

who desolate had burned with love
and swum the hashish skies,
his primal mystic texts, reports

whose mistakes kept coming back
like bad metaphors,
to hurteth him as he hurteth

and ever on he fled his own flaws
hawking rehashed poems to papers
doomed finally to Oakland by the bay—

Realf, I glimpsed you, hoary,
turning a wood-clapped corner
down a hallway of the Winsor Hotel

peripheral visions of poison suicide
daisies round your grave,
DE MORTUIS NIL NISI BONUM

Richard Realf: 1832-78, mysterious and storied poet.

Homage to Peggy Pond Church

Once she held this book
to sign it—
and if in dream the dead
return to tell you something—
then?

does she hand you the golden flower?
do you fly above the mesa
pursuing her vision of beauty
the bulge of twilight
the bird that finds its exit
from amid the beams
of the box store

this pink book with green endpapers
of hills, dry riverbeds, ski trails,
and arroyos filling with rain
that she held cupped in hands
till it ran through and down
the atomic air

Peggy Pond Church: New Mexico poet, 1903-86.

Elegy for Leroy Carr

Preceding the blues
of the southern fields,
the Indianapolis avenue

on which human being
sang his sogged refrain
and folded the chords of a traum-time scene

rain along gutters
of the Avenue,
black holes in the white wall of the back room

a becoming-wax—
a becoming-train—
there's rats in my bed, and booze for my tomb

Leroy Carr: Indianapolis blues pianist and singer, recorded 1928-35,
accompanied by Scrapper Blackwell on guitar.

Kant We Hegel Our Way Out of This? The Problem of People in Postcolonial Studies

Postcolonial theory has a people problem. By this, I do not mean to suggest those who practice, write, or otherwise espouse a postcolonial perspective on cultural affairs are somehow tricky, obtuse, or otherwise problematic to deal with in professional settings. Even if this were the case, the solution to the deficiencies in postcolonial theory most certainly does not lie in the mandatory installation of the Sirius Cybernetics Corporation “Genuine People Personality” (Adams 95) software on every humanities department’s server the world over. Instead, I am unabashedly suggesting that postcolonial theoreticians’ overemphasis on people as the site of analysis lies at the heart of the limitations of the field’s key terms, epistemological boundaries, and approach to understanding phenomena as a whole. Indeed, if postcolonial theory and its related concepts and methods are to have any intellectual purchase, then it is time to abandon its anthropocentric approach to explaining how the world works in favor of perspectives which include non-human entities in colonial processes.

The goals of postcolonial practice occupy several intellectual nodes. One likely comes in the identification of the impact on the psyche and society of those people who suffer under the weight of the colonial project. A second is a means of demonstrating how human knowledge and the institutions it produces has been constructed to create a racist, gendered, and other exploitive architectures to justify and sustain patterns of oppression. A third occurs around communicating the stories

of humans before contact and colonization, their collective trauma and resistance to occupation, so that they may liberate themselves to live in freedom in particular cultural conjunctures. What unites these goals are both their evident anthropocentric character and the aims of shifting the locus of analysis from inside the minds of characters in the colonial drama to the human subject positions and collectivities which play out in social and cultural life. Concerns about the colonization of humans were rightly on the minds of postcolonial thinkers during the 20th century. Roughly one-third of all humans alive at the middle of the 20th century lived in non-self governing territories; diplomatic speak for a colony, a mandate, a protectorate, or some other entity which lacked state sovereignty. The onset of the Cold War, the withdrawal from imperial possessions as the global balance of state power shifted, the emergence of wars of national liberation, and the politics of various United Nations organs, and the proliferation of capitalism all worked to create a context for seeing the value of changing the dynamics of political colonization around the world. For postcolonial academics, whose published work came to the party a full generation (Eagleton 204-206) after the formal processes of political decolonization began, their concerns centered mainly on cultural interpretations of identity. This work is done to not only voice, explain and lay blame in the history of colonial relations, but also to point towards ways in which colonial logics, in varying degrees of Derridean-ness, can be deconstructed. This sort of postcolonial analysis fails to acknowledge that colonialism extends beyond the narrow frame of political colonialism, regardless of the suspension of the UN Trusteeship Council's work in 1994.

The fluid definition of postcoloniality reflects the apparent fact the term 'postcolonial' has severe limitations. Loomba rightly situates the very language of postcolonial studies, arguing that the word 'postcolonial' itself is only useful "with caution and qualification" and that if divorced from specific historical circumstances, "postcoloniality cannot be meaningfully investigated, and instead, the term begins to obscure the very relations of domination it seeks to uncover." (16) In turn, Hardt and Negri see postcolonial thought, particularly Bhabha's binary-busting mechanism of hybridity, as epiphenomenal of the logics of power and Empire. (145-146) These critiques point to another obvious fact: the colonial condition has not ended. Colonialism, neo or otherwise, is not merely or even primarily about the oppression of people. Imperial projects are ontologically materialist in its exploitation of territory through settlement, resources through extraction, surplus value through labor, and profit through finance. In other words, understanding colonialism means examining exploitive relationships between things; a perspective that does not dismiss humans, but indeed

dissenters them from the analysis. In the same way that Roy (54) suggests that an exclusive focus on human rights is a camera obscura of contemporary conflict which ignores the vital, fundamental importance of territorial appropriation and resource extraction, so too does postcolonial theory distract of a richer understanding and resistance to the colonial project as a whole by focusing on the epiphenomena of humanity through concepts such as subalternity, the native informant, and hybridity which not only foreclose a sophisticated understanding of human social affairs, but offer a nihilistic and narrow reading of life itself.

There are solutions to the people-based problems of postcolonial theory. Emerging transdisciplinary scholarship focus attention on how the myriad of non-human forms of life, as well as objects themselves, shape and, are shaped by colonial processes. In turn, theoretical and philosophical debates over “cenes” and the ontology of things point to how holistic work on colonialism necessitates the inclusion of non-human entities to produce robust analyses. Postcolonial theory may have its roots in the study of human affairs, but humans are not the only agents or objects that make up imperial practices; thus the study of colonialism should, therefore, continue to expand to reflect these realities.

The Problem of People

People are a problem in postcolonial theory on at least two levels. First, analyses that focus attention wholly on humans foreclose how colonialism influences other forms of life, as well objects, things, and other aspects of the physical world. People-centered approaches not only limits the field of colonialism’s impact on culture but also miss how material culture can work to sustain and expand colonial projects. Anthropocentric thinking emerges in the precursors and foundational work of postcolonial thought. Cesaire, Fanon, and Memmi all root their analysis of colonial conditions in varying degrees of psychoanalytic thinking. Indeed, it is the emergence, power, and durability of psychoanalysis which not only directly impacted early postcolonial theorists ---Fanon, for example, was trained as a psychologist --but speak to what has become an emblematic feature of the humanities; the conceptual and theoretical borrowing from other intellectual disciplines in order to find novel ways to study humans. Digressing into the various critiques of each of these psychological schools would be beside the point at this juncture, although there is something delicious in thinking about Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of psychoanalysis as, “a capitalist disorder.” (Crews 176) Rather, the fact that postcolonial theory latched onto and then extended ideas which were oriented exclusively towards

thinking about people, and oppressed people, in particular, was the first act in narrowing the aperture of postcolonial thought for the remainder of the century. The intertwining of psychoanalysis and postcolonial theory is not surprising, for psychoanalysis may be an emancipatory schema committed to freeing, “human beings from what frustrates their fulfillment and well being.” (Eagleton 166) Liberating oneself from slavery, servitude, or the precariat class under the weight of colonialism certainly seems like a worthwhile endeavor for psychoanalytic thinking.

Cesaire may root his work in Marxist analysis, yet the language he employs, “First we must study how colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the truest sense of the word” (35) is nothing short of anthropocentric. Cesaire’s suggestion that “no one colonizes innocently,” (39) is an intelligent rebuttal to attempts to negate human complicity in colonization --perhaps an earlier, more poetic version of Goldhagen’s provocative thesis on ‘ordinary’ Germans during the Second World War. While Cesaire works to frame colonialism in economically imperial terms, his argument about both mental states of colonizer and colonized, the latter often dehumanized through the racial component of colonialism, reaffirms that he sees the colonial project as one that lies exclusively in the world of human affairs. In the same vein, Memmi articulates his analysis of colonialism in wonderfully parsimonious terms, “the best possible definition of a colony: a place where one earns more and spends less.” (4)

In a similar vein, Fanon’s works rehumanize the racialized construction of blackness in the face of white supremacy, “I start suffering from not being a white man insofar as the white man discriminates against me; turns me into a colonized subject; robs me of any value or originality; tells me I am a parasite in the world, that I should toe the line of the white world as quickly as possible, and that we are brute beasts, that we are walking manure, a hideous forerunner of tender cane and silky cotton, that I have no place in this world.” (78) For Fanon, the task of his critique is to expose how the racism that is inherent to colonialism makes him something other than a human, “I am an object among other objects.” (89) But what if we all are objects? What if, rather than setting up human-centric hierarchies, we think about the structures and impact of all objects within particular systems? By framing his opposition to colonialism as a project of rehumanization, Fanon closes off broader, more accurate ways of reading and resisting colonialism, by privileging human existence over those very beasts abused under colonization.

Memmi spends chapter after chapter working through the positionality of the hypothetical colonizer and colonized person, looking to unpack the relationship between these protagonists, intertwined in the

tragedy of colonialism. Memmi invokes adjectives such as “disfigurement,” (147) “annihilation,” (151) and “liberation” (152) to describe the personal outcomes of this relationship. Memmi hints at a broader understanding of the colonial frame but then pulls back towards his exclusively human analysis, “Colonization is, above all, economic and political exploitation. If the colonized is eliminated, the colony becomes a country like any other, and who then will be exploited?” (149) Finally, Memmi writes that the human free of colonialism, “will be a whole and free man;” (153) reaffirming that colonialism and its end is species, or indeed agent-specific to humans.

The point of postcolonial criticism and action should not only be one of ending the exploitation of humans but exploitation writ large; an argument that is sorely absent from postcolonialist theory and praxis because of the anthropocentric nature of their intellectual project. The second people-problem in postcolonial thought: the anthropocentric logic of self-centered human inquiry forecloses other ways of knowing, and thus selectively limits the utility of postcolonial perspectives and concepts. For example, it is worth considering the intellectual options available to anti-colonial intellectuals in the early part of the 20th-century that would have allowed for a more robust postcolonial praxis beyond that of psychological critiques. While it is easy to levy critiques against postcolonialism theory’s myopic foci from the safety of the early 21st century now that many national liberation struggles have been played out, doing so would reek of post hoc commentary. Early postcolonial theorists did not participate in a world with robust environmental criticism, indeed developed theories of nationalism, not even World Systems Theory. But they did have the concept of ‘imperialism,’ a materialist-based, not-exclusively anthropocentric way of understanding and resisting colonial logics that was available to mid- and late-20th century postcolonial thinkers. Indeed, it is curious to ponder why ideas which were so widely in circulation seem completely absent from this postcolonial perspective. Hobson’s turn of the 20th-century analysis of imperialism as the natural extension of capitalist logic beyond the borders of the nation-state not only accurately diagnose the problem of imperialism, but also frame solutions to avoiding colonial logics through capital controls and domestic reinvestment. Hobson’s study is an assessment of both the human and non-human aspects of colonialism, one that rightly sees exploitation in broad terms beyond that of the individual. So influential was Hobson’s thesis that Lenin built and expanded on these ideas for his most prominent of publications, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Synthesizing Hobson and Marx and Engels, Lenin sees financial capital, a non-human object, as the driver of colonialism, one that produces the incentives for imperial

policies, extractive economies, and the offshoring of class conflict, the latter being remarkably similar to Memmi's definition of colonialism. As with much of Marxist influence in the postwar period, (Hobsbawm) Hobson and Lenin-based understandings of imperialism serve to inform anti-imperial praxis in Latin America, from overtly Marxian political and cultural analyses (Morana, Dussel, and Jauregui) to pedagogy, (Freire) to liberation theology. So too can the legacy of Hobson and Lenin be found at the heart of World Systems Theory and in particular, Hardt and Negri's profoundly influential *Empire*. Each of these analyses not only avoids the personal and psychoanalytic approach to critiquing the colonial condition, but they are also overtly solidarist and at least are open to, if not outright considerate of, their treatment of human and non-human things.

Hobson and Lenin are nowhere to be found in the analyses of the psychoanalytic approach to postcolonial thought, even though Hobson's (in English) and Lenin's (published in English in 1939) work predate and were available to Césaire, Fanon, and Memmi. But let's not merely hold these three accountable on their own; their reasons for missing Hobson and Lenin are likely unknowable. Where are Hobson and Lenin, and the study of imperialism in general, in the intellectual history of postcolonialism? Gandhi offers no analysis of either Hobson or Lenin and frames imperialism as "Western Nationalism;" (195) a curious connotation as national liberation and nationalism are the some of the very solutions postcolonialists espouse towards countering logics of imperialism. Indeed nationalism(s) is a key blind spot for postcolonial thought. Loomba is also silent on Hobson, dedicates less than a page to Lenin (10-11) in context with situating the term 'imperialism' itself, and dedicates a mere six pages (256) in the entire volume to the concept. Even the inexorable Spivak avoids Hobson entirely, and only discusses Lenin as an apologist for state power. (83) Spivak dedicates pages of prose and footnotes towards imperialism, although much of this comes in the form of her "unquiet ghosts" on the subject. (Eagleton 3) Said reserves just a single line for Hobson, "For imperialists like Balfour, or for anti-imperialists like J.A. Hobson, the Oriental, like the African, is a member of a subject race and not exclusively an inhabitant of a geographical area." (92) Lenin escapes Said's sting insofar as he does not appear at all in Said's seminal work. Imperialism features in Said's *Orientalism* of course but Said frames it mainly as a Western construct, rather than a capitalist one. Perhaps this is a reason --there is never 'the' reason --why Hobson, Lenin, and imperialism never gain any traction in postcolonial conversations.

Anthropocentrism lies at the heart of some critical postcolonial concepts. Spivak's conception of the subaltern is a way of thinking

through how to name and amplify individual and collective identities under colonization. Spivak's argument that, "The subaltern as female cannot be heard or read" (104) has its problems, as stories of and by these very women exist and are acknowledged, for example, in testimonio literature the world over. Spivak perhaps concedes this conceptual shortcoming with the intervention of the native informant concept (4); the human tasked with speaking on behalf of their culture under colonization. Spivak's conception of the subaltern or that of the native informant is emblematic of postcolonialism thinkers' intense focus on the human subject position which works to foreclose an acknowledgment of other forms of exploitation. The very notion of speaking, and the silences that Spivak sees as a part of the imperial project, presumes that human communication is the only form of dialogue worth acknowledging or even apprehending. In turn, Bhabha's work on identity also suffers from the same problem of anthropocentrism, although from a different perspective from Spivak's. Whereas Spivak wants the reader to hear and see those who are obscured by colonialism, Bhabha claims that these folks are already visible, we're just looking in the wrong places. For Bhabha, an individual's identity is a hybrid of their cultural condition, one that is shaped and informed by the long arc of colonialism. (277) For Bhabha, there is no Other in a binary sense, only individuals, and groups operating in third spaces between reified conceptions of colonizer and colonized. (66-69) These liminal locales may be sites of oppression or cosmopolitanism, but for Bhabha's reader, they are spaces dominated, if not exclusively occupied, by human affairs and relationships.

Can postcolonial theory resolve the twin traps of personhood? Such a move will be tricky, as the concept of the subaltern, the native informant, and hybridity are devoutly anthropocentric in their ontology. Focusing on personhood is a central pillar of postcolonial thought, as the intellectual legacy of the Enlightenment shapes the way we have prioritized our politics; both postcolonialists and the rest of us, even if the former is uncomfortable with the idea. Abandoning Hegelian notions of the Self and the Other will be difficult to realize unless one is willing to reconsider humanity's relationship to life writ large, a perspective that finds its home most prominently in emerging, interdisciplinary ways of knowing. This does not mean colonizing non-Western, indigenous, or other ways of knowing to recapture some lost intellectual framework, although acknowledging these cosmologies is undoubtedly the right thing to do. Instead, rejecting anthropocentrism means considering all of how colonialism impacts and informs material agents in cultural contexts.

Postcolonial Materials

Cross-disciplinary analysis of colonial projects opens up rich ways of understanding how non-human entities contribute to and are influenced by imperialism. Such work invariably involves the methods, evidence, and other tools from cultural, environmental, and literary studies, along with history. Postcolonial theory rests on the practice of traversing intellectual disciplines, and so extending the logic of interdisciplinary practice is essential understanding what Lowe (19) sees as “the intimacies” inherent in colonial practice. For example, paper, sugar, tea, and floral prints; each are seemingly innocuous on their own, and yet each object shapes and is shaped by colonial practices just like humans. Derived from one of the earliest merchantable economies of North America, (Cronon 109) lumber extraction drove efforts of British and later American settler-colonists across the continent; displacing flora and fauna along the way. The colonial logic of the mechanization of production and profit-seeking helped to change the sourcing of paper from rags to wood pulp, producing profound changes to cultural, economic, and environmental landscapes of colonized spaces of nineteenth-century western Massachusetts. (McGaw) In turn, Senchyne (144-148) suggests that the materiality of paper works to develop and further racialized hierarchies by operating within Robinson’s (3) conception of “racial capitalism;” part and parcel of the colonial project. In this case, non-human life such as trees and their surrounding ecosystem, as well as machines and objects themselves that contribute to the production and use of paper embody and normalize colonial legacies.

Focusing attention on production practices reveals both colonialism’s history and current state of affairs. Tsing’s conception of scalability, economies that perpetually expand without the need of changing the essential elements of production, decenter but do not displace humans from colonial narratives (505). In particular, the historical development and contemporary practice of the sugar industry rest upon colonial methods of expansion, standardization, and commodification. (Tsing 510-515) The drive to grow and profit from sugar serves to explain the long arc of capitalist territorial expansion, slave and “free” labor, and deforestation, which in turn influences contemporary demand and practice for cheap food. (Patel and Moore 14-18, 32-34) Indeed, Manning (2004) suggests that food is both an indicator and tool of colonialism. Colonization stabilized episodic famines in Europe (41) where “Agriculture was not so much about food as it was about the accumulation of wealth. It benefited some humans, and those people have been in charge ever since.” (38)

Exemplifying this focus on things instead of people, Lowe demonstrates that, “trades in tea, cottons, silks, and opium connect slave

labor in the cotton fields of the U.S. South, the history of Asian textile design and production, and the role of the East India and China trades in the rise of British ‘free-trade’ imperialism.” (74) English tea drinking practice and culture is not contingent on the cultural behavior of humans in Great Britain, but rather the presence of “sugar from the West Indies, tea and china service imported from China, tables made of hardwoods from the West Indies, splendid dresses made from Indian cottons.” (82) What Lowe and the other scholarship makes clear is that an anthropocentric postcolonial perspective that privileges human identity and agency as the site of analysis obscures or subordinates material objects that are essential to understanding the onset and endurance of colonialism.

Speculating Future Postcolonialisms

Thinking about colonialism in a non-anthropocentric way becomes an access point for scholarship on biocolonialism, environmental racism, and speciesism. (Huggan and Tiffin 4-11) This perspective is but one way of rescuing the concepts of the subaltern, the native informant, and hybridity. Animals, in parallel to Spivak’s reading of the term, cannot speak or be heard. Individuals, or better yet animals themselves can, in turn, speak on behalf of non-human objects from their cultural perspective; we merely have to listen. Hybrid locations and cultures can be remapped to acknowledge the existence of non-human actants in these spaces. The slums of Kibera are probably spaces where Bhabha would find hybrid cultures and identities that have been informed by the British colonial experience, so why not the wildlife reserves and parks established by the British East Africa Protectorate? (Chongwa 39-40) These parks are undoubtedly cosmopolitan, home to a broader variety of species and identities that can be found even in the capitalist-core cities of London or New York. Kenyan national parks undoubtedly reflect a legacy of colonialism, including the exercise of colonial power, intervenes in the culture of those who inhabit those spaces if culture is ordinary, learned and lived experiences. (Williams 4-5) There are problems with this line of reasoning for sure, cultural appropriation perhaps the most prominent one, yet questions of who has the authorial power to speak on behalf of something else don’t merely emerge when we are analyzing the colonization of non-humans; the critique is part and parcel to cultural studies as a whole. Instead, decentering humans from colonial studies means acknowledging that the colonization of non-humans occurs in similar and different ways than those of us who work in academia generally recognize.

An edge of contemporary ecocriticism, postcolonial environmental theory synthesizes various scholarly approaches towards understanding

the historical, present, and future arc of colonial projects. A core area of study within postcolonial environmental theory addresses the origins and nature of “cenes:” Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Themocene, Chthulucene, and more. (Balkan 2017) From these standpoints, colonialism is not an exclusive function of human agency at the species level, as climatic and extinction structures work with a variety of entities to further colonial practices in combined and uneven ways. Taking the analytical logic of structures and agents further, Bennett and fellow vibrant materialists understand social action and agency by exploring the assemblages of actants in particular contexts; for example, North American power grids. (24-28) In other words, one can apprehend colonial conditions by acknowledging the agency and influence of all types of objects beyond anthropocentric limits. The point here is that inquiry into colonialism need not be, nor never should it ever have been, exclusively about humans. Some of the more intriguing work in this area lies at the forefront of energy humanities (Imre and Boyer) and petroculture studies, (Wilson, Carlson, and Szeman) whereby access to or in pursuit of fossil fuels enable colonial action and where energy itself exerts agency and structures relationships between all varieties of objects. Thus colonialism remains alive and well, even if humans claim to have abandoned colonialism because the concomitant exploitation of colonization occurs in spaces with and without humans.

Landscapes, flora, and fauna are curiously absent from foundational postcolonial analysis, and so too are markets, machines, and commodities, the engines of capitalist colonial projects. For example, French imperial control over Martinique, where both Cesaire and Fanon hail from, and Tunisia, Memmi’s country of origin, was not exclusively about the power and exploitation of the local population. Ports in Forte-de-France and Tunis and the shipping lanes which connected these colonial entities to the broader Francophone imperial system and modern capitalist world system undoubtedly impacted the environs that Cesaire, Fanon, and Memmi were so passionate about liberating. Rail lines from Tunis stretch outward toward mines and oil fields across northern Africa, linking further on to the extraction of timber, rubber, and ivory from the heart of the continent. Territory, homes, waterways, mammals, libraries, communication networks; all were occupied and exploited by French colonial capitalism. Yes, the colonial condition for the locals in Martinique and Tunisia were deplorable, but Cesaire’s, Fanon’s, and Memmi’s reading of and solution to the colonial situation is suspiciously one-sided. Where is the critique of the French imperial system’s brutalization of the pastoral? Where is the precise, detailed accounting of how the expansion of capitalism from the French core to the Caribbean and North African

periphery exploited all aspects of life, not just the local population of bipedal hominids? Flipping the script slightly, is it merely the colonial mindset, and not the literal tools of the trade in the form of flotilla and firearms, which implicate themselves in the colonization of people, places, and everything else in the space? The imposition of the Francophone educational system did not merely colonize locals' school experiences or knowledge structures; books, buildings, and budgets all became ripe for the picking at the hands of French imperialists. Cesaire, Fanon, and Memmi are rather silent on these issues, and yet exploitation of all things --not merely humans --is at the heart of the colonial project. By failing to fully develop a critique of colonialism beyond the exploitation of humans, thereby privileging one type of object over another, these thinkers set the stage for an anthropocentric reading of postcolonial thought which inevitably comes to misread the proliferation and durability of colonialism to the present day. Our task is not to discard the aforementioned work, but to recognize the inherent anthropocentrism of their work as an intellectual limit to overcome in the present and future critique of colonial practices.

There are other, perhaps more worthy assessments of postcolonial thinking than those I have outlined here. The endurance of settler colonialism on indigenous spaces life is probably the most heartbreaking critique of the limits of postcolonial intellectual project, especially as the rise of postcolonial thought in the 1990s was wrapped up in thinking about emerging identities and nationalism at the end of the Cold War and not about the continued occupation and oppression of indigenous peoples under Empire. The problem of nationalism, the Janus-face of postcolonial thought, also works to limit the utility of contemporary postcolonial thinking, as national liberation ascribes both a vector for overturning European colonialism, but also a means of sustaining colonialism and oppression through Empire, settler colonialism, or blatant imperial capitalism. The problem of anthropocentric thinking may be a nuanced and somewhat troubling issue to work through. After all, postcolonial thought roots itself in the humanities and the social sciences where we primarily, if not exclusively, study human affairs. As I have hopefully argued to some reasonable extent, human-centric thinking has neither resolved the problems of colonialism nor provided entirely accurate accounts of the phenomena in the first place.

Anthropocentrism blinds our analytical view to see difficulties in purely human terms, both in their causes and their effects. Decentering, and not discarding humans, from our analysis of exploitation opens up more comprehensive ways of reading the dilemmas that are before us. None of this is easy, either intellectually or practically. Yet if humanities scholars and teachers are genuinely interested in addressing issues of ethics and

justice, disrupting locations and the exercise of power and exploitation, then our first acts should be to selflessly acknowledge that thinking exclusively about humans --from our philosophical, economic, and political models to our analyses and critiques of current and future conditions --may in itself be the problem. Put another way: if one is genuinely interested in overturning the colonial project, then it is worth naming all of how such exploitation exists and work, even in small ways, to end imperial interventions into life. We must do better than we have done so far.

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