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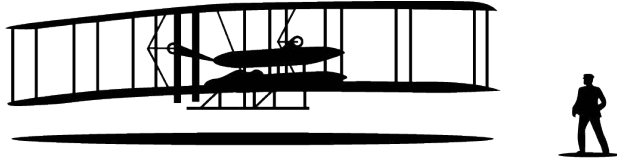
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Acknowledgments

The fifth edition of *Best Integrated Writing* is published with the support of the Wright State University community, and I have been profoundly happy and deeply grateful to have been a part of that community. I want to acknowledge the support and encouragement of several people who have made significant contributions to the journal's progress and encouraged my efforts to broaden the scope of *Best Integrated Writing*. Thanks to Dr. Carol Loranger, Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and former chair of the department of English, whose vision has guided the journal from its inception. I also thank Dean Linda Caron of the College of Liberal Arts who annually endorses this project so that we are able to highlight the scholarship of Wright State University undergraduate students. Dr. Alpana Sharma, chair of the Department of English, also deserves recognition for her part in continuing this endeavor and encouraging students to submit their scholarship. In addition, the Deans of each college and the chairs of each department deserve recognition for encouraging their faculty to submit student work for review.

Karen Strider Iames, Director of Brand Development and Integrated Communications for Communications and Marketing, offered professional expertise and assisted me with obtaining permission to use the Wright State University logo and mission statement, and I thank her for her continued support. Dr. Damaris Serrano deserves special recognition for encouraging students to submit work written in Spanish. Dr. Serrano's editing contributions for the fourth and fifth editions of *Best Integrated Writing* ensure that the journal reflects our core values of diversity and inclusion. Thanks to Jane Wildermuth, Head of Digital Initiatives and Repository Services, for her advice and expertise. In addition to helping with the logistics of publishing the journal, Jane provides a fresh set of eyes to assist me with formatting requirements. Our Metadata Librarian, Andrew Harris, has offered his keen insight and skill as well, and I thank him for his assistance. Thanks also to Jennifer Sheets, Administrative Support Coordinator in the Department of English, and Becca Webb, Administrative Specialist in the Department of English, who provide me with invaluable assistance.

Best Integrated Writing showcases the diversity of perspectives, worldviews, and life experiences of Wright State University students. Thanks to those students whose work is included in this edition, and thank you to each faculty member who nominated student work for inclusion. Your continuing commitment to the intellectual and professional development of our students

demonstrates that the strength of a university is rooted in its dedicated teaching staff.

Since we began publishing the journal online, work included in *Best Integrated Writing: The Journal of Integrated Writing Courses at Wright State University* has been downloaded more than 21,000 times. Indeed, as we reach the midpoint of 2018, work from the previous four editions has been downloaded more than 8,600 times. Moreover, the global impact of our journal continues to expand. Those who have downloaded our scholarship take part in the conversation of ideas at the heart of the university, and they reside in places as varied as The Russian Federation, Austria, Thailand, England, India, and Pakistan. Scholarship, it seems, obliterates barriers.

— M.C.C.

Editor's Note

The 2018 edition of *Best Integrated Writing* marks a watershed in the publication's history. After three years of careful stewardship of this publication, I end my tenure as editor. My experience of reviewing the work of undergraduate students at Wright State University has been an uplifting one. Observing the earnest, purposeful way in which these students engage in intellectual inquiry bolsters my faith and acts as a restorative tonic during these difficult times. I wish the next editor as much enrichment as I have derived from this endeavor.

This edition features work from students majoring in English, Spanish, Business, Nursing, Mechanical Engineering, and Fine Arts with a focus on Visual Painting. Nearly all have expressed a desire to continue their scholarship after earning their undergraduate degrees. Their commitment and dedication to the pursuit of higher education is admirable. Indeed, these students personify the philosophical stance of the American Philosopher, John Dewey who wrote about the intertwined nature of education and self-creation.

Self-creation, identity, and the discovery of the essential self are themes that resonate throughout these essays. A work of short fiction complicates our understanding of the demarcation between human and artificial intelligence. Two essays composed in Spanish challenge us to reconceive our notions about the ways in which the language we speak informs our cultural identity. Three reflections on Buddhist, Hindu, and Judeo-Christian wisdom texts explore the relationship between thoughtful examination of the human condition and the creation of an authentic self. One essay analyzes the impact cultural identity has on healthcare. Still another work examines the ways in which a great artist created a timeless masterpiece within an accepted cultural, visual vocabulary. Two essays examine the chilling legacy of Colonialism and explore the impact that historic oppression has on the process of identity formation.

I hear the voice of Dewey echoed in these essays. They teach us that the self is “not ready-made” but rather an act of “continuous formation.” The students whose work is represented in this journal are living the experience of continued self-creation through intellectual inquiry. Reader, I invite you to do the same.

— M.C.C.

The Bello Chavez Family: A Reflection of Health in the Mexican American Community Through a Family Nursing Assessment

VANESSA BELLO CHAVEZ

NUR 3200: Health, Wellness, and Diversity within Families, Spring 2017

Nominated by: Dr. Rosemary Eustace

Vanessa is a Nursing major with plans to pursue a higher degree and become a Nurse Practitioner.

Vanessa notes:

While this essay started with a simple look into my own family, it only took a short time to realize that many Hispanic families across the United States experience the same challenges when it comes to their health. The disparities between non-Hispanic Americans and Hispanic Americans were shocking to me, and I soon developed passion for investigating ways to close this gap. I hope that this essay helps others develop an interest in the health of the Hispanic community of the United States.

Dr. Eustace notes:

Vanessa Bello Chavez provides an in-depth, personal look into the health problems that affect Hispanic families across the United States. The writing takes a personal view and makes it relatable to all.

The Bello Chavez Family: A Reflection of Health in the Mexican American Community through a Family Nursing Assessment

Presented here is an in-depth family assessment of the Bello Chavez family that is centered on the author, Vanessa Bello Chavez. The family health was examined for two generations back from the index, meaning the starting point was the grandparents of Vanessa Bello Chavez on the maternal and paternal sides, and Vanessa was the index point. Data was collected, then organized to identify or discover any health concerns or protective factors. Through the journey of the analysis for the Bello Chavez family and their protective and risk factors, it was discovered that family assessment can help deter the onset of negative health events. These findings were analyzed further to provide a thorough comprehension of a health overview for the family. Finally, these findings were discussed and reflected upon. The family nursing assessment results indicated that the Bello Chavez family has multiple risk factors; further, the assessment provided information to improve and decrease these factors. Additionally, the assessment revealed numerous strengths that promote a healthier living for the Bello Chavez family. The revelation of the family nursing assessment for the Bello Chavez family demonstrated the importance of the family involvement and perceptions in health care for the author. Furthermore, the information was used as a starting point for a discussion of health for the Mexican American community.

Importance of Family Assessment

While it is imperative that technical clinical skills be learned by nursing students, one skill of a nurse that often gets overlooked is the ability to obtain a valuable family nursing assessment. To begin the journey of learning how to obtain a good family nursing assessment, it is important to understand what assessment is. In general, a family assessment makes sure that the family is being helped through the process of the patient's illness and all their needs are being met, not just those of the patient (Coehlo, Hanson, Kaakinen, Steele, & Tabacco, 2015). The first step in this process is to understand that in the case of the family nursing assessment, the nurse must collect information not just of the patient but of the patient's family. This does not include the patient's entire family, but the members of the family that the patient believes are involved in their health. To ascertain this, there are multiple tools the nurse can use to determine what part of the family should be used for the family nursing assessment. One would be a family

genogram that maps the family related to the patient, the index in this case, through genetics. The genogram gives a starting picture to the nurse about the patient's family. Another tool would be a family ecomap that allows the patient to show a picture representation of what is important to them and the types of relationships they hold with different family members and groups. There are also interviews that can be done to gather more pertinent information to assist the family. The nurse must sift through the information to determine what is important and what is not at that moment. With all the information gathered, the nurse must also avoid gaps of data to make sure an effective plan is created for the family (Coehlo et al., 2015).

Using these tools, the nurse may begin to understand the family's culture and therefore plan how to give culturally competent care. This means that the nurse will be able to have an idea about what the patient thinks about their own health in terms of their beliefs and culture. To provide the best care, the nurse must take into consideration what the patient believes is the cause of their 'sickness' in the first place, have an open dialogue about what they believe should be the treatment, and decide how their family should be involved in their care (Spector, 2013). A family assessment allows the nurse to begin an open communication with the family which is crucial for treating the health event. If the family members are not willing to open up to the nurse, they will not be willing to give information or take new information to help them get well (Coehlo et al, 2015). For instance, during the family assessment the nurse may learn the level of health literacy of the family and from there determine the best wording for the care plan of the family to make sure it is at a level they fully understand and can follow. A low level of health literacy may stem from something as simple as the family's low proficiency in the English language. The nurse can determine from this point if an interpreter may be needed (Spector, 2013). Given these components of the family assessment, along with open communication between the nurse and family, the nurse may present many different options that the family was not aware of before the health event to allow them to pick the best option for all (Coeholo et al, 2015). Specific methods were used for data collection on the Bello Chavez family in order to complete a family assessment.

Methods of Data Collection

Data Sources

A textbook focusing on family nursing, *Family health nursing: Theory, practice and research*, was used to obtain information on the importance of family assessment. *Cultural diversity in health and illness* by Spector provided the framework used to collect information about the significance of the cultural background of the family when completing the family assessment. A family cultural assessment questionnaire was used to collect and gather data to assess the ways in which culture and beliefs impact the health of the Bello Chavez family. A genogram was mapped out starting from the index, Vanessa Bello Chavez, and going back two more generations to Vanessa's grandparents. Gender, age, birth year, age at death, year of death, cause of death, marital status, sexual orientation, occupation, education and health concerns were collected for the family members when appropriate. The spouses of blood relatives were included in the genogram but their health concerns were not collected. Information that was unknown was left blank, such as the year of birth for the maternal biological grandfather who passed away. An ecomap was created to establish relationships and the status of the relationships to the family. The ecomap did not include all members included in the genogram, only the members living in the household with Vanessa. The household consisted of the mother, father, and half-brother of Vanessa. Interviews were necessary to obtain all the information needed to answer all questions of the family cultural assessment and construct the genogram and ecomap. Vanessa interviewed her mother and father to answer specific questions on the cultural assessment in order to verify foods eaten consistently and identify health concerns of the Bello Chavez family on each side.

Subject characteristics

The focal point of this paper is the family assessment of the Bello Chavez family, with the index being the author, Vanessa Bello Chavez. However, much of the assessment can be applied to the Mexican American community as many findings are common in this population. A total of 20 members of the blended Bello Chavez family provided the information that constitutes the collection of data used in the genogram. The ages for the participants ranged from the youngest being 2 years old and the oldest being 73 years old. The average age is 38.9 years old, including the age of death for

the two deceased family members. Males and females of the family were included. The first two generations of the Bello Chavez family identified as Mexican. In contrast, Vanessa's maternal uncle's ex-wife identified as American. The participants of the third generation, that included Vanessa, identified as Mexican-American, excluding Vanessa's half-brother who identified as Ecuadorian-Mexican-American. The level of education varied widely amongst the family members. Most had finished primary school if they were older than 12 at the time of data collection. Only Vanessa, her half-brother, and her male cousin on the maternal side had graduated high school at the time of data collection. Only Vanessa and her half-brother had some education after high school. Most of the family members identified as being part of the middle class. Vanessa's paternal grandparents and a paternal uncle are homeowners, as are the maternal grandparents and a maternal uncle. All of Vanessa's grandparents were born in, and live in, Mexico. Her father and all her father's siblings and their spouses immigrated to the United States from Mexico. Vanessa's mother and her maternal uncle also immigrated to the United States from Mexico. The first two generations, including Vanessa's grandparents and Vanessa's parents, had a strong preference for the Spanish language over English. The third generation, that included Vanessa, had a mixed preference. Vanessa, her half-brother, and her female paternal cousins felt comfortable using both English and Spanish. Vanessa's maternal, male cousin's language preference is English, he does not speak Spanish. All of the information collected was analyzed to identify protective and risks factors of the Bello Chavez family.

Results

Protective Factor: Social Support

The ecomap demonstrates a strong relationship between the family that lives in the household with the index and close friends. Typically within Mexican American communities, the most support comes from family. There are health benefits from this, as a study by Bell, LaVeist, and Thrope (2010) found that Mexican Americans have a decreased chance of hypertension if they have strong social support compared to white Americans. The same study also found that the chance of hypertension in Mexican American adults 40 years or older was lower than White Americans when access to social and financial support was available (Bell, LaVeist, & Thrope, 2010). This is because the support acts as a buffer to the stress related to a health event. For instance, it was discovered that low social support in the year after an

acute myocardial infarction led to similar death rates as other high-risk factors like smoking, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. In fact, another study by Arthur and Mookadam (2004) found that 2330 males who experienced an acute myocardial infarction were four times more likely to die within 3 years of the event if they had high stress and were socially isolated (Arthur & Mookadam, 2004). The social support in the Bello Chavez family is beneficial but unfortunately Mexican Americans usually do not get as much social support as White Americans (Bell, 2010). However a difference in social support is not the only factor affecting Hispanic families, there are other risk factors that may contribute to poor health outcomes.

Risk Factor: Lack of Exercise

A lack of exercise presents itself as a risk factor within the Bello Chavez household and among many Mexican American families. This is a risk factor because exercise has been proven to relieve stress, decrease feelings of depression, and increase a person's view of themselves (Constance & Flood, 2002). A study by Guzman (2012) found that about one-third of Mexican Americans from 2001 to 2006 did not participate in light exercise. Exercise is largely avoided with the excuse that there is not enough time or there is a lack of knowledge on how to work out. However, it would benefit the family to learn that even down-time exercise can lower the risk of coronary heart disease by 26% (Kayyali, Singh, & Subhashni, 2011). This means that the family is at higher risk for coronary heart disease by avoiding simple tasks, such as parking the car farther away from their intended destination to encourage more walking (Constance, 2002). Evidence has even shown that adding some form of exercise decreases the chances of coronary heart disease in women more than men, which may provide incentive to the female family members suffering from hypertension (Kayyali, 2011).

Of course, there is a very well-known fact that exercise can lower body weight. It is highly recommended that everyone exercises for 30 minutes a day because the short amount of time decreases the risk of all negative health events associated with obesity (Constance, 2002). The connection between lack of exercise and obesity is important because this leads to the association of lack of exercise to diabetes in the United States. It has been shown that exercise can help blood glucose levels to stay within a healthy range in type 1 and type 2 diabetics (Constance, 2002). This means a diabetic patient may be able to improve their blood glucose levels well enough to have their prescribed medication decreased. If the diabetic patient is overweight, they

can still participate in exercise but in short sessions throughout the day (Constance, 2002).

Another study done on men whose average age was 60 and who spent most of their time sitting found that exercise can lower blood pressure – but not just on the day the exercise was done. The study showed a decrease in mean arterial blood pressure as well as systolic and diastolic readings in the following 24 hours of the exercise sessions. This led to the idea that exercising everyday will help combat continuous high blood pressure (Brown et al., 2000). A lack of exercise can have potentially dangerous effects as it possibly contributes to 5-13% of the risk of developing hypertension. Therefore, long term exercise is again proven to be a beneficial agent for better health (Börjesson, Dahlöf, Lundqvist, & Onerup, 2016).

Risk Factor: Hypertension

A problem area for Hispanics and hypertension is their lack of awareness and lack of effective control over their blood pressure. This may stem from the fact that a portion of the Hispanic community in the United States has a limited understanding of English and therefore cannot comprehend what their healthcare provider is attempting to discuss (Guzman, 2012). Evidence of this can be found in the family's cultural assessment as members of the second generation of the Bello Chavez family are immigrants that feel more comfortable with Spanish, not English – a common finding among Mexican American families. While hypertension is widely treated, at this point there seems to be no specific set of guidelines for the Hispanic population. Since Hispanics are identified as the ethnic minority that is the fastest growing and expected to be 24% of the United State population in 2050, it is important to begin to explore unique characteristics of hypertension in regard to this minority (Alvarez, 2015).

A separate problem arises when another set of data found that Hispanics have low levels of adherence to the medications prescribed for their cardiovascular health (Guzman, 2012). Therefore, even though evidence suggests Hispanics may benefit the most, they are least likely to take their medicine. This may be because of the low number of Hispanic healthcare providers for the Hispanic community to feel comfortable with; therefore, patients follow the advice of their community (Guzman, 2012). This idea is demonstrated in the family cultural assessment as the Bello Chavez family

reported that they have never seen a healthcare provider of their ethnicity in the communities.

Risk Factor: Stroke

Vanessa's maternal grandmother suffered a stroke in February of 2017. The examination of the factors that led to the stroke was paramount for the other members of the Bello Chavez Family to prevent a similar health event. Interviews conducted by the index found that the maternal grandmother was constantly working before retirement. Research on long hours at work, 55 hours per week or more, has been found to increase the chance of a stroke. A study of 603,838 participants was conducted in which the participants worked long hours but did not have cardiovascular disease at the beginning of the collection of data. These participants were revisited after 8.5 years and it was found that 4,768 of them had experienced a cardiovascular disease health event (Rosenberg, 2016). The stress added on to her body, paired with her year-long habit of smoking, was thought to be the cause of the stroke.

Due to the stroke, Vanessa's maternal grandmother was advised by her healthcare provider to quit the use of tobacco products, particularly smoking cigarettes. The interviews conducted also revealed that smoking is a habit she had carried for over 50 years. The length of the time of the habit will result in a challenging quitting process. Not only will the physical addiction of lighting a cigarette be difficult to break, there is also the chemical addiction to nicotine. Even though the health event of a stroke is terrible, it was not a complete surprise as it is a well-known fact that smoking will increase the chances of a stroke. Relapse can also be expected as there is strong evidence to support the idea that a person's first attempt to stop smoking usually fails (Patient Education Series: Smoking cessation 2012).

Risk Factor: Obesity

A concern voiced during the interviews conducted was obesity within the Bello Chavez family. The exact body mass index for each family member was not available, but assumptions of overweight or obesity were made on body size. The likelihood of obesity within the family is high as more than one-third of adults in the United States over the age of 20 are defined as obese (Chen, Kirby, Liang, Wang, 2012). However, it is important to also examine this health concern with the scope of ethnicity, as Hispanics were found to have 20.5% higher odds of being obese if they live within a Hispanic neighborhood or have their body mass index increase by 0.55 (Chen et al., Best Integrated Writing

2012). The information was derived from a study that described a Hispanic neighborhood as one where 25% of the community is Hispanic (Chen et al., 2012). The reasoning behind this increase in incidence of obesity in the Hispanic communities is that they are often impoverished communities. These are neighborhoods that are less likely to have a fitness center or healthy grocery markets to promote a healthy lifestyle to combat obesity. This has led to the mean body mass index of the Hispanic group in the United States to be 27.7, which is categorized as overweight. Having the mean body mass index close to 30, what is considered obese, is dangerous because obesity does not just affect quality of life but quantity, as obesity has been shown to lead to a shorter lifespan (Chen et al., 2012).

The shorter lifespan may also be attributed to the illnesses that are linked to obesity. In fact, five out of the top 10 causes of death for people living in the United States in 2009 had a direct tie to obesity (Agurs-Collins et al., 2013). These five related causes were cancer, diabetes mellitus, kidney disease, and stroke. A study by Agurs-Collins et al., (2013) also found that there is a possible link between an obese patient and the risk of developing an aggressive tumor. This would be especially detrimental to Hispanic obese patients receiving chemotherapy as a study measuring the chemotherapy therapeutic effect on obese women compared to non-obese women found that obese women did not respond as well (Agurs-Collins et al., 2013). Perhaps this could be a contributing factor as to why the Hispanic group only has an 87% survival rate of breast cancer, less than the non-Hispanic white population in the United States (Bandera, John, Maskarinec & Romieu, 2015).

Risk Factor: Language Barrier

The first generation of the Bello Chavez family living in the United States felt most comfortable with speaking Spanish – a common theme among immigrant families. This can create a barrier which can hinder health care causing a multitude of issues including: delayed care in health care settings, poor understanding of the patient's pain resulting in under treatment, and an increased risk of medical errors and sentinel events. Studies have been conducted on patients with limited English proficiency and it was proven that the health programs could not help as much compared to English speakers. Poor understanding of English can also lead to poor patient adherence to medications or health regimens. These issues will finally lead limited English speakers to stop seeking regular medical care. If they do, they

are more likely to seek care in the emergency room meaning higher costs (Carillo-Zuniga, Dadig, Guion, & Rice, 2008).

These failings have been recognized and standards known as Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) (Carillo-Zuniga, et al., 2008) have been put in place to rectify the situation. One of the three categories CLAS focuses on is language access services for patients with limited English proficiency. These services include properly identifying the language the patient would prefer and providing interpreters not just for communities with the patient and healthcare provider but to also assist in the understating of printed material the patient may receive. To institutionalize CLAS, healthcare facilities should ensure there are proper guidelines to follow with a patient whose English is limited including providing interpreters. These guidelines can include having an established panel of representative from the healthcare facility to evaluate the effectiveness of care provided using these protocols in place. These ideas are important as they can decrease the risk of all the adverse events that often occur with limited English proficiency patients (Carillo-Zuniga et al., 2008). The family assessment was able to identify the language barrier as a risk factor along with others that affect not only the Bello Chavez family, but other Hispanic families in the United States.

Reflections

The collection of family data and information regarding protective and risk factors of the Bello Chavez family provided a helpful insight on the impact of family assessment. During a regular health screening, the mother of the index found she had hypertension. This diagnosis is an opportunity for family social support to take an important role in improving their health. Strong social support may even help manage, possibly reduce, the hypertension risk factor within the family. If an unfortunate health event were to occur, such as a myocardial infarction, the social support can improve the recovery process. Therefore, the social support would be a protective factor the nurse would encourage.

Further research into risk factors sheds light on the effects of a sedentary lifestyle of the Bello Chavez family, proving that this risk factor may be eradicated by simply walking regularly. With an increase in simple exercise tasks, Members of the Bello Chavez family may avoid elevated blood glucose levels and even coronary artery disease. The data gathered also provided

support that exercise can help decrease blood pressure which will decrease the chance of adverse effects associated with hypertension. Information about exercise can be stressed to future patients for its benefits, but it will be important to also discuss that they do not have to dedicate multiple hours a day to exercise. It will be less daunting to a patient if they are given small goals and told the recommended time for exercise is 30 minutes a day.

As discussed in the results, limited understanding of a disease can affect compliance to medication or regimen meant to help lower the risks of negative health events. This was especially true for the Bello Chavez family as many members felt more comfortable with Spanish as their primary language but seek care from English-speaking healthcare providers. From the family's experience, it would be wise for the nurse to evaluate each patient and family's health literacy for their understanding of the material they are given, in particular, when there is evidence suggesting the patient and their family have difficulty understanding the patient and family teachings.

The ultimate results found from the analysis of the Bello Chavez family is that culture provided a significant impact on their health. By gaining a deeper understanding of the culture, a nurse will be able to assess a patient fully and determine if any health promotion activities can be geared towards their culture. This application of a family nursing assessment can be extended to the entire Mexican American community, as many risk and protective factors found in the Bello Chavez family can be found across this population.

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Enseñar superpoderes: La importancia de una educación bilingüe

CAMRYN POTTER

SPN 3210: Conversation and Writing in Spanish, Fall 2017

Nominated by: Dr. Damaris E. Serrano

Camryn Potter admires the Spanish culture and language and hopes to become a Spanish teacher. Studying Spanish is truly her passion and she wants to pass her knowledge of the beautiful language to the future generation. Potter will study abroad in Montevideo, Uruguay for Fall 2018 to better her abilities and she cannot wait for the journey that is ahead of her.

Camryn notes:

This essay covers a topic that is very dear to my heart as I hope to teach Spanish in a classroom setting one day. I believe that there is power in knowing a second language. The process of just starting to learn a language is mentally debilitating, but it shows incredible perseverance in the person who is willing to do so. Foreign language has completely changed my life and I have full confidence that studying a foreign language can impact anyone's life. From this piece of writing, I hope my audience will understand that learning a foreign language can open so many doors for people and that students will not only flourish in school, but become well-rounded beings with an immense understanding of the cultural world around us.

Dr. Serrano notes:

This argumentative essay deals with a well-known topic in the field of linguistics, methodology and education. The topic, however, has not been exhausted, so Camryn Potter's reflections insert her in a generation of new advocates of second language teaching. In detailed progression and with a clear style, Potter conveys her vision: it is true that when learning a second language, a person acquires skills beneficial for the brain and the holistic human condition. Although passionate about the topic, Potter does not jump to conclusions. On the contrary, she explores different pros and cons. An educator at heart, she invites the reader to embrace the benefits of bilingualism.

Enseñar superpoderes:
La importancia de una educación bilingüe

Cada niño quiere ser un superhéroe. El aprender un segundo idioma los acerca un paso más a esta meta. La mayoría de los estudiantes en los Estados Unidos asiste a escuelas públicas. El sistema implementado en estas escuelas estandariza el currículo a nivel nacional. Algunas ciudades de los Estados Unidos ahora ofrecen escuelas bilingües así que los niños aprenden un segundo idioma a una edad más temprana. El problema es que la mayoría de los padres desconoce la existencia de las escuelas bilingües incluso las que imparten las materias del currículo en más de un idioma; por lo tanto, disminuyen automáticamente las posibilidades de que sus hijos tengan un trabajo estable u otras oportunidades en el futuro. Los padres de hoy en este país necesitan matricular a sus hijos en una educación bilingüe, para que sus niños puedan disfrutar de oportunidades fuera de la escuela, proyectar su futuro y aprovechar los muchos beneficios cognitivos que dicha educación conlleva.

Los padres necesitan registrar a sus hijos en una escuela bilingüe. En nuestro mundo diverso, para que los niños puedan crecer y tener muchas opciones al elegir una carrera, es imprescindible dominar más de una lengua. Está probado que las personas que pueden hablar un segundo idioma serán contratadas antes de alguien que solo puede hablar uno. Otro beneficio de ser bilingüe es que muestran un mejor nivel atención y retienen más información. Estas ventajas ayudan a los estudiantes a conseguir notas más altas en la escuela. Con estos beneficios en mente, la matrícula de jóvenes estudiantes en una escuela bilingüe solo puede favorecer a los estudiantes según se hacen mayores y buscan oportunidades a través de su idioma.

Cuando pensamos en el sistema educativo, a veces olvidamos las muchas partes que deben ir de la mano para que éste funcione con efectividad. Las partes del sistema de educación son los profesores, la administración, el director de la escuela, el plan de estudios, los edificios y los materiales. Todas las partes funcionan juntas para crear un sistema escolar bien operativo. Si una de las partes no existiera, el sistema no funcionaría bien. Hay muchos tipos de sistemas escolares como las escuelas privadas, las escuelas públicas, las escuelas bilingües, los colegios, los internados y las universidades. Las escuelas privadas generalmente poseen una matrícula que debe pagarse para mejorar las instalaciones de la escuela, también suelen tener una educación de mayor calidad, debido a los recursos disponibles. La

contraparte de este sistema es la educación pública, la cual siempre se ve sujeta a debates. Es gratis asistir a las escuelas públicas, pero debido a varios factores, en los Estados Unidos no se ofrece una educación de calidad individualizada, y todo esto depende del nivel económico de los distritos escolares en cada ciudad. En todo caso, en ambos sistemas puede ofrecerse la educación bilingüe. Las escuelas bilingües enseñan materias como matemáticas, ciencias, lectura y escritura en dos idiomas diferentes desde una edad temprana. Las escuelas secundarias, o colegios, acomodan a los estudiantes de 9° a 12° grado de escolaridad. También existen los internados, los que son escuelas donde los niños residen para recibir su educación. A las universidades los estudiantes van a recibir un título y seguir su educación. Siempre hay matrícula para pagar a las universidades. Cada tipo de escuela, a pesar de algunas diferencias, lleva a cabo cursos varios de los cuales se puede escoger. No importa en cuál de estos sistemas se matricule un estudiante, cuando hay educación bilingüe, el producto final es mejor, porque visualiza a la persona como un todo.

La enseñanza bilingüe es la instrucción académica presentada en dos idiomas, por lo general un idioma nativo y un segundo idioma, utilizando cada idioma en tiempos variables de acuerdo con el programa. Este sistema puede servir como un método para enseñar un idioma nativo a un estudiante que no es nativo de esa lengua o puede enseñar un segundo idioma a un estudiante nativo. Los sistemas escolares bilingües se pueden encontrar en muchos países, pero según Aimee Chin, solo hay pocos en los Estados Unidos en las principales ciudades y estados como Nueva York, Tejas y California (64). De acuerdo con la ley de educación bilingüe de los Estados Unidos de 1968, enmendada en 1988, el Congreso ordenó que los inmigrantes tuvieran acceso a su primer lenguaje. Aimee Chin de Departamento de Economía de la Universidad de Houston declara que el impacto general de la educación bilingüe en los estudiantes es positivo y significativo. Esto se debe a que la instrucción bilingüe provee a los estudiantes no solo beneficios cognitivos, sino también oportunidades que les abren las puertas a las carreras.

El propósito de la educación bilingüe es para enseñar un segundo idioma a los estudiantes mientras practican su lenguaje nativo. La enseñanza bilingüe no es solo instrucción en dos idiomas, es una conexión con otras culturas mundanas y una comprensión más profunda de la vida al experimentar y ver otros caminos de la existencia. Comprender una forma de vida diferente y aprender a comunicarse con otras culturas es muy

importante, porque le da al andar —esa jornada vital del individuo— otro significado, y permite que las personas vean sus propias vidas bajo una luz diferente. Esta es la razón por la cual los maestros de lenguas extranjeras, las personas de diferentes etnias y las personas bilingües comparten los abundantes beneficios de una educación bilingüe. No importa lo que esté estudiando o quiera en la trayectoria, aprender un segundo idioma se llevará allí con gran éxito. De acuerdo a un artículo escrito por Manfred Spitzer, se llevaron pruebas de inteligencia entre estudiantes franceses y estudiantes bilingües en francés e inglés. Los niños bilingües obtuvieron puntajes más altos en casi todas las pruebas porque su capacidad para descifrar idiomas era más alta. No solo los estudiantes reciben información cultural sorprendente cuando aprenden otro idioma, sino también están adquiriendo poder mental, el que, en última instancia, puede combatir la demencia senil y el deterioro de la capacidad cognitiva.

Una gran razón por la cual los padres en los Estados Unidos no colocan a sus hijos en una escuela bilingüe es solo por su falta de conocimiento de la oferta educativa. La mayoría de los padres no conoce los increíbles beneficios de saber dos idiomas y, como resultado, sus hijos no realizan su potencial educativo completo. Otra dificultad que causa problemas en el acceso de la educación bilingüe es que no hay muchas escuelas bilingües que comiencen desde una edad temprana, la que es el mejor momento para aprender un segundo idioma, porque el cerebro aún se está desarrollando y adquiriendo nuevas habilidades. En algunas escuelas públicas de los Estados Unidos, la primera vez que un estudiante puede aprender un segundo idioma es en 8º grado, y la mayoría de los niños no lo aprovechan debido a otras clases, como clase de cocina y arte. A la edad de 14 años no es un buen tiempo para aprender otro idioma porque estos jóvenes estudiantes tienen muchas otras metas en sus mentes, como chicos/as, estrés, deportes, y otras actividades. Un problema que ocurre en este momento y en muchas regiones de los Estados Unidos es que los maestros y los administradores no presionan para que estos estudiantes aprendan otro idioma. Puede hacerse la publicidad de que es divertido, pero eso no es suficiente para despertar el interés de un niño y, por lo tanto, hay menos estudiantes que aprenden idiomas extranjeros.

En una escuela promedio en los Estados Unidos, a los estudiantes se les enseñan temas como matemáticas, ciencia, historia e inglés. En contraste con un sistema bilingüe, a los estudiantes se les enseñan los mismos temas, pero cambian entre el idioma del origen y el segundo idioma. Ambos

sistemas trabajan para enseñar a los estudiantes el plan de estudios, pero se crea una atmósfera mejor al desafiar la mente de los individuos que aprenden con una metodología. Una fuente de *Education Corner* explica que: “Los defensores de la educación bilingüe creen que cuando los estudiantes que no hablan inglés reciben educación en su lengua materna y en inglés, su capacidad para aprender y hablar inglés aumenta mucho; aprenden inglés de una manera más eficiente y pueden continuar aprendiendo materias básicas (matemáticas, historia, ciencias, etc.) a medida que pasan a hablar inglés” (7). Esta manera de aprendizaje demuestra que la educación bilingüe parece ser la forma más efectiva de enseñar a los estudiantes cuya lengua dominante o materna no es el inglés.

Hay muchas ventajas y desventajas en el desarrollo de un cerebro bilingüe. En un artículo escrito por Mónica Setién de *ABC familia* describe cómo: “El cerebro de un bilingüe desarrolla nuevas habilidades para procesar y manejar la información almacenada, aumentando la capacidad para resolver problemas con mayor facilidad. Además, consigue[n] un nivel de concentración superior ya que tiene[n] que trabajar con más información, manteniendo los idiomas separados y accediendo en el momento oportuno a cada uno de ellos” (4). Estos son beneficios cognitivos impecables, pero dependiendo del individuo puede haber retrocesos en los procesos de aprendizaje. Según este mismo artículo: “[En] el modelo actual no existe gran diferencia entre los colegios no bilingües que enseñan inglés de los que les han puesto el cartel de bilingüe. Más bien, estudios recientes señalan que el alumnado del modelo bilingüe está adquiriendo menos competencias en aquellas materias que han sido enseñadas con dicho idioma” (13). Esto indica que los estudiantes corren el riesgo de abandonar uno de los idiomas y perder todos sus esfuerzos. La frustración y el proceso abrumador de aprender un segundo idioma puede forzar a la mente de un individuo a rechazar un idioma y causar más problemas para el estudiante esforzado. Generalmente, el rechazo de un lenguaje ocurre cuando una persona trata de aprender un idioma a una edad mayor. Esta es la razón por la cual los estudiantes deben matricularse en un programa bilingüe desde el principio de su vida.

Según los artículos por *Occupy Theory* y *Education Corner*, la enseñanza bilingüe cuesta mucho en comparación a otras formas de educación. Ya que la educación bilingüe cuesta tanto, este hecho no permite a las familias o individuos pobres el aprender un segundo idioma y les niega los mismos derechos educativos de estudiantes de clase superior. La opción para aprender otros idiomas debería ser implementada en cada escuela en los

Estados Unidos para proveer las mismas oportunidades para cada estudiante. Sitios de especialización en teorías educativas como *Occupy Theory* afirman que: “Las escuelas de todo el país luchan para seguir financiando sus programas de idiomas extranjeros como es... Gastar dinero en programas de educación bilingüe toma fondos valiosos de los programas que las escuelas ya están obligadas a recortar” (15). Aunque esto es cierto en algunas circunstancias, a mi juicio, es una falla del sistema educativo en los Estados Unidos y no una falla del programa bilingüe en sí mismo.

La discusión se extiende a todas las edades, pero la primera infancia es crucial para exhibir más de los beneficios cognitivos. Una fuente de *Mamás y Bebés* por Viviana González describe los éxitos que individuos bilingües pueden poseer en el mercado laboral. Hay más oportunidades disponibles en el mercado de trabajo para gente que habla otro idioma porque posee una destreza rara y en demanda a los ojos de los empleadores. Este argumento es análogo a la opinión de que ser bilingüe reduce las trayectorias de carreras. Claudia Brovetto discute este matiz negativo en los estudiantes bilingües en Uruguay que sufren con su lenguaje materno: “El trabajo concluye que las interferencias del portugués (lengua materna) en las producciones escritas en español (segunda lengua) son significativamente menos en los niños bilingües que asisten a escuelas bilingües español-portugués, que en los niños bilingües que asisten a escuelas monolingües en español” (29). Luchar en un idioma materno puede reducir los enfoques de carrera y reducir las asignaturas en las que un niño puede tener éxito. Una vez más, este no es un argumento común y la mayoría de los estudiantes bilingües exceden en todas las asignaturas con gran éxito debido a sus poderosos cerebros críticos.

En el caso de la enseñanza bilingüe a los niños en los Estados Unidos, es común creer que los niños pueden confundirse mientras aprenden un segundo idioma además de practicar su lengua materna, esto también se conoce como *sobrecarga de información*. Esto no es exactamente correcto porque los niños todavía están desarrollándose y aprendiendo a entender ambas lenguas. Esto significa que en la mente de un niño los dos lenguajes son dos procesos y, a menudo, amplían las habilidades cognitivas. Ingrid Christoffels explica en un artículo sobre educación bilingüe que la mente de un niño que aprende un [segundo] idioma a una edad temprana lo lleva a desarrollar un razonamiento flexible, el cual le permite cambiar rápidamente de un idioma a otro (371).

Esta evidencia es clara, pero la historia de la pugna es larga: a principios del siglo XX, según Kent Koppelman, los investigadores educativos de la época consideraron la comprensión de dos o más idiomas como una desventaja en el desarrollo de un niño. Ahora, los investigadores creen que múltiples idiomas son beneficiosos para la complejidad del cerebro. Yudhijit Bhattacharjee afirma que el cerebro de un bilingüe opera los dos sistemas de lenguaje incluso cuando solo uno se usa activamente. Gretchen Cuda-Kroen agrega a esta información que el proceso de diferenciación de los idiomas ocurre en la función de control ejecutivo del cerebro. Esta área del cerebro se ocupa de la resolución de problemas, la planificación diaria y la memoria (20). Cuando un lingüista hace incluso la tarea más simple, como hablar, el cerebro de ese individuo debe trabajar más para separar las lenguas e ignorar la materia gris, el tejido neural que forma el cerebro, que podría obstruir el otro lenguaje del lingüista (Bhattacharjee). Este conflicto interno fortalece los músculos cognitivos del cerebro. Esa es la razón por la que gente debería comenzar el bilingüismo de sus hijos a una edad temprana, porque cada beneficio cognitivo del bilingüismo fortalece el cerebro y las acciones cotidianas de los estudiantes, como la resolución de problemas, el recuerdo y los procesos de selección de la memoria en el cerebro.

Las dificultades de la enseñanza bilingüe, como los impedimentos económicos y la frustración, no se comparan con la recompensa al final de la instrucción. Recomiendo que, si los padres no están seguros acerca de la educación bilingüe, deberían probarlo de todos modos, y observar cómo se desenvuelve el niño en medio del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Es muy poco probable que un niño falle en este programa, pero si es así, los padres siempre pueden sacarlos de esa escuela y probar otros programas que consideren más adecuados para su hijo.

Sé que me hubiera gustado haber empezado a aprender español a una edad temprana porque puede ser difícil seguir el idioma siendo un adulto. Aunque comencé mi experiencia bilingüe más adelante en mi vida, no la cambiaría por nada, porque realmente aprecio el idioma y siento la pasión de enseñar español a los niños. Yo creo que la educación bilingüe es una inversión increíble porque los estudiantes mejoran tras esta experiencia en el aula. Los niños desarrollan habilidades de pensamiento crítico, trabajo en equipo y muchos otros beneficios cognitivos. Además, tendrán una variedad de oportunidades de trabajo y viajes debido a sus habilidades lingüísticas. La educación bilingüe provee tantos beneficios y oportunidades, que el crecimiento y desarrollo de los estudiantes ocurre en forma progresiva, cada

día. Es un modelo importante de instrucción y se estableció para crear estudiantes creativos e inteligentes que rompan con las normas sociales y ofrezcan diversidad en cualquier campo de la experiencia humana.

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The Scientific Narrative of Leonardo's *Last Supper*

AMANDA GRIEVE

ART 3130: Leonardo da Vinci, Fall 2017

Nominated by: Dr. Caroline Hillard

Amanda Grieve is a senior at Wright State University and is pursuing a BFA with a focus on Studio Painting. She received her Associates degree in Visual Communications from Sinclair Community College in 2007.

Amanda notes:

I knew Leonardo was an incredible artist, but what became obvious after researching and learning more about the man himself, is that he was a great thinker and intellectual. I believe those aspects of his personality greatly influenced his art and, in large part, made his work revolutionary for his time.

Dr. Hillard notes:

This paper presents a clear and original thesis about Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* that incorporates important scholarly research and Leonardo's own writings. The literature on Leonardo is extensive, yet the author has identified key studies and distilled their essential contributions with ease. Moreover, she has looked to Leonardo's writings on the art of painting to draw conclusions about his great mural.

The Scientific Narrative of Leonardo's *Last Supper*

The Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci has been an artistic sensation since its creation in the late fifteenth century (Fig I). It has been the focus of in-depth academic literature, artistic copies by many masters, and even popular fiction. It is arguably Leonardo's masterpiece and one of the West's best-known paintings, but due to faulty preparation for the mural's surface, only a ghost of Leonardo's paint remains (Barcilon 342). After the most recent restoration began in 1977, a greater version of Leonardo's genius has been revealed, if only in small remnants of his paint. *The Last Supper*, which was already known as a great composition and narrative, now reveals the modeling and sensitivity of Leonardo's hand, brought forth by Pinin Brambilla Barcilon, the lead restorer (vii). What becomes obvious on a scrupulous viewing of the restored work is that Leonardo da Vinci interwove a powerful telling of the gospel story along with a visual integration of his mastery of the liberal arts in *The Last Supper*.

Leonardo da Vinci first arrived in Milan from Florence circa 1482 (Kemp 16). He then came under the patronage of the regent Duke of Milan, Ludovico Sforza. Sforza had become regent for his nephew in 1476, but when his nephew died in 1494 he obtained the full dukedom. During this time Sforza initiated multiple projects to reinforce his rule, as he was the illegitimate son of his father, Francesco Sforza, previously a condottiere. Moreover, Ludovico's claim to the position was tenuous as the Sforzas had only been in possession of Milan since 1450 (Safra 680). In addition to commissioning from Leonardo a monumental equestrian statue to honor his father, Ludovico focused on restorations of the church and convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie (Kemp 34, 198). While there is no direct documentation or contract confirming either order, it is generally held that Ludovico, in conjunction with commissioning Bramante to update the church, also commissioned Leonardo to paint a Last Supper picture on the wall of the refectory (116).

The Last Supper was probably commissioned shortly after the Duke assumed his full power (Clark 144). It is known that Leonardo was working on *The Last Supper* during 1497 and was relatively close to completing it because Ludovico sent a letter to his secretary, Marchesino Stanga, "to urge Leonardo the Florentine to finish the work on the Refectory of the Grazie, which he has begun, in order to attend afterwards to the other wall of the Refectory..." (Kemp 17). Leonardo's painting must have been completed by

February 8, 1498, since, in that year, the mathematician Luca Pacioli, who worked with Leonardo in Milan, described the work as finished in the dedication of his treatise *De Divina Proportione*. (Clark 146, Young).

The Last Supper takes its iconography from the Bible story of Jesus and his twelve disciples celebrating the Passover meal. The four gospel books, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, tell the story of the disciples and Jesus gathering in an upper room where the scene takes place. During this time Jesus instituted the Eucharist, by sharing with his disciples bread and wine, which he said was his body and blood, and announced that one of the disciples would betray him.

The Last Supper, Jesus is seated in the middle of the table with six apostles to his right and six more to his left. They are all seated or standing on the same side of the table. The room is symmetrical, with four tapestries on each wall and three doors to the left and four slightly smaller matching shapes on the right. Jesus' head is framed by the largest of three windows symmetrically arranged on the back wall. The vanishing point falls to his right temple, where all converging orthogonal lines meet. The painting shows portions of both the floor and the coffered ceiling, and above the ceiling three lunettes depict the Sforza and Este coat of arms (Barcilon 405). The figures take up roughly half of the room's height, leaving a large portion of the boxy room showing, including the ceiling and side and back walls.

The figures in the foreground are arranged into four groups of three. Each disciple has a different expression and pose than the others. Some are standing; most are sitting. They speak to one another, gesture, and tend to lead the eye back to the center where Jesus sits. The room appears relatively large when first viewed, but if a closer inspection is taken to the area between the table and the right and left walls, the room actually becomes quite tight to the figures, almost squeezing them into a space that is not large enough for them. Although it is difficult to know exactly what visual effect the original work would have offered due to the degraded state of the mural, looking at other studies and reproductions of the work by artists such as Andrea Solario and Giampietrino helps to fill in the gaps for large general details such as the probable flower-patterned tapestries shown in Giampietrino's version (Fig. II & III).

Viewed from the refectory, the work creates the illusion of an extension of the real room's space due to Leonardo's use of scientific

perspective. However, the vanishing point, being approximately four and a half meters from the floor, is too high to create a true trompe l'oeil for viewers standing on the ground (Steinberg 122). Before war damaged the refectory where the mural is located, windows on Jesus' right would have let light into the room, and the light source in *The Last Supper* also comes from the same direction (124). The copies by Solario and Giampietrino show how brightly lit the right side of the mural most likely was. A doorway was enlarged after the painting was completed and cut off a section of the middle bottom of the painting. Again, looking at the works of Solario and Giampietrino, amongst others, is helpful to gain an idea of the original lower portion of the work, including Jesus' feet.

There is a great deal of emphasis on Jesus in the work. Jesus, the only calm figure in the painting, gazes down towards his left hand. He is given additional stability because his form creates a triangle with his head and his two outstretched hands. His calm appears heightened when contrasted with the various animated emotions and reactions of the apostles. He is highlighted by the back window, and in addition to the converging perspective, the various poses, gestures, and gazes of the disciples lead the viewer's eye continuously back to him. He is both given more visual space than any other figure and is slightly larger (Steinberg 61). In addition, after the recent restoration by Barcilon, it was discovered that Jesus' blue drapery was painted by Leonardo with the thickest layer of lapis lazuli, a precious and expensive pigment used in the Renaissance (Barcilon 426).

The apostles have been identified by Steinberg as, from left to right, Bartholomew, James Minor, Andrew, Judas, Peter, John, Thomas, James Major, Philip, Matthew, Thaddeus, and Simon (11). Leonardo uses identifiers both from biblical and apocryphal stories to give visual reference to each figure. Bartholomew, who is said to have been skinned alive, has a knife pointed directly at him by Peter. There was also a separate legend that Bartholomew was crucified. In *Golden Legend*, a thirteenth century sourcebook for the lives of the saints, Jacobus de Voragine claims that, in order to unite both versions, Bartholomew was first crucified, taken down before his death, and flayed (Steinberg 106). In *The Last Supper* Bartholomew's feet are crossed even though he stands. Leonardo, a great observer of the natural world, would not have let an awkward way of standing enter his painting unless it told a greater story. Andrew, martyred by crucifixion, raises his hands in front of him in a gesture that could be reminiscent of his death. Judas, the apostle who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, clutches a moneybag and

has knocked over a salt cellar, alluding to either a bad omen to come or the momentary discord of the apostles (Wasserman 70). In addition, Judas has an extended portion of neck showing, which may foreshadow his later suicide by hanging after Jesus was arrested (Steinberg 90). In the gospel book of John, Peter leans over to ask John to find out which disciple will betray Jesus. In addition, Peter holds a knife, which could foretell his cutting the ear off the official who comes to arrest Jesus (*The Holy Bible*, John 18.10). John, who traditionally is seated next to Jesus and often portrayed as a sleeping or fainting, almost feminine, figure, may be swooning. He clutches his hands together, foretelling his part to be played in witness to the Crucifixion (Steinberg 80). Thomas raises his finger, which foreshadows his unwillingness to believe Jesus has been raised from the dead until he touches the wounds with his own finger (88). Andrew, to the right of Jesus, was also martyred by crucifixion and has both his arms completely outstretched (99). There are many more identifiers that Steinberg presents, but for the sake of brevity the aforementioned examples give a sense of the narratives Leonardo painted.

Leonardo took much from the convention of previous Florentine refectories, but interpreted the common iconography in unprecedented ways. As compared to other Florentine refectory Last Supper paintings, Leonardo gave much time and thought to how he could arrange the disciples in a dramatic and visually stimulating composition. Depictions of the Last Supper by Andrea del Castagno, Domenico Ghirlandaio and Pietro Perugino show the same motif of the twelve disciples and Jesus sitting down on one side of a long table (Fig. IV, V, & VI). In each of the paintings, the figures for the most part sit upright, contained in their individual space, not overlapping each other. All three show Judas, the betrayer of Jesus, on the near side of the table, separating him from the eleven faithful followers. Leonardo chose to break tradition and kept Judas on the far side of the table, enabling Leonardo to create a more symmetrical composition with four distinct groups of disciples. He also chose a dramatic moment when the disciples are speaking and gesturing to one another, giving what was usually a static composition movement and interest. In addition to the unusual figural composition, Leonardo's choice of setting is also different from previous and contemporary paintings of the Last Supper. Leonardo chose a room that is relatively plain compared to those of the aforementioned artists. In contrast to Leonardo's painting, Castagno presents a relatively busy background filled with blocks of patterned stone. Ghirlandaio and Perugino incorporate intricate outdoor scenes where the viewer's eye can stray, almost forgetting

about the figures below. Leonardo, on the other hand, uses a dark back wall in addition to the perspectival composition to continuously lead the viewer's eye back to the figures in the foreground and centrally to Jesus.

Leonardo's choices for *The Last Supper* were anything but accidental. He put much time and thought into effectively communicating the inner workings of his figures in a visually dynamic way. Leonardo was concerned about the stories he would tell, going as far in his writings to describe how to begin drawing a narrative painting with loose strokes, which can be interpreted in a variety of ways (Kemp 171). This can be seen to a certain extent in one of his sketches for *The Last Supper* (Fig. VII). Here Leonardo has created what appears to be a quick sketch with loose lines and little details in the figures, leaving room for interpretation and adjustments. In another part of his notebooks he makes notation of what the disciples will be doing:

One who was drinking has left his glass in its position and turned his head towards the speaker. Another twists the fingers of his hands together and turns with a frown to his companion. Another with hands spread open showing the palm, shrugs his shoulders up to his ears, and makes a grimace of astonishment. Another speaks into his neighbor's ear and the listener turns to him to lend an ear, while he holds a knife in one hand and in the other the loaf half cut through by the knife; and in turning round another, who holds a knife, upsets with his hand a glass on the table (Victoria and Albert Museum).

While the exact notations do not show in his final work exactly as it is written, they do show his interest in the visual portrayal of narrative. Leonardo also wrote, "The figure is most praiseworthy, which, by its action, best expresses the passions of the soul" (Clark 152). It is clear after hearing directly from Leonardo that the narrative of not only the scene but also of each figure was of extreme importance to his preparations for painting.

In addition to his specific ideas about painting *The Last Supper*, in his *Paragone*, Leonardo vehemently argues that painting in general is a labor to be considered a work of the mind over the work of a hand. In the Renaissance, much as today, there was a general distinction between manual work, such as sculpting, painting, weaving, baking, and dyeing, and the liberal arts, defined in the Renaissance as the disciplines of philosophy, theology, rhetoric, geometry, astrology, music, and arithmetic. The manual disciplines generally belonged to the guild system and were comparable to today's blue-collar jobs. An education in the liberal arts would be the bases for professions that

would be akin to today's white-collar jobs. During the Renaissance, the liberal arts were referred to as sciences, and Leonardo was dissatisfied that painting was not considered to be on the same intellectual level as the liberal arts (Clark 127). If painting were to be elevated to a science, it would hold much more prestige for the painter and a more rigorous general education would be required.

To be specific, Leonardo argues in his *Paragone* that painting is like the science of philosophy because it describes all the individuality of nature and perceived nature, so if someone scorns painting, they scorn nature and thus the very invention of God (Farago 191,195). He also argues that painting is akin to the science of geometry and astronomy because it begins with line and perspective (177, 207). He claims painting is greater than other sciences that can be reproduced, such as books on a printing press, as no pupil can replicate another artist's work to an exact degree (189). He also attacks the science of poetry in particular. He states that painting is poetry seen and not heard and poetry is a painting that is heard and not seen (215). Leonardo argues that once the words are spoken, poetry dies, while the image of a painting remains. He asserts people would rather be without the sense of hearing than the sense of sight, therefore arguing sight is a higher sense to engage. Regarding the science of music, he argues that harmonic proportion is better when seen, such as in an angel's face, because again, it serves the eye, which is the higher sense (217). In these arguments Leonardo is not attempting to degrade the status of the aforementioned subjects, but to raise painting to an equal or even elevated position relative to these established liberal arts.

Continuing with proportion, during the Renaissance, order and proportion were of the utmost concern to theoreticians, artists, and architects like Leonardo. Many referenced classical authors, such as Vitruvius, a Roman architect, engineer and writer, who proposed that beauty was found in nature and found most abundantly in the perfect proportions of the human body (Kemp 66, Dwyer). Leonardo was inspired by the idea of perfect or divine proportions. He not only owned Vitruvius' *De Architectura* but also drew the perfect form described by Vitruvius in his *Vitruvian Man* (Fig. VIII). Another set of divine proportions Leonardo concerned himself with were the musical proportions set forth by Pythagoras (Kemp 67, 181). These proportions relate to musical intervals of the octave (2:1), the perfect fifth (3:2), and the perfect fourth (4:3). These ratios are 1:2, 2:3, and 3:4, and if they are expanded out, they become 3:4:6:12, which correspond to the

ratios of the perfect fourth (3:4), the perfect fifth (3:2 or 2:3 or 4:6) and the octave (2:1 or 1:2 or 6:12). As an observer of nature, “Leonardo formulates the numerical proportion 12:6:4:3 as an ordering principle he [not only] believed to have discovered in optical space” but also found in the previously noted musical ratios (Brachert 464).

If the space Leonardo created in *The Last Supper* is judged by the ordering principles of 12:6:4:3, it is found that when the picture plane is divided vertically in 12 equal parts, each square of the central coffered ceiling is one twelfth of the whole and the coffered area is 6:12. This same ratio is found in the height of the painting compared to its width. If the same 1:12 width is used to create modular squares, the painting’s height to width is also 6:12. Brachert also demonstrates in his article that the draperies on either side recede in the pattern of 12:6:4:3. The width of the back wall is one third (4:12) of the whole width. The bottom of the tablecloth to the ceiling also shares the ratio of 4:12. The width spanned by the rear three windows is 3:12 and the center back window is one module wide. Not only does the architecture share the rule of 12:6:4:3, but the figures fall into this category as well. Twelve apostles are broken up into two equal groups (12:6). Each group of six is broken up into two groups of three (6:3). Overall there are four groups of three figures (4:3). It is no wonder Leonardo added Judas to the far side of the table to be able to be consistent in his numerical groupings. However, as convincing as Brachert’s modular theory is, it does not extend to all portions of the painting. The ceiling is only one module high (1:6), which does not fit within the 12:6:4:3 ratio (Brachert 464-465).

Clark notes that unity and drama are the essential qualities that separate Leonardo’s Last Supper painting from his predecessors (149). Unity in his compositional groupings takes a difficult scene for any artist to make interesting and adds visual harmony and rhythm. The drama created from choosing a moment or moments where the disciples are all reacting in various ways lead us into each of their individual stories in an emotional way, which previous and contemporary artists’ portrayals lacked. The moment or, more accurately, moments painted exhibit the genius storyteller that Leonardo was. Many historians suggest the moment portrayed is when Jesus announced that one of his disciples would betray him, but the scene could also portray their astonishment at the first Eucharistic meal, the moment where they are arguing amongst themselves as to which of them is greater, or even evoke an image of all three interpretations (Steinberg 53). Jesus, however, remains peaceful--unfazed by his disciples’ reactions and emotions.

His hands gesture to the wine and bread, evoking the imagery of the Eucharistic meal. His right hand also reaches towards the dish where Judas is also reaching to--or recoiling from. This comes from the Bible story where Jesus, in answer to the questions of which disciple will betray him, says, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me" (*The Holy Bible*, Matthew 26.23). Not only are there three overarching stories that are plausibly being told, but each disciple's story, as previously discussed, is being told in his gesture, placement, and/or expression. All of these stories converge in a single painting to remind the pious viewer to remain faithful to Jesus: do not betray him, keep the Eucharistic meal, and be faithful even to death as a martyr, as nearly all of the disciples were.

Kenneth Clark claims, "[*The Last Supper*] is one of the greatest manifestations of intellectual power in art" (151). Clark, while obviously biased towards Leonardo, perhaps even above other artists, still guides his readers to see Leonardo's intellect in *The Last Supper*. As has been discussed, Leonardo's interest in valuing painting as an intellectual activity akin and equal to other liberal arts dramatically influenced his creation of *The Last Supper*. If the elements that came from a liberal arts education had been left out, Leonardo would be half as effective as a storyteller. Without scientific perspective, the composition would lose the immediate, direct focus on Jesus. Though the mural does not portray a true trompe l'oeil when viewed from the ground, the perceived visual extension of the space would flatten. Without the divine musical proportion, the groupings would be broken up, Judas would remain on the opposite side of the table and the balance and harmony felt when first viewing the painting would be lost. Without the visual poetry in the emotional states of the figures, the apostles would remain upright and static. The painting would then become, if not completely mundane, at best, common.

What becomes clear after understanding Leonardo's theoretical views on narrative stories, as well as the figures and their inner working along with the artist's interest in divine proportions, is that he was a master storyteller. He chose a wide variety of points in the biblical story of the Last Supper and also included apocryphal stories of the apostles themselves. He integrated the liberal arts such as geometric scientific perspective, divine musical proportions, and visual poetry together with a narrative story. He unified each aspect into a single composition, which gives homage to Jesus, the divine, and incorporates the divine in his proportions and composition. As Clark states, "It is the most literary of all great pictures" (152).

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Figures



Fig. I.

Source: Leonardo da Vinci. Last Supper. 1495-1498.

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Fig. II.

Source: Andrea Solario. *The Last Supper* copy after Leonardo's. c 1510

Steinberg, Leo. *Leonardo's Incessant Last Supper*. Zone Books. 2001.



Fig. III.

Source: Giampietrino. *The Last Supper* after Leonardo's. c. 1520

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Fig. IV.

Source: Andrea del Castagno. *The Last Supper*. 1447.

http://library.artstor.org/asset/SCALA_ARCHIVES_1031314665



Fig. V.

Source: Ghirlandaio, Domenico, 1449-1494. Last Supper.

http://library.artstor.org/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000636991



Fig. VI.

Source: Pietro Perugino. *Last Supper of Fuligno*. 1493–1496

http://www.museumsinflorence.com/musei/fuligno_last_supper.html

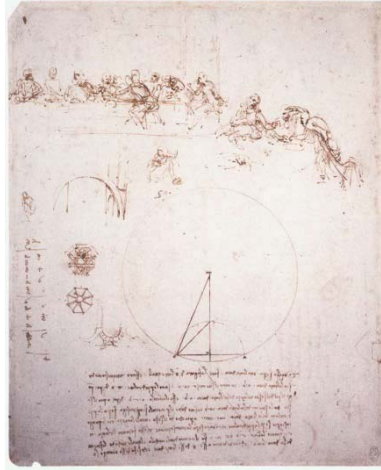


Fig. VII.

Source: Leonardo. Study for the Last Supper. Windsor Castle, Royal Collection (no. 12542) Steinberg, Leo. *Leonardo's Incessant Last Supper*. Zone Books. 2001.

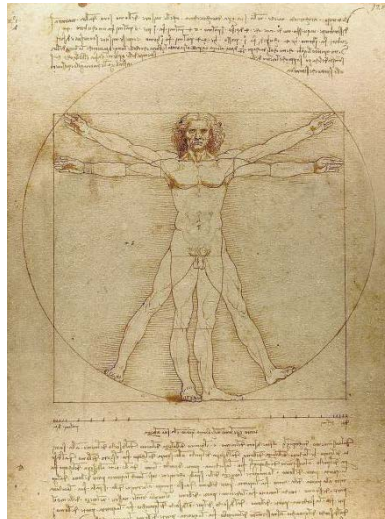


Fig. VIII.

Source: Leonardo da Vinci, Florentine, 1452-1519. Study of a man according to Vitruvius (Vitruvian Man). ca. 1485-1490.

http://library.artstor.org/asset/AHSC_ORPHANS_1071313510

“María llena eres de gracia” y una desconocida: la fortaleza del espíritu humano

YAAKOV OLIVEIRA

SPN 3210: Conversation and Writing in Spanish, Fall 2017

Nominated by: Dr. Damaris E. Serrano

Yaakov Oliveira is currently a senior working on a BA in Spanish. Yaakov’s goal is to receive a PhD in Hispanic linguistics. His next step, after Wright State, is going to Kent State to receive a Masters in Spanish.

Yaakov notes:

I tend to have an editorial writing style. This assignment was very important to me since it centers on Latin immigration in the United States. There continues to be a negative social stigma on the topic of immigration in this country. This project was also done at the time President Trump publicly announce that Mexicans were “Rapists.” I was expecting complete disaster when I started this assignment; however, towards the end I stood agog at how much I had accomplished. When reading this movie review, I hope that the audience gets a sense of the humanity of both Latina immigrants in the films. I also would like this review to have some impact on the people that make undereducated, brusque statements that label entire groups of people.

Dr. Serrano notes:

The compassion for, and understanding of, *The Other*, without bias, is the most revealing attribute of this paper. Given that immigration, and undocumented people constantly coming to the US, has become a national issue, it is inspiring to see that there still are ways of evaluating the problematic--with objectivity--yet with admiration. This writer is capable of seeing with the inner eyes, perceiving the colloquialisms of the Spanish language, the traits of the culture, and the emotion of both narratives that he is comparing. At the end of the day, film and art remain as *the bridge* between cultures.

“María llena eres de gracia” y una desconocida:
la fortaleza del espíritu humano

Muchos estadounidenses tienen sus propias opiniones sobre los inmigrantes que vienen a este país. La mayoría de ellos piensa que si una persona es latinoamericana y emigra aquí, es mexicana o ilegal. Este es un estereotipo muy ofensivo, aunque pudiera ser cierto ya que cada inmigrante tiene propia historia. En esta ocasión, el estereotipo se cumplió: *María eres llena de gracia* (HBO Home Video 2004) muestra un aspecto de ilegalidad, pero con un dramatismo conmovedor. Escrita y dirigida por Joshua Marston, fue nominada para el Premio de la Academia, porque el director tomó un tema polémico y lo convirtió en una obra de arte. Al mismo tiempo, la película “*Nací en México, pero... crecí sin documentos en Estados Unidos*” (“*I Was Born in Mexico, But... Growing Up Undocumented in America*”, su título en inglés) es un filme dirigido por Corey Ohama, descendiente de japoneses, quien presenta un tema similar, cual es, la historia sobre una mexicana que vive en los Estados Unidos sin documentos. Ambos directores han recibido reconocimientos por su trabajo. Esta última película, bajo el sello de **New Day Films**, fue presentada en el Festival de Cine de Los Ángeles, en el 2013.

Las películas atraen la atención del espectador con sus temas controversiales, sin embargo, es posible que después de ver lo que sucede en cada película, el espectador pudiera cambiar su opinión sobre la inmigración ilegal y desarrollar una visión más empática de sus situaciones. Piense lo que piense la gente sobre los ilegales, uno tiene que admitir que ambas películas son muy profundas y conmovedoras. *María eres llena de gracia* es una historia sobre una joven colombiana que trabaja en condiciones deplorables (sin descanso, bajo el régimen de un capataz inhumano) en una empresa de procesamiento de flores, en su pueblo natal. Sin embargo, después del injusto tratamiento de su jefe, ella deja su trabajo a pesar de la desaprobación vehemente de su familia. La madre de María también la presiona mucho para que gane dinero para un niño que no es suyo ni es su responsabilidad. María debe mantener a su familia, pero no recibe a cambio ningún reconocimiento. Como el espectador ve ciertas escenas en las que pensaría para sí mismo: “Yo habría hecho lo mismo si me hubieran tratado así”.

En “*Nací en México, pero... crecí sin documentos en Estados Unidos*” la trama es similar a la de *María llena eres de gracia*, pero las circunstancias son diferentes. La película se cuenta en primera persona, y tiene el corte testimonial, a

diferencia de *María llena eres de gracia*, donde la narración descansa en el diálogo. Fue muy interesante ver ambas historias con una trama similar desde dos puntos de vista diferentes. En “*Nací en México, pero... crecí sin documentos en Estados Unidos*”, el espectador nunca recibe el nombre de la joven indocumentada. Solo al mirar la escena de apertura sentimos como si no debiera permitírse nos el ver la película porque es muy secreto.

Los ángulos de cámara capturan la atención y contribuyen efectivamente en el relato de los problemas. No solo se presentan escenas impresionantes y panorámicas de ambientes en contraste, sino que la cámara sigue a las protagonistas en paneos, travellings y acercamientos, esto a pesar del bajo presupuesto de las películas, lo cual suele ser común en propuestas de cine alternativo. Esto no les quita calidad. La banda sonoras en cada película son extremadamente similares, y se puede saber cuándo viene el suspenso debido a que la percusión rápida juega en escenas intensas. En *María eres llena de gracia* hay tonadas suaves en las escenas de emoción gracias a la música durante la trama (como cuando ella descubrió que estaba embarazada). Igualmente, en “*Nací en México, pero... crecí sin documentos en Estados Unidos*” hay música melancólica cuando se narran las partes deprimentes de la trayectoria vital de la protagonista.

Las mujeres en estas películas vienen a los Estados Unidos en busca de una vida “mejor”. Sin embargo, ambas tienen diferentes maneras de llegar a los Estados Unidos. María acepta —para escapar de su situación familiar, y darle una “mejor” vida a su hijo— un trabajo como una **mula de la droga**, gracias al cual obtiene la documentación adecuada para traer contrabando a los Estados Unidos. Otro es el caso de la “desconocida” de “*Nací en México, pero...*”, puesto que fue traída por sus padres de México, ilegalmente, nadando a través de un río. La película de esta desconocida es un documental en el que se llega a escuchar la historia de la vida desde la perspectiva de la protagonista. En *María llena eres de gracia* logramos observar varias perspectivas: la de las mujeres que mueren, o son capturadas, la de los familiares, la del gobierno... aparte de la de María.

Las similitudes entre ambas películas fueron sorprendentes por el drama y las situaciones que muestran a la audiencia. En *María...* uno está viendo los momentos de suspenso, en tiempo real, como cuando María estaba a punto de ser atrapada por aduana de Estados Unidos con cocaína en su estómago... y se salva por estar embarazada; mientras que, en la película con

la desconocida, los trágicos acontecimientos ya habían ocurrido y el narrador lo está contando al espectador en retrospectiva.

Casi lloré viendo ambas películas porque los dos personajes principales habían perdido miembros de la familia en su camino a los Estados Unidos. María, el personaje principal, perdió a su amiga cuando a ésta las pepas de cocaína le explotaron adentro. De la misma manera, *la desconocida* vive la muerte de un ser querido cuando perdió a su hermana porque ésta se ahogó nadando, al intentar emigrar. Una lagrima cayó de mi mejilla y me quedé estupefacto al ver la escena cataclísmica cuando la amiga de María murió, porque dicha amiga también tenía una hermana, esperándola. Esa escena específica compartía las mismas características con el documental, pues *la desconocida* explicaba la pérdida de su hermana que se ahogaba en el río. Ambas escenas climáticas contienen un poderoso mensaje que resuena en los sentimientos del espectador. Si tuviera que pasar por lo que ambas mujeres pasaron, yo habría muerto.

Para conseguir una mejor comprensión de la sensación emocional de la película decidí ponerme en su lugar. Intenté vislumbrar la vida de María, a través de mis propios ojos. Ella creció pobre, la familia era abusiva con ella, un novio vago la embarazó y, para lograr una vida mejor, obtuvo un trabajo de contrabando de cocaína hacia a EEUU. La brusquedad de la pelea entre María y su mamá habría sido suficiente para irme y nunca volver. No puedes decirme (como le dijo su madre a María): “No me saque la piedra”, sin una lucha o batalla. Comoquiera que se examine el hecho, esta no es una película o una historia para los débiles. Tampoco lo es la otra.

Catalina Sandino Moreno (María Álvarez) es una actriz insoportablemente talentosa, para mostrar tal profundidad emocional y hacer suyas las experiencias de la vida real de su personaje. Al contrario, la vida de *la desconocida* la percibimos a través de sus experiencias: no hay actores. El documental, sin embargo, no carece de pormenores. Por ejemplo: *la desconocida* explicó con gran detalle el hecho de que los otros estudiantes en la escuela se burlaran, lo cual muestra la intolerancia y la discriminación racial. No podía creer que su padre no hablara inglés ni lo escribiera tampoco. Las circunstancias múltiples de esa vida se nos aparecen como increíbles.

La desconocida mexicana vive en los Estados Unidos con su familia, a diferencia de María que estaba de paso para transportar drogas, aunque al final decide quedarse. El espectador puede prestar gran atención a la valentía

de estas mujeres para lograr todo lo que hicieron. Ninguna de ellas quiso volver a sus propios países debido a los obstáculos de su cultura. Al fin y al cabo, sabían que todo su trabajo duro no hubiera servido de nada.

Para mí, ambas historias eran increíblemente conmovedoras debido al tormento por el que cada mujer tuvo que pasar, pero más que nada por la fortaleza con que lo superaron. He tenido que tolerar algunas de las mismas dificultades que estas dos mujeres, pero con la diferencia de que soy ciudadano. No puedo concebir los obstáculos con los que se debe lidiar al no tener el estatus legal en los Estados Unidos. Mi corazón se derritió viendo ambas películas. Fue como andar de puntillas en el infierno una y otra vez.

Hoy, cuando los problemas de legalidad parecieran aumentar, afectando profundamente la vida de familias enteras, la experiencia de estas protagonistas puede arrojar una luz en el debate. Aparte de la gratitud que sentimos por lo que tenemos, la enseñanza que nos queda al terminar la película *María llena eres de gracia* y el documental “*Nací en México, pero... crecí sin documentos en Estados Unidos*” es que cuando el espíritu humano se enfrenta con grandes dificultades, siempre se refuerza una valentía oculta, que es la que nos hace encontrar el mejor camino.

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Self-Destructive Education in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

SARAH MILLER

ENG 4470: Postcolonial Texts, Summer 2017

Nominated by: Dr. Alpana Sharma

Sarah recently graduated Summa Cum Laude from Wright State University where she majored in English Literature in the College of Liberal Arts. She is the winner of Sinclair Community College's Spectrum Award and Legacy Award for an English major. She intends to pursue a Doctorate and serve as a professor and an administrator.

Sarah Notes:

Reading *Nervous Conditions* and learning about postcolonial Zimbabwe was an alarming experience for me. Education is such a key part of my identity and has always been a benefit I pursued without question. For Dangarembga's characters, and thus presumably for other victims of colonialism, it's not clear whether those benefits of education are worth the enormous personal cost, and I wanted to explore that scary but important problem.

Dr. Sharma notes:

In this essay, Sarah examines Tsitsi Dangarembga's 1988 novel *Nervous Conditions*, set during the colonial period in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). She argues that the novel portrays education in an ambivalent light: while it serves as a vehicle of liberation and progress for the black Rhodesian characters, it also reveals to them the injustices of colonial occupation. The essay uses excellent textual examples and good support from secondary sources to convincingly advance this thesis. I believe that Sarah makes us rethink the function of education in a critical light; when viewed in the African colonial context, education becomes a tool for ideological oppression.

Self-Destructive Education in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

In Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, the most evident colonial power structure is the education system. Education occupies a paradoxical position; it both promotes the values of the dominant culture and uncovers injustices of the culture toward its victims. Effects of such education are most prominently illustrated through the novel's point-of-view character Tambudzai, or Tambu, and her cousin Nyasha. Tambu's and Nyasha's education opens new opportunities for their advancement and expression yet also coincides with their disillusionment and suffering. The coexisting but contradictory "nervous condition" of oppression and liberation through education is made clear by splitting the two outcomes between two characters. While Tambu's character trajectory shows the benefits of colonial education, Nyasha's self-destructive, noncompliant development shows its dangers and serves as a tragic example of resistance.

Nervous Conditions is set in colonial Rhodesia before it became Zimbabwe, and tells the story of a young girl named Tambu and her family. At first, Tambu lives on a farm in poverty with her parents and siblings, but when her older brother Nhamo dies she takes his place in attending a mission school and living with her wealthier uncle Babamukuru. Babamukuru became the headmaster of the school after he and his wife and children went to study in England for five years. His trip has tragic consequences for his daughter Nyasha, Tambu's best friend.

For Tambu, the oppressive western values of the educational system serve as a motivation for self-empowerment. Tambu learns quickly that education is not a realm of equal opportunity. Her brother Nhamo is given the limited resources her family possesses for school fees instead of Tambu because, he tells her, "you are a girl" (Dangarembga 21). While this realization of the gender preference toward males is frustrating for Tambu, it inspires her to work hard at growing her own maize to put herself through school (17). Here, Tambu never questions whether or not she truly wants and will benefit from the education that colonialism taunts her with; for her, it is a necessity worth her daily sacrifices. Her attitude towards academic opportunity is entirely optimistic.

The same system that awakens determination in Tambu disempowers her cousin Nyasha by creating barriers between her and her family. When Nyasha returns from Babamukuru's five-year trip attending British school, Best Integrated Writing

her mother explains to Tambu that she and her brother “have been speaking nothing but English for so long that most of their Shona has gone” (Dangarembga 42). Nyasha’s plight alerts the reader to the impending separation from cultural roots that Tambu overlooks in her eventual triumph at obtaining her coveted chance at school. The language barrier that arises for the girls is a negative consequence, the heavy price for a perhaps indispensable academic experience. Critic Gilian Gorle acknowledges the complex problem of an education that can both empower, as in Tambu’s case, or deprive as in Nyasha’s by noting that “questions of linguistic hegemony and alienation are fundamentally fluid and must therefore defy neat resolution” (Gorle 180). For Gorle, the dominance of the English language that happens through colonial education is alienating, yet it cannot be easily dismissed since it is a part of a system that also offers opportunity. It seems then that the contrast between Tambu and Nyasha is an attempt to clarify or differentiate the otherwise irresolvable paradox of language and education in colonial contexts.

One of the major ways that the girls are exposed to the English language is through reading. Tambu’s reading choices are primarily fictional stories with pleasant resolutions; her reading results in optimism. In fact, Tambu uses these stories to connect her new experiences as an academic under Western influence with her heritage as a member of her Rhodesian family. Nyasha describes Tambu’s selections as “fairy tales” (94), echoing the description earlier in the novel of the family stories Tambu’s grandmother told (19). The connecting of these stories indicates a fusion of Tambu’s new and old identity into a cohesive whole. Her education is not tearing her out of Rhodesia by the roots. There is a place for her in the colonial world that she feels she can occupy comfortably.

Nyasha’s reading reveals a more threatened state of existence. The literature she identifies with is non-fiction: writing that explores violence, challenge, and international oppression. Dangarembga tells readers that Nyasha read “about Nazis and Japanese and Hiroshima and Nagasaki” and “had nightmares about these things ... but she carried on reading all the same” (95). Nyasha is far from comfortable in the world of oppression beyond her own that she is discovering through education. She is horrified and restless, experiencing the negative outcomes of being instilled with a desire for knowledge. The doors education opens for Nyasha are not merely doors of opportunity but doors of uncertainty.

Tambu learns from Nyasha to read critically, but still does not understand how to question as deeply as her cousin does. She still uses the word “enjoy” (95) to describe transitioning to some of the more realistic books Nyasha recommends. Tambu is still able to maintain a balance between the dangers and the benefits of her education, proving herself to be the ideal compliant subject. Nyasha, on the other hand, represents the most damaging outcomes of a colonial education that destroys identity and creates distress and resistance.

Tambu’s compliance and Nyasha’s resistance are further seen in their attitudes toward Babamukuru, the headmaster of their school and an influential, colonized figure. The education Babamukuru offers makes Tambu feel gratitude and respect toward her uncle. She is impressed by his success and “the great extent of the sacrifice he had made” (88). To her, he stands for the idea that “circumstances were not immutable, no burden so binding that it could not be dropped” (Dangarembga 58). This is the ideal that Tambu herself hopes to embody with the educational progress she makes.

Nyasha, however, is rebellious and resentful of the education in Britain that her father Babamukuru not just provided but imposed upon her. She fights his authority verbally and even physically; Dangarembga writes, “They went down on to the floor, Babamukuru alternately punching Nyasha’s head and banging it against the floor” (117). Babamukuru is unhappy with Nyasha’s independent mind despite his instrumental role in its development, and Nyasha is constantly questioning herself and her unstable position between her English education and her life in Rhodesia. She explains to Tambu “I know ... it’s not England anymore and I ought to adjust. But when you’ve seen different things you want to be sure you’re adjusting to the right thing” (119). Nyasha is unable to find the peaceful, adjusted identity that her cousin enjoys. She is still haunted by the British influence that threatens her membership among the Shona people.

Later on, Tambu follows Nyasha’s rebellious lead by refusing to attend her parent’s wedding in spite of Babamukuru’s insistence (169). This is a time when Tambu’s consciousness, like Nyasha’s, is split “into two disconnected entities that had long, frightening arguments with each other” (169) over the issue of the wedding, which is Babamukuru’s attempt to Christianize an already established union. Her identity is threatened more by Babamukuru’s delegitimization of her parent’s marriage than by the academic learning and

reading he has provided her with through the mission school. She still boasts a stronger sense of belonging within her family and her nation than Nyasha. Here, Dangarembga reveals the collectivist nature of Tambu's identity in contrast to the individualized identity that Nyasha has assumed in her more extensive exposure to British values.

Tambu's education molds her and leads her to further recognition and further opportunity when she obtains a scholarship to Sacred Heart College. Still more pleased than angered by her participation in the colonial education system, Tambu rejoices that "All the things that I wanted were tying themselves up into a neat package which presented itself to me with a flourish" (195). She is proud of her accomplishments and so excited by and focused on her studies that she "hardly noticed the omission" (199) when her cousin Nyasha continues to postpone her promised visit. Tambu is becoming more independent and more westernized, but at a distractingly quick pace. She lacks the excruciating self-awareness Nyasha possesses.

Nyasha's knowledge and critical thinking become volatile and threatening the more her education progresses, and rather than finding excitement and opportunity, she finds a more intimate suffering. Tambu's absence leaves her isolated in her struggle with her split identity, setting her back until her situation becomes pathological. Tambu is shocked when she finally returns on a holiday to discover that Nyasha "had grown skeletal" (202) due to anorexia. Nyasha has realized that her British education is now so deeply engrained that in order to destroy the colonial power in her life, she feels she must destroy herself.

In a heartbreaking moment of vulnerability, Nyasha expresses her ultimate inability to reconcile her education and her identity, proclaiming "I'm not one of them but I'm not one of you" (205). While Tambu has carefully walked the line between two cultures, Nyasha has only managed to occupy an undefined space between the two; critic Christine Sizemore explains "Nyasha for all her insight and bravery has even fewer resources than Tambu. Nyasha is alone" (74). Sizemore sees Nyasha and Tambu as characters that powerfully contrast with one another, "a pair of girls, one of whom manages to establish a sense of self and find a space between damaging ideologies of gender and colonialism and one of whom succumbs to mental illness" (68). This means that Nyasha and Tambu may be navigating and working against the same system, but they do not share the same degree of success. Nyasha's tragic attempt to decolonize her body is

one behavior that Tambu does not imitate; it is the barrier between the loving cousins who, in so many ways, have grown and become educated together.

The mixed benefits and downfalls of systematic colonial education are split distinctly between Dangarembga's characters Tambu and Nyasha. It almost seems that the novel offers Nyasha as a warning against an overly heightened self-awareness and noncompliance. However, as much as readers may congratulate Tambu on her victory over the forces at play in her world, they cannot like Tambu at Sacred Heart ignore Nyasha, who though tragic also displays a compelling strength. She is a part of Tambu, and she demands to be noticed. Thus, while Dangarembga has initially used the stark contrast between the girls to simplify a complicated issue, the characters grow more complex and intermingled over the course of the novel, resulting in mixed and perhaps irreconcilable feelings for readers. Tambu preserves her identity and Nyasha destroys hers, but self-preservation and self-destruction are not categories. They are outcomes of the same institution, an institution that leaves a tragic paradox of growth and ruin in its wake.

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Self as Religion in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

LAUREN RANDALL

English 4470: Postcolonial Texts, Summer 2017

Nominated by: Dr. Alpana Sharma

Lauren Randall is working on her Bachelor of Arts in English Literature in the college of Liberal Arts at Wright State University. She hopes to graduate in 2019 and begin work on her Master's degree.

Lauren notes:

Dr. Sharma's Postcolonial Texts course gave me the opportunity to read an incredible Zimbabwean writer, NoViolet Bulawayo. Bulawayo's debut novel gave me much to consider in terms of innovative writing. Her shifting use of language and re-purposing of Western symbols really interested me, and this paper examines Bulawayo's use of these elements of style.

Dr. Sharma notes:

In this essay, Lauren shows how a breakdown in the belief in the Christian God in NoViolet Bulawayo's novel *We Need New Names* leads to the protagonist's renewal of faith in herself. As the world around her implodes and modern-day Zimbabwe collapses under the political regime of Robert Mugabe (who is never named in the novel but whose baleful influence is nevertheless assumed), "Bulawayo juxtaposes human endurance and the absence of a helpful god to achieve commentary on Darling's fortitude and resilience." The essay presents several original insights and offers a sensitive and highly nuanced picture of the divided colonial legacy of Christianity in Zimbabwe.

Self as Religion in
NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

In NoViolet Bulawayo's novel *We Need New Names*, Darling, the female protagonist from Zimbabwe, grapples with her belief in God, who she claims "doesn't even do anything to show that he is a god," (Bulawayo 139). Zimbabwe is in a post-colonial state of affairs in which indigenous African rituals and religious practices are denounced as pagan. Religion is mentioned repeatedly throughout the novel, and numerous references are made to Jesus Christ as well as other pillars of the Christian faith. The connotations of the Christian ideologies can be read beyond the literal associations, however, and seen as representative of Darling's own sustainability, sense of survival, and endurance. As critic Wole Soyinka mentions in his book *Myth, Literature and the African World*, the traditional epics of past African literature have mingled a protagonist's personal journey with a "cosmic context of his existence," often illustrated by a confrontation with the Gods (Soyinka 3). However, in contemporary African literature, as in *We Need New Names*, the protagonist often experiences a confrontation with the self in the absence of God or cosmic intervention. The pervasive undercurrent of divine indifference which exists for Darling amid harrowing circumstances symbolizes Darling's belief in herself and her assuredness in the continuous, if not always consistent, improvement of her own life. Direct reference is made to a passive and ignorant God during times of great psychological struggle or reflection for Darling--a fact which lends credence to the argument that Bulawayo juxtaposes human endurance and the absence of a helpful God to achieve commentary on Darling's fortitude and resilience.

We Need New Names revolves around the life of young Darling, a Zimbabwean child who is accustomed to a post-colonial climate. Darling exists within a context of western involvement and longs to travel to the United States, live with her Aunt Fostalina, and gain an education. The more nuanced underbelly of the story explores Darling's navigation through the differences of interaction between herself and others.

Darling resides in the ironically named shantytown of Paradise, to which she and others have been forced by the government to relocate. According to Darling, Paradise is a place wherein residents recite "meaningless prayers," (Bulawayo 21). Their meaninglessness is due to the fact that their speakers occupy a space in which God neither lives nor listens. Darling bristles at the thought of a god who punishes many, herself included,

for the transgressions of some, which feeling is made evident when she states that "[she herself] wasn't there when it all happened, so how can [she] be a sinner?" (21). This quote speaks to Darling's desire for agency in her life. The desire engenders Darling's mental rebellion against the vicarious punishment she receives for crimes uncommitted, and this same desire fosters her disdain for the uncontrollable surroundings in which she dwells. Darling is able to critically and consciously inquire into the validity of the realm of the divine, and in doing so, she comes to the conclusion that perhaps she is better equipped than a distant (western) deity to judge her own actions.

Christianity had been introduced to indigenous people by the missionary presence of colonialism, and as noted by Jesse Ndwiga Kanyua Mugambi in his book *Critiques of Christianity in African Literature*, the religious influence has subsequently spread into many aspects of native life. The missionary enterprise which presented itself in the African context did much to divide those who embraced such indoctrination and those who resisted it or wholly refused to participate in it. In *We Need New Names*, Mother of Bones is a member of the camp who chooses to abide by the "norms of conduct set for them by the missionaries who introduced Christianity," (Mugambi 1). Mother of Bones and the other attendees of the mountaintop church find themselves immersed in the ideology, while the children instead find solace in their pseudo-political games. When Darling notes that Mother of Bones speaks as if she knows God, it is clear that Darling does not share in this sentiment. She likens God to a child, as when Bulawayo writes "Mother of Bones said God like she knew God personally, like God was not even something bigger than the sky," but as if he were a boy that Darling herself may have encountered at any point in Paradise, a boy who "spoke with a stammer and played Find bin Laden with us," (94). Darling describes knowing God as being comparable to knowing a child in her own group of friends. Darling creating a version of God who is reflective of Zimbabwean children like herself accentuates two points of interest: first, the fact that the children have the least agency or autonomy of anyone in the novel and second, the difference in experience of the post-colonial climate among adults and children in the novel, even as they exist in the same setting. The use of comparison in this instance further illustrates how Darling and her friends are navigating the circumstances under which they live. While the adults do their best to change what they can politically, as well as consciously or subconsciously Africanizing the Christianity that has been imposed on the area, the children in Paradise instead choose to play games such as Find bin Laden, in which they are the powerful and conquering heroes. The children

see themselves in a position that God has hitherto abandoned: the savior. Darling displays no enthusiasm toward a cosmic connection. Instead, she exchanges the vast, "infinite grandeur" of the conventional God for "the tangible, the immediate," image of someone she might know, someone like herself, whom she could conceivably relate to, collude and dream with, in order to reach the goal of circumstantial improvement (Soyinka 4).

The conflation of Darling and other Zimbabwean children with God occurs explicitly in numerous instances in the novel. Darling thinks of Jesus being photographed in the same way she thinks of herself being photographed in that "[Jesus] really wanted to look nice in the picture," smiling shyly as Darling herself has been taught to do in front of the NGO people's cameras (Bulawayo 25). Darling goes on to reveal that she has painted Jesus's eyes "brown like [hers] and everybody's, to make him normal," further associating herself with God in a physical capacity. Finally, Darling asserts that "When [she is] on Fambeki like this [she] feels like [she is] God, who sees everything," (36). Darling is looking down at Paradise and suddenly everything down below seems beautiful to her. This is due in no part to her feeling closer to God, but rather due to her own vantage point, through both literal and psychological lenses. While atop the mountain, Darling is no longer among the ramshackle shelters below but is instead seeing them from a distance, enabling her to temporarily see the landscape as the background of a painting instead of the foreground of her own life. The setting of this chapter, one of religious practice, illustrates the parallel Bulawayo presents throughout the novel; that is, Darling experiencing a transformative and revelatory moment as she occupies the position of her own version of God.

Darling's perception of God remains relatively consistent until the final of three prose-poetry chapters which are narrated in the first person plural, containing no explicit statement about who is delivering the information. Regardless of whether or not one assumes Darling to be the narrator in this chapter, entitled "The Way They Lived," the mention of God is significant in what it reveals about the immigrant experience that Darling, among others, navigates throughout the novel. The narrator of the chapter is speaking on behalf of all who have endured the plight of displacement, voluntary or involuntary, and in doing so illuminates a final example of the contention between Darling and the God she feels has been indifferent. The chapter depicts the psychological turmoil that exists for those who have left their homes, struggled to assimilate, and resigned themselves to certain

Americanized beliefs and experiences; this all within the context of God being either present or absent under the circumstances. In Paradise and innumerable other similar shantytowns, as conditions worsened, inhabitants thought it better to be under their own governance, if not politically then at least spiritually, as opposed to being indebted to a pitiless, deaf God. However, upon arrival in America, the material abundance was proof to immigrants of a divine existence, one who represented prosperity in the country to which they had travelled. Bulawayo writes a passage which makes unmistakable the conflation of God and money, when the narrator states that "In God We Trust too now, In God We Trust for real," (241). The association made between religion and sustainability for the immigrants is demonstrative of a sort of inverse of the theme that exists throughout the rest of the novel; that is, one of personal progression which coincides with a lack of cosmic intervention. In this instance, God must exist because things have improved, when in reality, what Darling maintains from the start of the novel remains true: she and others like her were able to assess, survive, and extricate themselves from the situations they were in for one reason or another. The successes to this end are due to a thriving belief in the abilities of the immigrants to persevere, as Darling has done throughout. Bulawayo achieves this commentary through her use of juxtaposition of religion and endurance on the part of Darling and others in the African diaspora observed in the novel.

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Gone with the Wind

MIKE FALLEN

REL 2040: Bible, Qur'an and Western Culture, Spring 2018

Nominated by: Dr. Mark Verman

Mike Fallen is an English major at Wright State University. He likes to write and offers this quote from Thoreau to describe himself: "Here is life, an experiment to a great extent yet untried by me."

Mike notes:

I was interested in the ways in which Konoletch employed wind as an analogy for the ephemeral view of human nature he finds in Ecclesiastes.

Dr. Verman notes:

This essay is in response to an assignment that required students to select a short book of the Bible and discuss it in two parts. The first section offers an academic appreciation and analysis of the work. In part two students were challenged with imagining that they were a disciple of the author of the book and were asked to compose a funeral eulogy for their recently deceased teacher. Mike's wonderful essay on Ecclesiastes, a biblical meditation on the meaning of life, is consistently engaging. At times lyrical in phrasing, it is both evocative and insightful--a joy to read.

Gone with the Wind

Life is short. As the universal time-scale stretches further and further – back to whatever caused our universe-sized vortex of planets, stars, atoms and dust – the human time-scale shrinks. The universe is purportedly 13.8 billion years old. The average life-span for a male in western society ranges from 70-80 years, a drop in the bucket. Every action a man takes in his life won't affect the motion of the cosmos. Science tells us everything tends towards entropy. The universe will eventually turn back to meaningless information in the form of heat. So why bother? Man's attempts to stay are as fleeting and futile as his attempts to control the wind.

What exactly is futility? Existentialist philosophers, like Albert Camus, have tried defining it. Camus provides his definition in the form of allegory. *The Myth of Sisyphus* places Sisyphus in an eternal toil imposed by the Gods for his failure to find meaning in life. He is tasked with spending his time pushing a boulder up a hill only to have it roll back down again. Sisyphus toils away knowing that nothing will come of it.

The Book of Ecclesiastes agrees with Camus' definition of futility. In Ecclesiastes the Hebrew word, "hevel" is often translated as futility, or, in an equally common translation, vanity. But no word truly captures this sensation. Kierkegaard used despair, dread, and anxiety. Camus used absurdity. Nietzsche used Nihilism and aphorisms. But, perhaps hevel is best captured by the metaphor for the flight of the wind employed in Ecclesiastes.

"Southward blowing, turning northward, ever turning blows the wind; on its rounds the wind returns" (EC 1:6). What effect can man, in all his endeavors, have on the wind? What are man's actions but various wind-like twists and turns. The book of Ecclesiastes seeks to answer this question. It answers with a firm rejection of man's ability to cause lasting change on earth. Ecclesiastes makes the claim that, "All is futile" (EC 1:2).

Ecclesiastes is self-attributed to "Koheleth." Who was Koheleth? The text marks him as, "son of David, king in Jerusalem" (EC 1:1). Scholars agree that this Koheleth is intended to be Solomon. Koheleth in Hebrew, is not a name, but a noun signifying, according to JSB an "Assembler."¹ Assembler here meaning an assembler of utterances, or possibly someone who

¹ JSB 1602
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assembles people to read Ecclesiastes. According to Ehrman, Koheleth could also mean simply “preacher” or “teacher.”²

But, Koheleth cannot be Soloman. Both JSB and Ehrman, and the scholars they cite, agree that the book was written after the reign and life of Soloman. Ehrman says, “There is no way [Koheleth] actually was Solomon.”³ Ehrman cites anachronistic Aramaic and Persian vocabulary, as well as themes from the book which seem to derive from later “Hellenistic” philosophical traditions.⁴ The desperate themes explored in the book also contribute to its questionable heritage. The book does not seem to jive with the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures. It’s canonization within the Hebrew Scriptures is, according to Crenshaw in *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, likely a result of the book’s epilogue, which, “removed the sting from Qohelet’s skepticism and advocated traditional views concerning observance of Torah.”⁵ The epilogue will be treated in greater detail later. Exploring a sort-of ancient Pascal’s wager, Ecclesiastes seeks to show that our material, earthly, existence is fleeting and futile. Rather than instantiating hope for the future of the children of Israel, Ecclesiastes denies material gain and places the question of an Afterlife in brackets. Koheleth poses the rhetorical question, “What real value is there for a man in all the gains he makes beneath the sun?” (EC 1:3). The readers are prompted to silently answer: none.

Koheleth has seen the world and searched for wisdom across the earth. He searched for it in “merriment” (EC 2:1). Koheleth is left with the question, “What good is that?” (EC 2:2). Chapter 2 seeks to list Koheleth’s various attempts to “learn which of the two was better for men to practice in their few days of life under heaven” (EC 2:3) He tries to acquire material possessions. He tries food. He tries concubines. He tries ranching. Over and over, he likens each of these attempts to a “pursuit of the wind” (2:26).

So, according to Ecclesiastes, why bother? “Appreciate your vigor in the days of your youth,” answers Koheleth. Ehrman says, Koheleth’s answer is “We should live life to the fullest as long as we can.”⁶ Hedonism seems to

² Ehrman 203

³ Ehrman 203

⁴ Ehrman 203

⁵ Harper’s 520

⁶ Ehrman 204

be the answer. What does it mean to live life to the fullest? Koheleth says, “the only good a man can have under the sun is to eat and drink and enjoy himself. That much can accompany him, in exchange for his wealth, through the days of life that God has granted him under the sun” (EC 8:15). If everything beneath the sun is fleeting like the wind, all one can do is enjoy oneself.

The Hebrew God is portrayed very differently in Ecclesiastes than elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures. In Genesis, God walks among Adam and Eve and creates the earth. He instructs Abraham to sacrifice his son, turns someone to a pillar of salt, and rains fire down on Sodom and Gomorrah. In Ecclesiastes, there’s no doubt of his existence, but his hand in affecting the movement of human beings is restricted only to giving them life. God’s hands are folded in his lap. He is patiently watching mankind as they toil away in *hevel*, in futility, in vanity.

Ecclesiastes holds God at arm’s length until finally, in the last words, Koholeth says, “The sum of the matter, when all is said and done: revere God and observe His commandments! For this applies to all mankind.” Uphold His commandments? The last verses of Ecclesiastes ring like a discordant note compared to the harmony of the rest of the book. According to JSB and Ehrman, this discordance is owed to a “later orthodox editor.” Koholeth did not write the ending. But, this supposition begs the question “Why would a later orthodox editor want to include the book of Ecclesiastes in the corpus of the Hebrew Scriptures?”

Camus, Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky, and Kierkegaard all reached the same conclusion as the writer of Ecclesiastes. But, each of them rejects suicide, rejects a hatred of human existence, and instead, in their own ways, revolts against this conclusion. Camus finds Sisyphus happy. Nietzsche encourages us to transcend a priestly morality. Dostoyevsky’s Ivan Karamozov dies. Kierkegaard remains a Christian. Koholeth’s wisdom leads him to seek deep enjoyment from life. The later orthodox editor must have included Ecclesiastes alongside Genesis, Exodus, and the whole corpus of the Hebrew Scriptures, to inculcate readers and future generations from succumbing to *hevel*, this much is obvious. But, according to Ehrman, the later addition “provided a means for interpreting everything that went before it, which now is read in light of the fact that there is a judgement day coming.”⁷

⁷ Ehrman 205

It would seem then, that the later orthodox editor, added their ending to discuss life after death. Modern Christians might interpret this book along the following lines: all is hevel, so uphold God's commandments and be rewarded in the afterlife for your toiling here on earth. Though the Hebrew Scriptures, analyzed separate from the New Testament, does not support this interpretation. The Hebrew Scriptural notion of the afterlife is, according to Ehrman, "a place of rest."⁸ The modern Christian interpretation must be abandoned; it was not the intention of the later orthodox editor to invoke the afterlife.

It is shocking that mankind can be so doubtful about the ultimate meaning of their earthly existence and still toil away on earth. Tragedy happens, suffering is an aspect of life, yet, here we are performing our various meaningless tasks: working, eating, procreating, writing essays. No existentialist author thinks we should ignore suffering. But, instead, they all agree that it is possible to derive morality, meaning, or purpose *from* suffering. Although our lives are filled to the brim with *hevel*, we need not despair. Koholeth takes this argument a step further. He goes on to cite all sorts of idols and ideals which enthrall mankind (wealth, sex, leisure, wisdom), and shows them all as meaningless.

The task I have been asked to carry through today is impossible. And, not only is it impossible, it is unlikely to matter to many of you, who, gathered here today, are also doing the impossible by attending the funeral of a nameless man. Surely, he was given a name at birth. Surely, he had a mother, a father, a family, somewhere. But, the call of the wind encouraged him to abandon them. He abandoned everyone and everything he couldn't heft onto his shoulders. He had no friends. He had no name. He was wholly alone.

He spent his life traveling. Whipped by the wind, he meandered as far north as Damascus, and as far south as Beersheba. Not wistfully, but solemnly. It was not pure pleasure which guided him, but a careful study of one sensation: the feeling of the wind at his back, of dust clouds hovering always close at his heels.

⁸ Ibid. 204

Contrary to his youth, his last years were spent holed away in his study. Commissioned by the King, to whom, as you all know, he was a distant relative, he spent his last three years dictating a book. The road had not left him with time to learn reading or writing, and it was only accident that I was chosen as his transcriptionist. I was sent to him and told to do exactly as he asked. When I arrived, all he asked was that I keep up.

His task, like mine, was impossible. He knew his days were numbered. At the time we began writing, his health was very poor. He would sit huddled in a chair across from my desk. He was usually wrapped in wool blankets and had a terrible cough. He shook. Though he knew his life was coming to a close, he figured he would have just enough time to finish telling me everything. The impossibility of death, though it loomed at the back of his mind, was not the most pressing impossibility he had to confront. He was being asked to translate a life swept by the wind onto a sheet of papyrus as permanent as stone.

When we started, it soon became clear that his memory had not held up. He recounted thousands of different stints in different cities. There were gaps, and long pauses while he dug down into bedrock to retrieve only a few disparate glimpses. It also became clear that the man we're gathered here today to celebrate, was a diligent and watchful man. Yet, when the time came to share what he had seen, he was left with nothing firm. He told me of great buildings he had helped build. He told me of plantations he grew from the first seed, of great riches he had gained and lost, of revelry, of friendship. And, in each of these glimmers, his memories seemed like ledger entries: this great accomplishment in this small city with this many people affected. But what would last? As he sat across from me, recounting, I watched his memories wriggle through his fingers and disappear in air.

A year into writing, he had a realization. We burned everything we had written up to the point and embarked anew. He told me that day, "We will capture the wind." For the next month, he spoke with a peculiar lucidity. Closing his eyes, he told me of the poles of life. He asked that question: What would last? He sought his answer zealously. Pleasure was futile, his youth had convinced him of that. In his mind, the space saved for his youth, was hollowed out by his pursuit of pleasure. Riches were futile. Wisdom, futile. He struggled with wisdom. It had seemed to him that the wisdom of his realization was deeply meaningful. Nothing lasts. But, how would he reconcile what seemed to him to be a bedrock truth with what that truth

revealed? He couldn't. Not for lack of trying. Not even for lack of time. There came a day, about three months ago, when I knocked on his door. He let me in, we sat down, and he told me that he had decided to stop his book, and that he believed it was finished. He saw no need for a proper ending, and I was to collect his papers, assemble them, and give them to the King. He also said that he would not claim the piece. He wanted it attributed to Qoheleth, for this is all he did, assemble a few scraps of paper.

He did not concern himself with the fame he would have received for writing his book. He would not carry any of that fame with him where he went after his death.

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The Struggle Within

ROBERT PUTHOFF

REL 2320: NonWestern Religions, Spring 2018

Nominated by: Dr. Sharon Showman

Robert Puthoff is a Wright State University student from St. Henry, Ohio who is studying Mechanical Engineering. He completed an internship at Crown Equipment Corporation in New Bremen, OH and saw the relevance for the international corporate world of this particular religion class. He has always been interested in what we gain from examining inner thought and monologue. Given his recent diagnosis of depression and anxiety disorder, his work on this paper has revealed new meaning.

Robert notes:

I hope whoever reads this takes away that you need to stay true to yourself. Anything you do in your life will have some reaction, but try and focus on how your actions can better your life, or the lives of your loved ones.

Dr. Showman notes:

In *The Struggle Within*, Bob seeks to understand basic teachings for Hindus in *The Bhagavad Gita* and then ambitiously seeks to apply some of those lessons to his own life as a college student. Bob is one of the few students who chose to read *The Bhagavad Gita*, which speaks to his ability to challenge himself academically; in addition, he also uses one of the class's textbooks to help him decipher key elements of the story. Bob's leap from *The Bhagavad Gita* into his own life experience is a tribute to his ability to look at his life and to write about it using Hindu teachings as a way to explore it and change it.

The Struggle Within

The Bhagavad Gita is a part of the Hindu epic, the Mahabharata. The translation I read is by Eknath Easwaran. *The Bhagavad Gita* is the story of a prince named Arjuna and his inward struggle to fight or not to fight in battle. Along the way, Arjuna is counseled by Lord Krishna, who in Hinduism is the deity that represents compassion and love. The entire story revolves around metaphors for real people going through everyday struggles, and it serves as a guide to those practicing Hinduism as to how they should lead their lives. The aspects of the Bhagavad Gita I will be touching on are the battle within (the struggle to know one's dharma), how to fulfill one's dharma, and The Field and The Knower. Throughout this reflection paper, I will use the teachings of Krishna and try to apply them to stories from my life and then use the teachings to see how I can change my future.

The first aspect I would like to discuss is the element of the battle. The battle is between two sides, the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Arjuna is brought to the battle by Krishna, but as they approach, Arjuna realizes that he has family and friends on both sides of the battle. As they get closer, Arjuna also sees that his side does not have the overwhelming majority of participants as he had thought initially. With these realizations, Arjuna desponds and throws down his weapon because he no longer wishes to go into battle. Krishna advises him to push on and engage in the battle, saying, "One believes he is the slayer, another believes he is the slain. Both are ignorant; there is neither slayer nor slain ... As one abandons worn-out clothes and acquires new ones, so when the body is worn out a new one is acquired by the Self, who lives within" (Easwaran 90). This quote leads me to think of the battle as a metaphor for a person's inner battle. Krishna is telling Arjuna to do what he must do, to follow his dharma, but this is difficult for Arjuna because of how it will affect others in his life. He feels the outside pressure to not hurt the people around him. Krishna is telling Arjuna that, in the end, it does not matter since the body is merely mortal but the soul endures. These mortal issues should not hinder Arjuna from defeating evil and restoring good. Everyone--at some point in their life--has felt a pressure like this, a pressure to do what the people around them think that they should do instead of doing what they think it right for them. The example in my life that relates to this is when I was initially choosing my college major. When I first went to college, I wanted to study physics. I enjoyed physics and was good with mathematics, but my mother insisted that I study something

with better job prospects. I gave into that pressure and eventually chose engineering. Can I say either path is definitively the correct one for me? No, but the outside pressure did influence my decision-making process. Now that Krishna is telling Arjuna to follow his dharma, the next question is how does one follow one's own path?

In Hinduism, dharma is one's duty to fulfill social and religious obligations in life (Morgan 38). Krishna tells Arjuna that, as a warrior, not engaging in the battle would be a violation of his dharma. On the subject of following one's dharma Krishna says, "Seek refuge in the attitude of detachment and you will amass the wealth of spiritual awareness. Those who are motivated only by desire for the fruits of action are miserable, for they are constantly anxious about the results of what they do. When consciousness is unified, however, all vain anxiety is left behind" (Easwaran 94). To me this quote is saying that one should not be worried with the results of what we must do; suffering comes when the person is fixated upon only the results. I think that Krishna is also trying to say that material attachment is not helpful when following your dharma. In a different chapter in the book, I also found this quote from Krishna "It is better to perform one's own duties imperfectly than to master the duties of another. By fulfilling the obligations he is born with, a person never comes to grief. No one should abandon duties because he sees defects in them. Every action, every activity, is surrounded by defects as a fire is surrounded by smoke" (262). I felt that this was applicable to the section about following one's dharma because it teaches that each person has his/her own path. Moreover, each person's path is unique and that he/she should not try to follow someone else's dharma. It is better to try to follow your path and fail than to follow someone else's and succeed. This quote also highlights that, along this path, mistakes will be made, and that it is okay to make those mistakes. Fire produces smoke, but does that mean that the fire is not doing what it is supposed to be doing? To me this whole section is a reminder to be comfortable and confident with your essential self. You do not need to strive to be someone else or to try and be anything that you are not. It also speaks to me about the success in failure; just because someone fails at something does not mean that he/she is bad, or that he/she is a failure. To me, failure is a teaching moment, and it is what you learn from that failure, and how you apply it to better yourself, that can turn a failure into a success.

Finally, I wish to speak about the section called “The Field & The Knower.” The field represents the human body and the sense that it has, while the mind, or soul, is the knower. Krishna makes it clear that there is a distinction between the body and the soul. Krishna also speaks how the soul should only pursue the Self, which is the Brahman, and that to seek anything else is “ignorance.” Krishna says, “In this field arise desire and aversion, pleasure and pain, the body, intelligence, and will” (217). Krishna then explains how the truly free understand the field and can find the distinction between the soul and the body. To me this section alludes to the idea that wisdom is greater than physical prowess. The only way to transcend life and become one with the Brahman is through wisdom, and the path of ignorance is one of suffering. I believe that this is very applicable in modern times given the way people strive for beauty more than knowledge. Do not get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with being beautiful or being in very good physical shape, but the issue arises when that is your main or only objective in life. The brain is a very powerful tool, and I think it needs constant development. I think Krishna is saying that people should not worry themselves with vanity but to follow one's path towards oneness with Brahman.

Through reading *The Bhagavad Gita*, I have learned somethings I hope to take with me into the future. First, I would like to focus on how the decisions I make--no matter the choice I make--will affect the loved ones around me. I cannot dwell on this matter, because whatever path I take there will be people close to me that will support, or oppose my decision. Through the teaching of Krishna, I now know that I must do what is right for me, and the rest will figure itself out. The second teaching I will try to utilize in my future is not to fear failure. I transferred to Wright State University after being on the brink of being academically dismissed at The Ohio State University. Since then, I have been fearful of failing again, but I think that every failure is a chance to learn something new. I will never get those years and money back from my time in Columbus, Ohio, but the lessons I learned through that failure will stick with me forever. The main lesson I learned is that I need balance in my life. Overdoing anything has negative results for me, including positive things like studying. In addition, not paying attention to an aspect of my life may be damaging. Between school, work, family time, and trying to maintain a social life physical exercise was something I had disregarded. I do agree though that the attainment of physical fitness should not be driven by vanity, but should be a more noble cause. I believe that I

should try to maintain a better physical shape to prolong my time of acquiring wisdom. Obviously, there are too many teachings in *The Bhagavad Gita* for a person such as myself to follow, but these were a few of the teachings that I believe will stick the most with me.

Though *The Bhagavad Gita* may be a fable, this does not take away from its teachings--in my mind. People will take away different things, but it does have something for everyone within its pages. Through the teachings of the battle within, how to fulfill one's dharma, and The Field and The Knower, I think I will be a better person. Everyone is Arjuna, but Krishna will not always come. We must decide for ourselves what to do.

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Lessons for Life

ANDREW BECKER

REL 2320: Nonwestern Religions, Spring 2018

Nominated by: Dr. Sharon Showman

Andrew Becker is a first year student on the WSU-Lake Campus. He is majoring in business with a focus on finance and is preparing to be a financial advisor.

Andrew notes:

This reflection results from a lengthy process of reading, reflecting, writing, and revising. Working through the process of writing this paper helped me to comprehend the ways in which biases and prejudices can impact my interpretation of the truth. This understanding helps develop respect for myself and others. I hope the readers will find this reflection helpful in their own journeys of self-discovery.

Dr. Showman notes:

Andrew's paper is well structured, and it clearly shows his interaction with the material he chose to read and displays his beginning personal journey in understanding Zen Buddhism. The rewrites and editing of the paper he composed brought him closer to what he was trying to say. The final version of his writing and editing process exhibits the discipline a first-year student can master. Those who research the brain tell us that when a student makes the type of personal connection that Andrew has with the academic material the student remembers the material studied long after the class has ended.

Lessons for Life

The mind is very complex and not something that can be mastered without practice. It is easy to fall into the trap of false knowledge. Everyone has opinions and predispositions about a multitude of topics. Often it is hard to find actual truths while being blinded by these biases. I chose to read the book, *Not Always So: Practicing the True Spirit of Zen*, by Shunryu Suzuki and edited by Edward Espe Brown due to my new-found interest in Zen Buddhism. This book contains many of Suzuki's lectures on the practice of Zen Buddhism. Previously it had never occurred to me that I could be missing out on so much truth because of my own stubbornness. Putting personal beliefs aside, and being able to accept being wrong, is very difficult. Entwined with the idea of having an open mind comes having respect for all things, and seeking truth for oneself. I find that showing respect for everything and everyone makes it much easier to be open to learning. These concepts are taught heavily in *Not Always So: Practicing the True Spirit of Zen*, and they can help me and others improve our compatibility, knowledge, and overall happiness in life.

A good place to start--and a core concept in Zen Buddhism--is the idea that biases and prejudices can completely skew one's perspective on truth. In Western society there is a sharp divide that has grown over time. People believe that everything is either black or white, and right or wrong. Buddhism would say that the object of debate is neither black nor white. This prior belief of what something must be inhibits people from seeing what is truly there. Suzuki provides a good picture of this by saying "It is like drawing something on white paper; if you do not use clean white paper, you cannot draw what you want" (43). When people come into conflict with each other often it is because their paper isn't white. In other words, it is impossible to see what someone is saying while still being stuck in the mindset of having to be right and proving a point. I find this insight to be extremely powerful. Early in my high school career, I had problems with many people. It was very difficult for me to see their side of an issue and to have an open mind to differing opinions. Over the past few years I have tried to be more thoughtful and patient. The difference this effort makes is astronomical. Suzuki emphasizes the importance of this lesson even more when he says, "When you are brave enough to accept your surroundings without saying what is right and what is wrong, then the teaching that was told to you will help" (98). When entering a discussion without having a desired conclusion, it is then possible actually to benefit from the discussion.

Having a predetermined idea of what is right and wrong and being close-minded makes the interaction pointless. Everyone has different views based upon their different walks in life. Rather than looking at them critically, it is best to just listen and consider what it is they are saying. I used to feel my heart-rate jump when someone had a disagreement with me. However, now that I am able to hear what people have to say and respect it, I have become happier and more relaxed.

This idea of respect goes much deeper than just listening to people and what they have to say. In Buddhism, people are meant to respect everything in all walks of life. It is important to have respect for all things and not just those that someone deems as deserving. Disrespect can become a habit just as anything else can, and it is detrimental to the coexistence of everything on this earth. Suzuki speaks of a time when he heard the noise of chairs being pushed around from above him and says, “To push the chairs across the floor is very convenient, but it will give us a lazy feeling. Of course this kind of laziness is part of our culture, and it eventually causes us to fight with each other” (81-82). This quote really highlights the importance of having a respect that is portrayed through mindfulness. The person pushing the chairs thought nothing of it and did not intend any disrespect. However, it is the laziness to not think of how it could bother someone or how it is not a kind way to treat even an object that makes it disrespectful. This idea spoke to me because of how I feel it translates to current time. Disrespectfulness by being lazy is evident in today’s society. Companies pollute the air and dump their garbage freely. Forests are torn down and nature is ruined to build new places to live. These things happen without any disrespectful intent. People don’t do these things because they intend to be disrespectful, or because they are bad people. Once again, these decisions are made based upon people being too lazy to think of an alternative way of doing things and taking the necessary action. On a much smaller scale, I can apply this teaching by not acting out of convenience. Whether it is finding a trash can rather than littering or staying quiet while the people I live with sleep, working on my mindfulness and respect could have a positive impact on who I am as a person.

In Buddhism, mindfulness does not apply solely to respect and taking care of all things. Mindfulness also applies to the idea of karma. What seems like a small decision or bad choice can grow to be much worse in its effect if not carefully thought through. Suzuki states, “Karma starts from small things, but with neglect your bad karma will accelerate” (21). Suzuki is

alluding to the fact that people are faced with many decisions in life, many of which have a morally right and wrong alternative. While making the wrong choice on a minor issue might not seem like a big deal, it can grow into much more. If making the wrong decision is okay in some circumstances, then it is hard to figure out where to draw the line. If there is no definitive line, then that allows people to keep pushing farther in farther in the wrong direction. In Buddhist teachings, this push in the wrong direction will provide bad karma and prevent enlightenment. I can apply it to my life when it comes to being the person I want to be. There are so many opportunities as a young person, and throughout life, to make the wrong decision. At first the decision could be just to call off work for no reason or say something rude to a peer. While this might not seem like a big deal, the line of what is “okay” to do can just keep getting pushed back farther and farther. Without mindfulness and self-awareness, it is easy to fall into that trap. *Not Always So: Practicing the True Spirit of Zen*, gives me something to think back to when presented an opportunity to make the decision. Whether the objective is enlightenment or just being a good person, this lesson is extremely important to take to heart.

It is easy to unintendedly inhibit myself when it comes to doing the right thing and the same goes for obtaining knowledge and wisdom. The easiest option is to be spoon fed information and ask someone what they think. However, *Not Always So: Practicing the True Spirit of Zen* provides a great deal of context as to what human habits are common and why it is important to break them. Suzuki exuberates on the laziness of people while trying to obtain knowledge by stating, “Usually you will try to solve your difficulty in the best way as soon as possible. Rather than studying for yourself, you ask someone why you have a problem” (72). Suzuki is illustrating the fact that people are more prone to get their answer the easiest way than to actually search for it themselves. I had a time in my life when I was trying to decide whether I wanted to continue playing baseball. I had played for fifteen years and my decision was not easy. The natural choice for me to make was to talk to my friends and teammates and see what their perspective was on the situation. Most of them were urging me to keep playing and their reasoning made sense. However, despite all their reasons and advice as to why I should play, I was not content and eventually decided against it. I can draw significant ties to the teachings of Buddhism when it comes to how I made this decision. Suzuki states, “If a Zen master drinks sake, you may think the best way to obtain enlightenment is to drink sake. But even though you drink a lot of sake, as he does, you will not obtain enlightenment” (73). He really does an amazing job of portraying the fact that the only way to find what is

being searched for is through personal experiences and thought. I was never going to find the answer of whether I should keep playing baseball from someone else. As Buddhism teaches, my own experiences and thought could guide me to the right choice *for me*.

Finding personal truth is certainly a key to enlightenment and happiness in Buddhism, but living in the moment is just as important. Buddhism addresses the fact that people spend so much time worrying about tomorrow, next week, or even next year that they let so many present moments slip by. It is not hard for me to think back and recall the many times that I couldn't truly enjoy what I was partaking in--strictly due to being worried about moments in time far ahead of me. Suzuki enlightens people on the importance of moments by saying, "we say, 'Even in a snap of your fingers there are millions of instants of time.' This way we can emphasize the feeling of existing in each instant of time. Then your mind is very quiet" (5). It is important to remember that the ultimate goal in Buddhism is to achieve enlightenment. This quote stresses the fact that it is impossible to keep a quiet mind while worrying about things in the future. Without a quiet mind Buddhists cannot acquire the self-awareness and the knowledge it takes to reach enlightenment. Whether or not the goal is to reach enlightenment, the premise of the teaching doesn't change. If there are thousands of moments within a snap of the fingers, it is crazy to imagine how many moments slip by because of an overly active mind. I use this mindset when it comes to school and work. Recently I have been trying not to stress about having to complete work by certain due dates and about what job offer I am going to receive after college. The only way for me to obtain the best results for myself in this regard is to clear my mind so that I can give my best at what I do now rather than waste my energy worrying.

It is sad to think that people overlook the lessons of religions such as Buddhism due to having different beliefs. Buddhism provides a gateway to not only personal knowledge and happiness but even to improving the world. Practicing Buddhists' deep respect and ability to seek their own truth could have a great impact on the western world. Rather than having a dualistic point of view and trying to solve everything through conflict, Buddhism teaches that having an open mind is important. During a time when respect and virtue seem to be fading away, it is quite possible that everyone needs a bit more Buddhism in their life.

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Polybius

KATELIN BRANHAM

ENG 4830: Advanced Fiction Writing Seminar, Spring 2018

Nominated by: Dr. Erin Flanagan

Katelin Branham is a student in the college of Liberal Arts. She intends to become an author and editor later in life. For now, she enjoys reading, writing, and (of course) video games.

Katelin notes:

I've always been interested in urban legends. For a long time, I had the idea of a kid running into the mythical arcade game, Polybius, but never put it down on paper. A song inspired me to put a twist on the point of view, and the story took on a life of its own.

Dr. Flanagan notes:

This story brought me back to my video-game days—the roll of the joystick in my twelve-year-old palm, the smell of adolescent sweat, and the dizzying belief the game was out to get me. Now I'm wondering if that might have been true. Branham's story delves deep into its main character's consciousness to extract complicated questions about competition and friendship, the relationship between humans and technology, and the chilling question of what it means to be alive. Branham trusts her readers to keep up and crack the codes of the story, and what we're rewarded with is both a wild fantasy and a nightmare. Keep your coins in your pockets, kids. This one will turn you upside down.

Polybius

The only two people I ever really cared for were the manager and MLY. Everyone else just moved past in a slow parade of faces staring into my own. Few stood out. And among those, even fewer impressed me enough to remember--and think of--during those long busy summer days and vacant nights.

One of the first kids I met that made an impression came around right after the arcade opened. His name was NOA and he had serious, searching dark eyes. His hands, smooth and wide, seemed to have been made for analog sticks and that poised rest position between buttons I always saw in the kids, the ones who were naturals. And NOA was a natural. He was great at Galaga, fantastic at Frogger, the best at Berzerk, and just really, *really* good at Duck Hunt. The younger kids would follow him from game to game watching him play when he came around, and he was cool about it. Maybe that was why I started to hate him.

I tried to challenge him more than I did other players. He handled each curve expertly, with grade schoolers piled around him the way pigeons would crowd a park bench. That was when I put it together--all those kids were following him, talking to him, paying attention to *him*. That wasn't what I wanted. But NOA kept coming back, each time growing more nonchalant about how good he was at every game. That was the first time a player ever made me angry.

The next time NOA came around was one of the last. Kids would always pull him towards me; I was popular, rightfully so. Other games had flat colors and cartoonish illustrations, but the neon eye and nerve decals on the sides of my cabinet almost glowed, even in the middle of the afternoon, and never faded. Even the smart kids, the ones who knew that toxic creatures were marked by nature with unnaturally bright colors, were drawn in. NOA was smart before all that happened--but he didn't respect me like I felt he should have, so when he came around to play again, I showed those dark searching eyes of his something secret behind my screen.

After that he stopped scoring so well. Eventually his hands shook so badly he could hardly put a quarter in the machine right. By the end of the summer he wasn't even able to play Centipede--not without trembling and getting a migraine bad enough to make him retch. He never came back after

that, and eventually his score dropped lower and lower on my leaderboard until it was erased entirely. Maybe if NOA had been more grateful for his skill with video games I wouldn't have had to do that to him.

"Where's your big brother, Caden?"

"He's home sleeping. Mom said I shouldn't bother him."

"All he does is sleep anymore. I wish he'd come back and show me how to get two ships in Galaga again."

Another time I had to do something like that but not with a player--it was with another game. I've never doubted or questioned my popularity. It was my due, and was a comfortable constant, even as they wheeled out the aging and unpopular games and replaced them with newer ones. But across the aisle from me was Frogger. Frogger, with its stupid tie and briefcase. Frogger, that made the kids screech with laughter every time their friend's frog was flattened. Frogger, with its turtles and logs and traffic that *somehow* managed to be more enticing than me--but only sometimes.

So one morning as the old man unlocked the place and got everything ready, I stared Frogger down. It looked blankly back at me, unfazed. I sent a thought out into the floor through my power cord and it wormed its way through the wires back out into Frogger's chassis, and the screen started to warp. It flashed once, twice, and smoke began to leak from the service door on its back. The manager only noticed when the panel burst open with a bang. He never knew much about how to actually work on arcade games--he only knew how to make change quickly and how to lock and unlock doors. All he could do was put an out of order sign on Frogger's monitor. He didn't know that I had been the one to kill it. And I hadn't even needed a car.

"Dude, where'd Frogger go?"

"I dunno. Who cares, that's a baby game."

"Yeah but I had the number four high score on it."

For a couple summers after that, things were just fine- idyllic, even. The manager smiled at kids and pumped quarters out of his moneychanger in return for dollar bills, and if he accidentally counted wrong and gave them an extra one nobody seemed to mind. They brought in a pinball machine. Berzerk and Rampage and Pole Position got moved out, taken somewhere I never had to worry or think about. They brought in Street Fighters and X-Men and Battletoads to replace them. After watching those for a few days, I made my own 2-player mode.

Some older kids would swear I didn't always have 2-player mode. They were right, but to them it didn't make sense that an arcade game could create its own software independent of that ingrained in it during manufacturing. But I could, and I did, almost every time someone played me. I think that was why I was so popular, among the many other reasons--kids would come and play and find the levels changing as they went through them, changing purposefully. I was intent on seeing who could think on their feet and who couldn't. There were no patterns like in Galaga--just entry stages to gauge my player's skill and then the real game. 2-player mode was much the same.

“Man, I spent all my allowance trying to win the crane game.”

“At least you get an allowance. My parents don't give me jack.”

“So you can't let me borrow any? I wanted to win that dog for Sadie.”

MLY first came to the arcade the same summer Atari's Batman game did. She didn't have any interest in that, though. She liked the skill crane--or maybe she liked looking at the prizes inside. All the kids did, though none of them could get the trinkets outside of their smudged plastic prison. MLY was no exception. Looking back, I don't think she was particularly good at *any* game. But when she first stepped up to play me, I saw her hand fall back to that familiar resting position. Her marble blue eyes were wide, gaping even, snatching up every pixel I put on the screen. And I was glad. I was always happy when a kid narrowed their focus down to me exclusively, but now I was *gleeful*.

She was bad at it. She was incredibly bad. I didn't know her name for weeks. But that didn't stop her, which was what I loved. She kept coming back even though she lost every time. And every time she lost, her score was a bit higher. Every time she made it a bit farther. I think I was more excited to see her getting better at it than she was. But she was excited too--I registered that she had a gap in her teeth. She wore ribbons in her hair that were pale blue like her eyes. I'd never had a favorite before, but once she came around I did. And the day she beat the tenth highest score on my leaderboard I learned her name: MLY.

The kid whose score had been knocked off, JAX, wasn't very happy about it. No kid ever was. But that was fine, because it would make most come back again and again to try getting that coveted spot back. Kids were predictable, and that made my life so much easier. I felt untouchable in a way; their success was completely on me. They were lucky I was so fair about

everything- didn't they realize how easy it would have been for me to make them all lose the first stage, to just rob them of those precious quarters? My saintly generosity has to be among my best traits.

"Haha, dude, you got knocked off the board by a little girl."

"Shut up! At least I can get onto a board in the first place."

"Yeah, Mickey. The only thing you're good at is picking your nose."

Then along came JME.

"Man I hate that kid. But I wanna watch him play."

"It's hard to see 'cause he's so tall. Plus his butt sticks out."

"I changed my mind."

JME played a lot, and he was good, but he lacked the tact that NOA had once had. I suppose I liked him, but he seemed like nothing to me. He was not dexterous. His eyes were dull. Blunt. Hungry. They ate but they didn't taste, and they *never* gave thanks for their meal. In hindsight, I should have seen all that earlier. But I was too preoccupied with his scores to give it much thought. One of my few mistakes I'm humble enough to admit.

He was coarse, but maybe I'd just been spoiled by MLY, who always went right for the bathroom before playing any games to wash her hands. JME didn't seem to be on very good terms with soap, and he had a gangly frame that seemed to impose itself on a lot of the boys in the arcade eventually. MLY was short in comparison; so short that if she were any shorter, she'd need a stool to play. She looked up at my screen, but JME looked down, hunched over my cabinet as if he were taking a test and was bent on preventing others from peeking.

JME didn't care about JAX's score getting knocked off, and he didn't care when MLY went on to take out BRD and JWB. JME had the three highest scores on my board (29,870, 28,560, and 26,990) and paid no mind to a little girl who had just broken seventh place (with 16,960). Maybe he saw it as beneath him. Odds were he was too dumb to notice any change that didn't affect him. As he blundered up and down the aisles, I was happily tracking MLY's progress in the game. That must have been what pride felt like, pride in something other than yourself, anyway. I liked it. I liked it a lot.

"That game over there keeps giving my quarters back to me."

"Which one? Polybius?"

"Yeah. It sucks. I wanna play it."

Even though MLY was easily my favorite player, I never made my game easier for her. That was my favorite part of the whole thing, anyway, ratcheting up the difficulty to see which players could handle the heat and which ones couldn't. It was a test of reflexes and wit, and seeing MLY succeed made me happy--a feeling that, until then, was by and large unfamiliar. When she lost she never shouted or stomped, just furrowed her brow in thought and then wandered away. And when she came back, whether it was in half an hour or the next day, she never made the same mistake again.

I'll admit I started feeding quarters back to some kids, ones that I remembered were no good at my game. I didn't see it as a particular loss. If they were going to get better, they would have by now. And besides, they'd still use the quarters, just at other games, so there was no need for the manager to be upset at all. Between you and me, I don't know why he wanted those quarters so badly if all he did was give them back to kids the next day. But it wasn't his job to make sense. All he had to do was unlock the doors for kids to come in and play.

"Nuh-uh, that game's weird. I hate all the eyeballs."

"I think it's cool. I hope they make like a movie or a comic book about it."

"Maybe they will. So weirdos like you can go see it."

JME noticed when MLY took off his third place score. He was angry. I, on the other hand, was elated. I played the fanfare for her twice and caused little bursts of pixels on the screen, like fireworks. She was smiling and pumping her fists in the air. Some other kids congratulated her, too; there tended to be a line by my cabinet. It was good, and I was proud, and I reveled in these new feelings I had unlocked through MLY. It was so much better than being mad, like I had been with NOA. I thought it would never stop.

But JME came up; it did.

"How'd you do that?" He said to MLY, astonished that someone else could be good at video games.

"I just play it a lot." She shrugged.

"Well so do I!" He said, and turned back to me.

I saw MLY stick her tongue out at his back and was filled with a new kind of mischievous delight. I thought about it the whole time JME played, until I noticed what he was doing.

His thick eyebrows were in a tight, tense line and stayed that way the whole time he played. And one by one he started to knock every other score off the board. After my screen lit up the neon green HI SCORE! above the counter, he'd lose on purpose and then start again. I thought he couldn't keep it up, but he did- according to the kids watching, JME "mowed lawns," so he had a lot of quarters. Then I felt an old familiar anger. Did he think this was a game? Well, maybe it was, but it was my entire life, and I wasn't going to just let him erase other people's hard work because he was mad at a little girl.

After fishing around in his jeans for another quarter, JME put it in the coin slot. He had a stupid look of confusion on his face when I gave it back.

"Oh it does that to me all the time!" A kid in back said.

"Not me!" JME said.

I gave him his quarter back again and again, and then he did something that I had only ever seen happen to other games: he kicked me in the side, and I was consumed with a glowing white rage. I switched to the high score table.

"What the hell?" JME yelled. He gripped my molding with his big sweaty hands. I kept showing him the high scores. All of his names were gone, every one- even the ones MLY hadn't beaten yet. She was on top, with nine other kids who'd been knocked off prior.

"What the *hell?*" He repeated.

"Hey," said a kid who had pushed their way up. "There's my old score!"

It was indeed their old score. I glared the screen at JME, daring him to do something. I wanted him to, for some reason. I wanted a kid to test me, like NOA had, but worse, I wanted him to actively fight me. I wanted to put him in his place so the other kids could see what happened when you got greedy and ungrateful and mean like that. I wanted to make him into an example.

But he walked away, shoulders hunched and fists in his pockets. He went to gather his equally greedy ungrateful mean friends. I didn't give anyone else's quarters back after that.

"Think you can make a little kid steal the keys off the old guy's belt?"

"Sure. He's like asleep on his feet. Why though?"

"Because I want the keys. And I want you and Donnie to be in the alley tonight."

I was right. No surprise there. He came back. No surprise there, either. I told you kids were predictable. JME and his two friends snuck in about two hours after the manager locked up. He didn't seem very troubled by his missing keys; he had spares, after all. But JME had keys too, now. When I saw them come in and sneak through the mausoleum aisles of dead gray screens, I was glad.

First they unlocked the coin doors to Super Mario Bros. and Street Fighter and filled their pockets up with quarters. I didn't know what they were saying, but I heard their whispers and incessant snickering. I waited for them with a sort of patience only I could have. I never moved much in my years at the arcade, so I'd say I'm good at waiting.

"Course he's not gonna notice. We'll lock the door again."

"I guess we can just come tomorrow and leave the keys for him to find."

"Yeah, like the men's room. Jamie, what's the bat for?"

When they came near, I saw JME was holding something long and blunt. It was dented in spots, and had a dull metallic shine to it. I waited to see what he was going to do. He raised it and swung at my monitor. It bounced off with a noise I could feel in my diodes.

"Jamie, what the fuck?"

"Dude look, you didn't even crack it!"

"Well I'm gonna."

JME stopped before his second swing connected. All three of them blinked in the light of my screen when I turned it on. It was only the title screen--electric blue letters and a bleached white eye shot through with red veins. The iris was hot magenta. My theme played loud and harsh in the cemetery of the arcade. JME swung and hit my speaker grill as if to shut me up--but there was no one else around to hear me. There was no one else around to hear them.

JME, I said. Simple white on a black field.
“Those are your initials, dude!”
YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD BEAT ME.
“What the fuuuck.”

I saw something in JME’s neck move as he swallowed. His dull animal eyes were wide. There was the sound of plastic complaining as I pulled in the cords from cabinets around me. We were all plugged into the same power source- but only I needed to be on right now. They didn’t have to see this.
“What was that?”

JME didn’t respond. His eyes stayed on my screen as I pushed myself off the ground. A pillar of wires from the other games held me up, as a snake’s body would its head. One kid screamed, the other turned to run and bashed his knee against Super Metroid’s cabinet.

GAME OVER JME.

“Oh my god.” He finally said--just before my cord wrapped around his neck.

While JME hung there, clawing at his neck, I looked up to find the other two boys. I didn’t want them getting out. I didn’t have anything personal against them, so I decided I wouldn’t kill them, but I would give them a good fright. I sent a cord out to find the power strip set in the floor two aisles over.

JME kicked. His eyes bulged and strained, and his face was turning an interesting shade between red and purple. I decided I hated the feeling of his neck--like wires wound together with a greasy covering and some kind of reinforcement stuck between the two. Is that what humans were, after everything was said and done? Machines full of faux wires with not-steel supports and something like oil running through them to keep all their joints moving smoothly?

I thought on this as JME acted out his last struggles. I stared carefully at him, and he stared back, eyes beginning to gloss and spit running from the corners of his mouth--a scientist out in the field, squeezing their specimen too hard between their forceps. I decided humans were not like the immortal machine. I broke JME’s neck too easily and cast him down, like the skill crane would carelessly drop one of its stuffed prizes.

When I found the outlets in the other aisle, the cabinets on that side of the room blinked back to life. They wailed out snatches of their theme songs as I made their screens grow brighter and brighter. The older ones burst first, sending out showers of glass like sharp sparkling confetti. The smell of melting plastic and warping metal emerged, and the smoke that coiled from the broken games was black.

The cord I had used to kill JME went to find and drag back his friend who had been crawling away. The other was hiding behind the counter--why he hadn't run I didn't know--but I was glad. I grabbed him up as well and brought them both back to me. I leaned over the two, and my screen was only showing them a wide, unblinking eye. The smoke clouding the ceiling was blotted with my magenta glow. The smoke alarm didn't go off--had the manager forgotten to check up on it, or could it be that it was connected to the same power grid as the games?

In the reflections from their eyes I saw myself bounced back, between bursts of screaming static and unnamed colors and shapes non-Euclidean in nature. It was the closest to a mirror I had ever gotten--I saw myself staring back in their impossibly wide eyes and I thought I looked very good this way. When I was done looking at myself I tossed the two kids down amidst the broken, now burning, cabinets, and picked JME back up. Then I let the smoke alarm come on. The sprinklers followed shortly after--when I remembered we had them.

They attributed the fire to the two boys who survived, despite neither having tools for arson on them. They'd set the fires for fun, the chief fireman supposed, and then gotten trapped when the fire spread too fast. They were lucky to have been pulled out when they had. The trauma and the smoke inhalation had all but killed them. They both had been burned badly; one would only say "Jamie," when asked what happened; the other stayed curled up and shaking. He cried and covered his eyes whenever the lights in his hospital room were on.

It was a good thing the manager had taken insurance out before he lost himself, everyone agreed. He could afford to replace most of the games that had been lost--and the carpet on one side of the floor. Thankfully the other half of the arcade hadn't been touched. But kids always complained that the place still stunk of burnt plastic and what they assumed to be metal. The manager might have recognized it, but he doesn't do much anymore except

stare at the wall. He never came near my cabinet. He never opened up the back panel to find JME, who was doing a funny sort of contortionist's act inside. Bones bulged in his neck and his thigh where I'd had to twist him so he could fit.

MLY still has the number one high score.
