

Veritas



Honors Journal
Nassau Community College
2021 - 2022

Veritas

Go home and write
a page tonight.
And let that page come out of you—
Then, it will be true.

Langston Hughes
“Theme for English B”

An Interdisciplinary Journal
of the Honors Club
of Nassau Community College

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Dedication

The Directors, Faculty, and Staff of the Honors Program
dedicate this volume of *Veritas* to

Alexi Rodriguez

Michael Egan



Acknowledgements

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***Veritas: The Interdisciplinary Honors
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Nassau Community College***

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About *Veritas*: The Interdisciplinary Honors Journal of the Honors Club of Nassau Community College

Members of the Honors Club, its Faculty Advisors, and the Directors of the Honors Program take pride in issuing the interdisciplinary research journal of the Honors Club at SUNY Nassau Community College. While the works included in *Veritas* are predominantly critical in nature -- critical analyses, expository essays, research papers, and research projects from various disciplines -- the journal also proudly showcases creative contributions -- poetry, art, and journal entries. Contributors to the journal are Honors students whose writings are found to be exemplary by Honors faculty and Faculty Advisors to the journal.

The goals of *Veritas* are to provide a venue for Honors students to publish their finest academic work as undergraduates, to inspire them to continue to write with a view toward publication, and to further prepare them for scholarship at four-year institutions.

Veritas extends a call to all Honors students who wish to submit critical as well as creative work for publication and to Honors faculty who wish to see their students' writings publicly showcased. Submissions should reflect the author's name, mailing address, email address, and the name of the professor for whom the work was written or created. Work should be saved as Microsoft Word documents or as JPG files (for illustrations) and emailed as an attachment to the Faculty Advisors of the journal at the following locations:

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Those of us associated with the creation and production of *Veritas* hope you enjoy reading the journal, that you find it enriching, and that you are inspired to contribute to it in the future.

Faculty Advisors to this journal and the Honors student editorial staff review all work submitted to *Veritas*. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or of the college.

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Elizabeth Wheeler Wilcox and “New Thought”

Alexi Rodriguez

Ella Wheeler Wilcox is a moderately prominent American poet and author. Although considered a prodigy of her time- 1850 to 1919- the controversy of her simplicity ultimately caused her to get lost behind poets like Emily Dickinson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and David Thoreau. As a politically and spiritually active woman, I believe her simplicity was driven by her desire to share content with the public. There would be no purpose in discretion or vagueness if she were trying to push ideas and ideals. To study her life in comparison to her poetry, it is abundantly clear that her values are being trumpeted to the public through her poetry. These values stemmed from the many societies she was a part of. She practiced New Thought Religion, was involved in the temperance movement, and was personally tied in spiritualism and theosophy.

New Thought religion was a space where science and faith intertwined. Beginning in the mid-19th century, New Thought spread its beliefs through public reading and became quickly established. These journals, books, and articles were not intended to form an organized religion, but the writings brought like-minded individuals together. Members believed in the power of thought, positivity as a means of healing, and metaphysical associations. Wilcox was such a strong believer that she published her own poems and books, sharing her interpretations of New Thought. She was even an author in a New Thought magazine. The most telling of her works is *The Heart of New Thought* (1902). This could be thought of as the Wilcox Bible. In it she addresses her religious concerns, from a pregnant mother’s prenatal mental responsibilities to what negative thinking does to the health and soul of person. Most of her views are very stark, unforgiving, and judgmental. It’s a fascinating look into the mind of Wilcox.

From reading *The Heart of New Thought*, it is clear that Ella Wheeler Wilcox had stern standards of purity. In fact, a recurring theme was sacrifice to achieve this purity. Sometimes the thing sacrificed was sex, other times gossip, but I believe the most prominent sacrifice was to abstain from alcohol. Her first book, *Drops of Water* (1875), was even a collection of temperance poems. But my interest is where her agenda seeped into her more mainstreamed poetry. A glaringly obvious example is her poem “The Two Glasses.” This poem is a story of two glasses -- one filled with wine, the other with water – both sharing in the triumphs they quenched. It was published in books such as *The Best Loved Poems of the American People* (Wilcox & Felleman). The wine’s tale was of a terrifyingly wretched nature. The wine boasts of dethroned kings, disaster, and power so great it can break the virtuous. The water shared its role in nursing

civilization back to health. Water was there for people of all needs and came to the rescue when wine kept men captive. And water's supremacy was in nature and landscapes. It traveled from cloud, to valley, to waterfall in rushes powerful enough to carve the Earth.

New Thought is everywhere in this poem. To understand this, one must recognize the roots of this religion. It is fully recognized that Transcendentalism was a stepping stone to New Thought, but how was Transcendentalism born? Fronted by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Transcendentalism began with a simple book titled *Nature*. We will revisit the meaning of the name shortly. The book addressed ideas such as consciousness, the symbolism of spirits in nature, subconscious/metaphysical unity of souls he calls Reason, and the meditative powers into that realm. Emerson was not alone in his creation of Transcendentalism. Other namely contributors were Walt Whitman, Margaret Fuller (Goodman), the mystical Emma Curtis Hopkins (The History of "New Thought"), Henry David Thoreau with *Civil Disobedience* (1849), and, most intriguingly, Madame Blavatsky, a personal theosophical confidant of Wilcox (Connolly). It is also common knowledge that Transcendentalism evolved during the Romantic period, and this was integral in defining as well as refining the meaning of Transcendentalism, especially as it related to nature.

What many were unaware of was both Blavatsky's and Emerson's use of their personal Hindu influence. One Brahmo Samaj leader, Pratap Chunder Majumdar (1840-1905, also spelled Mazoomdar), wrote an essay entitled "Emerson as Seen from India." He spoke of Emerson's natural draw to Hinduism by saying "Brahmanism is an acquirement, a state of being rather than a creed. In whomsoever the eternal Brahma breathed his unquenchable fire, he was the Brahman. And in that sense Emerson was the best of Brahmans... He seems to some of us to have been a geographical mistake" (qtd. in "History: Emerson and the Transcendentalists"). Emerson himself spoke to this in his poem "Brahman" when he said "I am the hymn the Brahman sings." How can we prove Emerson the Brahman and Hindu influence in New Thought? Let's start simply with the English translation of Brahma: "The Creator," a term used throughout New Thought as an alternative to "God" (Cartwright). It is also a term Wilcox used frequently in her poetry. Hindus also practice weary or absolute refrain from alcohol consumption, an idea more staunchly practiced in New Thought. Emerson, Blavatsky, and other influential transcendentalists brought these values and many more into New Thought. Let's use this to revisit our exemplary mainstreamed New Thought poem. We can clearly see the propaganda against alcohol in "The Two Glasses." Wilcox claimed wine began as a celebratory drink, but stealthily applied its temptations until each drinker was consumed enough to lose all honor. Wine made integrity vanish and stole innocence from children. Of course, there is no mention of healthy boundaries in alcohol consumption. Wilcox wrote from the perspective of wine:

I have blasted many an honored name;
I have taken virtue and given shame;
I have tempted the youth with a sip, a taste,

That has made his future a barren waste. (13-16)

This poem was pure propaganda towards temperance. She took lessons taught from New Thought, originally borrowed from Hinduism, and turned it into a conventional and entertaining New Thought advertisement in the form of poetry.

This did not stop with wine. Wilcox's mention of nature shows her powerful tie to the brainchild of Transcendentalism. Transcendentalism and Romanticism have strong emphasis on the hypnotic power of nature. Naturally, this relation was carried into New Thought. The significance of truly noticing the natural world is a main theme in Emerson's *Nature*. His prose on nature is reflected in "The Two Glasses" as Wilcox tells of rushes of water. She speaks in suggestion to power, freedom, and innocence. Her profound statements in "The Two Glasses" are as follows:

I have leaped through the valley, dashed down the mountain,
Flowed in the river and played in the fountain,
Slept in the sunshine and dropped from the sky,
And everywhere gladdened the landscape and eye. (32-35)

An interpretation of *Nature* was that "The ultimate function of nature, then, is to serve, to free the spirit, to unlock its capacities" (Leary). This is a stark contrast to the suppressive qualities Wilcox placed on those who fell victim to the glass of wine. Wine stole innocence and captivated the drunk while water "set the chained wine-captive free" (44). Water's part of the poem entirely promotes unbound consciousness and power, mirroring mind to nature -- a connection ever present in New Thought. By incorporating nature into her poetry, Wilcox is not only able to provide powerful symbolism, but also share New Thought's stance on the admiration of nature.

When we evaluate the virtues shared by wine and water, it is apparent that this poem is symbolic of religions and philosophies. The water follows Hinduism, Transcendentalism/Romanticism, and New Thought values. The wine represents religions Wilcox would call "mistaken creeds" (*The Heart of New Thought* Wilcox 60). Wilcox is presenting wine and water as evil and good. In doing so she is underhandedly disparaging religions that condone blasphemous drunks. *The Two Glasses* became mainstream under the guise of self-improvement, but readers were really reading a poem of New Thought politics dually influenced by Hinduism and Transcendentalism. This pattern in Wilcox's writing is also repeated in her linking of physical illness, sexual desire, and the "mistaken creeds" which damage human judgment. In this way, Wilcox's thought represents a merging of the moral ideals of the Temperance Movement with New Thought.

Wilcox's adherence to these standards of physical, psychological, and spiritual purity found her diametrically opposed to any form of promiscuity. There are two exceptional poems of hers which clearly illustrate this relationship, "Soldiers, Come Back Clean" (1917) and "The Price He Paid" (1914), with both addressing promiscuity and its consequences. Wilcox's comically strict understanding of sex and purity holds a strong connection to New Thought religion

through the belief that one can remain virtuous through abstinence. This idea can be traced to New Thought history, and to the preaching of Father Divine, also known as George Baker, which was instrumental in bringing black Americans to the New Thought movement. Griffith's analysis of his teachings in *Body Salvation: New Thought, Father Divine, and the Feast of Material Pleasures* explained Father Divine's (and so, the whole of New Thought's) obsession with divine bodies in connection with honorable spirit. He required celibacy for himself and his devout followers -- whom he called angels (Griffith). It was believed that physical changes could be made if one "tuned the mind to Infinite Spirit and channeled cosmic energy" (Griffith). It must also be remembered that New Thought is rooted in Hindu practice, and in Hinduism, like many religions, abstinence can be practiced as a means to cultivate virtue. With that, the connection can be made between Wilcox's poems and New Thought propaganda.

Wilcox's "Soldiers, Come Back Clean" was a poem distributed to U.S. soldiers and printed in newspapers such as *The Moffat County Courier* during World War I (December 13, 1917). The poem can practically read as a mock-epic, a style of composition with which Wilcox was familiar -- including her poem "The Song of the Sandwich" (1893), in which a woman sends a man on a painstaking and treacherous conquest to retrieve for her... a sandwich. In the poem "Soldiers Come Back Clean," the mock-epic style is used to equate literal warfare to the soldier's grapple to suppress his sexual drive. It begins in declaration: "This is the song of the soldier, to sing as he rides from home" and promptly transitions to the soldiers' perspective (12). The soldier goes on singing a song of promise to fight both the enemy at war and his own enemy -- lust. The following is an example of the level of dramatization present:

I may lie in the mud of the trenches,
I may reek with blood and mire,
But I will control, by the God in my soul,
The might of my man's desire" (9-12)

Considering the United States' position on fighting venereal diseases in the military, this type of anti-vice propaganda was a staple at the time. The newspapers made claims that the poem "should be in the hands of every soldier." According to the National Institute of Health's National Library of Medicine, venereal diseases were responsible for the most sick time taken in WWI -- second only to the flu (Speaker). And so fidelity became a matter of patriotism. Though for Wilcox, this was also a matter of spiritual patriotism.

Wilcox gave little room for sexual exploration. She viewed sexual tendencies in a generally pessimistic and unmoral light, seen again in her poem "The Price He Paid" written in 1919. This poem was the 76th in her well-established book, *Poems of Purpose*. The story is of an older man recounting his wanton youth. He eventually settles down, only to face the consequences of his sexual conquests. Most of the advice for the young man is from clergies warning him he'd be condemned to hell. For instance:

I said I would have my fling,
And do what a young man may;
And I didn't believe a thing
That the parsons have to say.
I didn't believe in a God
That gives us blood like fire,
Then flings us into hell because
We answer the call of desire. (1-8)

The man clearly is cautioned by parsons that practice belief in the after-life. But he found their advice irrelevant, as he feared not an inexistent hell. So, these flings continued until he found his wife. And after marrying, they had a child. But here, he met his fate:

She was going to bring me a child,
And when in labour she cried
With love and fear I was wild—
But now I wish she had died.
For the son she bore me was blind
And crippled and weak and sore!
And his mother was left a wreck.
It was so she settled my score. (41-48)

In short, the man had contracted a venereal disease which he spread to his wife. And the pregnant mother's disease -- presumably syphilis -- passed onto her fetus, causing blindness and physical disability. She closes off the poem as a reproach from the man against afterlife religions' fear tactics in place of education:

Folks talk too much of a soul
From heavenly joys debarred—
And not enough of the babes unborn
By the sins of their fathers scarred.” (53-56)

He clearly felt betrayed by the primitive misinformation and misguidance by the church. The physical consequences of sexual endeavors weren't explained to him, and so he contracted a disease he wasn't even familiar with. This is how Wilcox indicates her distaste for the “mistaken creeds” practices of substituting pure-body education for threats of eternal damnation. New Thought was created to be a haven where science and religion could coexist -- more so, were dependent upon each other. Any religion that said otherwise was bashed by Wilcox. In *The Heart of New Thought* -----, *The Price He Paid* became so mainstream it was adapted into a 1914 silent film, proving that society craved a more foundational approach to venereal diseases. The last two lines of the poem could also be read as a connection to Wilcox's belief in reincarnation. She's expressed throughout multiple works her views on this matter, and it would not at all be farfetched to say a dual meaning may be present as a nod to karmic retributions. On page 79 of *The Heart of New Thought* Wilcox can be found saying “The three-year-old child

who toddles in front of a trolley car and loses a leg, while the tired mother is bending over the washtub to keep the wolf of hunger at bay, cannot be blamed for wrong thinking as the cause of its trouble. Neither can the deaf mute or child born blind or deformed. We must go farther back, to former lives, to find the first cause of such misfortunes.” (2012). And on page 76 “You do not recall the fact, but you brought about the present conditions of your destiny in former incarnations.”

The emphasis on illness and disability must also be noted. Wilcox seemed to have a fascination with these topics; possibly since her time period was saddled with yellow fever, typhoid, and syphilis. But there is also the role New Thought perspective played. According to New Thought, or at least Wilcox’s interpretation of it, ailments could largely be avoided with proper thought practice. In Wilcox’s *The Heart of New Thought*, we find various accounts of comments similar to the following: “It is your mind which makes your body sick. Let your spirit assert itself and demand health...”. She advises against considering oneself permanently ill and only to regard ailments as temporary conditions. She even goes so far as to suggest that if you’ve found yourself in such suffering, you should reflect if it is the result of your own thoughts manifesting to reality. What might the cause of a self-inflicted infirmity look like? In Wilcox’s description, it is any “mental malaria” that can intoxicate the soul and body. Rumination on ills and getting stuck in despondence are what she believes serves as classic manifestation.

In looking back over the variety of ideas and beliefs which Wilcox absorbed and assimilated into her artistic and intellectual output, it is easy to see how she was a forerunner of both those modern artists who compulsively blend discussion of important social issues with easily remembered lyric poems and slogans. Today, there is more to be said about the connection between stress and health. It’s recognized that even trauma can exist in the body, expressing itself through illnesses, chronic or otherwise. The theory is that unprocessed trauma leaves higher cortisol levels in the body, causing a multitude of inflammatory responses. Various resources are surfacing to spread a message identical to Wilcox’s. Dr. John Sarno is a well-respected rehabilitation doctor treating clients with a plethora of chronic ills using a therapeutic “Mind-Body” approach to focus on suppressed emotions past, present, and personality driven as a means of healing (SimplySarno.com). Nicole Sachs LCSW has published books, created podcasts, and treated clients with her own adaptation of Sarno’s work after she herself found healing from a serious condition through psychotherapy, and so defying the odds and expectations set by traditional doctors. The famous meditation guru and alternative medicine advocate Deepak Chopra stars in a Kelly Noonan film titled *Heal: A Documentary About Healing Within* that also presents the connection between illness and underlying stress. For Wilcox, the main declarative of so many of her poems is to highlight the world’s maladies in such a way as to stress the association of a Higher Power with organization and harmony. Her vision of that higher power as “the great Physician,” places her deity within the process of healing as well. As Wilcox herself stated, in “Oh, Poor Sick World,” appropriately published in her book *Poems of Optimism*:

The World has walked with fever in its veins
For many and many a day. Oh, poor, sick world!
Not knowing all its dreams of greed and gain,
Of selfish conquest and possession, were
Disordered visions of a brain diseased. (13-17)

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The American Dream Versus the American Nightmare

Michael Egan

There are those who achieve the American Dream, those who lose it, and those that never have an opportunity to pursue it. In “A Rose for Emily,” written by William Faulkner, Emily achieves and loses that dream while her African American servant, Tobe, is precluded from pursuing it because of race. In fact, he becomes a servant to her lost dream and remains an anonymous figure throughout his life never obtaining a legacy of his own.

If ever there was a textbook example of the “Have and Have Nots,” Emily and Tobe were the very definition of what it is like to be born into affluence and wealth and what it is like to be born into a life of service and selflessness. Emily was born into old money that was about to run out as noted by the narrator, “It was a big, squarish frame house that had once been white, decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, set on what had once been our most select street” (Faulkner 4). Faulkner writes in past tense using words like, “was” and “what had once been” to describe Emily’s decaying mansion, an ancient relic of what used to be a home of wealth and a monument to monetary success. Now it is only a crumbling memory of what used to be and what shall never be again.

While Emily had the experience of living a life full of luxuries that only the wealthiest and most elite can afford, Tobe was denied the opportunity to have his own identity or a life of his own. He was only referred to as “Negro” or “nigger” by the townspeople. Responding to a complaint about the “smell” permeating Miss Emily’s property, Judge Stevens states, “It’s probably just a snake or a rat that nigger of hers killed in the yard. I’ll speak to him about it” (4). This quote clearly demonstrates the mindset and attitude of people in that time. Moreover, the statement “That nigger of hers” shows ownership and defines Tobe as Emily’s property even though slavery had been abolished and the Civil War was over. It also shows how Tobe gets blamed for the putrid smell that is emanating from Emily’s yard as if a white woman was not capable of such an atrocity. The fact that Tobe receives the blame for the smell when he is not the one responsible also shows how African Americans became the scapegoats for their former masters and humbly took the blame for that white master’s mess. Post war, loyalty without question was expected of African American servants for all who continued to deem them property.

While their lives were juxtaposed -- Emily being born white, affluent, and privileged while Tobe was born black and poor and, as such, would never know opportunity, they did have one important thing in common—they would each live

lives of solitude and never have a family of their own or even a social circle to which they would belong. Emily's funeral is a testament to the fact that she was a recluse with no friends, family, or community. As the narrator remembers, "When Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house, which no one save an old man-servant – a combined gardener and cook – had seen in at least ten years" (1). No one came to Emily's funeral out of love. They came hoping to satisfy some kind of morbid curiosity, but it was never out of love or care or concern for Emily Grierson. It was out of obligation or respect.

Is it any great mystery why Tobe ran out the back door at Emily's funeral never to be seen again? The fact that he ran the moment he was no longer obligated to stay speaks volumes. By the time Emily passed away, Tobe was a stooped-over old man with not much life left to live. Although Faulkner never writes about whatever became of old Tobe, it would be nice to think that he lived the remainder of his days as a free man, that he might even have found romance, or that he became reunited with a distant relative. There were clearly many Tobe's out there: African American servants who never had a chance to educate themselves or have families of their own. After a lifetime of keeping the skeletons in Emily's closet from escaping and being her scapegoat, Tobe more than deserved some kind of life. Because of Emily's unhealthy relationship and dedication to her father, she missed out on the opportunity to marry and to have a family of her own. For Tobe's dedication to Emily, he would similarly never have any of those opportunities.

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Health in the Postmodern World

Farishta Ali

Most of us want to have perfect looks and lead healthy lives. Tissue engineering is a biomedical engineering discipline that integrates biology with engineering to create tissues or cellular products outside the body or to make use of gained knowledge to better manage and repair tissues within the body. It illustrates a wide variety of postmodern ideas such as transhumanism, posthumanism, cyborgs and hyperreality. Tissue regeneration is an example of how we are progressing on our path to the posthuman because it demonstrates ways in which we can further our status as a cyborg. Moreover, it provides us with opportunities to better our human experience, and thus confirms our status as transhuman.

Tissue engineering is a form of regenerative medicine to encompass the creation, replacement, and repair of tissues or organs by a range of therapeutic strategies. Engineered tissue is formed by a scaffold (natural or a biodegradable synthetic structure) that usually has human cells implanted prior to implantation of a scaffold in the patient. The source of the cell varies, but preferably the cells are derived from the patient (such as a bone marrow or muscle biopsy) to avoid any immune response issues.

The tissue engineering cycle is a 4-step process. Firstly, a sample of cells are taken from the person who needs an implant so that under correct physiological conditions it forms the constructs for implantation. Secondly, those cells are aligned in a monolayer cell culture so that they grow in-line, making it easy to study the cells. Those cells expand and are ready to use in a 3D polymeric scaffold. A scaffold is a 3-Dimensional porous solid biomaterial which is used to promote cell-biomaterial interactions, cell-adhesion, permit proper exchange of gases and nutrients to allow cell survival, cell differentiation and mimics the real organ, tissue, or bone that must be replaced. The 3D polymeric scaffold provides a tool to provide a physiological microenvironment for drug testing which is converted into a graft. Finally, the graft (a piece of living tissue that is transplanted surgically) is then inserted or replaced on the affected area (“Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine”). As of January 2022, Karen Blum at Johns Hopkins University reported that tissue engineering, nanotechnology and biology will save humans from death and diseases by numerous techniques.

Our Pathway to Posthumanism:

Posthuman refers to the idea that as we become more involved with technology and more dependent upon it, what makes us human will change

(Schopp 3). Within this narrative, the posthuman fits the role of a “human metamorphosed by reconnection to the worldly and systemic conditions of its evolutionary possibility” (Clarke 196). As Callus Herbrechter states, “posthuman does not need technology, though it remains a technological formation through and through. It is simply “that which reconfigures the actual and the possible once human potential is reengineered, and new orders instituted (whether by technology or otherwise)” (Schopp 35). In the postmodern world, people like to enhance their features so they undergo plastic surgery to feel good about themselves. In the process, they change their original features to new ones where hyperreality comes into play because it is defined as a lack of distinction between the real and the artificial (13). Hyperreality shows us that even if we do not possess the original organ, the replacement organ can function exactly like the real organ.

Transhumanism:

Transhumanism is the transitional state that we will go through as we progress towards posthuman. It makes our existence better, which includes eradicating disease, reversing aging, or making our world’s living conditions better. It provides us with the hope that we will see death as a disease that can be cured (6). An example of transhumanism would be: imagine a person who was in a horrible car crash and has damaged his facial bones. With tissue engineering, the damaged facial bones could be replaced with tissues made from their own cells. It would not matter to a person if they have lost their original bones because the replaced artificial bones would function exactly same as the original ones. Another example is arthritis. It is a common disorder amongst women above the age of 50. What is the cause of arthritis? Women give birth to children and the unborn child exhausts all the minerals and energy sources from the mother. The child gets its minerals from the bones and teeth of the mother. When the mother ages, she suffers from arthritis, which leads to a lot of women having to go through surgeries for bone replacement. A bone biopsy study has suggested that bone loss in early pregnancy is associated with trabecular thinning whereas restoration of bone volume in later pregnancy is associated with the addition of new trabeculae, leading to a finer bone network with increased struts (Shahtaheri, NP).

Science has advanced to a level where we can use a person’s own body cells/bones to replace damaged or painful bones. Some examples would be autografts or bone grafts that are harvested from one site and implanted into another site within the same individual. They are optimally osteogenic (forms bones), osteoinductive (having growth factors that attract osteoblasts and activates bone growth), and osteoconductive (provides scaffolding for a bone to grow onto) and has no risk of disease transmission and immunogenicity. Sonia Baelo-Allue states, “... transhumanism aims at enhancing not storytelling but human capacities. It is based on the idea that human limitations can be overcome through reason, science and technology is often seen as a way to free us from limitations of our bodies and minds (114). Transhumanism takes technology and the postmodern world to the next level giving us the hope that many health problems can have solutions.

Tissue Engineering as a Pathway to becoming Cyborgs:

Cyborgs are a combination of humans and machines (Schopp 5). Imagine if a patient has lost facial bones to cancer. He or she would have very few options for surgery which have a small chance of being successful. Surgeons have the options to employ metals to serve as an implant. There is a chance of rejection or the material not acting like the tissue. You can use 3D printers to create scaffolds made from biodegradable polymers combined with other natural materials in the exact shape of the facial defects. The metal and scaffold use technology or machine-made artificial items which can be used to incorporate into the organic human body. Another example of humans becoming cyborgs would be when a person loses his arm or leg; technology has advanced to a level where that person can have a mechanical arm or leg inserted into the limb which functions as an original arm or leg. This enables many special athletes to compete in the special Olympics.

Bioprinting is a branch of regenerative medicine and is under development. However, simpler tissues including blood vessels and tubes are developed. Bioprinting is a technique that deposits layers of material on top of each other to construct a 3-dimensional object one slice at a time. A simple structure like the meniscus is printed within 30 minutes. The Meniscus is a structure in a bone, is a shock absorber, and can prevent bone wear and tear (Jones 1:38). If we continue working with technology, we can create fully functional kidneys, hearts, and livers which function like the original organ. With printed tissues and embedded technology, we may make unburnable skin. Replacing defective parts or organs of the body with mechanically functional parts and making them part of a human body would make us merge with technology, which shows the idea of humans becoming cyborgs.

Finally, tissue engineering and bioprinting are going to play a vital role in the postmodern world. It will change how we define humans. Both fields will help us to have unburnable skin and replace complex organs like the heart and liver. Similarly, it will help us get rid of diseases such as arthritis, facial bone deformities, combat cancer, blood disorders, and create designer or perfect babies, free from disease.

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Cal Newport and the Need for Deep Work

Kevin Dolan

The socioeconomic atmosphere is changing faster than ever before. The emergence, evolution, and ubiquity of technology has made the vastly deep pool of human knowledge far more accessible to all. Unlimited access to information and instantaneous communication are two of the most useful outcomes of this revolutionary change. Technology has spread not just to innocent, excitable consumers, but to soulless, profit driven corporations. The algorithms responsible for seamless movie streaming are not dissimilar to those responsible for the most complex machines. As a result, mechanization and automation have swept across all industries leaving many workers jobless and hopeless. Cal Newport does not see this problem ending any time soon.

The author offers an antidote to the human costs of the above: deep work. Newport defines deep work as “Professional activities performed in a state of distraction-free concentration that push your cognitive capabilities to their limit. These efforts create new value, improve your skill, and are hard to replicate” (Newport 3). It is those who can master the skill of deep work who will thrive in this climate while all others will struggle to survive. Deep work leads not only to more thought-out careers, but to more thought-out lives, a reward that cannot be Googled or found in an inbox. Newport’s reason for urgency regarding deep work is simple: “a deep life is a good life” (18). Perhaps, it is time to jump into the deep end.

Newport’s central thesis is that cutting out frivolous tasks as much as possible while reallocating gained time to harder but more substantial tasks is what will allow for self-preservation in such a rapidly changing world. He organizes ‘work’ into two groups: deep work and shallow work. Deep work refers to defined time set aside for a sole purpose, academic or professional in nature, perhaps a longer duration than comfortable, but done willingly for a recognized good greater than the immediate pleasure or lack thereof. Newport contrasts this with shallow work, the more medial tasks that still demand a large portion of time but yield no significant outcome. Shallow work is often more tedious than strenuous. Speaking of shallow work, he says “These efforts tend to not create much new value in the world” (6). Tasks like email come to mind -- societally deemed necessary aspects of work that take an absurd amount of time with little resulting advancement. Deep work, or consequential thought, requires an “unbroken concentration” that the distraction filled shallow task cannot afford (7). The heart of deep work lies in Newport’s own mission statement: “I’ve invested significant effort to minimize the shallow in my life while making sure I get the most out of the time this frees

up” (16). It is by cutting out the nonsense we are so reluctant to unhand that makes advancement possible.

When Newport speaks of the two categories of work, he points out the often-overlooked power and necessity of deep work while warning of the black hole of time and true productivity that shallow work tends to be. It is reasonable to conclude that deep work is good and shallow work is bad. However, Newport is not so naive to suggest this. He sees the necessity of shallow work but urges that we be conscious of our time spent engaging in it. He explains it does not help us much, but rather gives us a false feeling of getting things done. But a false sense it is! Shallow work “is inevitable, but you must keep it confined to a point where it doesn’t impede your ability to take full advantage of the deeper efforts that ultimately determine your impact” (221).

Newport presents the theory of two MIT economists, Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee for the nation’s long-term socio-economic future. They propose three groups will thrive in this shift while all others will struggle to adapt: “In this new economy, three groups will have a particular advantage: those who can work well and creatively with intelligent machines, those who are the best at what they do, and those with access to capital” (28). However, there are two core abilities necessary for success in this new economy, regardless of category membership or not. 1. “The ability to quickly master hard things. 2. The ability to produce at an elite level, in terms of both quality and speed” (29). Deep work is vital for both mandatory abilities. Surface level, trivial tasks do not lead to mastery and elite level production, prerequisites for success, Newport explains. Deep work is the means of true change, of purposeful direction. It is the breeding ground for intention. Without it, the laborers are left wandering idly, devoting hours a day to trifling tasks with no ambition but mere self-preservation in a merciless market. To summarize, in this new and long-lasting socioeconomic landscape, the few who will have an advantage over the widespread mechanization will be those who have mastered hard things and those who produce results efficiently. They will also fall into one of three groups: those who are the best at what they do, those who craft the dreaded “job-stealing” machines which aid the first group, and those with capital willing to fund the first two groups. All these traits require deep work.

Deep work seems to be the obvious answer to many of our practical problems. But surprisingly, this method is far from permeating. In fact, it is largely unpracticed. Newport points to modernity’s requirements as the reason for its absence: “Many other ideas are being prioritized as more important than deep work in the business world, including, as we just encountered, serendipitous collaboration, rapid communication, and an active presence on social media” (51). It is these, he argues, that not only are not deep work, but “decrease one’s ability to go deep” (51). The frenetic demands of today are so pervasive, so boundaryless, that one is left suffocated by such often valueless tasks, unable to escape physically and emotionally in order to engage in the all-consuming deep work.

Distracted hyper connectedness is a new problem. Only with the emergence and omnipresence of technology has distracted hyper connectedness

become so possible and yet so problematic. Distracted hyperconnectedness is an elegant way of describing the addiction to distraction that has plagued the world, primarily through social media. And this addiction is not easy to break: “Once you’re wired for distraction, you crave it” (160). Newport attempts to offer an alternative to the backward way people today often take breaks. He asserts, “Instead of scheduling the occasional break *from distraction* so you can focus, you should instead schedule the occasional break *from focus* to give in to distraction” (161). For a practical step he proposes to set aside a time for internet usage. Time outside of this block ought to be entirely free from the internet. The key he urges, is to rewire the brain to not need distraction or constant stimulation.

There is an endless list of clear pros to the internet and social media. However, there is also an endless list of cons. Isolation and polarization are issues we are experiencing today as a society in such a dramatic way. Access to information is great, but soon one is drowning in information that is both irrelevant and useless. Surely, I have benefitted from the accessibility the internet offers. Unfortunately, I have certainly felt its detriment as well, more poignant now than ever. I do in theory support the author’s almost radical objection to social media -- I am not on the major platforms myself. However, I realize they are not going anywhere. And so does he.

Newport’s profound truths can sometimes be lost in the mass of words and examples he provides. At times, it can be challenging to maintain sight of his point. Part of my goal is to display just how amazing his claims really are, by presenting them in a less cluttered format. The following quote is not one of those examples. His words are more than sufficient; they sear the reader with their unrelenting audaciousness. But every word is true. And the reader knows it. Newport starkly explains what social media truly is:

These services are not as advertised, the lifeblood of our modern connected world. They are just products, developed by private companies, funded lavishly, marketed carefully, and designed to capture then sell your personal information and attention to advertisers. They can be fun, but in the scheme of your life and what you want to accomplish, they are a lightweight whimsy, one unimportant distraction among many threatening to derail you from something deeper. (Newport 209)

Social media is a fine entertainment source. But as Newport writes, it soon becomes a distraction that keeps us from going deep. It is only in the moderation of such a tool that we can benefit from its utility free of its relentless hold.

Newport begins his *Deep Work* with an observation: the socioeconomic atmosphere is changing fast and poses significant risk to the easily replicable employee. More and more jobs are being replaced by complex machines, leaving the multitude helpless and hopeless in their inevitable fate of job termination. Or so it seems. Deep work, he offers, is the discipline that can free the masses of their shackles, liberating the dependent laborer to blaze a trail from the status of soon-to-be-replaced to soon-to-be-promoted. The process has two main themes: minimize shallow work and maximize deep work. It is by minimizing shallow

work, that is, the more tedious and trivial tasks that sap much of our time while offering negligible results in return, and in turn, embracing deep work or the challenging, distraction free, all-consuming project that is far from easy but creates life changing results, that one can establish necessary skills to survive our ravenous economic climate. Deep work is the antithesis to the popular quick fix solutions of today. It is incompatible with the comfortable, all too luring shortcut. It is not a new solution but a reformulation of the most archaic and fundamental tool humans have utilized for centuries.

Newport closes with two options for the reader: continue to laze in the quotidian, safe, and harmless bubble of shallow work or, cast oneself into the mental desert alone, afraid, and ill-equipped but returning to civilization bold and new because of it. Quit being a weak, sycophantic sheep and be a brave, bold, and proud lion. For it's not just the quality of work that is at stake, but the quality of life. So go deep.

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The Chat

Dylan Rivera

Modernism and Postmodernism juxtapose each other, when examining the socio-cultural world we reside within. Some of these contradictions include how Modernism tends to be perceived as a slower movement, where postmodernism is perceived as one of rapidity. This may be due to fragmentation as knowledge is learnt transiently. Postmodernism revolves around the thought of replacing the anachronistic ideology of objective truth and reality, with a more modern vessel of knowledge. This includes platforms such as language interpretation and subjective past experiences, in which both may subsequently offer skewed truths. Modernism refers to the prerequisite period, beckoning a unification of one truth, regardless of world issues and subjective opinions. Postmodernism allocates these biases or stigmas and factors them into consideration. Such consideration creates a new meta-narrative, ergo a more experienced, more knowledgeable ideology. Modernism is the very birth of facets like art, music, literature, and technology, while postmodernism is the melting pot of such disciplines. Postmodernism reflects a nature of novelty, almost a nouveau, opinionated way of thinking. It depicts how its counterpoint, while being traditional, is ignorant to it.

They shared a jabber, a chat, in a coffee shop fifty miles west of Scranton, and in assuming the niche of an outskirt journalist, he remained humble. This, in a hole in the wall mom-and-pop cafe just off the interstate. It was a harmless chitter of ideas and concepts not to mention experiences, nonetheless being a matter of fact. A woman from phobos, or at least that's what she attested to, to which I imagined was a Greek island off the coast of heavens knows where, waltzed in wearing what he perceived as a large, out-of-place trench coat, yet fashionable jeans for a woman her age. She told him she'd come back from a mission, in what he assumed was part of a government position she'd procured. The woman acted as a 'time traveler' of sorts, if you can assume a Hollywood-esque simulacra mentality. She was so much more in that she was not a time traveler, but a looker into the post-postmodern world. Perhaps once a child of post modernity, now a woman of the post-postmodern. Bestowed upon her, a beautiful name, Adna.

Enhanced perspectives of Jean Baudrillard, Andrew Lam, and Jacques Derrida, among others, flooded the simple man's head as he sat, sheepishly, with humility fastened at his belt buckle, and curiosity at his whim. He connected the tannins of what he'd been formally steeped with when in his studies at Jefferson, to the harrowing diction of this goddess, as the moment resided as no more than fate itself. A theory to the man, stood as more than a supposition, or a simple opinion in that it is an abstract gander into the universe of possibilities. A theorist

may stand as the looker into the system. The one taking the presupposed gander into the unknown. As Adna's striking words of modernity and its counterpoint penetrated the man's mind, he thought to himself. Such periods exhibit partitions of history containing some of the greatest if not glorious thinkers of their era. Jean Baudrillard for instance, approached the man's psyche as Adna discussed the simulacra, hyperrealities and the post-poststructuralism of her time. She, like a nymph sang of her world's simulacra: "We coexist these long days as slaves, property of AI Inc. Society as you know it, devolves into a mindless sheeple of emaciated beings, never leaving the house, in a catatonic state, addicted to the simulacrum. The new street drug of the century" Adna protested, as her lips pursed with alarm. "Man is a product of AI, as it satisfies every human form of physical and social sustenance, for leaving the home is an idea of the past." She reminisced on the atmosphere of her world: society embedded in apps, artificial intelligence, and the personally customized simulation, rather than merely glued to it. The man noted how Adna was well beyond her years considering social media came to be the only form of viable information in her day. The man desired to propose a query but he remembered again. As being the looker into the postmodern system, Baudrillard denotes the theory of signs, the signified, and just how the simulacra or 'substitution of the original' exists in the postmodern world. The man noted how Nasrullah Mambrol examined Baudrillard attesting to the Gulf war not taking place, as it would be a substitution for the actual war that transpired (12). Reality is then thus spoon fed to the public in increments of false images and reenactments. The man recalled Mambrol, "Here Baudrillard is not merely suggesting that the postmodern world is artificial; he is also implying that we have lost the capacity to discriminate between the real and the artificial"(12). The man sat dumbfounded; he pondered how Baudrillard finds humans have an issue with distinguishing reality from the simulacra, the real from the constructed, and the hyperreality from its counter. In the postmodern world, humans often desperately cling to the unreal as it's more familiar, comfortable, and safe. The unreal becomes the new real, and begs the question; just how much of the hyperreal can we graze on before it is considered false?

The man once more recollected his former academia, as the woman spoke of forms of entertainment. She spoke softly, "We no longer tweet, share and digitally document crises, we watch it as entertainment, in the house behind closed doors, embedded in the simulation." Adna scowled, "Homicides, riots, acts of terrorism, all filmed for amusement, broadcasted to the home, at one's affordable disposal" Astonished as the man was, his brain drowning in comprehension of the post postmodern, he remained silent. He remembered Andrew Lam writing "But one of the most troubling consequences of devoting so much attention to the virtual world is the death of empathy" (73). The man mentally jotted how society has lost its essence of feeling for others, seeing what others see, and truly empathizing. We have lost the capacity to qualitatively study others' emotions as if they were our own. Examining the postmodern world, Lam denotes the 'disinhibition effect' as something coined by psychologists and anthropologists (74). He writes, "We have all become actors, filmmakers, reporters."(74). Lam is

discussing the effect of being all too familiar with the digital world. Existing as something obscure and abstract, the disinhibition effect causes society to prefer the anonymity of the digital footprint they so create, thereby excusing them from real world problems. Perhaps, digitally excused. After all, one would rather anonymously view a screen in their cozy dwelling rather than help another, thus making this very mentality pure fetishization of the bystander effect.

Adna glared at the man, as she anticipated a comment, an inquiry, or perhaps an apprehension of sorts, yet the man remained humble, unfolding his arms and scratching his chin in utter silence. The silence birthed impressions of Derrida and Mary Klages to the man's perception. He recalled the center and its lack of play, not to mention binary oppositions and Derrida's theory on *différance*. The man remembered Klages writing on Derrida's concept of deconstruction, ". . . speech is always seen as more important than writing... because speech is associated with presence-- for there to be spoken language, somebody has to be there speaking" (93). This accounts for the sort of presence in Adna's post-postmodern world, being the only thing there is. Adna spoke once again as if what she was saying were dire, perhaps even crucial to the man to know: "Social celibacy rules the post-postmodern epoch, a centerless center with individuals infatuated with their digital autobiography." The presence of her world was depicted by individual presence, or the presence of oneself, leaving behind both writing and speech to be selfishly thrown into history as yet another form of pointless communication. Adna interrupted the man's stillness and spoke again in her velvet voice, "Writing is the postmodern hieroglyphic, be it something ancient, or a lost art of your world, as it is only utilized as an awe of cheap societal amusement in mine. Libraries are now what one would call a museum in my world," she uttered. Adna choked on the word *library* as it was unfamiliar, excluded from her native post-postmodern tongue. In the post-postmodern era, speech was all that there was, perhaps a fourth order of the simulacrum, where writing and text were indistinguishable from Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets. The man thought of Klages attesting, "Anyway the moment when you start thinking about the roominess of your room is the moment or 'event' Derrida is talking about--the moment when philosophers begin to see their philosophical systems, not as absolute truths, but as systems, as constructs, as structure." (85). The man coupled this thought with Adna's tales of her world, thinking to himself that Derrida's "event" or "rupture" in structuralism has a continuity well into the future. The future holds a construct of its own, a sinister craving for totalization behaving like a lost lamb in the post-postmodern pasture. The play of Adna's world reflected its lack of center and free use of signifiers, which may summarize the true *différance* of her speech, her demeanor, her post post-modernworld.

The man sat amongst his thoughts and reasoning, attempting to articulate a sentence, a question, a comment or concern; his cranium saturated in the ideas of Baudrillard, Lam, Klages, and Derrida. He pondered the orders of the simulacra, each one waltzing in his head. He wondered how more artificial culture can become, and desperately sought clarity from what he'd witnessed. He thought about the death of the real, empathy, totalization, and perhaps society itself, as

the center of post-poststructuralism looks rather grim. The man awaited but a moment too long for the woman arose gently, preparing to greet the starry night that came to be. He called out her name, and as foreign as her name was to the man, somehow he managed to mutter out, “Adna,” his voice cracked to the pitch, “Thank you.” Slowly turning as her ears tuned into his only words, she spoke one last time. “You can call me Addie,” she said with a somber yet childlike grin, “After all, that’s what you’ll name me.”

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CRISPR-Cas9 “the cure” for Sickle Cell Disease

Gabriela Rodriguez



CRISPR is a gene-editing technology that can potentially cure many genetic diseases. One of these diseases is sickle cell anemia; a harmful blood disorder caused by a missense mutation in the DNA which changes the amino acids composition in hemoglobin. Currently, it affects approximately 100,000 people in the United States and millions around the world (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Until now, a bone marrow transplant is the only treatment option for patients affected by this disease. Very recently, however, CRISPR gene therapy has brought new hope to both patients and scientists since patients may not need a compatible donor to treat the disease in the future. Gene therapy involves the removal of stem cells from the patient, substituting the mutated gene with a normal copy, and then reinserting the genetically modified cells back into the patient.

CRISPR is a natural phenomenon that allows bacterial cells to have a copy of the viruses to which they have been exposed. DNA fragments of the viral DNA are passed on to the cell’s progeny to protect them from viruses through several generations, which makes it possible for cells to keep track of viral infections. In other words, CRISPR works like “a genetic vaccination card for bacterial cells” (Barrangou, 2022). When the fragments of the viral DNA have been incorporated into the bacterial chromosome, the cell makes a small copy of RNA, which is a replica of the viral DNA that allows interaction with DNA molecules with a similar sequence.

What is CRISPR-Cas9?

The Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats system also known as CRISPR was discovered and then developed as a genetic engineering tool by Jennifer Doudna, Ph.D., and Emmanuelle Charpentier, Ph.D. Dr. Doudna has a laboratory at the University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Charpentier is the head of the Max Planck Unit for the Science of Pathogens in

Berlin, Germany. They both were awarded the 2020 Nobel Prize in chemistry for their work on designing a new biotechnology tool based on a natural phenomenon that allows bacterial cells to resist viral infections (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).

Gene therapy involving the CRISPR/Cas9 tool currently uses two different approaches. The first approach uses the Cas 9 enzyme to break the target DNA sequence. The Cas 9 nuclease requires a guide RNA to track down the gene of interest. This guide RNA can be produced in a laboratory. Gene therapy using CRISPR/Cas9 disrupts a gene and leads to the inactivation or the editing of the target gene. Hence, CRISPR/Cas9 enables gene inactivation or gene correction. In other words, the guide RNA informs the Cas nuclease where to cut the target DNA. The laboratories of Dr. Doudna and Dr. Charpentier engineered a guide RNA to allow the CRISPR/Cas 9 system to target specific DNA sequences in living cells, and not just bacterial cells.

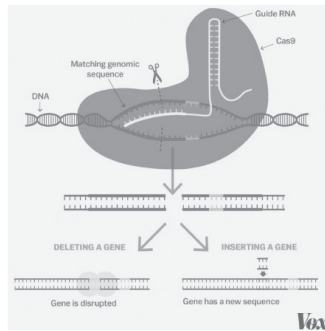


Figure 1: CRISPR / Cas9 mediated gene disruption and gene editing.

The most recent CRISPR-Cas9 assay uses the Cas-9 nuclease, which targets a particular gene by pairing it with a guide RNA. The guide RNA is made in the laboratory and is homologous to the target gene. After the gene is cut by the Cas9 nuclease, the cell tries to join the two ends of the DNA that cut. Currently, two approaches on how to use the CRISPR / Cas9 system to cure individuals with sickle cell anemia are pursued. The first approach is to disrupt a gene called BCL11A that turns off gamma-globin production after a baby is born. Hemoglobin, the protein that binds oxygen in our red blood cells consists of alpha and beta-globin subunits. However, the hemoglobin in a fetus consists of alpha and gamma-globin subunits. Gamma globin production is turned off shortly after birth by the BCL11A protein while beta-globin production is turned on. Sickle cell anemia is caused by a mutation in the beta-globin gene. If the faulty beta-globin gene could be bypassed by keeping the fetal gamma-globin expressed, functional hemoglobin could be produced. Specifically, if the BCL11A protein cannot be produced due to CRISPR/Cas 9 disruption, then gamma-globin will be produced throughout the life of the patient and will provide functional hemoglobin. After the Cas9 nuclease has cut the target DNA, the cell tries to join

the two ends of the DNA. The cell may introduce somenucleotides randomly, preventing the nucleases presented in the cell from chewing up the DNA. The faulty repair results in gene disruption shown on the left side in Figure 1. The second approach for curing sickle cell anemia is the use of CRISPR's editing mechanism, shown on the right of Figure 1. As the cell tries to repair the double-stranded DNA break that the Cas9 nuclease has caused, the provision of a small piece of DNA that could be used as a 'bandaid' will allow the cell to quickly repair the damage. The DNA that is provided to the cell can be designed to edit the target DNA.

Sickle cell anemia is caused by a point mutation, the change of a single letter in DNA. The fragment of DNA that is supplied to the cell to repair the broken DNA can be created in a laboratory. It contains the sequence of the normal beta-globin gene. As the cell incorporates that piece, the mutation is removed.

How can the CRISPR/Cas 9 system be used to cure sickle cell anemia?

CRISPR is a promising and accurate gene-editing tool in gene therapy options for sickle cell anemia. There are two main ways that CRISPR-Cas9 can be used to treat sickle cell anemia. One approach is to repair the hemoglobin S gene to produce the normal form. For this approach, bone marrow stem cells are extracted from the patient. The mutated beta globin gene is edited in vitro. The edited cells are engineered to produce normal hemoglobin. These edited cells are re-implanted back into the patient's bloodstream.

The second approach is to replace hemoglobin S with hemoglobin F by disrupting the BCL11A gene that turns off hemoglobin F production. Both approaches are applied in the clinic by gathering blood from a patient, editing the hematopoietic progenitor stem cells (HSPC) with CRISPR-Cas9, and reimplanting the edited cells into the patient's bloodstream.

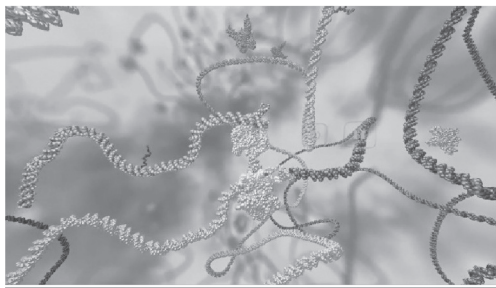


Figure 2: CRISPR-Cas9 is repairing the mutation in the gene that causes sickle cell disease (shown in light blue). (UC Berkeley image courtesy of Innovative Genomics Institute)

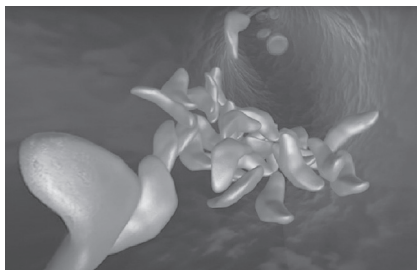


Figure 3: The sickle cell anemia mutation deforms red blood cells into a sickle shape.

Sickle Cell CRISPR-Cas9 Trials

CTX001 by CRISPR Therapeutics and Vertex Pharmaceuticals are prominent clinical trials in the media (5). This CRISPR trial for treating sickle cell disease involves the approach of replenishing fetal hemoglobin expression to correct the symptoms of both Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) and beta-thalassemia. This autologous gene therapy treatment helps bypass the immune response to allogeneic transplants. Since the CTX001 investigational drug was filed for a clinical trial, many people have been waiting to see the positive results in patients. Early trials have been completed; however, scientists are concerned about the impact CRISPR technology could have on genetically engineering human cells. The newest published data referred to two patients with about three months of follow-up after obtaining CRISPR gene therapy treatment for sickle cell anemia with a range of 3 to 15 months. The findings showed similar patterns in these two patients, with rapid and sustained increases in total and fetal hemoglobin levels, reaching near-normal levels at the last evaluation (5). The CRISPR/Cas9 technology has the potential to become a “best-in-class therapy” in which scientists plan to continue clinical trials to bring new development towards genetic diseases.

The future of CRISPR

Since patients who went through the first CRISPR trials for editing out sickle cell anemia are showing remarkable improvement, the CRISPR technology is the best approach to cure (SCD) and beta-thalassemia. Scientists are still working on improving the technique to correct the sickle cell mutation inside the body using in vivo therapy which implies the use of antibodies to target the CRISPR enzyme to correct stem cells (1). Given that in-vivo-therapy does not harm stem cells nor destroy the bone marrow that produces white blood cells, the safety, and efficacy of CRISPR-Cas9 may take some time to convince the population as one may think there exists a trade-off to such efficiency. However, CRISPR/Cas9 has enormous capability to transform the treatment of sickle cell anemia. Dr. Doudna states “It’s a tool that scientists and clinicians around the world are using to understand our genetics, the genetics of all living things, and — most importantly — to intervene in genetic disease,” (1). This technology has

been a significant advancement that is changing the way research is conducted in all fields of medicine.



CRISPR-Cas9 has brought hope to many patients who suffer from sickle cell disease. Finding the cure for sickle cell anemia would be a significant advancement in biotechnology and medicine. It will promote new clinical trials for other genetic diseases that could be cured by CRISPR gene editing. CRISPR is a promising technology that will not only bring advances to those who suffer from sickle cell anemia, but also to a variety of genetic diseases that have not yet found a cure or a safe treatment.

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The Criminalization of Midwifery

Elizabeth Pahs

Abstract

In the United States 35% of the country still criminalizes the practice of direct-entry midwifery. Yet, studies have shown time and again that the most cost-effective, safe, and least interventive method of maternity care is led by midwives outside the hospital setting. There are three major causes of the continued criminalization of midwifery in many parts of the U.S. First, medical colleges and journals created stigmas around the practice of midwifery, informing the public that they should give birth at hospitals to ensure their safety and the safety of their babies. This recommendation resulted in a steady stream of income for hospitals as birth climbed to the number one cause for hospital visits in the United States. Second, midwifery became viewed as a lower-class method of delivery for women who could not afford to have their babies in hospitals. Third, as the medical industry became more institutionalized, laws regarding medical licensure and education were passed, leaving midwives out of the guidelines. Midwives still struggle to hold onto their profession and continue their education as state legislatures refuse to repeal stringent licensing laws. Today, a great deal of differing opinions and misinformation surrounding the practice of direct-entry and homebirth midwifery exists in the United States. With appropriate legal structure, education and professional development, midwifery can rise out of its reputation as an archaic practice that the medical institution has relegated it to. This paper will evaluate each of the causes of the criminalization of midwifery, shedding light on a legal problem that deprives so many women of natural and inexpensive maternal care.

The Criminalization of Midwifery

In the United States, 35% of the country still criminalizes the practice of direct-entry midwifery (Midwives Alliance of North America, 2020). In states such as New York and Georgia, direct-entry midwives—or midwives who attend births outside of the hospital setting—can be arrested for practicing medicine without a license or even more serious felonies if something happens to the babies they are delivering. These midwives are often credentialed, well-learned, and highly respected in their communities—some with thousands of births to their credit. Yet they might be judged criminals because of a “decades-old political fight over who can be licensed as a midwife” (Block, 2020, p. 3). Studies have shown time and again that the most cost-effective, safe, and least intrusive method of maternity care is led by midwives outside the hospital setting. Despite this,

midwifery is still illegal in many states around the U.S, even after a resurgence of home birth midwifery in the latter part of the 20th century. Midwives are again in jeopardy due to the rising rate of malpractice insurance costs and outdated legislation governing their licensure.

Childbirth Becomes Medical

In the 19th century, the focus of childbirth shifted from a woman-centered, natural, and physiological process that took place in homes and communities to an urgent malady that must be dealt with in professional medical setting. There, doctors—who saw childbirth as a pathological process—attended every birth (Block, 2007, p. 216). Medical journals published reports recommending women give birth in hospital settings. The introduction of “twilight sleep” (a combination of morphine and an amnesiac) became an easy escape from the pain of birth, welcomed by upper-class women as a symbol of medical progress (Pollesche, 2018).

Shortly following this “breakthrough,” Dr. Joseph DeLee wrote a textbook, *The Principles and Practice of Obstetrics*, that became the most influential obstetrics text of the early 19th century. Dr. DeLee was the first to categorize childbirth as a destructive pathological process that was harmful to both mothers and babies. He worked to eliminate the attendance of midwives at births, most of whom understood that birth is a normal function of a woman’s body (Brodsky, 2008, p. 50). Dr. DeLee’s textbook became the core source upon which hospitals built their routine management of birth. He also pushed physicians to incorporate episiotomies, sedatives, ether, and forceps in the delivery room. These unnecessary medical interventions soon became rote for hospital births. This medical paradigm of birth persisted until the 1960s, with the advent of the feminist movement, when women regained part of their voice in issues involving their reproductive health. The position of the midwife became a desired one, as more and more women began “rejecting the hospital, forcing a resurgence of physiologic (what used to be called ‘natural’) birth” (Block, 2020, p. 6). These midwives began to learn a lost body of knowledge and taught themselves the traditions and techniques that brought humanity back to the ordeal of childbirth and restoring the autonomy of the laboring mother. Out of this necessity for homebirth midwives, the national credential of the Certified Professional Midwife (CPM) or the “direct-entry” midwife was born.

Midwifery Stigmas

Nevertheless, the medical view of childbirth persisted, and obstetricians began to compete with these midwives by getting states to erect statutory barriers for midwives, denying midwives licenses, and discrediting midwives themselves. Through medical journals and colleges (such as the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology) and suppression of readily available education on alternative birth options, the medical industry informed women that the safest and best place to deliver their babies was with “trained” medical professionals in a “secure” hospital setting. Doctors—including Dr. DeLee and the others that followed

him-informed patients that “pregnancy is a dangerous condition requiring care available only from highly trained medical specialists” (Rooks, 2011, p. 2).

Many of the remaining midwives in the 19th and early 20th centuries were immigrants, indigenous women, and black women. In the poorer and more rural regions of the United States, these midwives continued to give the same maternal care that they had always given. These midwives followed their cultures and traditions, and often faced seemingly insurmountable challenges through their reduced socio-economic status. Midwives not only had to fight for their rights as medical providers, but their rights as women as well. Medical journals viciously attacked midwives as ignorant, “un-American,” and medically inept (Block, 2007, p. 216). Because of tensions between the upper class and this demographic, midwifery became associated with an outdated system leading to further discreditation and marginalization by medical institutions.

The Steady Profit of Birth

In the United States, the leading reason for hospital admissions is childbirth. In an article for *The Atlantic*, Olga Khazan states that millions of women every year are charged steep hospital fees simply to have a baby, and that “the average new mother with insurance will pay more than \$4,500 for her labor and delivery” (Khazan, 2020, p. 2). Doctors realize that a steady part of the hospital’s income comes from the millions of births every year, as 98% of births in the United States take place in hospitals. With the obstetric interventions in place as routine birth practices, doctors are able to induce 27-41% of labors without any medical indication, utilize synthetic oxytocin (Pitocin) to speed up labor in 40-50% of births, administer epidurals, and recommend and nearly enforce cesarean sections (“The Legal Infrastructure,” 2020, p. 2212). All of these interventions, though most of the time completely unnecessary for a healthy birth outcome, are used liberally in a hospital setting. This allows for increased fees for medical interventions, births to be charged as procedures, and hospitals to receive further funding.

Midwives are a threat to this profit, as the rates for homebirth are significantly less. Homebirth midwives are able to be flexible with their payment and hours, and some even get paid in goods—eggs, pies, fresh vegetables, or even a handmade birthing stool (Block, 2020, p. 15). Yet doctors still want the corner of the market on this lucrative event and use malpractice law and liability insurance rates to make it more difficult for midwives to serve their communities due to a lowered capacity to cover these costs.

Exclusive Licensure for Midwives

Each state has different regulations for midwives—some outlawing their practice entirely—and it is difficult to find colleges and universities that will offer midwifery programs that do not conform to the hospital-centric standard of care. New York State is one of many states that has played tug-of-war with direct-entry midwives for decades. In the 1990s, a bill was passed to establish a Board of Midwifery to write the regulations and to oversee education, practice,

and discipline among midwives. Yet all of the legislative sessions purposefully excluded homebirth midwives, focusing on nurse-midwives whose practice is exclusively hospital-centric. Today, in New York, the closest thing to direct-entry midwifery is the strictly regulated Certified Midwife (CM) license, which is simply a more limited level of access than that of a Certified Nurse-Midwife (CNM). New York still does not recognize CPMs (Certified Professional Midwives) as licensed medical providers because though many direct-entry midwives are fighting for this credential, it is continually passed over. For example, in 1995, the state invited homebirth midwives to apply for licensure, but denied every single application (Block, 2020, p. 13). The medical industry continues to work with legislation to restrict midwives through denial of education and licensure. In contrast to doctors—who are granted enormous leeway to set and maintain standards—midwives are tightly regulated so that it is almost impossible for them to assist their patients in decision-making (“The Legal Infrastructure,” 2020, p. 2220).

It is within a state’s power to regulate midwifery as a medical profession, yet this legislative power must be measured against the right of an individual to choose who will attend the birth of their child: “States that prohibit midwifery deny pregnant women the full range of birthing options” (Stover, 2011, p. 311). Each differs extensively in their laws regarding “which types of midwives they choose to license, the scope of practice they allow these midwives, and access to birthing centers or permission of home births” (“The Legal Infrastructure,” 2020, p. 2220). The inconsistencies in licensure and lack of uniformity among states make it very difficult for midwives to work together on a national level and often cause midwives to have to relocate to obtain licensure or begin practicing. More homogeneous laws and regulations would also allow midwives to act together when it comes to legislation and progressive action.

Despite the stringent regulations on midwives, many women will choose midwife care over hospital care, especially in situations where women desire a vaginal birth after cesarean section (VBAC). Almost always, hospitals will deny this option, as they view the procedure as a high liability risk. However, evidence shows that attempting a VBAC is a safe option and one that should be offered to mothers. In order to find a provider who will respect their decision-making, many women will seek out legal—or illegal—midwifery care. Phyllis Brodsky, an experienced obstetric nurse and author of *The Control of Childbirth: Women Versus Medicine Through the Ages* emphasizes that research findings have demonstrated that “Midwives are safe practitioners, are more sensitive and patient than other care providers, and intervene far less than obstetricians” (Brodsky, 2008, p. 50). The United States continues to restrict women’s access to midwives through statutory regulations and denial of licenses. Through this action, the state is working with medical associations to limit women’s rights to choose the birth experience they want.

Future Steps

Midwifery is experiencing a resurgence that has caused mothers and midwives to question the controlling, corporate, financially-minded institution of our hospital system and has shown that women have the right to choose what kind of birth experience—and ultimately what kind of healthcare—is in their best interests. Erica Lyon, a New York childbirth educator, highlights that women’s choices in childbirth have been subverted: “Women are vulnerable in pregnancy, even if they are highly educated, professionally successful, and in control of their lives in every way, they are relying on the external authority of healthcare providers and institutions during pregnancy and childbirth” (Block, 2007, p. 268). History threatens to repeat itself, as women are beginning to depend upon medical associations once more to make the decisions about what is best for them and their baby. Undoubtedly, women need to be educated on the range of options available to them, and to understand their rights when it comes to their bodies and their babies.

Positive Public Awareness of Midwifery

Today, expectant mothers don’t often choose midwife care, not because they don’t want it, but because they do not know that it is an option for them. There are so many historical stigmas still surrounding the practice of midwifery, and the negative images that medical associations have projected in the past prevail today. Women should know that they have rights when they are pregnant—and during the labor and delivery process—rights to choose what happens to them and their baby:

It is a woman’s right to fully embrace all of her choices around her reproductive health... it also extends to who she wants to catch her baby, where she wants to be, how she wants to do it. She should have all the information to make the choice that is best for her (Block, 2020, p. 15).

This encouragement must come with education. Today, women have “unprecedented access to the information they need to make the best decisions for themselves—and therefore the best decisions for their babies. They are in fact in a far better position to make evidenced-based decisions than their doctors” (Block, 2007, p. 271). The internet is a huge purveyor of this information, as women all over the United States are able to connect and share birthing experiences, educate each other on midwifery practices, and recommend a woven network of midwives all over the country. Positive evidence and successful studies have shown time and again that midwifery is the most cost-effective, safe, and least invasive method of maternity care. In order to bring midwifery out of its outlawed state, this information must be brought to light before the general public. Otherwise, women will remain trapped in a system that cares more about the bottom line than providing the best and most personal care during labor, delivery, and recovery.

Legislative Action

While it is certainly the awareness and education of midwifery that would promote the regular practice of it in the United States, the legal infrastructure of midwifery is the door that must be opened first. Policymakers must move beyond the conventional standards for birth that came about in the early 19th century. We must advocate to bring “the regulation of childbirth into alignment with healthcare and constitutional law, and on reforming areas of the law that can improve access to a broader spectrum of care” (“The Legal Infrastructure,” 2020, p. 2232). There is an urgent need to replace the medical, physician-controlled, impersonal system of childbirth with one that is focused on the rights of the woman to have a say over her body and a voice in the welfare of her own child. It is the role of the people to call upon their legislators to fully recognize this right of bodily autonomy and overturn the criminalization of midwifery in America.

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One Hand Over the Other or Rebellious by Design

Maria Galatro

Sinistrality, or the condition of being left handed (*Merriam-Webster Medical Dictionary*), has long had both social and religious stigmas associated with it. In 1779, Benjamin Franklin penned an anonymous letter which described his “frustration” with the dominant cultural view and treatment of the left-handed. Written from the perspective of a young girl, “A Petition to Those Who Have the Superintendency of Education” described her sister’s life as one of privilege in comparison to the neglectful treatment she received herself as one who is left-handed. Though both were equal, one had been alienated and “beaten for being awkward.” At the end of the letter was a simple request: that both siblings receive fair treatment. The letter was respectfully signed “your obedient servant, The Left Hand” (Franklin 236-237). The letter arguably serves as an example of the neglect and discrimination the left-handed has long received. Since handedness was considered a personal choice, sinistrals were expected to conform to society’s standard of “normal.” Refusal to conform to normalcy was considered an act of defiance, or rebellion. In further exploration of Franklin’s essay, as well as a parable from the “Gospel of Matthew” in the Christian Bible, this study will examine the origins of cultural and religious prejudices toward sinistrality. In so doing, the discriminatory methods of hand correction during the 15th through to the 20th centuries will reveal why sinistrals may be rebellious by design.

The life of the sinistral child was filled with incessant correction, ridicule, and often physical abuse. There was constant pressure to conform to the social standard as well as punishment for using an appendage that society considered inferior. In Franklin’s essay, the young girl implored her friends to turn their attention to her “unhappy fate, in order to remove the prejudices of which” she was “the victim” (236). Left-handed children were often singled out by the school system for being different. This made him or her subject to cultural prejudice and discrimination. Psychology professor, neuropsychological researcher, and author Stanley Coren explained that “handism” was a specific type of discrimination, which he defined as “behaviors directed against individuals who belong to a certain group of people simply because of their membership in that group” (10). In this case, sinistrals were subject to discrimination just for using the “other” hand. Society demanded conformity, and the left-handed child stood out as a social deviant. In his 1924 medical journal article “An Inquiry into the Origin of Squint, Left-Handedness and Stammer,” senior ophthalmic surgeon W.S. Inman, M.B., discussed his research and observed, “Though left-handedness has never yet been classified among diseases... a most striking feature is the intolerance shown towards it” (211). Sinistrality

was viewed by society as an external abnormality that required correction. One of society's expectations was that the education system would take up the task of correcting the abnormality. An examination of the meanings behind the words that have been used to describe "left" in various cultures reveals a common conception; that the left is always the opposite of what is "right."

The human body comes equipped with its own binary system: the right side and the left side. For this reason, opposing terms tend to be categorized by an association with a particular side, which then becomes the symbolic meaning for that side. As discussed by physician, lecturer, and author Dr. Ira S Wile, through these associations, the right side represents "strength," "godliness," "truth," "goodness," and "masculinity" (30). The right side has been symbolized through positive and empowering terms. The terms associated with the left, however, tell a very different story: "The left hand represents the opposite... the negation of all traits and characteristics attributed to the right hand" (Wile 30). This means, regardless of the culture, whatever terms are associated with the right, the left will have the opposite meaning. Though the symbolic meanings for 'left' differ from one language to another, one factor has remained the same; the meanings hold a negative connotation. The meanings range from "awkward" to "weak" or "worthless" (34-35). These meanings describe the apparent awkwardness of a left-handed person who writes with the hand in a hooked position. The left side of the body was viewed as weak compared to the right side of the body and therefore, not as highly valued. The word 'sinistrality,' the term for left-handedness, comes from the Latin word 'sinister,' which means "on the left hand, when it was used as a bad omen" (34). From 'awkward' to 'bad' luck, 'weak' to 'worthless,' these words reinforced the cultural perception of left-handedness as a handicap. These words and meanings represent the social stigma attached to sinistrality, which also appeared to be supported by religious belief.

Augmenting the cultural bias toward sinistrality, the Christian Bible seemed to have added a religious bias as well. Franklin wrote, "From my infancy, I have been led to consider my sister as a being of a more elevated rank" (236). Left-handed children were taught early on that the right hand was considered superior by religion, society, and school. In the Christian Bible, the right hand was presented as preferred or more powerful, and the left hand as inferior or aligned with the devil. Society echoed God's apparent preference for the right hand. The following example from the "Book of Matthew" is the quintessential biblical passage that delineates right from left by identifying the good from the bad, the just from the cursed, and the sheep from the goats. In this passage, there was no question that the right hand was aligned with God, whereas the left hand was identified with the devil and punishment. "The Last Judgement" states:

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the king say to them that shall be on his right hand, 'Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...' Then he will say to those on his left hand, 'Depart from me accursed ones, into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his

angels...’ And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just, into everlasting life (CV Bib. Matt. 25.33-46).

This passage clearly states that only the faithful followers of God, the sheep, would be allowed to enter into the kingdom of God and be rewarded with eternal life. These sheep were placed on the right-hand side of God as an indication of their status as His chosen ones. Then, there were the goats, the sinners who failed to faithfully follow the commands of God. These goats received a sentence of infinite suffering in the eternal fires of hell as punishment for their sins. The undesirable goats, the damned who were subjected to an eternity of punishment at the hands of Satan and his minions, were identified with the left-hand side of God. This passage has been “used as scriptural justification for the practice of forcing left-handed children to write with their right hands” (Coren 19). The Bible provided a moral code for societies to keep people under control by encouraging them to follow the righteous path. If a person strayed from that righteous path, he or she was labeled a sinner. According to this passage from the “Gospel of Matthew,” sinners were punished. It then became the moral duty of every member of that religious society to seek out and reform the sinners. Because scripture depicted “the left” as not on the side of God, left-handed people were viewed as sinners and subjected to reform until they accepted the path of the righteous, by conforming to the dominant right-handed standards of society. This reformation of sinistrals became more punishment than correction. Nonetheless, it was not God nor the Bible, but society’s interpretation, and implementation of scripture that influenced the social discrimination against sinistrality.

As Western Christianity identified the left hand as undesirable to God in its social institutions, sinistrality became a defect. Franklin wrote, “it would not be in my power even to scrawl a suppliant petition for relief, having been obliged to employ the hand of another in transcribing the request...” (237). This quote represents the powerlessness of the left-hand under the authority of a restrictive education system. The right-hand had to write the petition on behalf of the left-hand, because the left-hand was not allowed to. In an educational journal article from 1919, Arthur L. Beeley, Professor of Psychology and Education at the University of Utah, argued that “a serious handicap is put upon a left-handed child” (290). Concomitantly, the education system treated left-handedness as a physical disability. In a world designed for right-handed people, a left-handed person could cause injury to his or herself if, for example, machinery was improperly used. Hand correction was implemented to keep the left-handed child from becoming an unnecessarily disadvantaged adult in a right-handed world. Left-handedness “can be readily corrected by teacher or parent at the very first indication on the part of a child of any tendency to write in this undesirable fashion” (290). This pressured parents to be an equal partner in the hand conversion process, along with educators. As the first line of defense, parents were expected to start correcting their left-handed child at home, even before proper schooling began. And the sooner the better, for it was argued that the “plea for the early correction of the defect of left-handedness seems particularly well sustained” (290). Or, once properly corrected the child remained corrected.

Controlling the child's handedness would ensure that the child would grow into a fully functional adult, willing to embrace conformity, and not rebel against it. Society and the religious believed that the need for correction justified the means of correction.

There were various means of correction employed to convert the handedness of children from left to right. These methods ranged from mild to harsh depending upon age and the child's level of obstinance. For a four-year-old girl who showed left-hand preference, her father would try verbal persuasion to correct her hand usage (Inman 211). If persuasion failed, the method of correction was to simply remove the writing instrument from the left hand and place it in the child's right hand. The key to this method was repetition, until the child learned to use his or her right-hand without intervention. Franklin wrote, "but if by chance I touched a pencil, a pen, or a needle, I was bitterly rebuked..." (236). Once the child entered school, the methods of correction became harsher. The child no longer received a gentle reminder to use the right hand. Instead, the child was punished for using the left-hand. Frequently, "...children were whacked on the knuckles if they were caught writing with their left hand" (Coren 55). My own grandmother, as a left-handed child in Germany during the 1910s, was forcibly corrected in this manner. A nun inflicted the punishment with a ruler. Children were often required to sit on their left-hand during school to keep them from using it. Professor of Psychology and Medical Education at the University College of London and author, Chris McManus explained that "The Victorians even invented a vicious leather device with a belt and buckles for strapping the left hand firmly behind the back" (268). In the absence of such a device, a belt or rope would be used to restrain the left-hand either at the child's side or behind their back. The goal was to make sure the left-hand was immobilized, so that the child would have no choice but to use the right-hand. An eight-year old boy was forced to change handedness by the school master: "The boy [was] found difficulty in compliance," and "was beaten" (Inman 213). As a left-handed child advanced in age and obstinance, if the previous methods of correction had not worked, the focus shifted from correction to punishment, which came in the form of physical beatings. Parents and teachers alike used "verbal persuasion, arguments, appeals to logic, or fears of the devil to get the child to change... however, physical punishment was employed to enforce the right-handed use" (Coren 68). The fear of being beaten was supposed to motivate the child to conform to right-handedness. Sometimes, punishment created a more rebellious child.

A rebel resists authority and refuses to conform to society's standards. A persistent sinistral who refused to conform was considered to be rebellious. A sinistral has been seen as someone who "rejects and resents all efforts at coercion against his organic nature" (Wile 349). Being a sinistral myself, left-handedness was instinctual. There was a natural gravitation toward the hand that was best suited to complete the task; it happened to be my left-hand. "Left-handedness obviously conduces to special patterns of behavior that deviate from the norm..." (343). For some, the innate need to use the left-hand was so strong that no amount of persuasion, correction, or punishment would change them. With this unyielding

stubbornness in opposition to the right-hand standard, society viewed the sinistral as a social deviant. Sinistrals have demonstrated a “resentful attitude” in “opposition to authority” (Inman 212). Resentment of authority is not necessarily an innate trait, it can be learned and developed over time. If a right-handed person were subjected to the same prejudicial practices and physical punishments as a left-handed person, just for making use of an appendage he or she was born with, most likely, that right-handed person would learn to resent and resist authority as well.

We have seen the influential power of the Bible and religious tradition over society and culture: groups of people are willing to adopt interpretations of the stories within the book as truth and are also willing to carry out those instructions as social law. The book becomes a source of power, used as evidence and reasoning for discriminatory practices against a specific group of people. This group is discriminated against for a perceived “abnormality” (Inman 212). Even famed Renaissance artist Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) was considered to have “a deformity” for using his left hand (Brophy 400). Sinistrals follow their natural tendencies instead of being deterred by forceful correction, ridicule, and physical punishment. By following their true nature of left-handedness, they are perceived as social deviants for resisting authority, and for refusing to conform to society’s right-handed standard of behavior. Judging by this shared “spirit of contrariness,” it could be that left-handers are rebellious by nature (Inman 212). On the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome, Italy, there are frescoes “depicting scenes from the book of Genesis” (Cole 400) painted by Michelangelo Buonarroti between 1508 and 1512. One of these frescoes, *The Creation of Adam*, shows God, His right hand outstretched from the heavens to touch the hand of Adam to bring him to life. On the ground, laying on his right side, Adam’s left-hand is extended upward touching the right-hand of God (401). This could be a protest against the discriminatory practices toward the left-hand in the name of religion or a peace offering between God and the left-hand. Or, this could be a reminder that God created man in His image and though man symbolizes beauty and near perfection, the left hand reminds us that man is inherently flawed. Though we may never know Michelangelo’s true intention behind this work, one thing is certain... the left hand has made its mark on the Church, and the Bible has made its mark on the left hand.

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Keeper

Julia Cavanagh

Grass stain badges
Turf burn trophies
Roughed up hands
Grab the ball for glory

A rocket to the head
Is what you can expect
When stepping in front
Of a soccer net

Dirt embedded in my skin
With a ball imprint on my shin
A pink jersey that means much more
Than the game, me, or the score.

When the lights are on,
And cameras roll,
My relationship with falling
Sometimes takes a toll.

Those 90 minutes don't go fast
Nothing passes time when you're in a cast.
The bench keeps me company when I'm low
But when I play keeper, I put on a show.

Hybridism in Lady Gaga's "Til It Happens to You"

Michael Bakal

When music television networks first started broadcasting music videos, the intention was not just to entertain the audience, but for the artist to promote their work. However, in recent years, artists began shifting their direction and intention within their music videos. This form of entertainment has now evolved into one that addresses social issues and gives a new forum for the injured and the abused. Through the power of hybridism or music videos that encompass both music and film, our experiences as an audience would be forever changed (Schopp 1). The artist's mission evolved from not only selling albums and tickets, but to communicate with the audience in a visual and lyrical way. In Lady Gaga's song "Till It Happens to You," she addresses sexual assault and its prevalence within the college setting by utilizing a first-person perspective to invoke the most effective emotional response. This means that we, the viewers, are witnessing the crimes as they take place. Her expressive and artistic video possesses a documentary film style and adds crucial accusatory lyrical messages that must be consumed together in order to understand the critical theme that is being delivered. Imagine the feeling of witnessing someone being attacked and not able to do anything about it. What kind of feelings would rise to the surface as we feel we are to blame as well? Can we truly understand the pain and suffering rape victims go through? How would you react if you were accused of being blind to the reality of sexual assault? Lady Gaga challenges the audience with these questions, even though there is a cold reality: only the ones who are attacked, only the victims, can truly understand. As we will learn through the cinema and lyrics, patience and understanding become key points to appreciate the totality of sexual assault and its effect on the world, and more specifically college life.

Lady Gaga presents the reality of sexual assault through different points of view and challenges the audience to question their assumptions of how to cope and deal with experiences as a victim. The stories themselves are interwoven with each other in order to create a level of chaos and uncontrollability, no doubt the exact feelings one would experience through sexual assault. In order to solicit the most desired response from the audience, Lady Gaga utilizes a female actress who is seen walking through the halls as a witness to all of the events. Each event gives the actress a front row seat to a compact and uncomfortable perspective, adding to the gruesome reality of sexual assault. The theatres of choice are three stories by which multiple women and a transgender female to male were attacked and raped by fellow college students.

As the first act begins, we see a woman dressed in black walking towards

a room where a female character is writing musical lyrics. In order to create the most emotionally driven reaction, the impact on the audience's perspective alters from a third-person to first-person point of view. This adjustment in the camera angle is intended to enhance the connection between the audience and the players, thus creating a feeling of being a part of the cinema. As this story progresses, we see a male student, apparently a familiar face to the young girl, enter the room. He begins his devious intentions by grabbing her work and making her stand with her back towards the wall. This is a tactical move to create a dominant position for a potential attack. In an effort to manipulate the situation, he begins to innocently tease her and returns her papers. His actions become more aggressive when he presses her body against the wall and attempts a kiss. In response to her disapproval of his romantic advances, the young man pushes forward, trapping her position, and begins to sexual assault his friend. While we are watching this event unfold, we also start to hear the accusations from the performer with lyrics like, "Tell me how the hell could you know?" It becomes apparent that even though we may observe the entire assault, the victim not only blames the rapist for the crime, but us as well for making assumptions to what we think we believe to be true. For the first time, the audience is subjected to a horrible tragedy, forcing them to learn the inescapable truth: many sexual assaults are committed by those who know their victims.

The second story begins with the portrayal of a male student who is transgender. While wearing an unbuttoned shirt in the male bathroom, he is approached by another student who aggressively expresses his disgust with the victim's gender expression. Within a matter of seconds, the victim is pressed down over the vanity and his attacker begins to rip off his clothing. With anger and prejudice driving his rage, the assailant commits this heinous crime from behind, eventually leaving the victim alone. In this moment, the audience feels the true nature of solitude and loneliness when they witness the victim collapse into a cold reality of shame and humiliation. After witnessing a sexual assault hastily committed towards a complete stranger, the audience is forced to recognize that rape is fueled by hatred and prejudice. The feelings of fear and sympathy for the transgender community become prevalent within the hearts of the audience.

The third story presents a horrific experience of being drugged at a college party; two female roommates are given Rohypnol, a date raping drug commonly referred to as the "forget pill" for its potential to cause retrograde amnesia. Other symptoms can range from disorientation to incapacitation, preventing victims from resisting and not maintaining a memory of the event. With these facts obviously known to the male character, he portrays the most cowardly act of all by assaulting both victims, one by one, while they remained in a sedated state of consciousness. Luckily, one of the female victims regains her situational awareness and pushes her assailant off, escaping the room with her roommate. Even though the audience experiences a moment of relief, the reality is that both female students were drugged and victimized. The audience sees firsthand the vulnerabilities of college students at alcohol inclusive parties. After observing these horrible tragedies, the audience is exposed to the aftermath.

This is portrayed by the female actors who remain isolated and alone, only to dwell in their own thoughts. Additionally, they seem to experience feelings of depression, anxiety, and other symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder, also known as PTSD. It is logical to assume that living through these events will forever shape the rest of their lives, and likely prevent them from continuing as the “average college student.” The lyric, “Cause until you walk where I walk, this is no joke” gives us the impression that after everything we have just seen, we must appreciate the reality of what has happened. The ignorance of outsiders can have a detrimental effect on the victim and their attempts to pull their lives back together.

The cohesive relationship between the music and the lyrics is that the audience cannot consume one without the other to fully appreciate the message. The lyrics “You tell me it gets better” and “You say I’ll pull myself together” suggest that a witness to these events can’t fathom the impact on a rape victim. The empty clichés and poor attempts to minimize the reality add another layer to the assaults themselves: Are the words expressed toward the character we are watching, or are they for us, the viewer casting an opinion based on what we just saw? Clearly, the words are talking to us, and the question arises as to why this is so.

Towards the end of the cinema, we see that through genuine friendship and understanding by family and friends, the victims can rise up from their misery and seize life once again. Phrases such as, “I am worthy” and “I love myself” are drawn on the victims’ arms to give reminders of self-worth and determination. The metaphor of walking side by side through the dorm halls illustrates a support system bringing an uplifting conclusion to their stories. Again, we see the unidentified young woman at the end of the hall standing in awe of how many stories she has seen, and more importantly, not seen. The final communication to the audience flashed across the screen suggests we may not know the larger issue at hand -- “One in five college women will be sexually assaulted this year unless something changes.” It emphasizes the importance of addressing unreported sexual assaults and our duty as a society to listen and learn from our mistakes. These young women feel as if someone who isn’t the victim of sexual assault can’t understand how it feels; hence the title of the song comes into play, “Til It Happens To You.” Without our respect and patience for the victim, we become just as guilty as the assailants.

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“The Male and Female Power Dynamic in ‘20/20’”

Natalie Deme

In the story *20/20*, written by Linda Brewer, issues of male/female and societal/female power relations were brought to light through the fictive relationship of the two characters, driving companions Bill and Ruthie. The story is told from a third-person limited point of view allowing readers insight into the thoughts and intentions of the two. For this reason, we are able to deconstruct the story and understand these relations from the perspectives of both characters. Brewer opted for an elusive approach to communicate the theme of male/female and societal/female power dynamics to allow for its understanding from opposing narratives.

The male/female power relation becomes evident in the opening lines of Brewer’s story. The narrator begins the story stating, “By the time they reached Indiana, Bill realized that Ruthie, his driving companion, was incapable of theoretical debate” (1-2). Readers are informed within the first two lines that Bill is dissatisfied with the intellect of his female counterpart, providing the understanding that Bill believes he is more intelligent than Ruthie. In later lines, the narrator supplies the reasoning for Bill’s perceiving his driving companion as simpleminded due to his being from the East Coast, where women “disputed everything he said” (5). Aware of Ruthie’s being from Ohio, Bill assumes her mental inability and excitability to be attributed to her being from the midwest “and thrilled to death to be anywhere else” (7-8). The male/female power relation between the two characters is communicated to readers within these first few lines of text, portraying Ruthie to be the underprivileged character.

It is understandable, when reading the text through Bill’s narrative, to regard Ruthie as a simple young girl from the midwest. However, upon deconstructing the story and analyzing the text from Ruthie’s disadvantaged position, we can bring to light the reasons for this misconception. Rereading the text from the underprivileged female perspective, the selfless intentions driving Ruthie’s behavior can be understood. This change in perspective is most apparent toward the end of the story when Bill switching places in the car with Ruthie so that he was now driving. Up until this moment, Ruthie had been driving in the direction of the setting sun, a task most people would find highly unpleasant as noted, but she was unbothered and while he rested, she carried on making “simple observations” of the various landmarks they passed in their travels (6). It wasn’t until Bill turned around, peering at the road passing behind them, that he experienced this profound change in outlook. It is also at this point within the text that the binary opposition, male/female, becomes most evident in terms of

the 'female' being privileged. Bill's offering to drive allows for the viewing of the story from Ruthie's advantage, following his recognizes her true intentions in attempting to keep her driving companion engaged while on their long trip. In all her considerations of Bill, entertaining him on their extensive journey while driving into the setting sun, he rested -- overlooking her selfless acts under the faulty assumption she was some simpleminded girl from Ohio. Having switched places, now driving, Bill and readers are introduced to Ruthie as a considerate and tolerant character.

In the final lines of the text, this altruistic perception of Ruthie is confirmed with the narrator's description of her physical appearance following their switching places, so that she is now seated in the passenger seat of the vehicle. Ruthie is recounted as having eyes "big, blue and capable of seeing wonderful sights" (22). This characterization is in strong opposition to her description at the beginning of the story, told from Bill's narrative, as a feeble-minded young girl from middle America impressed by the simplest observations. This difference in her description can be attributed to the change in narration that takes place from Bill's privileged perspective to Ruthie's now privileged point of view.

Linda Brewer drew upon the assumed characteristics of females during the time period, as simple housewives unable to take part in conversations requiring the ability to engage in critical thought. She then dismissed this societal misconception and faulty presumption of the kindhearted and selfless actions of women when their behaviors are analyzed solely through the privileged male viewpoint. Taking into consideration opposing outlooks, such as the disadvantaged female perspective, readers are exposed to the true intent of Ruthie's behavior. In doing this, Brewer casts light upon the binary oppositions existing not only within the fictive story but within the lives of women as well.

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Lluvia de Estrellas

Tyler Lynch

Picked you up in my car
And drove over that same old bridge.
But it was through your eyes
I saw it for the first time.

Holding hands,
We sprinted across the street
Desperate to feel
the cool ivory sand beneath our feet.

We came to this beach
To see shooting stars,
Where gazed at the sky for hours.

But the stars, they never showered.
And with our eyes fixed on that black sky,
We never even realized,
The dazzling display
Right there on that lifeguard stand.

Tissue Engineering

Timmeree Koepele

What is Tissue Engineering?

For hundreds of years, humans have had a fascination with substituting human body parts with alternative materials. However, the real “boom” of tissue engineering began in the 1990s, with the adjacent emergence of stem cell biology. Researchers everywhere became obsessed with recreating the process of tissue formation outside the body. The term “tissue engineering” belongs to the field of regenerative medicine, but more specifically refers to the set of methods involved in tissue regeneration from cells interacting with growth factors and biomaterials.

Scientists experiment with materials such as cells, scaffolding, and biologically active materials and transform them into functional tissues. The main priorities pertain to restoring, reconstructing, maintaining, or improving tissues and even whole organs. Now, laboratory-grown tissues including that of the nerve, liver, bone, heart valves, blood vessels, bladder, and kidney can be utilized in research along with a multitude of medical practices (Pearson et al., 2017).

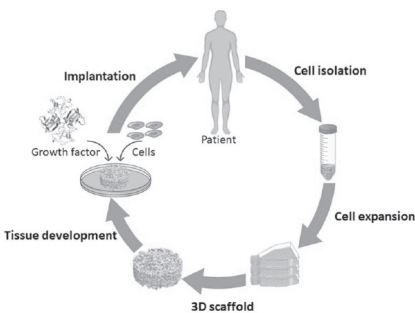


Figure 1.

The cycle of tissue engineering
(Source: Asadian et al., 2020)

How Does Tissue Engineering Work?

There are two main approaches to this field. The first involves scaffolding being used as a cell support device, where cells are injected in vitro. The second combines scaffolding with a growth factor, so when it’s implanted, the scaffolding site recruits cells and forms tissues (Howard et al., 2008). For both of these approaches, there are many factors that contribute to the success of a tissue scaffold. For example, the cell source is very important to know and understand. There are three classifications of cells used in tissue engineering; autologous (patient’s own cells), allogenic (other human cells), and xenogeneic (animal cells) (Yoshito, 2006). Autologous cells automatically have the advantage

of being in their native environment, and don't have the risk for immune rejection that the other two do. Additionally, the structure of the scaffold determines how the tissue degrades and functions. Currently, the use of biodegradable polymers as scaffolding is becoming more and more popular, but poly-hydroxyl polymers are even more widespread in the medical field. This is because these materials degrade by bulk-hydrolysis, which releases the drug in a slow and controlled manner (Howard et al., 2008).

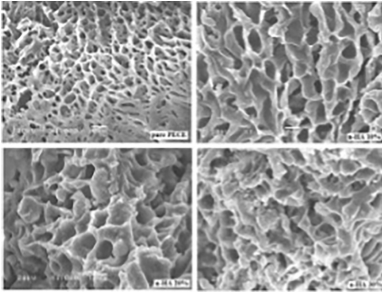


Figure 2. SEM photographs showing cross-sectional tissue engineering (Source: Li et al., 2014)

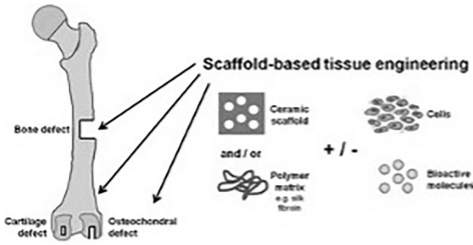


Figure 3. Scaffold-based tissue morphologies of pure Pece hydrogel and n-Ha/Pece hydrogel nanocomposites (Source: Fu et al., 2009)

How Do We Use Tissue Engineering Today?

Currently, tissue engineering plays only a small role in medical practices. Small arteries, skin grafts, and even whole supplemental organs have been implanted in patients, but these procedures are very expensive and still a big risk. As of now, tissue engineering is most helpful at a research standpoint, especially in drug development. Essentially, tissues are the body's basic unit of function, and tissues are made up of groups of cells. Groups of cells have their own extracellular matrix, which is involved in relaying messages from surrounding cells and environmental factors. Understanding the way cells will react to a signal, because each causes a chain of reactions, helps scientists predict the way cells will react and change, which, in turn, help them figure out the best way to repair damaged tissues or construct new ones.

What are Future Research Projects and Goals for Tissue Engineering?

Regenerative medicine, including tissue engineering, has major potential in the restoration and replacement of damaged tissues and organs. Some clinical trials are already underway, testing the possibility of treating and correcting a wide range of medical maladies, from simple flesh wounds to terminal cancer (Mao and Mooney, 2015). One ambitious project that scientists are working on is implanting human livers into mice. These lab-grown livers are shown in figure 4 below. The mice's livers remain intact and fully functional; this way, the human liver can process drugs. This allows researchers to test drugs on mice before introducing them to clinical trials, cutting down on risk factors as well as time and cost of drug production (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.).

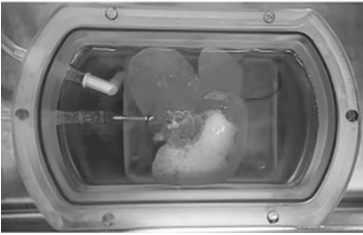


Figure 4.

Photograph of rat liver, stripped of rat-specific cells and re-seeded with engineered human liver cell

(Source: Hare, 2019)

What are the Challenges of Tissue Engineering?

The current main problems in tissue and organ reconstruction include immune system rejection, which is being diminished as immunotherapy research progresses, and shortages of donated organs, which is where tissue engineering comes in. However, implanting a foreign group of cells into a human body often causes an immune response that rejects the foreign mass. Xenogeneic and allogeneic cell sources have a higher risk of being rejected and need immunosuppressive therapy when used in tissue engineering. Additionally, using animal cells also opens up the risk for animal-bone diseases. Recent findings of a porcine virus have significantly decreased the use of pig cells in trials (Patience et al. 1997). There are also issues with autologous cells; however, researchers have found that it can be hard to harvest enough cells, especially in elderly or diseased patients (Mao and Mooney, 2015).

Conclusion

Tissue Engineering is still a new term in the medical world. Though it's attracted a lot of attention in the past forty years, the progress being made is slow and made with calculated steps (Berthiaume et al., 2011). Tissue engineering is a very delicate process that could easily go wrong with any factors less than ideal. That being said, it's also an incredibly open field right now. Researchers still have a way to go before they can achieve the goal of implanting fully functional, complex organs grown from a patient's own cells into the patient.

Vocabulary

Biomaterial: any matter that interacts with biological systems. Can be synthesized or naturally obtained, such as polymers, ceramics etc. examples include heart valves, hip replacements etc.

In Vitro: In external labware, outside the body.

Hydrolysis: the chemical breakdown of a compound due to reaction with water.

Extracellular matrix: an intricate network composed of an array of multi-domain macromolecules organized in a cell/tissue-specific manner

Immunotherapy: the treatment of disease by activating or suppressing the immune system

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Nam June Paik's *Becoming Robot* (Robot K-456)

Rachel Katz



Postmodern artists dive deeper into the technological world of art. One such artist is Nam June Paik. He wanted to find different interpretations of how culture and technology interact in everyday life, which is why he created a work of art in the 1980s called *Becoming Robot*. The postmodern ideas that are shown in the artwork are simulacra, the effects of social media, and herd mentality. Simulacra tests how much a product can be manufactured in an absurd amount; social media gives insight into how absorbed people can get with technology; and herd mentality reflects a bold understanding of popularity when it comes to advancements in technology.

Nam June Paik was an artist who was born in 1932, in the capital of Korea, Seoul. He went to New York to pursue other career interests like music but shortly became close with famous American artists which included, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, and Yoko Ono. He stayed in the United States for over 40 years and gained interest in progressive ideas and contemporary artwork that challenged the ideas of technology. He was considered “the father of video art” because of how creative his visual language was. Paik showed how technology can be wrapped around everyday culture and could be detrimental to humans in terms of their dependence on technological systems (Yun).

Simulacra is an important indication in the art piece. By looking at the artwork, there are a variety of different TVs all arranged in human form to look like a robot. These TVs give focus to how advanced technology was becoming in the late 1900s. After televisions were created in the twentieth century, there was a boom in productivity. In “The Orders of Simulacra”, Jean Baudrillard writes, “The Second Order of Simulacra appears with the advent of the Industrial Revolution. The Simulacra now become infinitely reproducible through industrial

mass production” (55). Mass production was used to efficiently create products like TVs, which were seen in almost everyone’s home. Many people today rely on these screens for entertainment, which can make someone very zoned into that technology. As a result, reality can seem faded since technology is a distraction. Screens are a big part of society and Paik’s artwork shows how much technology can consume humans.

The postmodern idea of social media makes it hard to disconnect from the technology. Paik makes it clear that this machinery is becoming so real in society that it absorbs people and makes them seem robotic, as seen in the art piece. Everyone is becoming more dependent and obsessive over the newest models of technology. Paik’s piece shows a virtual smile on the TV face which can simulate fake happiness caused by computers. Social media can put a temporary bandage on someone’s problems by avoiding them, which isn’t good. Also, technology can show how people have a lack of empathy because of how focused people are when it comes to recording things. Andrew Lam demonstrates this in “I Tweet Therefore I Am: Life in the Halls of Mirrors:”

A significant fraction of people’s experiences are now fragmented. Which may very well explain a story that involves professor Bill Nye, popularly known as ‘the Science Guy’ on TV a couple years ago. He collapsed on stage out of exhaustion as he prepared to give a lecture. But instead of rushing to the stage to help him, the *LA Times* and other media reported, many students in the audience took out their cell phones, snapped photos, texted and tweeted the event. (62)

This example shows how corrupt people are when they have these mechanisms glued to their bodies all the time. People become blind and a lot of this has to do with how popular products can become.

Herd mentality can be another example of how technology can corrupt based on Paik’s visual. The art piece models how humans are in this society. Computer programmed devices are taking over people which is shown in how many TVs there are portrayed in a human-like form. People are programmed to use their phones and are not able to best interact with others anymore. The reason why technology is so popular is because of consumer demand. When someone has the latest technology, someone else automatically wants it because of how cool it may be. It is like a train method of people hopping on. This makes producers excited because they are making a lot more money and attention, which makes them want to make better products. It is all one big cycle. For example, there is a new iPhone that comes out every year; Apple is a very popular company, so there are always going to be higher demands for their phones. Paik’s robotic model signifies how the TVs are being produced so often because of demand for them. In “Modern History Sourcebook: Nietzsche: Parable of the Madman”, the narrator explains, “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him . . . Here the madman fell silent again at his listeners, and they, too, silent and stared at him in astonishment (Nietzsche 36). This explains how people lost sight of what they believed in because they listened to others who knew more

than they did. As technology and science became more popular, people similarly disregarded religion because of how innovative technology was. This reflects the herd mentality.

Technology has been around for decades and keeps on becoming more popular. It is hard to even know the effects of what it may do to people in the long run. Maybe people will become what Paik envisioned in his art: robots.

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Volver, Volver

Seidy Rodriguez

Oh, corazon mio
Why is this happening to you
Seeing you like this is a pain no other
You can't see me like this, so I switch my masks.
I pretend that it's not here, the "uninvited".
But oh no, it breaks the doors open.
An interruption that cannot be stopped.
I look at you to see what I can do,
I only see the exterior, but what's going on inside papa?
What are the terrors that haunt you throughout the day?
What am I supposed to do?
I play nuestra canción.
Sharing a moment without speaking,
Everything will be okay,
I promise papa.

Hamlet: A Man of Nobility

Qituwra Muhammad

Hamlet: A Man of Nobility

William Shakespeare captures the true essence of tragedy in his drama Hamlet. We are confronted with a young prince with a heavy burden in his heart who vacillates in his ability to decipher how to confront his problems. In addition to mourning his father's death, Hamlet is clouded with the worry of Norwegian invasion by Prince Fortinbras, and attempting to adjust to his uncle marrying his mother. The young Prince is often lost pondering in misery, questioning morality and destiny. Shakespeare's foreshadowing of events allows the audience to believe that Hamlet's issues are mainly with his uncle, Claudius. However, we later realize the true conflict is within his own mind. To his credit, however, Hamlet's ability to critically think before he acts illustrates that he acted nobly to overcome the challenges his uncle created.

The character of Hamlet is presented as melancholy, thoughtful, and cynical, which allows for his introspection. He often spends time alone reflecting, trying to decipher his thoughts for deeper understanding. He's very sad, bordering madness because the changes in his life are sudden and against his morals. We're introduced to him after his confidant Horatio calls upon him to describe the citing of a ghost. The Ghost is a motif of revenge for the spirit of the late King Hamlet. Throughout the story, we will see the ghost as one of the symbols that motivates the prince to action. The Ghost provides the circumstances of his death to Hamlet in the following speech act: "'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard / A serpent stung me. So, the whole ear of Denmark / Is by a forged process of my death / rankly abused. But know thou noble youth, / The serpent that did sting thy father's life / Now wears his crown" (1.3.35-40). It's worth noting that the Ghost characterizes prince Hamlet as "noble" here. The ghost also provides the reason for Hamlet's sadness by confirming that his mood is justifiable. The ghost confirms that Claudius's evils have not only tricked the prince but the people of Denmark who adored King Hamlet. Once he realizes the weight of his father's words, Hamlet analyzes the situation and decides to dedicate his time to figure out a way to turn his sadness into revenge. As opposed to retreating and allowing his consciousness to grow with a lie that's hurting him, he decides to act and avenge his father's death. This is the action of a noble prince who can utilize his emotions for justice.

Shakespeare illustrates many parallels in this drama to establish Hamlet's nobility. For example, the parallel between good and evil can be seen in the relationship between Hamlet and Claudius. In Act III when Hamlet killed Polonius

after mistakenly assuming he was Claudius, his mother Gertrude responded in horror, “Oh, what a rash and bloody deed is this!” (3.3.28), exclaiming that she was against the act and thought it was senseless. Hamlet replied, “A bloody deed? Almost as bad, good mother, / As kill a king and marry with his brother” (3.4.29-30). In Hamlet’s quote, we see him directly compare his “bloody deed” to the deed of Claudius against King Hamlet. Hamlet states that his actions are no different from that of Claudius. Hamlet, however, can justify his deed because he believes he’s doing it out of revenge for his father. In the first act, Hamlet states, “O villain, villain, smiling, damnèd villain! / My tables! —Meet it is I set it down / That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain. / At least I’m sure it may be so in Denmark. (writes) / So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word.” (1.5.106-110). In this quote, Hamlet calls Claudius a villain and vows to avenge what he believes he’s done. He acknowledges these acts as evil and therefore feels justified in correcting the wrong that’s been done to his family. Hamlet believes it’s his job as the prince to protect what’s his as well as Denmark’s.

Another example of a parallel is when Hamlet compares himself to Fortinbras. When Hamlet hears of Fortinbras’s army of 20,000 men, he acknowledges that Fortinbras is an admirable prince and even describes him as delicate and tender, which are compliments to his character. He expresses his admiration in the following statement, “Witness this army of such mass and charge. / Led by a delicate and tender prince, /Whose spirit and divine ambition puff’d / Makes mouths at the invisible event (4.4.47-50). In this moment of admiration, Hamlet realizes what he could be doing to provide justice for Denmark as Fortinbras does for Norway. Hamlet’s ability to model his competition in order to follow something he believes in is the characteristic of a brave individual. He also sees Fortinbras as his equal as they were both robbed of their nation and were in similar positions in that their uncles are on the throne. Hamlet demonstrates that he is a noble prince by trying to utilize this knowledge to make the best decisions for his family and country.

This drama is a timeless exploration of how young adults deal with tough situations. Sadness is something that greatly affects all of us and at times our morality will be placed into question. Hamlet exhibited the behavior of someone who is logical and moral. Although he expressed his emotions, he often took careful time to consider the outcome. He accepted that death is a small penalty compared to living a lie. Hamlet wasn’t mad; he was understanding of how one person’s actions can potentially influence another’s, and he was prepared to do what was right even in death. Overall, he was a noble and upright man, not an enabler of his own victimization.

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Untitled: The Grim Reality of Grief

Alexander Lockman

Untitled



Between February 20th and March 18th of 1991, twenty-four billboards were put up across Manhattan as a part of Félix González-Torres' piece *Untitled*. The billboards all displayed the same black and white image of an unmade double bed with depressions in the pillows and mattress. By displaying the intimate image of the bed in such a public space, Félix González-Torres gives the public a raw view of the harsh reality of mourning the loss of a lover.

Félix González-Torres was born on November 26, 1957, in Guáimaro, Cuba. In 1983, he earned a BFA in photography from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, and in 1987, he earned a MFA from the International Center of Photography and New York University. Félix González-Torres' work had a big impact on social and political movements, particularly during the AIDS crisis. His artwork typically consists of everyday items, and they usually were left unnamed. González-Torres was an openly gay artist, with his most well-known pieces memorializing his partner, Ross Laycock, who died of AIDS-related complications on January 24, 1991. Félix González-Torres himself died of AIDS-related causes on January 9, 1996.

A postmodern element present in Félix González-Torres' work is Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulacra. The empty bed seen in *Untitled* is a simulation of beds across America. In many family households, there is an unmade double bed in the home, waiting for the couple to return. When people pass by the billboard (primarily those in a heterosexual relationship), they think of their own domestic lives, knowing that they will return to their bed at the end of the day, along with their partner. Andrew Schopp states that, "When our models and simulations proliferate so much, and when we become more and more separated from originals, we become more and more likely to take the simulations for the real" (61). When passersby see the billboard, they think about their own relationships,

the copy. They do not stop to process that the unmade bed does not belong to a healthy heterosexual couple, but rather to a homosexual couple during the AIDS crisis, where it was unknown if both people would return to their own bed.

Derrida's binary oppositions are all over Félix González-Torres' *Untitled*. One binary opposition present is public/intimate. The intimate and private setting of the bed shown on the billboard is the exact opposite of the environment in which it is displayed -- Manhattan. Another binary opposition in González-Torres' work is presence/absence. The image on the billboard portrays both of these concepts. The actual body-shaped depressions in the pillows and the mattress within the unmade bed cause the viewer to see the presence of two people. The fact that an actual person is not shown on the billboard brings an eerie sense of absence to the image. Similarly, considering the death of González-Torres' partner, the binary opposition of love/loss can also be seen. The bed represents a romantic and intimate environment, which González-Torres uses to show his relationship with his deceased lover. The absence of bodies in the bed then represents the death of his lover, Ross Laycock, as well as the eventual death of himself.

Foucault's ideas of heterotopias can also be applied to *Untitled*. The bed shown on the billboard can be classified both a mental crisis heterotopia, as well as a deviation heterotopia. The billboards were put on display just over a month after Ross Laycock passed away. Torres commissioned exactly twenty-four billboards to represent the date that Ross Laycock passed away, the 24th of January. During this time, González-Torres was undergoing a mental crisis of grief. The empty bed represents the place of otherness for the artist to go through his suffering of the loss of a loved one. The bed can similarly be classified as a deviation heterotopia. During the AIDS crisis, as well as time before then, homosexual relationships were frowned upon. The bedroom served as a deviation heterotopia for people in homosexual relationships as it was the only place for them to be themselves without "disturbing" society.

Félix González-Torres' piece *Untitled* certainly left viewers confused. However, leaving viewers thinking and questioning was one of the goals of Félix González-Torres' work. The image on the billboard seems so plain and bare, but upon further analysis, it tells a stunning and captivating story of grief without words.

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With Lungs on Fire

Amanda Heldt

With lungs on fire, a heartbeat louder than a thousand war drums, and vision quickly fading to darkness, I grabbed the wall and pulled myself out of the water. The deafening sound of cheering as I emerged was drowned out by my own thoughts. *I don't want this. This isn't me.* As I gazed into the water, blinded by the reflection of the sun above, I finally accepted the lesson that I should have learned years before.

Growing up, I followed my older sister, Mara, in everything she did: violin, guitar, gymnastics, and for many years now, swimming. I wanted to be just like her, and at the time, I thought my parents wanted me to be like her too -- a childish and untrue thought, but nonetheless real in the mind of a little girl who was too young to truly determine and develop her own independent identity. And so as I turned the age to be permitted on the team, I embraced this opportunity to be like the only role model I had ever known. I continued to chase this goal for years, until at the age of 16, on the morning of August 12th, I would finally learn to stop trying to be someone I was not

It was early in the morning since all swim practices had to be held before the pool opened to the public, and I could tell just from the cool air around me that the water would feel like diving straight into an icebox. I sat my things in my lonely spot against the wall and watched as the rest of my teammates stood together in pairs and helped each other put their swim caps on, laughing and gossiping and swooning over the lifeguards. Both my older and even my younger sister thrived in their own sections of the team -- either the guppies or the seniors, neither of which I belonged to. Now, it wasn't that there weren't any other kids my age on the team or that I was even disliked or antisocial in any way; I simply didn't share their passion for swimming. I hated the cold water, the endless laps, the early morning practices, and the long, crowded competitions. Yet every summer, for as long as I could remember, I found myself dropping my things in the same lonely spot, unwilling to truly admit to myself and those around me that I was only there because I didn't know where else or *who* else to be.

With only 15 minutes of practice left, we began the most intense part known as "sprints", where the speed and endurance of each individual swimmer was tested against each other through a series of 6v6 races. Even after all my years of swimming laps, I could never win a race; in fact, I disqualified every relay team I had ever been on because I could never perfect the diving techniques

in a race, and always ended up doing some “illegal” move. My saving grace from this drill was a tradition as old as the team itself where any swimmer who could complete one lap across the pool without coming up for a breath of air would be excused from sprints. I was not in any way a fast swimmer, but all my years of practice built up my endurance so this loophole was never a challenge for me or any of my teammates for that matter.

I stepped up onto the diving block, prepared to complete my single breathless lap and go home, when I suddenly heard the voice of a teammate. “Wait a minute coach. Do you *really* think it’s fair that so many swimmers can be excused from sprints for something as easy as one lap without breathing?” My heart dropped as the coach immediately agreed with my teammate and declared that the required number of breathless laps to be excused from sprints had now been doubled. No one had EVER swam two laps without breathing before. I could not believe my ears when I heard an anonymous teammate call out, “I bet Amanda could still do two laps.” Still standing up on the diving block, I looked around as the eyes of every swimmer, lifeguard, coach, and gossiping swim mom landed directly on me. Silence filled what felt like all of Nassau County and I realized they were waiting for me to give a response. All I could think to myself was, “*Mara wouldn’t back down. I can’t say no. Everyone is looking at me like I’ve already agreed to try it anyway.*” Before I even got the chance to accept or decline the challenge, I noticed one of the seniors picked up her stopwatch, and I knew there was no saying ‘no’ now. So, I said, “I guess I’ll give it a try, but I don’t think I’ll actually be able to do it.” The latter end of my response was overpowered by the excitement of the crowd that I accepted the challenge.

I glanced at my sister, then at the water, and took a deep breath, knowing it would be the last one I would take for a while. I leapt into the icy, over chlorinated water, and the cheering of the crowd turned to complete silence as if a switch was flipped that muted the whole world. I reached the other side easily, but as I kicked off the wall to start the second half of my underwater journey, I felt a sense of dread when I saw just how far I really had to go. I brought myself deeper into the water, as to not be tempted to come up for air. Only a quarter through my second lap, I felt my lungs begin to burn, but not as much as the gaze of every soul above the surface that was piercing the water and landing directly on me. The lack of oxygen spread the fire in my lungs to my muscles. Still, I chose the pain of staying under the water, rather than coming back to the surface and seeing the disappointment on everyone’s faces. I had a quarter of the lap left and the edges of my vision had begun to fade to black. Still I pushed forward. *How long has it been?* Through quickly fading vision, I saw the wall was about to come into reach. That wall that I had scraped my knees and elbows on so many times in the past. That wall that I would not allow myself to reach through the luxury of air until I felt it touch my fingertips. *But for what? Why the hell am I doing this?* I finally felt the rough edge of the wall grace my fingertips and pulled myself up out of the water, greeted by the overwhelming sound of cheering. I did it. Yet inside I felt

nothing. No excitement. Not even pride. The little girl with no identity that dove into the water never came out. I was a new person who had decided to be me, to do what I wanted to do, regardless of what other people thought. No more trying to be something I was not. The fire in my lungs that I never realized had been present for years, was finally extinguished when I mustered the courage to confidently breathe out the words, **“I quit”**.

