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## Engineering Toy Project &amp; Initiative

By Julia Ceglenski

**Introduction**

Our study focused on evaluating and assessing ten different engineering toys for their educational quality and functional use in a classroom setting. Toys are typically used in a household setting as entertainment outlets for kids, but we wanted to see if these particular toys could be used for teaching purposes in STEM fields. Because of their educational value and low cost, these toys are potential educational resources, not only in education systems throughout the country, but also in developing nations. One particular country we are interested in expanding a toy based lesson plan is Haiti. We were first introduced to the needs in Haiti through an organization based in Cap-Haitian, Haiti. Meds and Food for Kids, is non-profit organization that provides peanut based nutrition bars designed to battle malnutrition affecting children in Haiti, and more recently through their partnering with UNICEF, with children around the world. Through their connections to local schools and with some help from Haitian friends currently living in the United States, we hope to eventually implement select toys as educational tools in order to introduce the students to STEM subjects and foster an early foundational interest in engineering.

**Set-up**

Our project spanned approximately three months and we first began by conducting our own team assessment of each toy. Once we reached a consensus for each of our evaluation categories, our team of ten worked with about three upperclassmen to determine certain logistics and to contact local public schools. Once a date of implementation was determined, we went to the school and observed the use of these toys in the classroom and evaluated the feedback from the students.

The criteria for evaluating each toy consisted of appropriate age, interest in engineering as well as what type of engineering, language barriers, and whether or not the toy can be played in groups. This criteria was designed to test the toys on their ability to embody scientific concepts at an easily interpreted level and the ease of transferring them to country where English is not the main language. After combining all 10 individual assessments, we formulated a complete profile for each toy based on the evaluation criteria. Altogether, 9 out of the 10 toys fit the target age group, 5 of the 10 toys can be played individually, and 8 of the 10 toys can be used in groups with an average group size of 3 students. All of the toys were determined to spark an interest in engineering, but mostly towards mechanical, electrical, or civil engineering. Our initial target age group was 8-10 years old, but as the toys were evaluated, this age range seemed to be on the lower end for most of the toys, so as the project developed, we decided to test the toys on an older age range of 11-13 year olds. Almost all of the toys came with instruction manuals or practice workbooks that would need to be translated in order to fully understand the material being communicated by the toy and to properly use the toy as a teaching supplement. This causes a severe language barrier for students in countries where English is not a primary language. Thankfully most of the manufacturers can print the instructions and workbooks in other languages, though we are particularly interested in printing them in French because of our interest in implementing the toys in Haiti. The main language spoken in Haiti is Creole; however, French can be understood depending on the amount of education received and the home life of each student.

**Toy Profiles**

The 10 toys were chosen based on outside reviews and also their ability to encourage productive teamwork between students. The 10 toys decided on were: Levers, Motors and Generators, Solar Power, K'nex, Cams and Cranks, Goldie Blox, Snap Circuits Jr., Gears, Cranial Model, and Wind Power 2.0.

*1. Levers:*

Levers is a toy manufactured by Engino Toys International, which is a company that prides itself on creating toys that are centralized on basic physical concepts and engineering. This particular toy allows kids to create

simple machines such as a scale, wheelbarrow, or parking gate. Because the toy is so structured, we found that there is not much flexibility when playing with the toy without following instructions. We determined that the toy emphasizes mechanical engineering specifically and that an appropriate age range is between 10-13 years old, while the box says ages 6+. The toy comes with an interactive instruction and activity booklet with practice problems and conceptual explanations. The inclusion of such a booklet makes the toy ideal for classroom use, even though the toy is not specifically marketed towards teachers and schools. We also found that Levers is best if assembled in a group along with a discussion component in order to achieve optimal learning.

*2. Motors & Generators:*

Motors & Generators is an educational kit manufactured by Thames and Kosmos, which produces over 120 science and experimental kits in all fields of science. This toy is designed for individual use and does not teach about engineering as much as it does about electricity and magnetism. The company does do a great amount distribution to educational distributors, but mostly home-school suppliers. We determined the age range to be between 8-14 years old, which is consistent with the manufacturer's suggestion. The toy also comes with a manual that is set up experimentally and guides students through different experiments using magnets, batteries, and a hand-cranked transparent generator, stimulating an interest in electrical engineering. We determined that this toy would be most beneficial if played alone or in pairs, but teaching such concepts must include a discussion component that follows the guide book.

*3. Solar Power*

Solar Power is another experimental kit designed by Thames and Kosmos. It focuses on electrical and mechanical engineering, as well as environmental science and alternative energy, and we determined the appropriate ages would be 12+ instead of 8+ as suggested. While the kit again seems more directed to individuals, because of the assembly and difficulty level, we believe that instructor led group discussion would be the most beneficial teaching method. The toy constructs 20 different models, such as cars or airplanes, which are powered by solar cells converting solar energy into mechanical energy. They kit comes with a guided experimental booklet that allows students to see how factors such as placement angles, and different light sources affect the amount of energy available.

*4. K'nex:*

K'nex are a very well known construction toy, and are even the namesake of the company. The company also manufactures Lincoln Logs and Tinker Toys, but mostly advertises the educational value of K'nex and its various extension packets. We only evaluated a basic 52 model building set of K'nex, which includes 600 rods and connectors with pictorial instructions for building each model, and the toy does encourage free building. Most of the models are simple machines, such as a wheelbarrow, that lean towards mechanical engineering, but because the toy is so unstructured and simplistic, there is virtually no discussion component that can be factored into presenting the toy. We also determined the age range to be between 5-11 years old, which extends slightly younger than the manufacturer's suggestion of 7+. Even though the company does not include an educational activity booklet in most of its toys, it does offer lesson plans for teachers on its website for both elementary and middle schools; however, none of them were based on the specific building set we evaluated.

*5. Cams & Cranks:*

Cams and Cranks is also manufactured by Engino Toys, and is set up almost exactly the same as Levers, it simply focuses on a different mechanical concept. Students can build a pumpjack, fishing crane, or moving figure. The toy also comes with an activity and instructional booklet, that includes detailed explanations and practice problems. The inclusion of such a booklet makes the toy ideal for classroom use, and is best if assembled in a group along with a discussion component in order to achieve maximum learning. Because of the booklet and assembly required for the toy, we determined the age range to be 10-12 years old, which is a large difference from

the 6+ age advertised by the company.

6. *GoldieBlox & The Spinning Machine:*

GoldieBlox is a brand new company with an incredible goal: to spark interest in engineering in young girls across the nation, inspiring them to become future engineers by having a positive female engineering character to look up to. The design of this toy is very much directed to little girls, with pastel colors and animal figurines, and the instructions for building different models is even set up in a story book format. Our determined age range for the toy to be 4-9 years old, with focuses on mechanical and civil engineering through pulleys, levers, and spatial skills. The toy is not really designed for use in a classroom setting. Because of its format and younger age range, we believe that the toy is best used at home either individually, or between child and parent.

7. *Snap Circuits Jr.*

Snap Circuits Jr. is created by Elenco Electronics and is one of the most highly awarded educational toys, and we believe one of the best toys on the market in introducing electrical engineering concepts, such as circuits and Ohm's Law, to students. The toy comes with a building manual with over 100 different models that can be constructed and each contains experimental elements. There are many different models of Snap Circuits available, they simply become more complex circuits as the student advances. We chose Snap Circuits Jr. because its age range of 8+ coincides with our evaluation. The toy is structured enough that electrical concepts can be communicated effectively, yet flexible enough to allow students to build their own models and conduct experiments freely without following a guide. While the toy is mostly sold and advertised towards parents and children at home, we believe that it is a great toy to have in a classroom as well.

8. *Gears:*

Gears is another toy manufactured by Engino, and is in the same mechanical science series as Levers and Cams and Cranks. It focuses on a mechanism central to almost all engineering designs. Using the durable building blocks, a hand drill, helicopter, and carousel can all be built following an included instruction manual. As with the other Engino toys, it comes with a detailed activity booklet that provides explanations of the different technological principals applied and also seems too advanced for the 6+ age suggested by the manufacturer. We believe that the best age range for such a toy is 9-14 years old. The toy would also be best if used in a classroom setting, and assembled in groups with a discussion component so that there can be optimal learning about engineering.

9. *Cranial Model:*

The cranial model is a 4D modeling kit and is retailed by many different suppliers. The toy is in a puzzle format and allows students to build a mental image of the skull and brain by putting together individual pieces. The model did not come with any instructions, only small pictures, and can be a little complicated for students to put together. We determined a decent age range to be between 8-12 years old. The toy does not really teach any engineering concepts, only anatomy of the skull. The model is also very small and does not allow for any free-play and best if constructed individually.

10. *Wind Power 2.0:*

Wind Power 2.0 is also another kit manufactured by Thames and Kosmos as part of their Alternative Energy and Environmental Science series. Two different styles of windmills can be constructed using a detailed instructional manual set up in an experimental format. The gears and connecting windmill blades are quite large, and they are all constructed by the student, while attaching to a transparent generator. The toy is appropriate for students older than 8 years old and is a great model to demonstrate alternative energy concepts, because it provides a fantastic visual aid and stimulates discussion between students and teachers.

**Ladue Implementation**

After each toy had been evaluated by a majority of the group members, the initial group of 10 freshmen expanded to include a few BME upperclassmen who were interested in the future prospects of our study. Because of faculty connections and raising our target age group, we chose to implement the toys at Ladue Middle School, which is located in a nearby suburb of St. Louis. We implemented the toys in two different classes, Ms. Murphy's 6th grade science class, and Ms. Peterson's 7th grade science class. Based on our evaluations, we felt the best way to implement the toys was to begin the class period by asking the students to verbally identify a definition of what they believed engineering involved. They were then split into groups of 3-4 students per toy, and either a junior or freshman led a teamwork centered discussion about physical and engineering concepts using the toy as a visual and instructional tool. As the discussion concluded the students were asked to fill out a simple evaluation sheet created by the juniors involved. Because of time limitations and class schedules, each group of students was only able to play with two of the toys for twenty minutes each. Besides creating the middle school evaluation criteria sheets and leading group discussions, the juniors involved also coordinated with the middle school teachers about possible dates of implementation and how the toys could fit into their predetermined syllabi. An eventual date of November 24th was decided.

In the 6th grade age range of 11-12 years old, we decided to implement Cams and Cranks, Goldieblox, K'nex, Cranial Model, and Legos. We chose these toys, because each of them leaned a little more towards the younger end of our age range. We added Legos to act as a baseline for the experimental toys. Legos are classically cited as inspiring interest in engineering, so we thought it would be interesting to compare them with our toys. Legos are also known for instituting creativity, so we did not include a discussion component nor instructions with the Legos, we simply asked the students to build whatever they liked as long as the finished product could do some sort of motion or task.

In the 7th grade age range of 12-13 years old, we decided to implement Wind Power 2.0, Snap Circuits Jr., Motors and Generators, Levers, and Solar Power. We chose these toys because they went into more depth about scientific principles, but were still appropriate for the age range. The small groups were also more focused on using verbal group participation to discuss the science behind each toy and to exemplify different experiments rather than assembling the toy.

The middle school student evaluation forms were written by a few of the upper classmen, and each form was specific to the toy that the students had just finished playing with. The form included four questions that asked what the students liked and disliked about the games, what are other applications of [levers, gears, etc.], and one other specific question about the scientific concepts covered in the discussion. Most of the students were able to understand the questions and come up with the desired answers. While the likes and dislikes varied by toy, the majority of students liked working in groups and playing with the toys that were not already pre-assembled. The students were also very responsive to the discussions led by the college students and actively participated in all components.

**Conclusion**

Based on our collective observations, the 6th graders seemed to really enjoy playing with the engineering toys. The toys encouraged group work and communication between students when conducting experiments with the toys. In general the students felt that the more structured a toy was, the more they learned from it. The Legos seemed too independent. At the Lego station, there was no discussion between the students and most of their structures were very basic and did not fully satisfy our instructions. At the experimental toy stations, there was a lot of discussion and debate amongst the students and they would walk around to try to get better views of the toy and to participate in constructing it. The students also seemed to appreciate playing with new toys that they had not seen before, or did not have in their homes. The unfamiliarity of the toys and the teamwork encouraged by the toy and the discussion leader worked well together to establish an innovative teaching method.

Also based on collective observation, the 7th graders also seemed to really enjoy playing with the engineering toys and the challenges they asserted. Certain physical concepts that are frequently used in engineering

core classes are often not introduced until very late in a student's career. The toys that we tested on the 7th graders cover a wide range of these topics. Because the toys were more science-based, the discussions led by the college students went into more depth on the specific topic, and this allowed the students to make better applications of the concepts to things that they have seen in everyday life. In order to have time for these thorough lectures, some of the toys were pre-assembled and used more as visual demonstrations. Surprisingly, based on the student's responses on the evaluations, not constructing the toys was what the students disliked the most. This revealed that a critical element of fun as well as learning comes from actually building the toy. Which shows that the instructional value of the engineering toys is two-part: using a team to assemble the toy and discussing with the group members the scientific concepts demonstrated by the toy.

Our study supports that not only can engineering-based toys be used in a classroom setting, they are actually the most beneficial to learning and understanding STEM foundations when used in such a setting. Using the format of small groups and discussion based learning allows students to simulate how engineering projects are accomplished in the work place. These toys provide valuable interactive and demonstrative visual aids for teachers across all STEM fields. These conclusions are consistent with our pre-evaluations and hopefully these unique toys and specific teaching method can be implemented in schools throughout the nation and even to our hopeful expansion in Haiti.

### Education in Haiti

According to the CIA World Factbook, the overall literacy rate in Haiti is only at 47%, comparable to the 99% rate in the United States, ranking it in the bottom 10 countries in the world for overall literacy. The education sector in Haiti is run by a division of the government known as the *Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle* (MENFP). International private schools run by Canada, France, or the United States, as well as religiously affiliated schools educate 90% of Haitian students [1]. Haiti has 15,200 primary schools, of which 90% are non-public and managed by communities, religious organizations or NGOs (non-governmental organizations) [2]. As a result, the private sector has become a substitute for governmental public investment in education as opposed to an addition. The Ministry provides very little funds to support public education and is limited in its ability to improve the quality of education in Haiti [3].

There are several problems facing the education system in Haiti. In regards to the private sector, three-fourths of all private schools operate with no certification or license from the Ministry of Education [4]. This literally means that anyone can open a school at any level of education, recruit students and hire teachers, without having to meet any minimum standards. At all levels of education, Haiti faces severe shortages in educational supplies and qualified teachers. The majority of schools in Haiti do not have adequate facilities and are under-equipped. According to the 2003 school survey, 5% of schools were housed in a church or an open-air shaded area. Some 58% do not have toilets and 23% have no running water [5]. The majority of workers, about 80%, do not meet the existing criteria for the selection of training programs or are not accepted in these programs because of the lack of space in professional schools.5 Six out of every 1,000 workers in the labor market have a diploma or certificate in a technical or professional field.5 In addition, only 15% of teachers at the elementary level have basic teaching qualifications, including university degrees, and nearly 25% have not attended secondary school.5 Many teachers leave their profession for alternative better paying jobs, and sometimes they are not paid due to insufficient government funds. This can create a very vicious cycle, causing more and more private schools to fill what they see as a large vacancy in the Haitian education system, and filling educational positions with unqualified instructors.

Haiti has the highest percentage of private schools in the world. A number of schools are run by religious organizations but many more are run as a business to make a profit. The consequence of the privatization of education is that private households must carry the economic burden of both the real cost of education and the private actor's profit. Because the government-run public schools are vastly outnumbered by private schools, it is unable to enforce its desired policies with respect to education. This inability has a myriad of ramifications. Often teachers are only a few grades ahead of the students they are teaching. Public school teachers typically

are more qualified than private school teachers, but there are no laws or regulations with respect to setting up a private school so anyone can begin a school and start teaching.

At a more detailed glance, the Haitian educational system has two exams that the government requires for a student to be promoted to the next grade. These exams are taken at the end of the 5th and 7th grades; however, many schools require exams at the end of every school year. A passing score results in promotion to the next grade. Students are required to pay a fee to take these exams, and if the fee is not paid, the student does not pass to the next grade regardless of how well they did during the school year. In rural areas, family income is greatest at the beginning of the school year when the harvest has been cultivated, creating an imbalance and causing it to be easier for children to start school than to finish it [6]. For families whose children do not get promoted, school fees must still be paid for the grade that is being repeated. This doubles the cost per grade or even more if the exam fees are once again not paid at the end of the year. Repeating grades leads to a wider range of abilities in the classroom, making it that much more difficult and taxing on an already unqualified teacher's abilities. This flaw is reflected in the enrollment and retention rate between primary and secondary schools in Haiti. The enrollment rate for primary school is 88%, while secondary schools only enroll 20% of eligible-age children [7]. The cost of attending private school beyond primary school age is just not a feasible possibility for low-income families.

During our time in Haiti, we met with three different schools in the region. Two of them were higher education facilities, one of them being the University of Haiti in Limonade. When discussing the issues facing the university with the President of the University of Haiti, he brought up many specifics that focus primarily on retention of teachers and financial concerns. According to the President, less populated areas, such as Limonade, have a harder time keeping professors because of the low pay associated with the position. If a professor has a Master's degree, a salary of \$1,000 U.S. dollars per month is distributed, and if that same professor has a PhD, the salary increase is \$2,000 U.S. dollars per month. In more populated areas, professors are able to subsidize this income with another form of employment, but in more rural areas, it is harder to find other means of work. This fact alone, deters most teachers from accepting a position. The teacher's incomes would be higher, but the government does not subsidize the university enough. The university thankfully, has all the amenities needed to function, including plumbing, air conditioning, electricity, and internet connection. The one thing missing is housing for students. The cost of attendance to the university is \$50 U.S. dollars per year, and students from all over the country attend, despite the lack of university housing available. While tuition might seem extremely affordable to most Americans, many Haitian families still have trouble affording it after years of paying private school tuition to prepare for university.

The World Bank estimates that 8 out of 10 college educated Haitians live outside the country. A way to attract them back to Haiti to teach at both university and lower education levels would be to offer dual citizenship or type of give-back program. Expenses such as tuition and housing could be waived if the student agrees to teach for a determined number of years as a part of paying back the cost of their education with a few years of teaching service. A possible solution to the issue of less family funds at the end of the school year proposed by the Ministry of Education is a change in the banking system. Access to loans at the end of the year based on anticipated harvest of the next year may help farming families to be able to afford the yearly tuition and exam fees. Another proposed solution is for the government to mold with certain private sectors and to provide subsidized funding allowing tuition costs to go down, and allow more students to attend. Fusing private schools into the public system would also raise standards imposed on educators and raise teacher quality in Haiti.

### Haiti Implementation

After further review and consultation with our Haitian guide, Westenor, our chosen school was a rural public elementary school in the Nord region just outside of Cap-Haitian in northern Haiti. The design of the Haiti implementation would have to be drastically different from the Ladue implementation, because of specific foreseen and unforeseen obstacles. A large obstacle that we were expecting would be the language barrier between the Haitian students and the American tutors. Because we were visiting a rural, public school, almost none of the students could speak or understand French, and none of the American students could speak Creole.

This gap eliminated a key feedback mechanism used in the Ladue implementation. We could not communicate fully with the students to fully and effectively convey the engineering concepts rooted in the toys. We could also not have the students fill out a written evaluation at the end of the lesson. This meant that for the Haiti implementation, our only form qualitative data would come from observations and interaction with the students.

To combat this barrier, we decided to take a more casual approach when teaching the Haitian students. Students would not be assigned to a group and could move freely between toys without a time limit. We would only take toys that could be used and understood with minimal instruction and whose assembly could be done using pictures. These toys were decided to be: the Engino series (Cams & Cranks, Gears, and Levers), Goldie Blox, Snap Circuits Jr., K'nex, Motors & Generators, Wind Power 2.0, and Solar Power. In the mornings when we would first arrive, we planned on starting with the engineering toys by assigning an American student a toy station and allowing the Haitian students to walk from station to station. Each American student's agenda would be to make sure the students are working together and that as much of the math and science concepts were communicated as possible. After approximately two hours of the engineering toys, we decided to bring a few more "toys" that were to be used as an introduction to more complex science advancements. These items were: stethoscopes, a quadcopter (remote controlled helicopter), and a computer microscope. We decided to bring these items to show the Haitian students a more advanced side of the basic engineering concepts they were learning. After the students were completely finished with the toys, we decided that an interesting way to close the day and our time with the students would be to have a quick English lesson. Simple words and phrases, such as "How are you?" and the days of the week would be the extent of the lesson. Through Westenor, we arranged to be at the school for a total of three consecutive days from June 14, 2015 – June 21, 2015. This timing would be towards the end of the Haitian school year.

Upon arrival at the school, some unforeseen challenges arose as we began our predetermined lesson plan. The school building was simply a concrete structure with no running water or air-conditioning and an outdoor pavilion that also served as an instructional space. For school supplies, the only items provided were two dozen folding chairs and one rolling chalk board. After walking around and introducing ourselves to the students present, we noticed that one very important person was missing—the teacher. No one had presented themselves as the teacher, so our guide, Westenor, had to serve as our interpreter and tell the students what we were doing there. Westenor explained to us that because the school was public and the end of the school year was approaching, many students simply attend whenever it is convenient or they are not needed at home. Because of this, we had very skewed age groups present at the school. There were many students present between the ages of 6-10 years old, with very few older than 12, which is much younger than our assessed and targeted age group of 11-13 years of age.

Despite the language barriers, lack of organization, and the below target age group, we decided to proceed with the study. We asked the students to follow the pictures as much as possible and helped them when necessary. A common practice used was the repetition of steps and taking apart and rebuilding certain components of the toy multiple times to show the students how something was working without using verbal explanations.

### Impressions

As the each morning progressed throughout the three days, more and more students began to arrive at the school. The few older students who arrived and were between the ages of our original target age group were more content to watch the younger students play with the toys than to actually interact with them and us. The younger students between the ages of 7-10 years old, were highly engaged by the engineering toys. They mostly worked in silence and did not verbally communicate with their fellow students often. They naturally tended to work independently or in pairs. Occasionally they would not allow a fellow student to help or even touch to toy or project they were working on. Some students traveled from station to station and interacted with every toy, while some students stayed with one toy for almost the entire time. The students who stayed with only one toy showed apparent signs of learning and comprehension. These students would be able to fully assemble and

disassemble different models and structures they had constructed from previous initial instruction. It was apparent that none of the students had ever seen or interacted with organized or structured toys such as these. The toys that were brought to Haiti were chosen with this structure in mind, so that the students would always have a finished project that they would be working to build. They were also chosen because of the durability of their pieces. Throughout the next three days, different students attended each day, creating an enormous data pool and an uncertain final assessment. After our three days with the students, we left behind 5 of the 9 engineering toys with the school, (Cams & Cranks, Gears, Levers, Goldie Blox, and K'nex). The other toys all required batteries to be operational, which the school would not have access to and could not replace. Therefore, we thought it best not to leave this toys with the students.

While the extent of the scientific knowledge gained or understood by the Haitian students was immeasurable, it was obvious that the Haitian students highly enjoyed their time with the American students and with the toys. They were able to be exposed to a different style of learning, and they probably did not even realize they were learning anything. Because we had to use an altered approach to presenting the toys to the Haitian students, the teaching method of group work and discussion could not be properly tested or conclusively supported from the Haiti study and provided an inaccurate comparison between a rural public school in a third world country, to one of the best performing school districts in the St. Louis area. However, any scientific comprehension that the Haitian students experienced can be directly attributed to the engineering toys themselves, because of the limited group work and explanation offered with the toys. The Haiti study cannot effectively support our findings from the Ladue study, but our impressions, observations, and experiences add promising data to an auspicious theory in early STEM education and its successful implementation in underdeveloped and under-resourced countries.

### Notes

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Poisoned Shakespeare: *Cymbeline's* Fairy Tale Contaminants

By Claire Peterson

Contamination characterizes the fairy tale genre. Form and cultural and historical context poison tales with distinguishing qualities. Written versions of the tales contaminate their oral precursors, and even Disney has participated in poisoning consumers of fairy tales by moving them from the page to the screen in aestheticized and anesthetized versions of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1957). I will argue that this process of contamination parallels Shakespeare's characteristic emulation in *Cymbeline*, a curiously polluted tale of British and anachronistic Roman history with poisoned characters and elements interwoven throughout. In doing so, Shakespeare highlights the simultaneously creative and destructive artistic process, one that pervades both oral and literary realms, most especially the stage, and poisons fiction with reality. The use of contaminating gestures in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* is a manifestation of the emulative process: simultaneously creative and destructive, one that confounds and fact with imagination, not to diminish, but to suggest that both can exist within and enrich the flavor of each other.

In his process of contaminating tales, Shakespeare also mixes the oral with the literary. This is demonstrated in the importance of text in the play and also at the meta-theatrical level, with both writing and performance as central to the success of a dramatic work. As Tolkien asserts, "If we pause, not merely to note that such old elements have been preserved, but to think how they have been preserved, we must conclude, I think, that it has happened, often, if not always, precisely because of this literary effect...The things that are there must often have been retained (or inserted) because the oral narrators, instinctively or consciously, felt their literary 'significance'" (11). Shakespeare sustains the fairy tale's elements because of their literary significance, but also because of their ability to reach across classes, affecting and discussing subconscious desire.

While contemporary audiences are not always as familiar with fairy tales, early modern audiences would have been very familiar with the archetypes that Shakespeare emulates. Many critics argue that Shakespeare, in all his emulative genius, would not have left out fairy tales from the material he borrowed because

he recognised and utilised the potent emotional dramas such tales encode, too. Fairy tales may initially attract their audiences by being entertaining, but they maintain rapt listeners by connecting with each member on an individual and emotional level. In drawing on fairy tales, then, Shakespeare was also evoking their rich emotional and personal resonances. This allowed him to add layers of subtle meaning to his plays, and to connect with audience on a private, perhaps subconscious level. (Rawnsley 146)

*Cymbeline* can be seen as an extreme experiment in the sense that this passage suggests. Shakespeare tests the limits of the genre by incorporating so many fantastical elements into the play, while still incorporating a focus on the historical, if anachronistic, translation of empire. In addition, he uses the fairy tales to pollute the public sphere of the theatre with the private sphere of the fairy tale realm. This is manifested in *Cymbeline* in the contamination of the private romance with the political dimension that will be discussed later.

*Cymbeline* follows three interwoven plot lines and the mixing of history, romance, and fairy tales at first appears problematic. The romantic aspects of the play render the events surrounding Imogen and Posthumus's marriage a special kind of narrative quality in the play because it is with the romance that Shakespeare begins his play. *Cymbeline* opens with a discussion between the First and Second Gentlemen who provide the summary of the action of the plot in media res. Shakespeare chooses to begin the play with Imogen, the king's "daughter, and the heir of 's kingdom" (1.1.4). Likewise, in the recounting of events at the end of the play—an oral tale within a dramatic within a literary history of empire—it is with Imogen that the story starts again as Iachimo explains to the king, "Your daughter's chastity--there it begins" (5.6.179). This frames the story around the romance, specifically centralized around Imogen and her sexuality. Iachimo's oral retelling also mirrors the history of fairy tales intended to teach young women about the world around them.

While the romance begins the play, it is still poisoned by the multiplicity of genre, contributing to a

complex but interwoven structure. The Posthumus and Imogen's romance cannot be separated from their political sphere, nor can it be separated from the discovery of the Arviragus and Guiderius. Because of this intertwining complexity that appears irreconcilably, audiences are invited to practice what Catherine Belsey calls "cognitive dissonance", detailing that "Many people, and, indeed, many cultures practise cognitive dissonance, believing and not believing at the same time" (86). Shakespeare asks his audience to practice this paradox as well, perhaps to an extreme in the 'much-ado-about-everything' of *Cymbeline*.

This paradox of belief is the foundation for Shakespeare's play. Audiences of all time periods would accept their unbelief of the performativity of the play, knowing that it is not "real," but accepting is as a means to appreciate the play and enjoy the dramatic realm. As Belsey acknowledges, "literal belief is not a condition of enjoyment", in fact, the realm of the stage is especially suited to the enjoyable and illusory aspects of life (86). Shakespeare's stage is the ideal medium for a mixing of reality and fiction, precisely because it seeks to bring to life in a tangible way the fictive content of storytelling. In order for both contemporary and early modern audiences to enjoy Shakespeare's plays, they have to allow for a contamination of fiction and reality. This is the experiment of Shakespeare in *Cymbeline's* mixing of spheres.

The fantasy elements of fairy tales often lead readers astray. Unfamiliarity with fairy tales creates the present difficulty of appreciating *Cymbeline*. Because contemporary audiences are more familiar with Disney's cartoon animated forms, it is easy to forget that these tales stem from oral and literary traditions, one that does not always wield the idealized aesthetic of princesses and gowns. In fact, many fairy tale archetypes are categorized by sinister undertones hidden in fantastical elements and metaphors. It is possible that this is the reason for which the tales have been relegated to the nursery. The association with children perhaps means to some that the tales are devalued, lesser. This disregards the aptitude of fairy tales to discuss both fantasy and reality at the same time, woven within each other.

The quality of fairy tales "allowed [Shakespeare] to connect with his audience on an intimate, perhaps subconscious level" (Rawnsley 141). While the classical source texts utilized by Shakespeare in his adaptation, interpretation, and emulation of history and legend provide a large portion of the material of the plays, it is possible to analyze fairy tales as just as pervasive of an influence on Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. It is also possible to see this inclusion of fairy tales as a contaminating gesture, mixing oral stories of the common people with classical, literary sources.

In the fairy tale elements of the play, Shakespeare invites his audience to believe and not believe at the same time, to practice Belsey's notion of "cognitive dissonance". This duality does not necessarily value fiction and reality disproportionately, but instead it discusses that the imaginative and the historical can exist simultaneously within each other. As Tolkien asserts, fairy tale fantasy can exist alongside realism:

Fantasy is a natural human activity. It certainly does not destroy or even insult Reason: and it does not either blunt the appetite for, nor obscure the perception of, scientific verity. On the contrary. The keener and clearer is the reason, the better fantasy will it make. If men were even in a state in which they did not want to know or could not perceive truth (facts or evidence), then Fantasy would languish until they were cured. If they ever get into that state (it would not seem at all impossible), Fantasy will perish, and become Morbid Delusion. (18)

Applied to Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, this means that the very presence of fairy tale and historical elements heightens the perception of both genres. In this contamination, Shakespeare comments upon the richness of both together, and a clear distinction is necessary to avoid Tolkien's "Morbid Delusion."

Tolkien also alludes to the necessity of considering the entirety of the story instead of breaking it into its individual parts, stating "Such studies are, however, scientific (at least in intent), they are the pursuit of folklorists of anthropologists: that is of people using the stories not as they were meant to be used, but as a quarry from which to dig evidence, or information, about matters in which they are interested. A perfectly legitimate procedure in itself--but ignorance or forgetfulness of the nature of a story (as a thing told in its entirety) has often led

such inquirers into strange judgments” (6). The nine episodes of the Snow White archetype, “origin (birth of the heroine), jealousy, expulsion, adoption, renewed jealousy, death, exhibition, resuscitation, and resolution,” are emulated and contaminated in the events of Imogen’s plot line (Tatar 74). In the spirit of Tolkien’s anti-structural analysis notion, I will not attempt to discuss the tales in terms of a more scientific approach by matching up exactly the skeletons of the plot. Especially because of the contaminated nature of the play, it is necessary to consider Cymbeline as a whole, although it appears disparate.

In order to explore this contamination, it is necessary to identify key elements of the fairy tale that are manifested in Cymbeline. As Belsey asserts in her discussion of the fairy tale connections of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the play, “takes its own world of magic seriously, without asking its audience to believe in fairies. Instead, its creatures of fantasy have the effect of deconstructing the conventional opposition between fact and fiction, reality and drama” (86-87). Accepting that this can also be applied to Cymbeline, it requires that the influence of fairy tales upon the play be considered along with the classical source texts. In the Snow White archetype, poison is the key ingredient. To compare the play to a literary version of Snow White, early modern recordings are scarce. Recorded in his 1634 collection of fairy tales *The Pentamarone*, Giambattista Basile’s “The Young Slave” evidences several literal and metaphorical poisonings that comprise the plot and relate the characters. While the printed tale is not a version that Shakespeare would have access to, the supposition remains that the oral story was a more-widely disseminated precursor. In this early modern version, first printed about thirty years after Shakespeare’s Cymbeline, Basile’s emulation of the Snow White archetype demonstrates an interest in the body politic, specifically in regards to poison or contaminants.

In Basile’s tale, Lilla, the sister of a Baron of Selvascura, is playing with her friends in a garden and they have a competition to see who can jump over a rose without hitting it. Lilla is the only girl who is able to jump clean over it. However, one of the leaves falls and she has to swallow it before anyone sees so she can still win the prize (Basile 80). While this exchange seems innocent enough, the “envelope” of adult theme is opened a short while later, three days to be exact, when Lilla realizes she is pregnant. One of the fairies she runs to for help trips and accidentally puts a spell on her daughter Lisa. When Lisa, at the age of seven, appears to have died from a comb getting stuck in her hair, she is put inside seven caskets made of crystal. When Lilla dies, poisoned by “her grief [that] brought her to her grave,” the Baron is left in charge of the seven crystal caskets (80). At the linguistic level, a contamination of Lilla’s name can be read in naming her daughter Lisa, and the ingestion of the leaf simultaneously realizes the theme of contamination and the metaphorization of sexuality characteristic of fairy tales.

Imogen and her various suitors, especially given the layers of possible morals attached to her own plot line within the larger play, closely resemble the warning signs interwoven in fairy tales designed to teach young women about sexual predators. Similarly, Imogen’s apparent death and resuscitation, especially involving a poison or sleeping draft given by the names “Queen,” perhaps paralleling the infamous poisoned apple or contaminated cake in the archetype.

Iachimo’s notion of the Imogen as “one of the fair’st that [he has] looked upon—” is remarkably similar to the common description of Snow White as the fairest of them all (2.4.31). Further, Posthumus’s subsequent interruption is one of underlying jealousy. He declares that she is “therewithal the best, or let her beauty / Look through a casement to allure false hearts, / And be false with them” (2.4.32-34). Punning on the importance of clothing and appearance as a symbol of character, Imogen’s position as “sole child to th’ King” means that she is especially vulnerable to the manipulation of her father and stepmother for political gain (1.1.56). Similarly, the importance of Imogen’s physical beauty is emphasized when she encounters her long lost brothers and Belarius in the cave. She is still considered quite beautiful even though she is dressed as a man, and Belarius even mistakes her for a fairy:

BELARIUS. [looking into the cave]: Stay, come not it.  
But that it eats our victuals I should think  
Here were a fairy.

GUIDERIUS.

What’s the matter, sit?

BELARIUS.

By Jupiter, an angel—or, if not,

An earthly paragon. Behold divineness

No elder than a boy

Enter Imogen [from the cave, dressed as a man]

IMOGEN.

Good master, harm me not. (3.6.39-44)

Highlighting the mixing of realms that complicates the play, Belarius’s description of Imogen as “an earthly paragon” conflates her with the fairy realm and emphasizes the importance of appearance. In addition, the setting for this scene indicates a metaphorization of female sexuality in the symbol of the cave, mixing public and private spheres, and contaminating family relations.

In “The Young Slave” the Baroness begins “to feel suspicious, and impelled by jealousy and consumed by curiosity, which is woman’s first attribute,” and seeks out the locked chamber while her husband is out hunting. She finds the caskets that inexplicably grew as Lisa did and wakes Lisa up by removing the comb from her hair. Lisa had mistaken the Baroness for her own mother, paralleling the mistake Imogen makes upon seeing the headless body of Cloten as Posthumus. The Baroness beats her until she is unrecognizable, “blackening her eyes and making her mouth look as if she had eaten raw pigeons” (81). The Baroness’s violent actions against Imogen’s appearance can be seen as an attempt to contaminate the image of which she is jealous, polluting the relationship on both literal and figurative levels.

Further, both Lisa and the stepmother, in the form of her aunt, are contaminants to the “natural” family. The antidote is to satisfy the jealousy by ridding her and the father of Snow White with, most appropriately, poison. From the very start of the play, Shakespeare establishes the theme of a contaminated family sphere in the disruption of the King and Queen’s wishes for Imogen’s marriage to Cloten. This is paralleled in the very beginning of the play in the marriage of Imogen and Posthumus, the latter who is of lower status than the former. Using physical objects, one that metaphorize female sexuality, the couple attempts to not only broadcast their love to others but keep it in tact.

Arguably, it is this notion of contamination that puts some critics off to the play. I would argue however that contamination is a dysphemistic way of discussing emulation. Shakespeare’s more widely accepted plays often receive praise because they emulate celebrated historical and mythological works. One of the most engaging elements of Shakespeare’s Roman plays is their emulative quality. Much of the material that comprises these plays is borrowed from other sources and reworked, or surpassed, in the process of creating the stories for the stage. Overt allusions and the adoption of plot structure of written works such as Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Plutarch’s *The Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* are central to Shakespeare’s works. From blatant plot thievery and reliance upon the classical texts to more subtle adaptations and allusions, Shakespeare places himself in a long tradition of recycling and refashioning history, myth, and legend. The classical sources provide ample material for emulation, similarly, fairy and folk tales contemporary to Shakespeare are another influence on his works, one that is more difficult to trace due to its largely unrecorded, oral tradition.

In its poisoning of genres, Cymbeline is a tale of what happens when human beings cannot distinguish reality from slander pollutes. The communication that passes between the characters in the form of letters is evidence of a formal contamination of the dramatic realm, confusing them as they search for realism and fact in the wrong places. Posthumus relies too heavily on the physical reality of the ring stolen by Iachimo and the “real” evidence he has of the Italian’s sexual relations with Imogen without considering the possibility of slander. What Posthumus does consider are the reasons behind Iachimo’s possession of the bracelet: “Maybe she plucked it off / To send it to me” (2.4.103-4). However, Posthumus disproportionately values the evidence

and allows Iachimo to manipulate him by asking “She writes so to you, doth she?” (2.4.105). In this, audiences understand Tolkien’s problem of “Morbid Delusion”, or characters functioning in a world where they are unable to distinguish the fantasy of slander from the reality of articulated truth. Here, Shakespeare comments upon the distinction between reality and fiction and the danger of mixing the two.

In examining the parallel structure of the archetype and Cymbeline, specifically with respect to Imogen’s metaphorical, or arguably literal, rape, it is possible to understand the dimension of yet another woman in Shakespeare’s tradition of ravished heroines. As Ciara Rawnsley notes in her exploration “Behind the Happily-Ever-After”, Shakespeare’s “All’s Well, then, is a play where extremely ‘adult’ subjects, like pursuing a sex object and losing one’s virginity, are placed inside an ‘envelope’ that seems to involve more child-like narrative expectations. The clash is not between realism and fairy tale, in that case, but as a fairy tale, between adult subjects and child-like narrative expectations.” (149) The concept of “adult” content enveloped in “child-like narrative expectations” is also central to the appreciation of Cymbeline.

Rape, an “extremely ‘adult’ subject,” is placed inside the “envelope” of the Imogen’s bedroom. This is played out in a few distinct layers: the metaphorization of female genitalia in the form of the trunk and the literary contamination of Imogen’s body. Focusing specifically on a self-aware gesture of aligning Imogen with a literary history, Act II Scene II provides a pivotal point of examination in both the play itself and the analysis of fairy tale elements knit into Cymbeline. The imposition of Ovid’s tale of Tereus and Philomel as Imogen’s “bed-time story” intentionally creates confusion about the heroine’s identity, a theme that will continue to develop as Imogen disguises herself as a boy. Ambiguously referring to either the character in the book and/or Imogen when locating “Here the leaf’s turned down / Where Philomel gave up” (2.2.45-46), Along with the comparison of himself to Tarquin, Iachimo aligns Imogen to a literary history of susceptible female heroines, vulnerable to the sexual exploitations of male predators. Participating in the unfortunate victimization of Lucrece, Philomela, and Lavinia (Titus). Here, Shakespeare mixes classical sources into the story of Imogen, perhaps citing the relationship of fairy tales to the discussion of sinister realities.

Even peaceful sleep is contaminated with violence and fairy tale imagery. When “Sleep hath seized [her] wholly,” Imogen calls upon the protection of the gods “From fairies and the tempters of the night” (2.2.7-9). This opening description and Giacomo’s subsequent portrayal functions to establish not only Imogen’s character as a “sleeping beauty”, a subgenre of the Snow White archetype, but also further the comparison of the two heroines. Iachimo’s description of Imogen’s features closely parallels the red and white motif apparent in the Snow White archetype:

How bravely though becom’st they bed! Fresh lily,  
And white than the sheets! That I might touch,  
But kiss, one kiss! Rubies unparagoned,  
How dearly they do’t! ‘Tis her breathing that  
Perfumes the chamber thus. (2.2.15-19)

While Iachimo’s description of the sleeping Imogen is subversively violent in its blazon form, it establishes Imogen’s physical appearance as that of a Snow White figure, with skin as white as her sheets, and lips that are the color of rubies. Imogen’s breathing is given an interesting euphemistic ability to contaminate the air, one that “perfumes the chamber thus.” Her breath is not described as sweet at all, but simply “thus”. This introduces a sense of nuanced ambiguity, and, in conjunction with Iachimo’s subsequent blazonry, confuses the sleeping but alive Imogen with a contaminated body. The curious ambiguity of the circumstances of Iachimo’s violation of Imogen’s private sphere must then be interpreted both figuratively and literally, not believed and believed at the same time.

Similarly, Iachimo notes a sense of enclosure while he is describing the coloring of her eyes, “now canopied / Under these windows, white and azure-laced” (2.2.21-22). The “blue of heaven’s own tinct” can be seen as the tint of Imogen’s dead skin and the enclosure can be read as the iconic crystal chest that puts Snow

White on display (2.2.23). Here, it is clear that Shakespeare relies upon both the idealization of the female body displayed as well as the coloring that suggests death or disease. Shakespeare emulates the archetypal beauty of Snow White in Imogen’s physical description, yet contaminates it with details that reinforce the literal as well as the figurative aspects of the scene. While the language is intended to be celebratory, it is almost as if Iachimo’s words contaminate or defile Imogen’s innocence precisely because he has invaded her private sphere.

The events of this scene operate as a metaphorical death in the archetype’s plot, transforming the tale’s command made to the huntsman to kill Snow White and bring her lungs and liver back as proof to a more sexually explicit--if not entirely literal rape of Imogen in her sleep, bringing back written or recorded knowledge of her body as proof of her ravishment. Here, Shakespeare contaminates Ovid’s classical source text with fairy tale elements from the Snow White archetype.

In her book Shakespeare’s Troy: Drama, politics, and the translation of empire, Heather James directly discusses the process of contamination with specific regard to Imogen waking to see Cloten’s headless body and taking it to be Posthumus’:

“The image, which functions similarly to the pit in Titus Andronicus, confounds distinct figures, roles, and genres: Posthumus and Cloten; Aeneas and Priam; imperial origins and decline; early Britain, imperial Rome, and early modern Italy; comedy and tragedy. It confounds these distinctions, moreover, at the very moment that it conjures the specter of a powerful but degenerate female sexuality.” (172)

As she smears her face with blood, Imogen contaminates herself, and along with, the image of her as pure and untainted. The imagery here parallels the description given of Lisa in “The Young Slave” after waking and being severely beaten beyond recognition by the Baroness. This not only emulates the Snow White archetype but also discusses the importance of and contamination of appearance in the play. Lisa no longer appears the niece that she is; Imogen no longer appears to be the same pure female being after smearing her face with blood. The transformation is not only a form of contamination, but also confounds the distinction between identities, and subsequently realistic understanding, in the play.

Just as the jealous Queen in Cymbeline attempts to poison Imogen, the Baroness reacts violently to Lisa and becomes “as bitter as a slave, as angry as a bitch with a litter of pups, and as venomous as a snake” (Basile 81). Here, Basile alludes to the motherly instincts of the Baroness in comparing her to a “bitch with a litter of pups” and also conflates the poisoning quality of jealousy towards Lisa. Central to the Snow White archetype, the relationship between the Snow White figure and her mother or stepmother is generally a tricky one. The stepmother is consumed by jealous upon encountering Snow White—whether that is because of her beauty or her presence alone, the context of the tale will tell. In Cymbeline, it is the political motivation of the Queen that causes her to be jealous of Imogen. She would like her own son Cloten to become heir to the throne. This inextricably links the romance elements of the play with the politics of the historical genre because the conquest for Imogen’s hand is brought into the political sphere.

Curiously, the play’s title character goes relatively undiscussed in Parker’s exploration of the westering of empire. Instead of focusing on Cymbeline, the discussion is centralized around Posthumus. Although he is undoubtedly similar to Virgil’s Aeneas, the play’s title begs the question of why it is not entitled Posthumus. As the romance of the play seems more prominent a feature than the translation of empire, that the play is not entitled Posthumus begs the question of why its title character seems so absent. In discussing the archetype, “To account for the remarkable narrative stability and cultural durability of ‘Snow White,’ most critics point to the tale’s powerful staging of mother/daughter conflicts. Bruno Bettelheim defines those conflicts as oedipal and asserts that they are ‘left to our imagination’ because ‘the person for whose love the two are in competition is never mentioned’ (Tatar 75). Shakespeare emulates the importance of the relationship between Imogen and the Queen, however, he contaminates the notion of Cymbeline as absent. At the end of the play, the focus is still on the King, who has the power to do homage to the Romans and the stature to have the last word. However, his voice is collective. Although he states, “my peace we will begin” is “We” that had been “dissuaded by our

wicked queen” (5.6.459, 464). It is possible to see this as a complication of the title character’s prominence in the story, drawing attention again to the wicked stepmother figure and her significance in the story.

The resolution of *Cymbeline* looks curiously like the happy ending of “The Young Slave”, when the marriage between Posthumus and Imogen is accepted. It closely parallels the actions of the Baron, who “gave his niece a handsome husband of her own choice” (Basile 83). In *Cymbeline*, ““All is outward sorrow”” at the opening of the story, but its close it attuned to the harmony of peace and happiness; and the play thus satisfies the essential conditions of “Romantic Comedy,” or more properly of Shakespearean “Tragi-Comedy,”--life’s commingling of tears and laughter, sorrow and joy; joy triumphant in the end” (Shakespeare viii).

This description presents the play as much simpler than it actually is, as Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* is characterized by complex and arguably irreconcilable contradiction in its layers of historical and mythological parallel. Not even temporality is protected from contamination in Shakespeare the play, and the mixing of genres is also celebrated. Imogen and Posthumus’s relationship is in a state of perpetual discord contaminated by the discrepancy in social position, described as the king’s daughter who “hath referred herself / Unto a poor but worth gentleman” (1.1.6-7). In this backwards translation of power, Shakespeare explores the translation of people through class, a concept that is interestingly discussed in Patricia Parker’s “Anachronistic *Cymbeline*”, noting that the central anachronism of the play is the translation of empire backwards. While this does not at first appear to connect to the romance plot line of the play, upon second glance, it mirrors the gesture of Imogen marrying someone who is beneath her stature in social status.

Patricia Parker’s “Romance and Empire: Anachronistic *Cymbeline*” addresses Shakespeare’s later Roman play, considering the work as a romance, one linked with epic history and discussing the central anachronism that upsets the play. Parker relies on G. Wilson Knight’s recognition and discussion of the political and historical aspects of the play in his work *The Crown of Life: Essays in Interpretation of Shakespeare’s Final Plays* (1948). His “original perception [is] that in this play we have to do with history and romance at once” (Parker 207). This allows her to argue that “the evocation of a specific imperial text in *Cymbeline*’s romance plot not only adds to the sense of ‘much ado about everything’ this late Shakespearean romance is notorious for but makes its central anachronism something very different from either bungling error or historical oversight” (190). Again, the contamination, in this instance of genre and temporality, is seen to be not a mistake, but rather an intentional decision on Shakespeare’s part.

The incongruous nature of the text due to its “looking back”, Parker argues, is not what some scholars have proclaimed is merely “a quaint blunder to be ascribed to poetic license, to carelessness, or to a distorted sense of history,” but rather, Shakespeare’s temporal disjunction in the form of anachronistic elements is intentional (190). She instead proposes *Cymbeline* as “a markedly different perspective on this crossing of times, one that would involve deliberate achronicity” (190). This “looking back” invites audiences to do the same. What they will find in *Cymbeline* is the mixing of fairy tales and history and the contamination of reality with imagination.

While Parker’s discussion of the similarities of Virgil’s epic and Shakespeare’s imperial romance is thorough, some elements of her argument are unclear. Though it may not have been her intention to trace all three plot lines, Parker seems to focus mainly on the romance plot line of the play, while recognizing the anachronistic struggle for tribute to be paid to Rome. Though she discusses the brothers in terms of their location in pastoral Wales, their events appear to constitute a lesser part of the play’s three intertwining chains of events, and in turn Parker deemphasizes their role in relationship to the rest of the play and its characters, reinforcing a notion of Imogen and Posthumus’ relationships as the more prominent story line.

Another question that arises from Parker’s argument is the tension between the intuitive central character of *Cymbeline* and the person her criticism implies is actually the focus. Although Parker points out that Shakespeare participates in “the familiar Virgilian instance of imitatio with a difference”, she does not discuss in detail this emulation on the level of the emendation of the soothsayer’s prophecy from Act IV Scene 2 to Act V Scene 5 (192). The original prophecy becomes contaminated by its revision. Shakespeare gestures towards

the emulative (contaminant) process of stories. It is important to note that the soothsayer is instructed to “Read, and declare the meaning,” which differs from the original speaking of the prophecy (5.6.435). The emendation of the soothsayer’s prophecy to fit the circumstances at the end of the play is a curious parallel to the alteration of tales across time periods and cultures, especially in terms of their transcription from oral to literary tales.

Unlike Tolkien, who determines that “To be dissolved, or to be degraded, is the likely fate of Fantasy when a dramatist tries to use it, even such a dramatists as Shakespeare,” the assertion that the dramatic space is one that necessitates duality means that fairy tale elements are just as adaptable to the stage as histories and tragedies (17). *Cymbeline*, though it is much-ado-about-everything, is not framed as a dream, but is presented as real. Tolkien discusses the distinction of truth and fiction in terms of how the story is framed: “It is at any rate essential to a genuine fairy-story, as distinct from the employment of this form for lesser or debased purposes, that it should be presented as ‘true.’ [...] since the fairy-story deals with ‘marvels,’ it cannot tolerate any frame or machinery suggesting that the whole story in which they occur is a figment or illusion” (5) This demonstrates that fairy tales and fantasy can indeed exist dually with reality if their presentation is a realistic one. Though Tolkien does not see the stage as an adequate frame for fairy tales, Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* presents fiction within the historical frame of the translation of empire. The stage, like Tolkien’s notion of fantasy, has a simultaneous familiarity and “arresting strangeness” because of its visual presentation blended with the imaginative realm (16). It is the contamination across genres that asks audiences to consider what it means to mix fairy tales with history and fairy tale.

In all of its rich and irreconcilable complexity, Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* cannot be entirely reduced to the archetypal structure of *Snow White* and the paralleled physical appearance that connects the two heroines “Upon a time” (5.6.153). However, Shakespeare invites audiences to consider the effect of the experimental play in the form of contaminating genres, classical and folk, and reality with imagination. What the fairy tale elements in Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* are concerned with is not with asking audiences to believe in the impossible disjunction of the play, but instead to enjoy the flavor of the elements that contrast and enrich the others.

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## From “I” to “We”: The Proprioceptive Social Body in Contemporary Literature

By Shreya Walia

Proprioception is a physiological term that describes a body’s “sixth sense,” which allows it to be self-aware of the orientation of individual body parts as they relate to the entire body. For example, without proprioception, driving a car would be impossible because the body would need to pay attention to the positioning of arms, legs, and eyes without understanding how they can all work together. Only through proprioception can the body maintain balance and forward movement. In a 1965 manifesto called “Proprioception,” Charles Olsen, often referred to as the father of postmodernism, uses the term to describe a reader’s relationship with poetry, when a poet pulls the reader into an objective text and evokes a full participation of all the reader’s body parts to produce a series of high-energy, transcendent experiences. Peter Siedlecki, Professor Emeritus and Poet in Residence at Daemen College, says of the proprioceptive poem: “The proprioceptive stance might be seen as excessively objective... involving the mind’s potential for establishing connections where no such connections seem to exist except within the consciousness of the I that issues its particular report of its experience” (Trawick 111). Ultimately, Olsen suggests, this technique is successful because the only way a reader can know himself is through his own experiences.

In an interesting deviation from Olsen’s use of proprioception, contemporary authors assert that communities, rather than individuals, are social proprioceptive bodies. In this view interrelated and interdependent connections exist among all members of a community, including the author, the fictional speaker, and the reader. People, in place of body parts, must work together to maintain balance and forward movement. Whereas Olsen suggests heightened self-consciousness and participation of individual parts of the body as a path towards self-knowledge, these texts seem to suggest a heightened social consciousness of people as a path towards advancement. Reworking the ideas of their postmodern heritage, contemporary authors imagine a positive future for human advancement through the realized proprioception of a social body, in which the subject as “we,” not “I,” creates forward movement through an interdependent and interconnected unification of all members, including reader and author.

Many contemporary novelists, such as Ben Lerner, David Foster Wallace, Heidi Julavits, and Colson Whitehead, are participating in an extraordinary movement towards a realized collective body. During an age of pessimism, these authors hope a future will unfold itself as realized communal bodies focus on maintaining the proprioceptive balance of their present states and learn to move forward interdependently, one step at a time. Contemporary American poet and novelist, Ben Lerner focuses his second novel on ways in which the proprioceptive sense in a communal body can be dissociated and united. Lerner’s 2014 novel, *10:04*, opens with the proprioceptive-less octopus that Ben Lerner (Ben Lerner being the name of the book’s author as well as the main character) encounters during a celebratory meal in Chelsea. The octopus, Lerner tells his readers, can “taste what it touches, but has poor proprioception, the brain unable to determine the position of its body in the current... it can detect local texture variations, but cannot integrate that information into a larger picture, cannot read the realistic fiction the world appears to be” (Lerner 6-7). Thus, while the octopus can taste anything it touches due to its evenly distributed neurons, it lacks an overall concept of its position in space. By comparing himself to a proprioceptive-less octopus, Lerner evokes the metaphor to comment on the poor spatial relationship individuals have with the communal body. In fact, other characters in the book are often referred to as having been “dissected”: “It felt like somebody had planned to be right back and never returned, dissected” (emphasis mine, 215); “I stared at him wide-eyed, waiting for him to die or dissect” (emphasis mine, 183); and “he was not going to stop talking at any point in the meal...unless he dissects, I thought” (emphasis mine, 117). There is a definite preoccupation with not only body parts dissecting, but also bodies themselves dissecting, suggesting a looming fear of the spatial disassociation of individual bodies from the communal body. It is interesting to note that Ben Lerner the author and Ben Lerner the speaker are both born in 1979, as part of the cynical Generation X. In comparing both himself and his Generation X friends to the proprioceptive-less octo-

pus, Lerner criticizes the growth-from-isolation model of societal development that arose in the 1960s, around the same time as Charles Olsen published his postmodern ideas regarding individual proprioception. For Lerner, isolation, or dissection, from society is barren, narcissistic, and fundamentally unproductive.

If forward movement is achieved through collectivity, instead of isolation, then even bad forms of collectivity are considered positive. Exploring the ways in which characters from Generation X unite in the second decade of the twenty-first century, Lerner begins his novel with the 2011 tropical storm Irene. As awareness of the storm seeped into the city, it “was becoming one organism, constituting itself in relation to a threat viewable from space” (17). While navigating through New York during the storm, the narrator observes a reemergence of communication between people: “Because every conversation you overheard in line or on the street or train began to share a theme, it was soon one common conversation you could join, removing the conventional partitions from social space; riding the N train to Whole Foods in Union Square, I found myself swapping surge level predictions with a Hasidic Jew and a West Indian nurse in purple scrubs” (17). The “partitions from social space” are also barricaded as mundane objects suddenly “glow” when their interconnected relationship with humans and among humans is realized. A bag of instant coffee makes the narrator contemplate the economics behind normally mundane coffee plants, as he realizes the multitude of social relations that arise during the creation of commercially manufactured products. The looming fear of a catastrophe and the destructive methods of capitalism (such as outsourcing or transnational imperialism) are undoubtedly negative forces; however, Lerner imagines fleeting glimmers of hope in their potential to create a united organism. Later in the book, while staring at changing weather patterns, he writes, “Whenever I looked at lower Manhattan from Whitman’s side of the river I resolved to become one of the artists who momentarily made bad forms of collectivity figures of its possibility, a proprioceptive flicker in advance of the communal body” (108). Lerner’s invocation of Walt Whitman serves to address the commonality of experience, albeit negative, in uniting a social body, a theme Whitman often explores in his poem “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.” In the midst of global pessimism towards a decaying society, Lerner insists on perceiving all forms of collectivity as positive movement. Although positive, such movement is artificial and slow.

It is curious that in a novel showcasing two disasters, only the aforementioned proves to be extraordinary. *10:04* sets itself in the years between the tropical storm Irene (2011) and the hurricane Sandy (2013), with both appearing at the beginning and the end of the novel, respectively. By the time Hurricane Sandy arrives in the narrative, the same city is now dark and lonely. When Alex and Ben ask around for help, cops “shrug dismissively,” taxi drivers “sped away,” and “here and there you could perceive a beam moving across a window, a flame, the glow of an LED, but the overall effect was of emptiness” (235-6). Yet the narrator, as he realizes “how many contradictory emotions were colliding and combining within me” (236), suppresses the urge to smile. This shift in tone is critical to understanding the book: sometime between the two disasters, the power to unite communities is transferred from an older generation represented by Ben Lerner to a younger generation represented by his child. Symbolically, herein lies the hope for Generation Y to take strides where Generation X inched forward.

In the midst of Irene, Lerner’s blood is compared to the water in the storm: “There were myriad apps to track it [Irene], the Doppler color-coded to indicate the intensity of precipitation, the same technology they’d utilized to measure the velocity of blood flow through my arteries” (17). In the midst of Hurricane Sandy, while Alex is getting a sonogram, 216 pages later, the text compares the unborn child to the storm: “On a flat-screen hung high up on the wall, we see the image of the coming storm, its limbs moving in real time, the brain visible in its translucent skull” (233). Being physically connected to his mother, Lerner’s unborn child serves as a symbol of hope for a world that is far less narcissistic than Lerner’s, a world where disaster or bad forms of collectivity are unneeded motivations for members of a community to care for each other. With this profound optimism, Lerner ends the book by addressing the “schoolchildren of America” with comforting words of wisdom: “I know it’s hard to understand / I am with you, and I know how it is” (242). Almost identically, in “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” Whitman writes: “It avails not, neither time or place—distance avails not; / I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence; / I project myself—also I return—I

am with you, and know how it is” (20-23) Through joint syntax and repetition, Lerner invokes Whitman, and together they serve the greater purpose of intimately uniting the past, the present, and the future, both spatially and temporally.

Towards the end of “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” a synthesized whole is imagined as the dualities of light and dark, reader and writer, past and future, life and death—all momentarily become united. Similarly, Lerner injects his novel with a multiplicity of hyperpresent moments where the dubiety of time intimately pulls the reader into moments of intense collectivity. Lerner’s proprioceptive-less body affects temporal perceptions: the narrator Ben Lerner cannot decide whether he is living in the past, present, or future. In a children’s hospital wing where “a giant octopus was painted on the wall,” Lerner feels old and “simultaneously infantilized” (6). He continues to describe this feeling: “What I mean is that my parts were coming to a possess a terrible neurological autonomy not only spacial but temporal, my future collapsing in upon me as each contraction expanded, however infinitesimally, the overly flexible tubing of my heart. Including myself, I was older and younger than everyone in the room” (7). Because perceptions of past and future are distorted, the narrator is forced to live in a fluid hyperpresent; in other words, Ben Lerner lives in an intensified, multidimensional present that is constantly presented as having various navigations of possibilities. Different temporal dimensions of meaning are thus produced through one source, which in this case is Lerner’s relationship to the people in the hospital. This effect gives the reader a glance at an infinite number of moments and possibilities within Lerner’s inner consciousness, all squeezed into one hyperpresent moment. Creating the situation as both objective, such that the common everyday details let the reader insert himself into the situation, and subjective, such that the story is presented by Ben Lerner the speaker and Ben Lerner the author, allows readers to intimately empathize and sympathize with the situation. In this way Lerner connects readers with fictional characters, authors, and themselves, thereby producing an interconnected communal body in which the reader too is a participant.

Transcending the periods of modernism and postmodernism, the avant-garde elements of contemporary novels like *10:04* can be best described as postmodern elements with a modernist emphasis on authenticity in human relations. In “Post-Postmodern Discontent: Contemporary Fiction and the Social World,” American literary critic Robert L. McLaughlin identifies the root problem of postmodernism: “Postmodernism was never about self-referentiality by itself: postmodernism made the process of representation problematic, it foregrounded literature pointing to itself trying to point to the world, but it did not give up the attempt to point to the world. The sea of change, I think, is a matter of emphasis. The emphasis among young writers...is less on the self-conscious wordplay and the violation of narrative conventions and more on representing the world we all more or less share” (McLaughlin 66). Reader participation, a trait that postmodern theorist Ihab Hassan identifies as uniquely postmodern, is manipulated by Ben Lerner, David Foster Wallace, and other contemporary authors to encourage a heightened social consciousness by engaging the reader within an interconnected and interdependent communal body.

Similarly, other contemporary authors—David Foster Wallace, Heidi Julavits, and Colson Whitehead, to name a few—all imagine forward movement through a proprioceptive social body. Heidi Julavits, in her 2011 novel *The Vanishers*, critiques the growth-from-isolation model of societal development, using the concept of proprioception to emphasize realized interconnectedness and interdependence among multiple generations of women as a necessary means for self-growth. Likewise, David Foster Wallace believes the 1960s’ postmodern agenda is unsuccessful and incomplete. Qualities of postmodern fiction tend to stunt and paralyze the quest for meaning; instead, postmodern fiction is more concerned with absence, self-interpretation, and isolation. Although still using the metafictional and self-conscious irony present in postmodern fiction, Wallace offers a revival of sincerity and understanding that transcends his predecessors. Like Ben Lerner, he too injects himself (as the character David Wallace) into *Good Old Neon* and creates dialogue among members of a social body that include the author, the fictional speaker, and the reader.

On March 31, 2015, Colson Whitehead wrote a *New York Times* article titled “How ‘You do you’ Perfectly Captures Our Narcissistic Culture,” in which he states: “In a world where the selfie has become our dominant art form, tautological phrases like ‘You do you’ and its tribe provide a philosophical scaffolding for our

ever-evolving, ever more complicated narcissism.” Applying Ben Lerner’s metaphor, Whitehead warns Generation Y of the dangers of being proprioceptive-less octopuses (like Generation X), concerned only with the narcissistic and unproductive demands of the self. For both Lerner and Whitehead, being detached and disconnected from the social body is ultimately unrewarding. Lerner writes, “The baby octopuses are delivered alive from Portugal each morning and then massaged gently but relentlessly with unrefined salt until their biological functions cease” (153). Critiquing the lazy and self-absorbed proprioceptive-less octopus, or rather, Generation X, contemporary authors assert that human beings are more than animals: an essential part of belonging to the twenty-first century community is actively belonging. The purpose of great literature is to reflect, reexamine, or reinvent the society in which it is born, and in doing so it has the potential to change the course of history. Accordingly, the purpose of contemporary fiction has become a societal awakening of the proprioceptive social body, especially a societal awakening of Generation Y—the 77 million Americans born between 1981 and 1999 who are currently in possession of America’s future. Through this agenda contemporary authors are the torchbearers of one of the most significant literary movements of the century, a movement attempting to raise active participation on the part of readers and to rekindle a flicker of hope for the future through a connected social body.

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## Very Nice: An Analysis of Sacha Baron Cohen's *Borat*

By Kristin Stokes

Maria Dmitrienko had just won a gold medal at the 2012 Arab Shooting Championship in Kuwait when, as she stood proud and medal-clad on a podium among the other winners, her fervor waned in the face of a horrible mistake. And when no one else noticed, Dmitrienko remained, hand over heart, as the incorrect national anthem erupted from the speaker. The song, with evidently unsuspecting English lyrics, trumpeted Kazakhstan as the “number one exporter of Potassium,” the origin of the “cleanest prostitutes in the region,” and possessing a leader with a “mighty penis.” For two minutes, Dmitrienko shifted awkwardly as the event’s organizers mistakenly played Sacha Baron Cohen’s parody anthem from a movie that was, ironically, banned in her country.

Released in 2006, *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* was written and produced by UK comedian Sacha Baron Cohen, who also plays the main character, Borat Sagdiyev, a reporter traveling crosscountry with the fictitious intent of documenting American culture for his home country of Kazakhstan. A collection of interviews and interactions with actual Americans, Borat received acclaim from comedians, film critics, and the western world for its raunchy humor and outrageous situations. The film garnered a nomination for Best Motion Picture: Musical or Comedy at the Golden Globes, won Best Comedy Movie from the Broadcast Film Association, and Baron Cohen received a Golden Globe for Best Actor: Musical or Comedy (Blouke). Borat, himself, was hailed *GQ Magazine*’s Man of the Year. And while the movie enjoyed critical and box office success, it is probably best known for inciting lawsuits, diplomatic fumbles, countrywide banning, and numerous police reports, as Baron Cohen’s character embodies every possible stereotype of the backwards foreigner coupled with especially anti-Semitic and sexist views.

### Genre

Since its release, *Borat* has often been touted as a “mockumentary:” a film that poses as a traditional documentary, in which both the documenter and the documented are aware of its falsehood. However, this genre proves insufficient for a film where most of the “actors” aren’t privy to the joke. At the same time, the fictional frame narrative and main character disqualify it from being categorized as a documentary. Borat proves itself elusive of genre; however it is this ambiguous quality, rising from the very real interactions between a fictional character and unsuspecting Americans, that makes the film so effective.

While watching *Borat*, one is most surprised at--aside from the several minute nude wrestling scene--the brazen attitudes of Americans involved. When Borat asks “what is the best gun to defend from Jew?” the gunshop owner promptly suggests either a nine millimeter or a “fortyfive.” A GM car salesman later recommends a Corvette or Hummer to the reporter when he asks which car attracts women who “shave down below.” And if one gets the impression that those interviewed would probably not have said these things if they knew it would be an award winning movie in both the US and UK, you are absolutely right. Following release, Borat received numerous lawsuits from those involved, arguing that the film was not the “documentary style” movie for which they had signed waivers, calling the film’s genre into question. All of these lawsuits failed, suggesting that legally, at least, it was; however, it is important to analyze the way this deliberately misleading phrase influenced the movie.

Borat deliberately blurs the lines between reality and fiction. And while viewers of the film can obviously see the humor in the outrageous character, it is important to remember that interviewees took him seriously. For both the gunshop owner and car salesman, a “documentary style” movie implied a certain amount of truth, and while clearly inappropriate, they genuinely answered the questions of what they perceived to be a confused foreigner. In this sense, the misleading nature of the film is almost negligible in terms of eliciting truth. The very real nature of these exchanges suggests an honesty from Americans when faced with Borat, a character so convincing that he makes his way onto a local morning news segment; however, these lawsuits suggest something interesting about language: that context matters.

When the boozy frat boys--who were filmed advocating slavery--filed suit, they claimed that both

the perceived real Borat and producers promised the film would never be shown in the US. Interestingly, this geographical distinction was, for the men, central to their behavior, and perhaps a microcosm of the nature of truth telling. As satire often seeks to do, Borat, although under false pretences, elicits truth from the people in his film and brings their darkest prejudices and attitudes to light. This instance also further proves that truth is both slippery and relative. In those interactions with Borat, the men revealed opinions that would not otherwise be uttered, much less in front of millions of American moviegoers. Borat, in all his perceived prejudices, offers interviewees an opportunity to lower their guard and join in.

### Making Fun of Who?

The film begins with Borat casually walking through his native village, introducing its members: the town rapist, the “mechanic and abortionist”, and a “pain in [his] assholes” neighbor that can’t afford a clock radio. He then introduces and makes out with his sister, the “number four prostitute in all of Kazakhstan.” In broken English and a vaguely Russian accent, Borat presents viewers with a Kazakhstan constructed of prejudices where an event called “The Running of the Jew” takes place. And while it may, on the surface, seem that Baron Cohen seeks to criticize the country, it is important to note the ways he criticizes the viewer by constructing a foreign country that is, as Dickie Wallace notes, “familiarily exotic.”

A country chosen primarily for its nearly unknown nature in America, Kazakhstan acts as an object onto which Baron Cohen projects all the western stereotypes of a backward eastern nation, and according to Baron Cohen, “The joke is not on Kazakhstan. I think the joke is on people who can believe the Kazakhstan that I describe can exist” (Akbar). For the interviewees, Borat encapsulates all of these stereotypes and the prejudice lies in their readiness to believe the character. When Borat attends a dinner attempting to learn etiquette, he excuses himself to use the restroom, only to return to the table with a bag of his feces. Rather than question the shocking behavior, one of the women takes the time to explain the specs of the toilet, toilet paper, and wiping. For this woman, the idea of a foreigner who didn’t understand how to wipe himself and brought feces to the dinner table was entirely possible and accepted, pointing to both a western assumption of superiority and of eastern “otherness.”

Baron Cohen further highlights this general othering of eastern nations at a Virginia rodeo. Invited to sing the national anthem, Borat stands center stage in an American flag shirt, shouting support for the “war of terror,” and is met with thunderous applause at the hope that “George Bush drink the blood of every single man, woman, and child of Iraq.” In an act of solidarity, Borat then sings the (fake) Kazakh national anthem to the tune of The Star Spangled Banner; however, he is immediately booed, and at this very real rodeo, Borat nearly incites a riot of bigoted Americans before the police are called. In this scene, Borat draws a very distinct line between “them” and “us,” and reveals the violent attitudes aroused by appeals to this rhetoric. This interaction also suggests a superiority complex within the American psyche as the audience boos in an effort to distinguish itself from Kazakhstan even a fake one.

In a *Time* article published shortly after the movie’s release titled “Borat Make Funny Joke on Idiot Americans! High Five!” Joel Stein criticizes the interviewees for not only this American othering of Kazakhstan, but for also neglecting to rebuke the horrifying attitudes of this perceived true country. According to Stein, “You’re the idiot who believes so much in cultural relativism that you’ll nod politely when a guy tells you that in his country they keep developmentally disabled people in cages.” And polite nods are often what Borat receives in response to largely sexist, xenophobic, and anti-Semitic statements. In one scene, the reporter sings “Throw the Jew Down the Well” in a country/western bar in Phoenix, Arizona; instead of polite nods, Borat reaps an audience that sings and claps along.

An Orthodox Jew himself, Baron Cohen suggests that “Borat essentially works as a tool. By himself being anti-Semitic, he lets people lower their guard and expose their own prejudices, whether it’s anti-Semitic or an acceptance of anti-Semitism” (Akbar). Like Stein, Baron Cohen points to a problem of cultural relativism or pure apathy in the continued acceptance of prejudice, and while the majority of those interviewed in *Borat* resist engaging in the xenophobic or sexist views expressed by the main character, fewer attempt to dispel them.

Unironically, this American appeal to cultural relativism for the sake of politeness is exemplified by an interview with an etiquette expert who, when asked how much to tip prostitutes, awkwardly suggests between ten and twenty percent.

### The Real Kazakhstan

In anticipation of the 2006 release of *Borat*, Kazakh officials were generally outraged at the movie's depiction of their people and government and actively sought to counter the movie that, according to Kazakh Foreign Ministry spokesman Yerzhan Ashykbayev, was an "utterly unacceptable...concoction of bad taste and ill manners" (Blouke). To counter Borat's claims for instance, that local wine was made from horse urine the country of Kazakhstan ran a four page advertisement in the *New York Times* trumpeting its education system, tolerance, and, strangely, the large wolf population; however, this ad did little more than create more buzz surrounding Baron Cohen's movie. Kazakh officials removed Baron Cohen's Kazakh website and even threatened the comedian with a lawsuit to which Borat responded, "I'd like to state I have no connection with Mr. Cohen and fully support my government's decision to sue this Jew" (Blouke). This seemingly farcical battle between a fictional character and a government led, according to Pauline Carpenter, western media to portray Kazakhs as "defensive and unaware of the actual intention of the film" (Blouke). However, regardless of Baron Cohen's intention, it is important to examine the rhetorical imprint Borat has left on the ninth largest country.

As Cate Blouke argues in "Borat, Sacha Baron Cohen, and the Seriousness of (Mock) Documentary," the movie *Borat* as well as the rhetoric surrounding it has influenced the very identity of a country, "creating the only Kazakhstan, the completely bogus hyperreal Kazakhstan that exists in the American imagination." And while one may argue that this was not Baron Cohen's intention, it is nonetheless a consequence and contributes heavily to the way the western world relays information about Kazakhstan. Just last year (2014), British news source *The Standard* ran an article detailing global female representation in government titled "Cultural Learnings for UK: Kazakhstan Has More Women MPs" alongside a large photo of the fictional character giving two thumbs up. And while the article had little to do with governmental relations in Kazakhstan in particular, the title draws on the chauvinist, fictitious Kazakhstan portrayed by Baron Cohen.

This movie constructed persona of Kazakhs also continues as a result of Baron Cohen's insistence to make his character appear real. Prior to a 2006 diplomatic meeting between Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbayev and George W. Bush, Baron Cohen appeared in character in Washington DC and held a press conference. During this conference, Borat dispelled claims made by Kazakh press secretary Roman Vasilenko positing gender equality and religious toleration as "disgusting fabrications." Borat also went on to state that the main purpose of Nazarbayev's visit was to promote his documentary. And while it may seem obvious that Baron Cohen's press conference is joke, there is no denying its impact on the way American's navigated diplomatic relations with the real Kazakhstan. Rather than focus on the realworld implications of the visit, Baron Cohen's framing expertly intertwined reality and fiction and this, well as other public appearances, further cemented the ubiquitous association of his movie with the country. Although, this has not had entirely harmful effects. In 2012, Kazakh Foreign Minister Yerzhan Kazykhanov reluctantly told politicians, "I am grateful to 'Borat' for helping attract tourists to Kazakhstan," as the number of visas issued by the country increased substantially since its release ("Kazakhstan Thanks...").

### Conclusion

Sacha Baron Cohen's *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* is most effective in its unique ability to blur the distinction between documentary and mock documentary, reality and fiction. And perhaps, one plotline in particular offers further insight into the way Borat navigates between the two. Although Borat travels to America with the intent of documenting cultural norms, his cross-country quest ultimately commences after watching an episode of *Baywatch* and promptly falling in love with Pamela Anderson's character "CJ." For the rest of the movie, Borat's obsession with the character is undoubtedly rooted in this same ambiguity. And when he vocalizes his love for the "lovely woman in [the] red water-

panties," interviewees are quick to remind him of the fictitious nature of CJ; Pamela Anderson, he is assured, is the real woman. Borat's idealization of the bombshell is further crushed when the earlier mentioned frat boys reveal that CJ Anderson is no virgin. This revelation is ironic for two reasons. First, the interviewees are able to distinguish between fiction and reality as an observer, but are unable to recognize the fabricated nature of their interviewer when involved. And second, because in the lawsuits filed by these interviewees, there exists a sense of context or relativity in terms of truth. For Borat CJ is very real in the same sense that interviewees perceived his character as well as the context of his questions and their response to be real. For Borat—and Baron Cohen—authenticity is derived within a perceived reality, regardless of a false context.

Baron Cohen expertly crafts Borat, a tool through which prejudices and western "othering" are revealed. And while one may argue that Borat is just fiction, it is important to note both the truth eliciting nature of the movie as well as its very real implications for the nation of Kazakhstan, a real country perpetually linked to the imagined.

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## Rethinking Development: Transforming Women on Film

By Rakshya Devkota

A fear of revolution and change, an insistence on disciplining the individual's desire to fit the confines of society, an elevation of exclusive or potentially unfulfilling development: though on the surface, these seem to have little to do with classic coming-of-age narratives, the narrative structure as well as the foundational philosophy of the traditional bildungsroman all create these ideologies within the genre. The traditional bildungsroman is a flawed, yet pervasive genre that props up centuries-old ideology about how individuals ought to live their lives, while simultaneously excluding a great number of individuals: essentially, anyone who was not white, middle class, and male lacked access to this narrative. The process of bildung is not elevated as universal in narratives of female development as it is for the traditional bildungsroman. As Susan Fraiman argues in *Unbecoming Women*, multiplicity of experience is a hallmark of female development narratives as a genre: “[The way to womanhood] is a lifelong act continuing well past any discrete season of youth, and it involves a struggle among diverse narratives: official and also oppositional stories of arriving at adult ‘femininity’” (Fraiman x). These oppositional stories subvert the ideology of faux-universality in the traditional bildungsroman by creating new “conduct books,” expanding access to the narrative as well as subverting the genre's fear of revolution and insistence on social conditioning as an important part of development. This kind of diversity of narratives can be seen through comparing two texts centered around young women, *Broad City* and *Pariah*. Both operate as transformative texts, but they do so in drastically different ways. *Broad City* creates a new “conduct book” by actively rejecting the process of bildung, thus removing the burden of development from women, giving them the freedom not to develop into polite members of society without facing severe consequences. However, the extent to which this type of narrative is accessible to non-white, non-middle class women is unclear, so this new conduct book arguably still carries some of the limitations of the old genre. *Pariah* depicts the process of development not as a reconciliation or compromise with society as it is in the traditional bildungsroman, but instead as a reconciliation with the self. It offers a different new “conduct book,” a cautiously utopic vision that suggests the importance of allowing women the freedom to pursue their development beyond societal constraints rather than compromising their development with conventions of family and respectability.

*Broad City* rejects the traditional bildungsroman's focus on development, and instead actively works against the process of narrative development itself. Fraiman suggests that development is a matter of free will in the traditional bildungsroman, which she refers to as “apprentice novels.” She gives the example of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, asserting, “Apprenticeship tends to imply choice... Wilhelm and his kinsmen look around, ask themselves where their unique talents lie, and self-consciously determine to cultivate those talents” (Fraiman 5). Traditionally, the bildungsroman operated as a conduct book for white, middle class men, encouraging them to “look around” themselves and based on what they see, develop their talents within the confines of the society around them. The philosophical ideology of the genre, though, suggests that the individual must actively, freely make the choice to develop within the confines of society: “Goethe stresses the freedom necessary for human development and views personal cultivation as a continuing project of the highest ethical significance... Humboldt also identifies Bildung as the primary goal of humanity... ‘Our true purpose in life is the cultivate our diverse talents into a balanced whole’” (Kontje 4). This places a clear burden of development on the individual, yet paradoxically suggests that development is a free choice.

*Broad City* is certainly conscious of the bildungsroman's burden of development, yet uses the vital aspect of freedom within it to subvert that burden and thus, the genre's status as a conduct book. Abbi and Ilana's choices drive their narratives, but the choices they make lead them not towards, but away from traditional development through the childishness and circularity of their narratives. Abbi and Ilana lack any sense of self-consciousness when they move through respectable adult spaces, even when they are hopelessly out-of-place and lacking in the social conventions of adulthood. Their prolonged adolescence is not presented as tragic, however: it's almost normalized. The show makes constant use of circular narratives lacking development, for example, but specific scenes also point to this normalization of the “woman-child”. This features prominently in one par-

ticular scene where Abbi and Ilana visit a CPA to get Ilana's taxes done. Rather than being confined to the script of interactions between responsible adults regarding a financial matters that Killian Casey, CPA is desperately clinging to, Abbi and Ilana basically throw the script out the window—for example, when asked if she has any dependents, Ilana replies, “Uh...I have a lot of independence...but, um...I guess I have people who depend on me, too.” In addition, within the shot/reverse shot sequence of the scene, the camera lingers longer on Abbi and Ilana, making Killian Casey's abrupt, frustrated responses to Ilana's vastly unhelpful “tax information” seem out-of-place, and when he eventually loses it and starts screaming at them to leave, his adult response, not Abbi and Ilana's childishness, is ultimately positioned as truly weird and laughable. The particular picture that Abbi thinks is a magic eye holds significance as well—the fact that she is unable to mentally process an image of a family suggests that the concept of having a family is incomprehensible to her, further emphasizing her state of adolescence. The scene thus suggests that traditional development is stranger than prolonged adolescence, and through this the latter is made not a sign of failure, but instead is normal. Another instance of this juxtaposition between respectful adulthood and prolonged adolescence occurs when Abbi and Ilana go to a fancy restaurant to celebrate Abbi's birthday, particularly when the two go out for a few minutes to smoke weed and then return to see the disgusted faces of everyone around them as they walk back to their table. The sequence of slow motion close-ups of the other guests' faces taken at canted angles which slowly come into focus is meant to reflect Abbi and Ilana's state of mind after getting high. The two, however, are unfazed by the negative reactions of the people around them. In fact, they are too busy taking care of their own matters: making sure the waiter didn't take the clams Abbi ordered away while they went out. This scene operates as a microcosm of the entire show—Abbi and Ilana act improperly, proper adults around them act disgusted, and Abbi and Ilana are unconcerned by their reaction. The two are in an altered, higher state of mind that allows them to distance themselves from the adverse reactions, and thus, the two remain unchanged despite the constant presence of attempted social conditioning pushing them to “grow up.” Ultimately, Abbi and Ilana do not develop as characters, but their freedom and their will are what drive the narrative, essentially repurposing the ideology of freedom within the bildungsroman to discard its other important ideology of societal conformity. The women of *Broad City* are given the freedom to do nothing, rather than being forced to bear the burden of respectability and success that narrative development within the bildungsroman puts on its central figures.

*Broad City* effectively creates a new conduct book for women, replacing the traditional bildungsroman's older conduct book that is both inaccessible and unfulfilling to women in particular. However, the extent to which even this new conduct book is universal is questionable. *Broad City*'s new conduct book emphasizes sexual freedom and removes the burden of finding and sustaining “proper” romantic relationships from the women at the center. Fraiman asserts that women at the center of the bildungsroman have an adverse relationship with sex compared to male protagonists of the genre: “The female protagonist's progress, at least until the twentieth century, is generally contingent on avoiding the abyss of extramarital sexuality, on successfully preventing ‘things’ from happening to her. Her paradoxical task is to see the world while avoiding violation by the world's gaze” (Fraiman 7). *Broad City* uses this critique of the bildungsroman to create a new narrative, one in which women are given power over their sexualities and relationships outside of the confines of society, creating, as Dorothy Allison said, a “remade world.” Whether it's guessing the dick sizes of men playing basketball while leering from the street, purely using men for sex, or trying to hook up with as many old (mostly male) acquaintances as possible through Facebook, Abbi and Ilana are unconstrained by the paradox of avoiding the world's gaze—they gaze right back. Their gaze, too, is remarkable due to the lack of consequences that result from it—Abbi and Ilana are free to pursue whoever they want to without fear of societal retribution, because they simply don't care about society. Even further, *Broad City* as a conduct book argues that mutually supportive female friendship should supersede traditional romantic relationships that tend to demand compromise and confinement for women. Fraiman addresses the idea of “courtship as education” for women at the center of the bildungsroman, pointing out that men in the female bildungsroman usually act as insufficient mentors for the female protagonist, teaching her to compromise herself so she is suitable for marriage (Fraiman 5). *Broad City*, diminishes the significance of this type of courtship, emphasizing instead the importance of female friendship

for women not as a stepping stone for individual development, but as a source of mutual comfort and support. In the fancy restaurant episode in particular, the two are incredibly supportive of one another: they shower each other in compliments about how good they look, Ilana cautions Abbi about a man trying to get her pregnant because according to Ilana's logic, everyone is as in love with Abbi as she is and would thus jump at a chance to "lock her down," an Epi-pen-fueled Abbi carries Ilana (who is in anaphylactic shock) out of the restaurant in a pose that parallels Michelangelo's *Pietà* while Ave Maria plays in the background. Their friendship is depicted in the show as the one consistent source of fulfillment in their lives, to the point that it suggests that female friendship is vital and necessary to women, and thus should be emulated. Abbi and Ilana are a counterpoint to the traditional focus on a solitary figure's development—they are a duo who rely on each other, not to further one another's development, but instead as a mutually supportive relationship that is a worthwhile achievement in its own right, far more worthwhile than pursuing development. However, this "new conduct book" may not be as accessible as it appears to be on the surface: there is no indication that a narrative like Abbi and Ilana's could exist for women of color. Sarah Sahim argues of this, "The hallmarks of a woman-child—messy relationships, career crossroads, financial failure, all-around bad habits—are privileges granted exclusively to white women" (Sahim 7). Sahim goes on to point out that women of color are denied access to this narrative without development because their placement at the center of it would guarantee that they would be perceived as hypersexual, directionless, and lazy. Because of this, just as the traditional bildungsroman's conduct book was inaccessible to women, *Broad City*'s conduct book is also not accessible to everyone, despite its wider reach.

Pariah, unlike *Broad City*, does not jettison the traditional bildungsroman's concept of development; instead, it redefines development. Pariah does so first by asserting the need for a redefinition by depicting the traditional conduct book's damaging effects on the individual, particularly on a woman. The traditional bildungsroman as a conduct book suggests that individuals should temper their desires to work harmoniously with society's limitations (Kontje 5), but when the individual's desires are in direct conflict with the limitations of society, a problem arises. This is the conflict depicted in Pariah. Expectations of her development are put onto Alike by her family and her environment: she is expected to dress "like a girl", to go to prom with a boy, and to eventually grow out of her "tomboy phase," none of which are things she actually wants to do. This conduct book is most prominently depicted through clothing, as Alike constantly has to switch between wearing the more masculine clothes she wears outside of her home and the more feminine clothes her mother wants her to wear. In the first scene where she changes, Alike is on the subway with her friend, Laura, returning home from a club. She insists that Laura get off at her own stop instead of taking Alike home, and after Laura leaves, she shifts up several seats and starts changing out of her more masculine clothes and into clothes her mother would approve of. The camera is angled so that both a close-up of Alike's face and her reflection can be seen, and Alike's reflection looks straight out at the viewer before flickering away several times. Alike herself never looks directly at the viewer, but the fact that her reflection does suggests that even though she finds fulfilling the expectations of those around her at the cost of her identity a personally unfulfilling task, her position as a black queer woman from a religious household forces her to outwardly conform. The scene, thus, operates as a commentary on the act of viewing, with Alike's reflection constantly looking out at the audience (who act as stand-ins for society) for approval as well as depicting the utter despondency of her expression at having to do so in the first place. Later, when Alike is getting ready to go to church, her mother forces her to change out of her comfortable blue collared shirt and pants into a too-tight pink blouse and skirt. While she is doing so, Alike's mother berates her father for not talking to Alike about fixing her unladylike behavior, saying she is "tired of this tomboy phase." Alike's mother's idea for her development is for Alike to become more feminine, and thus, more within societal constraints. Alike has to conform to a concept of femininity that is literally constraining her in order to please her mother and by extension fall within society's limitations; the traditional conduct book is clearly unfulfilling for her.

After asserting the inability for the traditional conduct book to lead to fulfillment for a central female protagonist, Pariah suggests an alternate view of development outside the confines of society, focusing instead of self-discovery. After Bina tells Alike that she is "not really gay," that sleeping together the night before was

insignificant to her, and that she shouldn't tell anyone about what happened, Alike flies out in a heartbroken rage, left in a state of despair at the discovery that one of the few people she thought she could be open with is just as ashamed of her as everyone else. The camera tracks her shakily as she runs home, kicking down trash cans and tearing off her scarf. The lighting of her room is red as the camera follows her tearing her room apart. When she tears her curtains down, the lighting turns blue, and she tears the rest of her clothes off, ultimately lying on the floor in her underwear, crying. Her removal of her clothes, the conduct book for her societally constrained development, conveys her realization that her sexuality and the constraints of the world around her are irreconcilable; because of this, she chooses to stop looking around herself for clues as to how to properly develop, but instead strip herself down and look within herself in order to develop. The shift in lighting, in particular, conveys this—as soon as the blue light comes in through the window without the curtains, Alike is able to strip herself down and ultimately, in the next scene, come out to her parents. Her mother's violent reaction to this further suggests the irreconcilability of Alike's identity with societal structures, this time with what Dorothy Allison refers to as "the myth of the family" as a source of support rather than as an "incubator of despair" (Allison 215). This rejection of the traditional family structure leads to Alike's ultimate decision to leave her family and go to college early and further develop her writing skills, developing outside of the societal confines. In the scene where she reconciles with her father and tells him about her decision, she is standing on the roof with him, the bright gold of the sky lighting the shot. In comparison to the dim, dark lighting of the the rest of the film, this scene and the scenes that follow it mark clear development in Alike's development. Her desires are no longer carefully hidden; she is finally able to pursue her own development openly without worrying about whether or not it fits within societal constraints because she has actively removed herself from society. In the final scene, the sound of Alike reading to her class a poem she wrote about her coming out and her decision to leave is played over shots of her father driving her to the bus station along with Laura and her sister, then Alike sitting on the bus and looking out the window with an expression of cautious optimism as the scene fades to white. "I am not running," she says. "I'm choosing...I am not broken. I am free." Alike is only able to gain the freedom to develop by actively resisting societal expectations. She discards the old, confining conduct book in favor of a new one, which the film suggests is one in which she will pursue self-fulfillment and develop her own talents without limits.

Both *Broad City* and *Pariah* pinpoint specific issues of the traditional conduct book to critique and transform these ideological flaws into a new, more accessible conduct book. *Broad City* focuses on using freedom to subvert the burden of narrative development itself, instead creating a new conduct book where women are not expected to develop and instead are encouraged to rely on one another for comfort and fulfillment. This, however, is not accessible to every protagonist, as *Broad City*'s depiction of freedom would be politicized in a vastly different and more negative way for a potential woman of color protagonist than for the white women who are comfortably at the center of the narrative. Women of color who abandon development would be seen as lazy and directionless, rather than as fun and carefree. The new conduct book presented by *Broad City*, though, certainly still expands the accessibility of the old genre. *Pariah*, on the other hand, does not completely abandon narrative development, but instead redefines it for its central queer woman of color: Alike does not develop traditionally within society, but she does progress towards self-fulfillment outside society's bounds. The removal of societal limitations from development alleviates some of its burden for the woman at the center, allowing her to self-actualize in a way she could not have done within the traditional structures of family and heteronormativity. *Pariah*'s conduct book, thus, emphasizes the importance of personal fulfillment, even at the cost of moving outside of the limits of society. Both of these narratives make use of the old genre to critique itself, and in doing so transform the genre itself: both pursue the "remade world" through their transformative power, allowing for women to have narratives far more fulfilling than the ones they get in the traditional bildungsroman.

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**Victorian Morality as the New Immorality**

By Lejla Bukvić

In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Oscar Wilde makes a mockery of the Victorian institution of marriage and understanding of romance. By using Algernon to represent more modern views and Lady Bracknell to represent Victorian views, Wilde expresses concern that there are severe moral issues that arise when a man or a woman marries for trivial reasons, such as solely money and/or social status.

In Act I, Jack and Algernon are discussing marriage when Jack tells him the reason he has come to town is for pleasure, to propose to Gwendolen. Algernon responds to this in a sort of comical way: “I thought you had come up for pleasure?...I call that business” (71). Though this is meant to be a funny quip, it’s the first of many jabs Wilde aims at marriage. When looking at marriage from the Victorian perspective, it looks very much like a business transaction; a woman would have a dowry, and that dowry would be given to the man (of high status) who agreed to marry her. There was no love involved in the decision, nor was there much of a choice for the woman; money and status were the only tools at either’s disposal. By comparing marriage to a business transaction, Wilde exposes the often tucked away immorality behind such a system: a person, or rather their status, is used as a bargaining chip to increase their chances of being married to the highest bidder. In this system, both men and women lose, for both have virtually no choice in who they marry because the system is setup to decide for them. Where the system fails or true love complicates the arrangement, the parents of the children have the authority to force this Victorian version of marriage upon them and decide for them, and where choice or responsibility is taken away, morality is lost.

Algernon also mentions love and its relationship (or lack of one) to proposals. He says, “It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty” (72). This line, which is also meant to be a humorous little pun, has many layers of meaning hidden beneath the surface, layers which once again critique the Victorian understanding of marriage and/or romance. By comparing romance to uncertainty, Wilde is negating the preconceived notion that romance and the certainty of marriage go hand in hand. During the Victorian era, things of romantic nature (sex, kissing, embracing, openly flirting) were designated specifically for one’s betrothed and seen as inappropriate outside of this agreement. The reader is made aware, however, that Algernon has carried out many of these behaviors before with his constant mention of “bunburying” or “Bunbury”, which Wilde would have included to signal to his audience the presence of a double life; Algernon’s promiscuous double life that was undoubtedly filled with uncertainty, and thus, romance. Being in favor of uncertainty in romance, then, also connects back with Algernon’s previous comparison to marriage as a business. Because he believes marriage to be a business, and accepted proposals would be considered a business agreement, both of his arguments seem perfectly logical. The same degree of certainty one would receive from this business transaction would not be romantic, for business transactions could hardly be considered as such. As for the immorality behind proposals, it is possible that Wilde was referring to the romanticization of claiming and being claimed. During the Victorian era, an engagement, and more particularly an engagement ring, was seen as a cause for celebration and congratulations. When looking at it from Algernon’s (or Wilde’s) perspective, this presumably wonderful occasion loses its charm.

A woman being proclaimed as engaged to be married and/or wearing an engagement ring in this sense, the Victorian sense, is analogous to a piece of property having its “for sale” sign taken down and a “sold” sign put in its place so others would know it, she, is “off the market”. Once again, the system is exposed for its immorality: it teaches men to view women as property or objects that they can claim, while teaching women to view themselves as such and simultaneously take joy in their objectification, and where there is dehumanization, there is no morality.

Though Algernon provides an outlet for Wilde’s more modern views of marriage and romance, the reader is also presented with Lady Bracknell, Algernon’s conservative aunt, who represents Victorian ideals. She frequently inserts her opinion on matters, but her comment on engagements specifically is important: “To speak

frankly, I am not in favour of long engagements. They give people the opportunity of finding out each other's character before marriage, which I think is never advisable" (135). Once again, the audience is meant to view this as whimsical, for it is; however, there is more to her words than is immediately apparent. Wilde is using Lady Bracknell's opinion to point out yet another immoral and commonly held belief about Victorian marriage and romance: love is not what marriage is about. The first part of her line is reminiscent of the idea that a business transaction is a quick one, for if one does not take the deal, another one will soon land on the table, which goes along with Algernon's (Wilde's) understanding of Victorian marriage as a business as well. The second part of her line, her objection to giving men and women "the opportunity of finding out each other's character before marriage" is also reminiscent of the Victorian notion that getting to know one another (dating, flirting, romance in general, etc.) is not necessary in order for an engagement to take place, and thus, neither is love. This argument in particular, the argument that spending one's life with another person is not something that requires getting to know them and love them, is one of the least moral of all the Victorian arguments and beliefs, if not the absolute least. This argument not only validates Algernon's (Wilde's) understanding of Victorian marriage and romance as a dehumanizing, objectifying, business system based solely on trivialities, it reduces the assumingly proud, just, and respected way of Victorian life without love, stunted emotions, and rigid societal rules to what it really is: arrogant, empty, and intolerant of differences, all traits which Lady Bracknell possesses and thus personifies as the Victorian voice of the play. If people and emotions (love, empathy, understanding) are valued significantly less than trivialities like status, money, material objects, or bigoted conventionalities like those the Victorians held, these values will lead to a society where freedom of choice is restricted, responsibility of one's actions is eliminated, and dehumanization becomes an everyday part of life. It will, undoubtedly, be an immoral society.

There is the question of why, then, Wilde would make it so Algernon becomes engaged to Cecily if he (as well as Algernon) seems so opposed to marriage. It is important to note that their engagement is and their marriage will be quite different from a Victorian one. They partake in flirting, kissing, and embracing before they are married, they love each other, and their choice to marry isn't based on societal rules, but rather their desire to be married. In the end, Wilde makes it clear that it is not marriage itself that he has problems with, but the trivial, societal constraints that it comes with; in the end, he simply wants people to love for love's sake.

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## The Disproportionate Impact of Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence on Black Women as an Intersection of Racism and Sexism

By Brenda Suhan

### Overview of the Problem

Domestic and intimate partner violence (DV/IPV) invades homes across the United States, often isolating victims and silencing them with shame and fear. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, DV/IPV is defined as "violence committed by a spouse, ex-spouse, or current or former boyfriend or girlfriend" (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003). Among women 18 years of age and older, 5.3 million cases of IPV occur each year (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003). Consequences of DV/IPV contribute to avoidable excess morbidity and mortality. Approximately 13.6 million days of work, both paid and unpaid, are lost due to IPV against U.S. women (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003). DV/IPV is associated with a range of chronic diseases – such as asthma, gastrointestinal disorders, cardiovascular disease, and central nervous system disorders – due to physical violence and the resulting stress (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). Women who are victims of DV/IPV consume more health services and often require several medical visits for each occurrence (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003).

In addition to suffering from more physical ailments, victims of DV/IPV have higher rates of depression, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide attempts than the general population (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003). While DV/IPV can occur in any household, violence tends to be more prevalent in lower socioeconomic groups. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, DV/IPV rates for black women are higher than for white women (Catalano, Smith, Snyder, & Rand, 2009). However, this is likely due to the fact that a greater proportion of black women live in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and so they face a greater risk (Gillum, 2009). Therefore, racism and the resulting poverty of racism – not race itself – contribute to the higher rates of DV/IPV and its effects. DV/IPV as a public health issue overlaps with social justice issues impacted by a multi-tiered framework of discrimination and is arguably an injustice rooted in much deeper social issues than simply the violence of a single perpetrator.

### A Social Justice Framework for Analyzing Discrimination

Camara Phyllis Jones discusses the effects of discrimination on public health in her publication, "Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale" (Jones, 2000). According to Jones, racism and discrimination can be examined on three levels: institutionalized, personally mediated, and internalized. Together, these levels create a framework with which health professionals can examine health disparities. Jones defines institutionalized racism as "differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by race" (Jones, 2000). Institutionalized racism is discrimination at a societal level, either perpetuated by policies or simply by "inaction" (Jones, 2000). Personally mediated racism is associated with "prejudice and discrimination" (Jones, 2000). Prejudice is characterized by "differential assumptions about the abilities, motives, and intentions of others according to their race," and discrimination is acting upon such assumptions (Jones, 2000). The third level, influenced by the first two, is internalized racism. This occurs when individuals in a population accept others' doubts of "their own abilities and intrinsic worth" (Jones, 2000). The individual begins to believe society's perception of them based upon the characteristics associated with their race (Jones, 2000). It should be noted that while Jones specifically addresses racism, other forms of discrimination can also be analyzed using this framework. The following analysis will address sexism, as well as racism, since both are important to the topic of DV/IPV.

### Institutionalized Racism

Institutionalized racism helps to explain the complexity of the problem of DV/IPV among black women.

Being black and being female are two intersecting identities that add to the burden of DV/IPV for this population. Racism and sexism dually target these victims and survivors. In the U.S., poverty is an issue of race perpetuated by lack of access to quality education. Since those with lower socioeconomic status have higher rates of DV/IPV, institutionalized racism plays a role in the impact of this issue on black women. Since American slavery, black men and women have been marginalized in the U.S. However, black women in particular were expected to fulfill traditional female roles of giving birth and raising a family as well as expected to do work alongside men in the fields (Martinson, 2001). Contrasted with white women, who only were expected to perform tasks traditionally assigned to women, black women became viewed as “bad,” “sinful,” and “immoral” (Martinson, 2001). In contrast to white women impacted by DV/IPV, black women typically are not viewed as “victims” (Martinson, 2001). They are either blamed or expected to fight back. These societal views have broken the trust of black women in our social systems, including the law enforcement, judicial, and medical systems. Racial inequities inherent to our societal structures act as barriers to solving DV/IPV issues in the black community, including victims’ abilities to seek assistance and leave abusive relationships. The reciprocity between the lack of publicity given to black women’s stories and the reluctance of black women to trust societal structures impedes help-seeking behavior. Even when victims do seek help, the existing systems available to them might not cater to the specific needs and concerns of black women, particularly those with low socioeconomic status (Martinson, 2001). Lack of health insurance, for example, impacts victims’ financial ability to obtain medical and mental health treatment due to injuries related to DV/IPV. In addition, more practical barriers discourage reporting and leaving an abuser. Being a woman puts an individual in a position of economic dependence on her partner, since women typically earn less than males and often have the added roles of caring for children. Women must have the economic means to survive without their abusers, and if children are a consideration, it could be even more difficult to leave (Martinson, 2001). Women are forced to choose between two undesirable outcomes: stay with the abuser and continue to endure physical and psychological wounds, or leave and face the daily uncertainty of physical and psychological security against a world that historically has failed to acknowledge a black woman as having worth.

### Personally Mediated Racism

Jones’ second level of racism, personally mediated discrimination, impacts the intra-racial dynamics in abusive relationships and how black women view their abusers. DV/IPV at its core is an issue of jealousy, power, and control by the abuser, often magnified by issues of low income and unemployment (Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, n.d.). In situations of DV/IPV, black women are pulled between loyalty to the black community, and to their identities as women.

By speaking out against black male partners, women risk further marginalizing black men and contributing to the societal stereotype that black men are violent (Martinson, 2001). The strained relationship between police officers and the black community adds to this fear. In particular, black women distrust the police and fear further violence against themselves or their abusers. This prevents women from calling the police to intervene when violence escalates. Other black women might even discourage a victim from reporting or leaving a partner. This tension between women’s interests and interests of the black community is in part responsible for unreported cases (Martinson, 2001).

### Internalized Racism

The final level of racism is internalized, which is influenced by both institutional and personally mediated factors. Black women believe the negative messages from personally mediated and institutionalized levels (Jones, 2000). Internalized racism influences help seeking behavior among black female victims. For example, victims might internalize the stereotypes against black women of the “sexual temptress,” “ugly mummies,” “bridges that hold the family together,” and “emasculating matriarchs” (Gillum, 2009). The label “strong black woman” is familiar to these victims, and dangerously implies that a black woman should be capable of combating violence on her own (Martinson, 2001). These internalized messages perpetuate a cycle of hopelessness

and fail to promote the motivation to seek help and leave an abusive partner. Stigma against mental illness also plays a role in these negative perceptions of seeking help, specifically for psychological distress related to the victimization. The rate of treatment for mental health challenges is only 7% among African American women who exhibit symptoms of mental illness (Ward & Heidrich, 2009). Black women tend to view depression not as a biological illness influenced by environmental factors, but as an individual weakness (Ward & Heidrich, 2009). The consequences of such perceptions are particularly detrimental to black women who are victims of DV/IPV because victimization can have severe and enduring consequences on mental health, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and even suicide. Black women indicate that spirituality and prayer are coping strategies for mental health challenges, yet U.S. society does not typically encourage this type of treatment (Ward & Heidrich, 2009).

### Creating Change

Because of the intersection of racism and sexism, black women who are victims of DV/IPV face greater barriers to seeking assistance than other populations in the U.S. When addressing violence, systems must understand the unique challenges that black women face. Institutional, personally mediated, and internalized racism all hinder black women in ways that are unjust because they perpetuate DV/IPV in the black community specifically. Many actions can help in changing these issues. Publicizing issues of DV/IPV in the black community, partnering with trusted systems such as the church to offer assistance, increasing the rates of insured individuals in the black community, and educating law enforcement and medical practitioners on these issues are several steps that can promote change. Targeting the institutional level of discrimination would create the greatest lasting impact, since societal structures influence both personally mediated and internalized discrimination. Recognizing the complexity of DV/IPV among black women and taking action at the government and policy level can help improve the outcomes and decrease the prevalence of black women victimized by DV/IPV, creating a foundation for healthier homes across the U.S.

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## Interdisciplinary Support for the Shared Decision-Making Model

By Tarun Yandamuri

### Introduction

Clinical medicine was historically paternalistic. However, for about thirty years the academic community has increasingly challenged paternalism in favor of patient autonomy.[1] This dramatic paradigm shift has created a void in the bioethical literature on how to effectively balance autonomy and medical care that enhances patient wellness. Moreover, the literature's overwhelming support of patient autonomy calls to question the physicians' decision-making process in clinical medicine. From a historical and societal perspective, this paper will first assess reasons for the shift from impractical paternalism to patient autonomy, before arguing for the greater clinical integration of shared decision-making through an interdisciplinary lens that borrows from sociology, psychology, and philosophical ideology.

### The Goal of Medicine:

Many authors have written on the goal(s) of medicine. Some may assert that good treatment and a healthy outcome is the only goal, claiming that the patient's preferences are not as important. However, this paper eschews this consequentialist outlook and rests on the fundamental assumption that the goal of medicine is to care for the patient as a human being.[2] Caring for the patient involves more than treating physical maladies or psychological diseases; the physician should also appreciate the patient's wishes, values, and goals. Understanding the goal of medicine as caring for the whole patient is fundamental when evaluating the shared decision-making model of care presented in this paper.

### A Brief History of Paternalistic Medicine and Autonomy:

Examining the historical roots of paternalistic medicine will reveal the need for a more humanistic and modern model of patient care. Philosopher Gerald Dworkin broadly defined paternalism as “interference with a person's liberty of action justified by reasons referring exclusively to the welfare, good, happiness, needs, interests, or values of the person being coerced.”[3] In the medical context, paternalism refers to physicians implementing whatever treatment they believe best for the patient. This decision may either align or dissent with the patient's independent values and wishes.

Support for the paternalistic model of the physician-patient relationship dates back to some of the earliest sources of Western medicine. The English translations of Hippocrates' writings are strewn with paternalistic implications of the physician's role in decision-making, including the following declaration taken from the original Hippocratic Oath: “I will follow that system of regimen which, according to my ability and judgment, I consider for the benefit of my patients [emphasis added].”[4] Medicine was therefore traditionally predisposed to paternalism; the physician acts as the patient's protector by unilaterally articulating the best treatment on behalf of the patient.[5] For thousands of years, paternalism remained mostly unchallenged as the guiding principle to medical decision-making.

Contrasting traditional paternalism, the founding fathers of the United States established the country under a fundamentally autonomous code of liberty and unalienable rights for all citizens.[6] Most definitions of autonomy are inspired by Kant's categorical imperative, which asserts “the idea of the will of every rational being as a will giving universal law.”[7] Dworkin condenses this explanation of an autonomous individual as one who acts according to his or her own thoughts and values, under legal boundaries -- this is the definition of ‘autonomy’ that I will use as well.[8] American civic life has always emphasized individual expression and personal autonomy primary in lawful decision-making. Meanwhile, medical decision-making has been fixed on paternalism, failing to develop a novel approach to align with societal views.[9]

The social contract between medicine and society is greatly responsible for the disparity between societal autonomy and medical paternalism. This unwritten contract can be described as a ‘bargain,’ in which society grants medicine the privileges of prestige, autonomy, and self-regulation with the expectation that physi-

cians will act altruistically, honestly, and in the patient’s best interest.[10] Medicine’s social contract was only developed in the early 1900s, yet has since firmly established physicians as sovereign professionals.[11] For decades society has been relatively complacent with this system, conceding decision-making capacity to benefit the greater good.

More recently major social forces have shifted the public’s interest from passively deferring medical decision-making to actively engaging in the process. Pellegrino and Thomasma outline these forces as the “expansion of political democracy” and “increasingly divergent moral pluralism” throughout civic life.[12] In essence, the public has the right and is encouraged to participate in decisions that have a personal effect.. For example, the government encourages its citizens to be proactive about their health through preventative care. The media is largely fueling this change by publicizing astounding medical advancements and the corresponding ethical and legal dilemmas.[13] Deep-seated concerns, such as abortion and physician-assisted suicide, have called the public’s attention to the intimacy of healthcare decisions. As the public gains insight into health care and its deficiencies, the physicians’ commanding grasp weakens. This inevitable confrontation of paternalism and patient autonomy is only a microcosm of the larger clash between societal views and conventional medicine.[14]

### **A Critique of Paternalistic Medicine:**

Contemporary societal norms are incompatible with a dogmatic paternalism. Superficially, paternalistic medicine fulfills the goals of medicine to the extent that well-being is measured by a patient’s physical responses to treatment. However, the goal of medicine includes caring for the patient’s psyche by considering the patient’s values and goals. Paternalism threatens psychological harm by ignoring the patient’s preferences.

Beauchamp and Childress explain that the principle of beneficence is the foundation of paternalism, defined as the physician’s “obligation to act for the benefit of others.”[15] Paternalistic medicine is a natural manifestation of beneficence according to the physician’s best judgment. However, this beneficence is disseminated from a largely one-sided perspective. Emanuel and Emanuel point out that the physician and patient likely hold different views and values, meaning the physician cannot consistently make a reasonable decision that constitutes benefit for the patient devoid of information.[16] The physician conceives patient autonomy as ‘patient assent,’ and assumes that the patient will agree with the decision at some point.[17] This does not match our previous definition of patient autonomy, because the patient cannot express preferences. True paternalism frequently infringes upon patient autonomy to some degree. While some publications have suggested models that incorporate both paternalism and patient autonomy, a clinically practical model remains elusive.[18]

Another concern with medical paternalism is the potential for physicians abusing their power. For example, there have been cases of corrupt physicians intentionally misdiagnosing patients to increase billing. In July 2015, a Michigan oncologist was sentenced with 45 years in prison for falsely misdiagnosing hundreds patients with cancer and accepting millions of dollars in fraudulent Medicare payments.[19] In these situations, irreversible harm is done before the patient discovers the truth. On an individual basis, implicit bias might corrupt the physician’s decision-making without any conscious dishonesty from the physician. Yet in other cases, such as this one, the physician is knowingly deceitful.

In the larger picture, medicine’s esteemed social status is partly to blame for some unethical behavior. People tend to venerate any source that allows them to live well and long; the public places its trust in physicians as a source of support in maintaining health.[20] In general, physicians are highly regarded figures in daily life. John Stuart Mill once commented on the dangers of class imbalances by saying, “Wherever there is an ascendant class, a large portion of the morality of the country emanates from its class interests and its feelings of class superiority.”[21] As members of an ascendant class, physicians’ interests become paramount to those of the general public. Paternalistic medicine provides the platform for physicians to endorse their own interests, even when those interests oppose those of their patients.

Most physicians object to medical paternalism under normal circumstances. A 2001 cross-sectional survey of 1,050 U.S. physicians found that only 14% of physicians preferred paternalism.[22] On the other hand, 75% of the respondents preferred to share decision-making with their patients.[23] The reasons for why

physicians generally dislike paternalism are far and varied. For example, physicians may not want to impose their will on the patients. They recognize that the patient’s dignity is injured when the physician dominates the decision. Physicians recognize that paternalism generally disregards how the patient feels, and thereby opposes the goal of medicine.

While paternalism is not suitable to normal clinical encounters, it is a necessary approach under certain circumstances. For example, if a patient is in critical condition and cannot provide informed consent to a procedure, a quick paternalistic intervention by the physician is almost always justified.[24] The value for patient autonomy is so high that even such extenuating cases are often handled through surrogate decision-makers, such as the patient’s family members or an external health care proxy, or a prewritten advanced directive. When all other reasonable options are unavailable, physicians can fairly (and legally) implement paternalistic care for patients who lack the decision-making capacity to relay their values. Another such exception is therapeutic privilege, which allows physicians to paternalistically withhold certain information from the patient to indirectly prevent serious harm.[25] Paternalistic interventions can be justified when the patient may harm self or others. Although children are often treated paternalistically and do not entirely possess decision-making capacity, the physician still considers the child’s wishes.[26] Lastly, certain patients may even prefer to forgo any decision-making authority in favor of the physician’s paternalistic judgment. Although shared decision-making is the gold standard for clinical interactions, certain situations require the physician to default to paternalistic measures.

### **A Need for Shared Decision-Making in Medicine:**

The decline in medical paternalism and the emphasis on patient autonomy made seeking informed consent from the patient before making a health decision crucial. The moral significance of informed consent became so important that informed consent has transformed from a recommendation into a legal necessity. The 1972 court case *Canterbury v. Spence* mandated that for a competent patient, “all risks potentially affecting the decision must be unmasked” to obtain informed consent.[27] One proposed model of the physician-patient relationship, the informative model, overstates informed consent and patient autonomy by requiring the physician to strictly transfer discrete information to the patient.[28] The patient then uses this information to make a wholly independent decision according to his or her values. However, the informative model assumes that the patient has known, fixed values and severely restricts the physician from making any recommendations whatsoever.[29] In reality, the patient often has dynamic values that may be unknown altogether.[30] While the paternalistic model limits patient autonomy, the informative model grants an impractical definition of patient autonomy. Several intermediate models, such as the physician-as-agent model, have described the physician attempting to make treatment decisions by choosing as the patient would choose.[31] The physician thereby unearths the patient’s values and chooses accordingly as the sole decision-maker. These models have been omitted from discussion for simplicity. However, all of these models fail to respect both the physician and patient as important, cooperative agents in decision-making.

As a response to this inequality of decision-making between the physician and patient, bioethical literature has increasingly supported the implementation of shared decision-making in clinical medicine. For cases in which multiple treatment options exist, the patient’s preferences become especially salient, and shared decision-making provides the patient a practical avenue to explore those choices. At its core, shared decision-making stresses the physician-patient relationship as a two-way street.[32] In other words, both parties are expected to contribute to the overall decision-making process. This is distinct from the paternalistic and informative models, which support unilateral decision-making. If either party is unable or unwilling to participate in the decision-making process, then shared decision-making cannot reasonably occur.[33] In this case, the paternalistic model can be reasonably justified.[34]

The literature notes that several criteria exist for shared decision-making to successfully occur. As mentioned, both parties should be motivated to proactively contribute. Research has shown that even though patients overwhelmingly desire medical information, they are much less willing to ask for that information from

the physician and subsequently assume responsibility for medical decision-making.[35] Oftentimes patients may default to a passive role because they feel burdened by the process, embarrassed to ask questions, or simply scared to complain to the physician.[36] For these reasons, shared decision-making suggests that the physician provide a favorable, friendly environment to maximize the patient's comfort. This can range from regularly asking the patient open questions to a warm smile. The physician should not ask yes or no questions, such as "Do you have any questions for me?" because the patient is more likely to answer "no" as a default.[37] Instead, asking open-ended questions such as "What questions do you have for me?" allows the physician to elicit the patient's preferences so that treatment options can be personalized according to the patient's needs and goals.[38] Physicians often misinterpret the patient's preferences through conjecture.[39] In accordance with the 'two-way information flow' axiom, while the patient communicates these personal preferences, the doctor should provide the technical information pertaining to all relevant treatment options as clearly as possible.[40]

In addition to standard communication, the physician may employ various decision aids to better inform the patient. Shared decision-making suggests that the physician convey the risks and benefits of each treatment while consciously trying to prevent imposing personal preferences onto the patient. At best, the physician can merely recommend one particular treatment option over another without coercing the patient to choose the same. Research has shown that patients feel mental and emotional comfort when they receive full information.[41] Like most physician-patient relationships, shared decision-making has little function without mutual trust between the patient and physician. Many of these criteria can only be met if the physician can initially solidify a meaningful professional relationship centered on trust.

The potential benefits of shared decision-making are significant. Shared decision-making may create a more knowledgeable patient. The patient feels lower levels of anxiety over the unknown, and a greater sense of control over the decision-making process.[42] Decision aids, such as written fact sheets and informational videos, offer other effective methods of information delivery. A recent review of the effectiveness of decision aids for patients undergoing stressful screening and treatment decisions found that patients consistently felt better informed and more realistic about their expectations of risks and benefits.[43] Furthermore, the physician often feels less stress since the patient is better prepared for consultation.[44]

Some research shows that shared decision-making may help reduce healthcare costs, with up to 20% of patients involved in shared decision-making selecting less expensive surgical options.[45] A 2012 observational study of knee or hip osteoarthritis patients found that providing decision aids resulted in 26% fewer hip replacement and 38% fewer knee replacement surgeries, thereby significantly reducing costs overall.[46] Although additional data is needed to solidify these claims, the preliminary research looks promising. Perhaps the most important benefit to shared decision-making is its wholesome approach to contemporary healthcare. Shared decision-making strengthens the physician-patient relationship and grants practical patient autonomy in a society that values patient empowerment.

On paper, the shared-decision making model is the current standard of care; however, the literature still calls for greater integration of shared-decision making in clinical practice.[47] What the academic medical community suggests and how physicians actually behave is not always in sync. The medical shared-decision model has great potential, particularly by borrowing from other well-established disciplines. Integration of this information provided by fields that study human behavior is important for improvements to shared decision-making between physicians and patients.

#### **A Sociological Perspective on Decision-Making:**

Any relationship intrinsically involves making decisions towards conflict resolution. Sociological factors can dictate how decisions are perceived between parties, remedying or worsening the conflict at play. The physician-patient relationship is no exception. Sociology has long studied decision-making and its many contextual elements. The physician-patient relationship is complex, comprising many sociological factors. The patient's personal characteristics, the physician's personal characteristics, and the physician's interaction with the healthcare system all can impact medical decision-making.[48]

A patient's socioeconomic status can affect how a physician perceives and diagnoses the patient, even if not intentionally.[49] One systematic review found that patients from lower socioeconomic classes are less often encouraged to participate and less likely to understand medical information when discussing treatment options.[50] The review also showed that physicians are less informative when consulting with patients from lower classes.[51] Several plausible reasons exist as to why patients from a lower socioeconomic class are treated with less attention in medical decision-making. Families with a lack of financial resources have frequently been correlated with a poor access to education.[52] Consequently, patients with a lower educational background are much less likely to participate in the decision-making process when compared to their well-educated counterparts.[53]

Some studies have reported that patients of a lower socioeconomic status feel less control over medical situations, and may believe that health and disease are beyond their authority.[54] Physicians may identify these passive patients as unwilling or unable to comprehend information and meaningfully contribute to medical decisions.[55] A reciprocating negative cycle emerges when the patient remains inactive and the physician incorrectly assumes the patient's unwillingness to contribute, leading to further patient inactivity.[56] In contrast, higher educated patients with a privileged socioeconomic background are often vocal in their healthcare decisions, eliciting an informative and positive attitude from the physician as well.[57] These patients belong to a socioeconomic class that is closer to the physician's, and often feel comfortable in asking questions and participating.[58] In order for shared decision-making to work, physicians should realize that socioeconomic variables can impact patients' participation in decision-making and thereby the quality of care administered.

The patient's race might subtly affect the decision-making process as well. One study showed differences in the quality of how well physicians communicate with patients of different races; physicians were found to be more verbally dominant and less emotionally perceptive with African American patients than white patients.[59] Another study used an implicit-association test to find that cardiologists were less likely to recommend African American patients for thrombolysis than white patients.[60] An implicit bias may exist in healthcare, impeding shared decision-making with African Americans as compared to white patients.[61] While additional research is needed to reach any firm conclusions, the idea of a potential racial bias among physicians, either conscious or unintentional, should not be dismissed.

Female patients are predisposed to a gender bias in healthcare, since women are underrepresented in clinical research studies compared to men.[62] The abundance of male research data may be incorrectly extrapolated to women, even if certain biological gender differences require different treatments for women.[63] For example, women's blood vessels are naturally narrower than men's, allowing for easier plaque buildup and a higher chance of rupture.[64] Pharmaceutical companies and physicians should compensate for such biological differences when developing or prescribing drugs. Biological gender differences may manifest into entirely different symptoms for men and women.[65] If these differences are neglected, physicians run the risk of failing to identify symptoms and diagnose key issues pertaining in female patients. In fact, women with coronary artery disease are given a disproportionately lower amount of lipid-lowering treatment than men with coronary artery disease.[66] Gender biases are therefore prevalent in research and clinical medicine as well. The patient's age and physical appearance may also factor into how the physician allocates decision-making with the patient.

The sociological characteristics of the physician are equally relevant to medical decision-making. Not all physicians treat clinical encounters in the same manner. Some physicians are disease-oriented and will prefer to take prompt action with the patient.[67] Other physicians are oriented towards health maintenance and will observe the patient's situation for some time before discussing treatment options.[68] The physician's gender may play a role in decision-making as well. Several studies suggest that female physicians take more time with their patients and give greater consideration to psychosocial issues than their male counterparts.[69], [70] This may suggest that female physicians are generally more patient-oriented.

Medicine's constantly evolving nature over time sets the physician's age as an influencing factor, caused by differences in belief and training between younger and older physicians. One study published by the American Sociological Association found that older physicians tend to more frequently diagnose depression in female

patients than younger physicians.[71] One plausible explanation for this disparity is that depression was once mistakenly believed to be a female-specific condition caused by postmenopausal changes.[72] Through a cohort effect, older physicians may still consider these claims when treating female patients.[73] While the effects of the physician's race on decision-making are inconclusive, patients in race-concordant relationships with their physicians tend to report higher levels of satisfaction than patients who are not race-concordant.[74] Physicians may claim a uniform standard of care to all patients and deny the relevance of any of these patient or physician characteristics. However, subconscious perceptions, biases, and stereotypes cannot be avoided until first acknowledged by the physician.

The physician's interaction with the medical profession can easily affect the physician's decision-making behavior. A commonly held belief among physicians is that overdiagnosing patients, even in the absence of patient benefit, is better than missing a diagnosis completely.[75] Some physicians may overdiagnose to satisfy the patient's desire to identify that something is truly wrong, while others may overdiagnose either due to the peer pressure of examining all differential diagnoses or avoiding the threat of a malpractice suit.[76] In either case, adding diagnoses most likely adds additional pharmacological treatment and unnecessarily burdens a patient. Furthermore, physicians who are actively engaged in the medical community and better informed on pharmacological advances are more likely to prescribe new drugs to patients.[77] The influence that pharmaceutical drug companies have on physicians is so great that medical students even undergo workshops that teach how to interact with pharmaceutical representatives.[78] These representatives persuade physicians to prescribe up-and-coming drugs. Physicians may feel compelled to recommend these novel drugs to patients based on qualitative claims in the community and a higher tolerance for risk. Other physicians may prefer to avoid risks and prescribe traditional drugs with confirmed data.

Sociology highlights the subtle social factors that affect decision-making, showing that physician treatment can never be perfectly uniform for all patients. Physicians and patients possess certain social and socioeconomic characteristics that naturally lead to biases in either party. If the goal of medicine truly is to care for the whole patient, then prejudices disrupt the goal entirely. Rather than ignoring such biases, physicians should instead expand their awareness of potential biases that may exist. The shared decision-making model can incorporate this awareness and encourage physicians to reflect on socioeconomic inequalities between themselves and their patients, allowing for the physician to subjectively compensate and provide less-biased patient care.

#### **A Psychological Perspective on Decision-Making:**

Another discipline that studies human behavior is psychology, and therefore can help reveal intra-personal undertones to decision-making. While sociological decision-making is largely impacted by relationships between people, the psychological perspective of decision-making is concerned with the human mind and emotions. Psychology offers excellent insight into underlying character traits that affect how people make decisions, specifically physicians and patients.

In 1889 William Osler, widely considered to be the father of modern medicine, emphasized the importance of physician equanimity in his valedictory speech to the University of Pennsylvania graduating medical class: "a certain measure of insensibility is not only an advantage, but a positive necessity in the exercise of a calm judgment." [79] Osler believed that a physician should strive to control his or her mental state and conceal any external emotions when treating a patient.[80] By maintaining an aura of coolness, Osler argued that physicians can cover up mental weaknesses and easily "see into" the patient's deeper self.[81] Osler's influence helped standardize physicians as objective beings who should view patients with an air of detached concern, out of respect to both the patient and the physician.[82] These attitudes have echoed throughout popular culture, personifying the doctor as an aloof and emotionally distant caretaker.[83] Numerous medical dramas contain apathetic physicians, such as famed characters Ben Casey and Gregory House, who treat their patients from an emotional distance.[84] The truth is that physicians possess innate personality traits and emotions that comprise their character, just like any rational human being with the ability to think freely. The ideal of objectivity is unrealistic in clinical practice, as even emotionally detached physicians are subject to raw emotions.[85] Detached

concern only masks already present emotions. These psychological traits and emotions can greatly influence how physicians and patients engage in decision-making activities together and should not be underplayed in the clinical setting.

The profusion of personality traits can mostly be narrowed down to five major psychological dimensions: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.[86] These dimensions refer to a person's ability to be tolerant of others, dependable and responsible, talkative and assertive, cooperative with others, and anxious or depressed, respectively.[87] However, one study found that these "Big Five" personality characteristics do not influence ethical decision-making nearly as much as a person's narcissism of self-worth and cynicism of other people.[88] Feelings of narcissistic entitlement and cynical assumptions about others' motives were consistently correlated with less ethical decision-making.[89] A narcissistic individual may exploit others to advance their own goals, while a cynical individual may trust others less.[90] For example, narcissistic physicians might prescribe patients expensive treatments for profit. A cynical patient can undermine trust through skepticism, even though trust is integral to the physician-patient relationship and therefore decision-making.[91] Narcissistic or cynical behavior can negatively impact communication and even create feelings of resentment.

While personality traits are integral to a person's character, emotions represent a short-lived response to external forces.[92] Discrete emotions, such as fear, anger, happiness, and sadness, can all alter how decisions are made.[93] Anger is one of the most intense emotions, and has been found to induce riskier decision-making behavior.[94] Anger can cause physicians to recommend riskier options than the patient, and other physicians, would typically be okay with. On the other hand, fearful individuals tend to overestimate risky events and instead select the safer option.[95] A fearful patient is likelier to avoid risky treatment options. Happiness and sadness can be polarized as well; while happy patients tend to select safer options, sad individuals feel a loss of control and may select riskier options.[96] When adverse emotions begin dominating a relationship, oftentimes the best answer is for both parties to separate for some time and cool down. The physician-patient relationship, however, is not so fortunate. Even through emotional turmoil, the physician cannot abandon the patient.

Rather than resist natural emotional tendencies like Osler suggested, physicians should strive to be empathetic towards their patients. Physicians who practice empathetic communication have been shown to substantially increase patient satisfaction and compliance in decision-making, simply by relating to patients on a sentimental level.[97] Empathetic physicians can strengthen trust in the physician-patient relationship and allow for a mutually beneficial decision-making process. When both the physician and patient are angry or frustrated, physicians can still cultivate the mental fortitude needed to form an empathetic connection with their patients through basic conflict management.[98] By first actively acknowledging their own negative emotions and then self-reflecting on why they exist, physicians can attune to what clues their own emotions reveal about their patients' feelings.[99]

Increased awareness when listening to patient's story can often expose hidden emotional concerns that may be missed if the physician is listening only for objective facts.[100] Such receptivity is especially crucial to nonverbal communication, since patients do not always express concerns explicitly.[101] For example, a patient with a quivering vocal tone or poor eye contact may have a hidden undiscussed issue.[102] Physicians have the opportunity to connect with patients in these moments by adjusting their own nonverbal behavior, such as spending less time reading the patient's chart and making more eye contact or more gestures.[103] If the situation is appropriate, the physician may verbally engage the patient to elicit this issue. During conflicts, physicians also become controlling and less open to criticism.[104] Instead physicians can overcome future conflicts by accepting negative feedback from their patients, consequently improving patient satisfaction as well.[105] Physicians who are genuinely connected to their patients on an emotional level can effectively share decision-making. Physicians who practice detached concern often miss these key psychological factors of the physician-patient relationship.

Psychology reveals that objectivity is an impossible ideal for physicians. Detached concern is an archaic outlook that hinders the goal of treating the whole and is incompatible with patient empathy. Ingrained personal-

ity traits and discrete emotions will always influence how physicians and patients make decisions. More importantly, these elements can be hidden entirely. The shared decision-making model should encourage physicians to remain empathetic with their patients, even through conflicts, in order to generate true curiosity in the patient's interests and possibly discover hidden concerns as well.

#### **A Philosophical Appeal to Action:**

Medical ethicist Dan Sulmasy argues that an act is not made good simply because it has been chosen, and that contemporary bioethics sometimes mistakenly grants a skewed perception of autonomy.[106] It is not enough for one to believe that he or she is doing good if the decision made is not fundamentally 'good.' Sulmasy bases his thesis in the largely deontological theory of Catholic natural law, which states that actions are inherently right or wrong as an objective truth[107]. For example, Sulmasy explains that the people who attacked the World Trade Center believed they made the correct decision, but instead committed a reprehensible act.[108] Rather, Sulmasy contends that the moral goal of natural law should be to help people understand what is truly good so that they may freely make that decision. In the medical context, when a patient's rationality fails and he or she makes decisions that are inherently wrong, the physician can override these decisions with the justification of natural law.[109] Many additional philosophical theories exist pertaining to human judgment and decision-making, but these theories have been omitted for simplicity.

Physicians are obligated to recognize variables impeding shared decision-making in the clinical encounter. A patient will not necessarily make a 'good' choice every time; the physician should try to identify when a 'bad' action threatens to cause damage. Still, this should be balanced with a patient's autonomous right to choose during the shared decision-making encounter. Does a patient's right to autonomy condone bad decision-making? To what extent can a physician's judgment trump a patient's bad decision-making?

The literature has shown that the best model for appreciating the goal of whole patient care is currently shared decision-making. Evidence-based medicine, such as shared decision-making, only works when physicians accept research and adopt methods into clinical practice. Most physicians believe that their patient interaction is already good, yet what happens if physicians continue to dismiss evidence? Interdisciplinary methods show support for shared decision-making; why aren't physicians taking action? Now more than ever, physicians should support philosophical research that may help uncover some of these answers in the clinical encounter.

#### **Addressing Criticism to the Interdisciplinary Shared-Decision Making Model:**

Several possible criticisms can be made in response to the interdisciplinary shared-decision making model. Perhaps the biggest criticism is the physicians' time limitation to implement shared-decision making in every clinical encounter. In order to integrate aspects of sociology, psychology, and philosophical undertones into shared decision-making, the physician needs sufficient time for self-reflection and deliberating choices with the patient. As physicians consistently utilize this model and habituate, the shared decision-making process will hopefully become ingrained and automatic. The overall interaction between physician and patient will eventually be more efficient, since patients are better informed. As familiarity with shared decision-making increases, physicians will be able to streamline their clinical encounters to be more time-efficient. Another plausible criticism is that the interdisciplinary shared decision-making model is impractical under certain clinical settings. For example, emergency physicians will rarely use shared decision-making since the majority of their patients require immediate attention.

Furthermore, this paper only presents limited research on the benefits of shared decision-making. Although shared decision-making is the current standard of care, not all physicians use the model. In the 2010 National Health Interview Survey, roughly two-thirds of men who underwent prostate cancer screening reported no evidence of shared decision-making with their physicians.[110] This interdisciplinary approach strengthens the arguments for shared decision-making beyond that which medicine can do on its own. Further research is necessary to fully understand the benefits and shortcomings of such a comprehensive model. Shared decision-making is not an ideal model, as it does not work in every clinical scenario. Although more criticisms may exist,

inadequate time, improper setting, and limited research are among the greatest concerns.

#### **Conclusion:**

Clinical medicine has evolved from historically paternalistic care to the contemporary standard of shared decision-making. Although the literature overwhelmingly supports shared decision-making for its respect of patient autonomy, the current shared decision-making model cannot uphold under modern society's increasing medical self-awareness. It is no longer acceptable for physicians to dismiss underlying biases or conceal emotions in the presence of their patients. Physicians should not dismiss variables affecting the clinical encounter, such as underlying biases or concealed emotions. The interdisciplinary approach seeks to support and shape shared decision-making into a more robust model of care that recognizes and responds to medical disparities from a multi-faceted perspective. By expanding the depth of shared decision-making through the sociological, psychological, and philosophical disciplines, physicians stand to translate the academic community's acclamation for respecting the patient's preferences into real clinical practice.

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## Human Rights and Human Wrongs: Challenges to Protecting the Human Rights of Asylum Seekers in Italy

By Stephanie Roderick

Asylum seekers are particularly vulnerable to human rights violations. By definition, they are individuals fleeing persecution in their home country on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugee, 1950, art. 1). Persecution based on any of these factors constitutes a human rights violation, but for many the struggle does not end there. When individuals requesting asylum arrive in their host countries and petition for asylum, also known as the official status of refugee, they are often subject to substandard living conditions, limited economic opportunities, and few legal rights. This is particularly evident in the ongoing crisis in the Mediterranean. Thousands of migrants have tried to sail across the sea into countries in Southern Europe like Italy. Their hope is that once they reach European soil, they can petition for and perhaps be granted asylum. Their reality, however, is often quite different.

Asylum seekers in Italy have found their human rights violated on a number of occasions. It is necessary to further investigate these cases reporting human rights violations, but it is also important to examine why these violations occur so as to prevent future human rights violations. This paper seeks to specifically identify what factors complicate the protection of human rights specifically concerning asylum seekers in Italy? To answer this question, the paper will first look at how human rights are perceived both in theory—according to the four main schools of thought—and in practice—according to international organizations such as the Council of Europe and the United Nations. Additionally, the paper will look Italy’s perspective on human rights and how the country has violated such rights as a result of various factors. In doing so, this paper expects to find three main factors have complicated the protection of asylum seekers’ human rights in Italy: the nature of state sovereignty and the international community’s inability to effectively enforce international human rights legislation; the social marginalization of migrants, including xenophobic and racist sentiments in Italy; and the economic constraints associated with taking in and caring for asylum seekers. Together these three factors offer an explanation on why protecting human rights can be a complicated process.

### What are human rights?

Four main schools of thought regarding human rights theory have emerged: the natural school, deliberative school, protest school, and discourse school (Dembour, 2010). The most prominent of the four is the natural school of thought. In this school, human rights are the inherent rights of humans simply for being human (Donnelly, 2007). As such, human rights are universal. Because humanity can neither be earned nor confiscated, all humans, universally, have the same human rights. In the case of asylum seekers in Italy, natural scholars claim they absolutely have human rights (Dembour and Kelly, 2011). The Italian government must therefore respect and protect those rights.

On the contrary, not everyone agrees with this concept of inherent, universal human rights. The deliberative school of thought, for example, claims there is no fixed definition of human rights nor should there be one (Ignatieff, 2001). Human rights are mere social constructs. They develop in response to social pressures, and they only come into existence when they are agreed upon by society. More specifically, human rights are born when they are written into law (Dembour, 2001:12) Accordingly, the human rights of asylum seekers in Italy depend on the laws created by the Italian citizens. Asylum seekers should not necessarily have much control over the legal proceedings in Italy regarding the human rights they are granted because they are not Italian citizens. Given that asylum seekers have very few legal rights in Italy, they have very human rights as well.

Members of the protest school of thought, similar to the deliberative school, do not explicitly define the concept of human rights. Scholars in this school claim that human rights exist because activists and individuals fight for them (Dembour, 2001). They are the byproducts of social movements (Stammers, 1999:984), and

the purpose of these social movements is to challenge dominant and oppressive power structures (Stammers, 1999:1007). When one person attains the right he or she was fighting for, that person then has an obligation to make sure others have that same right (Stammers, 1999:1006). Likewise, Italian citizens have an obligation to fight for the protection of asylum seekers’ human rights.

In addition to the natural, deliberative, and protest schools of thought, the discourse school of thought is another avenue scholars take in understanding human rights (Dembour, 2010). Although less common, discourse scholars are skeptical of human rights as a concept. They might even reject it altogether arguing that human rights don’t exist as the other schools have come to define them. The concept is merely an experimental philosophy that comes with many flaws. One main flaw is the influence of the West on common conceptions of human rights. Discourse scholars argue that human rights are a propagation of Western, ethnocentric, imperialist values (Mutua, 2003:3). In the case of asylum seekers in Italy, discourse scholars would argue that the asylum seekers do not have human rights because human rights don’t exist (Dembour and Tobias, 2010). If asylum seekers are to be treated fairly and have their supposed “human rights” respected, the Italian government must take a more solid approach to implementing justice and equality. The pre-existing, empty rhetoric about human rights is insufficient.

Despite their respective theories and disagreements, all four schools are likewise committed to eliminating injustices. They simply prefer to approach the topic in different ways. It is also important to note that these four schools do not encapsulate the full complexity of human rights theory nor are they mutually exclusive. Beliefs might, and often do, overlap.

In addition to these four academic perspectives, it is important to identify Italy’s perspective on the human rights of asylum seekers. On a broad level, the Italian government recognizes the concept of human rights. The country has ratified the Council of Europe’s Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) of 1950. Thus, theoretically the country must guarantee the rights set forth in it (International Humanitarian Law, 2015). This includes the right to life, the right to a fair trial, the right to liberty and security, and the prohibition of torture among others. These rights detailed in the ECHR take on a natural school approach. Moreover, although none of the rights listed in the ECHR specifically addresses asylum seekers, Article 3 on the prohibition of torture has become a key facet of asylum seekers’ human rights. The article explicitly prohibits inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment (European Convention on Human Rights, 1950). With few legal rights, asylum seekers are particularly vulnerable to inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment. By their very nature, asylum seekers face the risk of inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment if they are returned to their place of origin. If they didn’t face this risk, they would be considered immigrants or another type of migrant. Likewise, the act of refoulement, or the forcible return of asylum seekers to their place of origin without allowing them to first petition for asylum, is a violation of Article 3 on the prohibition of torture (Asylum and the ECHR, 2010: 23). In the case of Italy, not allowing asylum seekers to petition for asylum, or refouling them, is also a violation of Italian law. As deliberative scholars would argue, this legal violation constitutes an actual human rights violation. Article 10 of Italy’s constitution mandates that any foreigner who has been denied the ability to exercise “democratic liberties guaranteed by the Italian Constitution has the right of asylum in the territory of the Republic.” For example, estimates report that in 2014 alone, 64,000 people filed for asylum in Italy most coming from North Africa and Asia (Asylum in the EU, 2015). These 64,000 people thus have the legal and human right to have their petitions for asylum reviewed in Italy. In short, Italy formally recognizes the right to file for asylum as well as human rights detailed in the ECHR.

In the international context, Article 10 of Italy’s constitution requires that all Italian laws follow the principles set forth in international laws. Italian law must be in accordance with the United Nations’ Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 (CRSR) and the Protocol of 1967. The CRSR set the legal framework for asylum proceedings. It discusses how those who qualify for refugee status and consequently asylum should be treated. For example, the CRSR reiterates the ECHR’s Article 3 on the prohibition of torture. Accordingly, authorities must treat asylum seekers humanely while the asylum seekers wait for their applications to process. Also similar to the ECHR, the CRSR mandates the principle of non-refoulement. Authorities cannot send

asylum seekers back without first allowing them to file for asylum. While these rights set forth in international law are open to various interpretations, they provide an assessment of Italy's, the Council of Europe's, and the United Nations' respective positions on the human rights of asylum seekers.

### Italy in Violation of Human Rights

Given Italy's position on the human rights of asylum-seekers, it is surprising to find ample cases of human rights violations executed by the Italian government itself. For example, Italy has faced international criticism for the subpar conditions in Italian reception centers for asylum seekers. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) conducted a report in May 2011 detailing the conditions of these reception centers. The report first found an insufficient number of centers given the amount of people present in the country who are requesting asylum. Due to this deficit in reception centers and accommodation centers, a large number of asylum seekers are forced to live and sleep on the street. This in turn hinders their access to food and other basic needs. They also have very little economic opportunity to improve their situation, since they cannot legally work in the country until their applications have officially been processed. In addition, they have few legal rights to protect themselves from exploitation should they obtain a job clandestinely (UNHCR, 2015). The report also found that authorities in reception centers were not providing asylum seekers with information, or at least accurate information, regarding their rights to health care. This withholding of information has prevented asylum seekers from receiving proper medical attention simply because they did not know they could (UNHCR, 2015:7). The lack of resources offered and misconduct within reception centers violate asylum seekers' human right to humane treatment.

Italy has also found itself guilty on numerous occasions of refouling migrants, an indisputable violation of human rights. In a case from 2009, for example, 224 people tried to cross the Mediterranean Sea from Libya to Italy. Some individuals on board planned to petition for asylum once they reached Italy (Coppens, 2014). The Italian Revenue Police, or coast guard, intercepted their vessel before they made it to Italian shores or even to Italian waters for that matter. The interception occurred outside Italian jurisdiction. The Italian Revenue Police subsequently returned all the people on board to Libya without first identifying or assessing their situations. Eleven Somalis and thirteen Eritreans on board eventually filed a case in the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) on 26 May 2009 (Coppens, 2014). This case, *Hirsi Jamaa and Other vs. Italy*, argued that the forcible return of asylum seekers to Libya was in direct violation of the principle of non-refoulement. Italy, on the other hand, argued they were merely rescuing the migrants. They claim they are not responsible for offering political asylum because the migrants never made it to their shores. The case was eventually settled on 23 February 2012, when the ECtHR ruled that Italy was indeed repatriating asylum seekers without first offering the ability to petition for asylum. The country violated the principle of non-refoulement (Coppens, 2014). In addition to this ruling, a report from 2013 conducted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, Francois Crépeau, revealed that a number of newly arrived persons in Italy had expressed their intention of filing for asylum, but they too were returned to their country of origin before they were given the opportunity to do so (Crépeau, 2013: 79). These actions conducted by Italian authorities directly violate Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, Article 10 of the Italian constitution, laws set forth in the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951, and the human rights of asylum seekers in Italy. These are just a few examples.

### Factors Complicating the Protection of Human Rights

Considering the positions of Italy, the Council of Europe, and the United Nations, why have human rights violations occurred? What factors have complicated Italy's ability as a state to protect the human rights of asylum seekers? One factor that explains why Italy has repeatedly violated such treaties, and consequently the human rights of asylum seekers, is the financial burden associated with rescuing and providing services to asylum seekers. Protecting their human can be expensive (Hafner-Burton, 2013:6). For example, in Italy one main cost is funding the rescue efforts in the Mediterranean Sea. The International Organization for Migration (IOM)

estimates that in the first month and a half of 2016, 5,987 migrants arrived in Italy by sea, most from North Africa and Asia. In 2015, over 150,000 migrants arrived. More than 3,700 died in the process, a number of which were asylum seekers (IOM, 2016). In order to combat deaths tolls and consequently human rights violations at sea, Italy implemented a search and rescue operation to save migrants and potential asylum seekers in the Mediterranean. The operation *Mare Nostrum* successfully rescued more than 140,000 people in its one-year life span from October 2013 to November 2014 (*Mare Nostrum to End*, 2014). The operating costs for *Mare Nostrum*, however, exceeded €9.5 million (roughly \$13 million) per month (A surge from the sea, 2014). After refusing to absorb the costs alone, Italy shut down *Mare Nostrum* operations. Taking its place was the EU's Operation *Triton*. Unlike *Mare Nostrum*, Operation *Triton* had a slimmed down budget of €3 million (roughly \$4 million) per month. It mainly serves as a border patrol agency within close range of European borders. It is not intended to search and rescue migrants and asylum seekers in the same way *Mare Nostrum* had. The financial cost of rescuing people at sea has proven to be higher than countries are willing to pay.

Once asylum seekers arrive in Italy, additional costs are incurred. Providing shelter, food, legal resources, and social services are all finances the Italian government must fund. Ghiglione (2014) reports that each individual asylum seeker costs the Italian government €42 (about \$57) per day for food and shelter alone, and the average stay of asylum seekers in reception centers can last months to years (Ghiglione, 2014). While the UNHCR's 2011 report indicated poor conditions in reception centers and an overall insufficient number of centers, providing sufficient accommodations can be a costly endeavor for Italy to tackle alone. The financial pressure on the Italian government offers one explanation as to why such conditions in the reception centers occur.

Additionally, reports indicate that Italy has repeatedly sought financial assistance from the European Union, claiming the asylum and migration crisis in the Mediterranean is not just Italy's problem to handle (Latta Nadeau, 2014; *Amid Record Waves...* 2014). Asylum seekers escaping civil war or other desperate circumstances arrive in Italy as a result of geographic proximity. They simply want to enter the EU. The EU, however, has provided little cooperation in mitigating the costs (A Surge from the Sea, 2014). As scarcity of resources demands that states identify priorities, any lack of cooperation from the EU places deep constraints on Italy's ability to respond to the crisis (Hafner-Burton, 2013:6). Instead of protecting all human rights of asylum seekers, financial constraints force the country to pick and choose. Financial constraints have thus complicated and often limited Italy's ability to protect asylum seekers' human rights.

As perhaps a byproduct of the financial burden asylum seekers place on the Italian economy, social marginalization has risen in the country. The increased social marginalization serves as a second complicating factor in Italy's ability to protect asylum seekers' human rights. Historically speaking, Italy has long been a country of emigration, meaning people from Italy moved to other countries (Zanotti, 1993:174). Around the 1980s, the country began to experience its first encounters with immigration, meaning people moved into Italy. This initially provoked the reaction among natives that immigrants were a threat to the country's security (Zanotti, 1993: 177). Levels of racism and xenophobia increased, and migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees become socially marginalized groups as a result. While the country has taken efforts to eliminate discrimination against these groups in the years since, tensions still linger. The Pew Research Center indicates that anti-immigrant sentiments in Italy are high. A Spring 2014 survey conducted by the center revealed that 69% of Italians view immigrants as social burdens. They claim that immigrants consume social welfare and employment opportunities (Wike, 2014). While asylum seekers and immigrants are technically different under international law, to the everyday Italian, they look the same. Without a fast and clear way to distinguish between the two, the negative sentiment against immigrants is likely to transfer onto asylum seekers as well.

In addition to the Pew Research Center's report, in 2012 the Council of Europe released a scathing report further detailing racist sentiments in Italy. For example, the report mentions instances of racism and xenophobia found in public discourse. Politicians in the national government have publically criticized the influx of asylum seekers. Former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi went on record calling the crisis an "invasion." Politicians have also referred to some minority groups, such as Black individuals, as "animals" in public (ECRI

Report on Italy, 2012); a number of asylum seekers particularly from Africa are Black. Furthermore, despite politicians' various racist and xenophobic comments in public, the report indicates that such politicians have not received any official punishment or condemnation for their comments. Without facing any consequences, politicians who produce these comments and sentiments are particularly problematic for human rights protection in that politicians producing the comments are also responsible for producing legislation that protects human rights. Such politicians are not likely to agree to dedicate resources to protecting the human rights of asylum seekers, and as deliberative scholars on human rights would argue, without written codification, human rights of asylum seekers do not exist. The racist and xenophobic viewpoints among Italy's policymakers will complicate the government's ability to create and protect asylum seekers' human rights.

In addition, having notable figures such as national level politicians proliferate racist and xenophobic sentiments without consequence legitimizes acts of intolerance, racism, and xenophobia (ECRI Report on Italy, 2012:7). Their comments can influence and further divide the opinion of the Italian population at large, as well as further promote racism and xenophobia in the country. For example, Italians working closely with asylum seekers might uphold similar prejudices that prevent them protecting asylum seekers' human rights. These sentiments relating to the social marginalization of asylum seekers might explain why authorities in reception centers were not providing asylum seekers with information, or at least accurate information, regarding their rights to health care. While many Italians do not uphold racist and xenophobic views, their efforts to promote the protection of asylum seekers are consistently met with resistance from dissenters. As members of the protest school of thought would, the protection of human rights is the byproduct of social movements, and thus the social marginalization of asylum seekers in Italy hinders activists' abilities to promote such rights. In discovering a relatively high amount of racism and xenophobia in Italy, it seems that the social marginalization of asylum seekers, and migrants in general, complicates Italy's ability to protect their human rights.

A third factor that seems to complicate the protection of asylum seekers' human rights is the nature of state sovereignty and the international community. The principle of sovereignty affords states absolute authority within their borders (Reus-Smit, 2001: 519). States can determine their own political processes, laws, and economic systems. States also have the authority to determine which rights to acknowledge and to protect within their physical territory (Donnelly 2013:32). Although the international community mandates the protection of human rights, implementing and protecting such rights largely rests in the hands of national governments, such as Italy (Donnelly, 2013:32). Italy can decide which human rights to protect as well as how, where, and when to protect them. In the case of asylum seekers, Italy can carry out its own asylum proceedings, respecting human rights in its own way. While Italy may have agreed to comply with human rights and asylum legislation produced by international organizations (IOs) such as the Council of Europe and UN, the country remains a sovereign state, and as such, it has the authority to interpret for itself what exactly IO legislation mandates and how they wish to comply.

Moreover, complying with IO produced legislation and obeying IO legislation are two different things (Koh, 1999: 1401). Compliance promotes protecting human rights because it is the ethical course of action, but there is no authority figure to reprimand any deviation from the course of action. Obedience, on the other hand, requires strict adherence to a course of action and should deviation occur, an authority figure will inflict negative consequences (Koh, 1999). In the case of Italy, the country has agreed to comply with international human rights laws. Hafner-Burton (2013) argues that if an international law already coincides with what a state—Italy—planned to do, the state will likely obey it as well. If the law, however, differs from the state's preferred form of action, conflict may arise (Hafner-Burton, 2013:5). The country might agree to comply with legislation in the international community but not necessarily obey the legislation on the state level. Tension between compliance and obedience with international law can arise under state sovereignty.

This tension allows for human rights violations to occur without consequence. In the case of *Hirsi Jamaa vs. Italy*, Italy interpreted the situation of rescuing and returning migrants to Libya differently in comparison to the international community. The country conducted itself according to its sovereign authority, not according to the UN and Council of Europe's human rights policy. The ECtHR publically denounced Italy for refouler-

ing and violating the human rights of asylum seekers in the case, but the nature of sovereignty makes it a challenge for the international community to enforce its policies. States and international actors can proclaim to the world the atrocities that occur in Italian reception centers. They can condemn the country for its racism and xenophobic sentiments, advocate the cruelty of refoulement, and try to coerce the country back into obeying international human rights law through public humiliation and shame (Hafner-Burton, 2008). Outside states and international actors cannot, however, intervene with a police force without violating Italy's sovereignty nor can they sentence the country to jail. The enforcement options on the international level are limited. This inability to enforce international politics in turn affords states an element of freedom in determining how they conduct themselves. Italy can therefore decide for itself how to interpret international human rights legislation and whether or not to obey such legislation within the country's territorial boundaries. This further complicates the protection of asylum seekers' human rights in Italy.

### Conclusion

The various perspectives on human rights give way to a rich and varied understanding of asylum seekers' human rights. Natural scholars, for example, believe all humans are entitled to certain universal rights. Deliberative scholars believe these rights only exist once written into law. Protest scholars argue that human rights must be fought for. Discourse scholars, on the other hand, see human rights as merely an experimental philosophy. In addition, IOs have played a key role in the development and protection of human rights. The Council of Europe's European Convention on Human Rights and the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees uphold their own interpretations of asylum seekers' human rights. They proclaim all humans have the right to humane treatment and punishment, for example. Italy has agreed to comply with these legislative measures, yet on numerous occasions the country has found itself guilty of violating the human rights of its North African asylum seekers.

These violations can be attributed to three main factors. One factor is the financial burden associated with caring for the influx of asylum seekers. Financing the search and rescue missions as well as the reception and accommodation centers for asylum seekers inhibits Italy's ability to protect all human rights of all people at all times. A second factor is the social marginalization of asylum seekers. Due to research that indicates racist and xenophobic sentiments against asylum seekers exist in high numbers in Italy, protecting the human rights of asylum seekers can be a point of contention within the government and civil society. Even if Italy had the financial resources available to curb human rights crises, not everyone agrees that the money should be spent on asylum seekers. A third factor is the nature of state sovereignty, which allows Italy to determine for itself exactly what constitutes a human right and a human right violation. Italy has used the concept of sovereignty to deviate from international laws on human rights legislation, and without a clear method of enforcement, the international community has little ability to respond. Despite the international as well as national communities' efforts in promoting human rights, it can thus be noted that additional factors influence a country's ability to safeguard such rights. In further examining these factors, one can better evaluate effective responses to the challenges protecting human rights evokes.

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## Middlebrow and Minimalism: The Postwar Evolution of Aesthetics and Class

## Distinctions

By Emily Bley

Though the United States had been intermittently entangled with global conflict and domestic insecurity for nearly half of the twentieth century, arguably its greatest period of adjustment were the years following World War II. After the collapse of international governments, a fiscal depression, and an unprecedented display of wartime atrocities, the future of American society, culture, and economy seemed more uncertain than ever before—despite evidence of concrete improvement. The recovery of the economy, mass education of American citizens, and colossal military growth ushered the United States into an era of unprecedented peace and prosperity, yet Americans had been exposed to such an incredible scale of global upheaval between 1914 and 1945 that the restoration of prewar conditions seemed beyond possibility. So, if the world could not return to its previous societal and economic structures, how could it be expected to return to its previous class-dictated cultural standards? In his book *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing*, Mark McGurl claims that the breakdown of prewar American social classes corresponded with the end of the dual cultural categorization of art as either highbrow or lowbrow, which ultimately led to the development of a new aesthetic ‘middle’ space in which modernism dwelled:

Interwar modernism had shuttled between the extremes of high and low, between the values of “aristocracy” on the one hand and “primitivism” on the other... In the social class imaginary of the postwar period, the social distance traversed by the modernist dialectic is substantially narrowed: the crucial distinction here is between an upper middle class, for whom economic security is a given and higher education is understood as a virtual birthright, and the traditional working class, which instead of individual advancement through education offers its members the benefits of belonging and communal solidarity. The version of modernism that shuttles between these class positions [during the postwar period] is unable to come to rest in either of them... (67)

The version of modernism identified by McGurl exists within a larger stratum of middlebrow culture, in which minimalism is arguably included. The socioeconomic climate had changed in the United States, and the demands of the growing middle class called for more palatable and digestible art forms that challenged the old highbrow and lowbrow classifications. These were the socioeconomic conditions that precipitated the rising popularity of minimalism.

This essay will attempt to analyze how the ascent of minimalism converged with socioeconomic changes in midcentury America. As the middle class widened in the United States, the appeal of middlebrow culture grew accordingly, all the while marginalizing the old aesthetic division of art as highbrow or lowbrow. A.O. Scott describes the duality of highbrow and lowbrow culture in his *New York Times* essay, “The Squeeze on the Middlebrow” as such: “A world of landlords and peasants, of masters and servants, of patrons and workers is one in which art and life harmonize... an intellectual feudal system, in which the lowbrows do the work and create folk arts, and the highbrows do the thinking and create fine arts.” Just as class dictated appropriate artistic guidelines in prewar society, the evolution of artistic standards and socioeconomic distinctions in postwar society also cannot be considered as separate phenomena. In the changing reality of socioeconomic classifications in midcentury America, minimalism proved to be an accessible art form for the growing middle class, though critics dismissed the form for its simplicity, degeneration, and theatricality. While none of these critiques were explicitly anti-middlebrow, almost all of the objections made against minimalism were rooted in arguments that were inherently classist. Ultimately, while minimalism is an innovative art form that should be noted for challenging conventional aesthetics during its heyday, it should also be considered as a political statement that challenged the elitist dual categorization of art as exclusively either highbrow or lowbrow in the postwar period.

Perhaps the definition of middlebrow culture can best be explained by indicating the audience to which it appealed: the new middle class that had arisen in postwar America. The growth of the middle class was a direct result of “the collapse of older social hierarchies, the decline of inherited privilege, and the rise of a new meri-

tocratic order” (Scott, “The Squeeze on the Middlebrow”) that filled the social, economic, and cultural vacuum left in the wake of early twentieth century instability. The population boomed and industry blossomed; Americans had higher wages, more leisure time, access to higher education, and widely available music, literature, and films with incredible variation in style. These opportunities could release individuals from any particular class designation into the amorphous potentiality and mobility of the American middle; and as this class continued to grow, the content and form of the culture it consumed needed to change as well. The outdated and elitist highbrow culture was unappealing to modern Americans, as it was rooted in academia and aristocracy. The lowbrow classification was equally as unattractive; lowbrows are defined by Scott as “those who are as committed to living as highbrows are to thinking.” Middlebrow culture and its paperback literature, commercialized music, and according to some critics, minimalist artwork, was appealing in its accessibility and absorbability. This was the reality of the modern postwar period: the newly-born middle class of educated and financially stable masses fit neither in highbrow or lowbrow class distinctions, and lived in an era of growing consumerism, materialism, globalization, and immediacy.

Disillusioned with the prewar duality of highbrow and lowbrow aesthetics that was preserved by old, static, and hierarchical social classifications, the middle class embraced the middlebrow. But what exactly was so contemptible about welcoming a new cultural dimension? Critics of minimalism felt as though “something—variously called sophistication, authenticity, seriousness or just art—was being lost as the old, unbudging, quasi-feudal hierarchy of upper and lower was replaced by the hectic scrum of mass and middle” (Scott, “The Squeeze on the Middlebrow”). The frustration with middlebrow culture was that it encouraged upward mobility of lowbrows and celebrated the fallen standards of highbrows. High culture became more accessible and popular culture became more ambitious; the resulting middlebrow culture was dismissed as either pretentious or mediocre. Decades before Scott’s essay was published, Clement Greenberg called middlebrow culture in his essay “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” an “ersatz culture, kitsch, destined for those who, insensible to the values of genuine culture, are hungry nevertheless for the diversion that only culture of some sort can provide” (543). Greenberg outlines the highbrow and lowbrow classes as being either cultivated or ignorant, respectively, and claims that whatever exists between those distinctions is commercialized, popularized, overtly emotional, and has no genuine cultural value (544-546). Ultimately, Greenberg’s critique of kitsch—the art form of middlebrow culture—brings to light one of the main arguments against minimalism: it offers instantaneous gratification to the audience without intellectual effort or subliminal artistic understanding. Influenced heavily by Greenberg, critic Michael Fried would famously utilize a similar classist argument later on in the twentieth century against minimalism.

Greenberg’s and Fried’s critiques mean very little without understanding how exactly minimalism fit into midcentury American social conditions. Why exactly was minimalism attractive to the middle class, and what elements of its form characterize it as middlebrow culture? According to Duncan Chesney in his article, “Beckett, Minimalism, and the Question of Postmodernism,” the increased leisure time of the growing middle class produced a need and subsequent market for modernist art, especially minimalism:

The growth of this market, through which the very notion of art, artist, artistic production, and consumption were changed, was partially masked by the ideology of autonomy. Art was released from its courtly, ritual, and religious roles in a breakdown of the system of patronage, and thus the artist became free, his work serving only artistic ends. (638)

Minimalism responded directly to this changing reality. The form became closer to the audience, and subsequently the details surrounding the artist, their patron, and their craft became less distinguished. Minimalism was an art form that was dictated by no one, and therefore it could belong to anyone. In his essay “Specific Objects” the artist Donald Judd, considered as the reluctant founder of minimalist aesthetics, argued, “It isn’t necessary for a work to have a lot of things to look at, to compare, to analyze one by one, to contemplate. The thing as a whole, its quality as a whole, is what is interesting” (827). Essentially, Judd suggested that the only

action the spectator must take to do enjoy a work of art is to feel. Minimalist art, whether it be literature, painting, sculpture, or music, is simplified to the point of being only interesting, emotive, and necessary. These were requirements fulfilled easily by both middle class artists and consumers of minimalist art in midcentury America.

Minimalism encourages audiences to engage with objective material so as to invoke some type of individualized, subjective response. There is no necessity for institution, money, or education; rather, minimalist work emphasizes the experience of the audience (whatever that may be) rather than the formal intentions of the establishment or the author. For instance, John Cage's minimalist musical composition 4'33" has often been considered by critics of minimalism as reduction to the extreme. The piece instructs performers not to play their instruments for exactly 4 minutes and 33 seconds, and for that amount of time, the audience listens to silence, intermittently disrupted by incidental sounds of human life, such as coughing, laughter, or whispering. The piece is entirely experiential, temporal, and relative; it is instantly gratifying, and easy to understand regardless of class or educational differences. As Donald Judd argues in his essay, the difference between a musical composition by the likes of highbrow Mozart or Beethoven and Cage's 4'33" is that Cage's piece is a form that is "open and extended, more or less environmental" (826). The middle class appealed to this art form because it was encompassing across many lines of education and economic affordability; minimalism separated itself from Greenberg's financed highbrow elites and also conceptually rose above the limitations of lowbrow culture. Beyond the musical work of Cage, minimalist writers such as Beckett could similarly appeal to an audience that levitates in the realm between highbrow and lowbrow. Because minimalism first developed around visual art, such as Donald Judd's sculptures, the application of the form to literature has always been a bit more complex. Minimalism as language is complicated in that it is never fully objective, because every word has meaning and reference. Its stylistic requirements according to *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* are as follows: "[minimalism] holds that sparseness, tautness, understatement, and reduction constitute poetic authenticity" (886). Therefore, minimalist literature is not only brief in its form, but also concise in its content.

The specific prose utilized by Samuel Beckett in his work, especially in "Imagination Dead Imagine," aligns with both this definition and the environmental elements similar to Cage's music. Beckett's work is incredibly spatial and temporal in the way that it directs the reader: "No way in, go in, measure. Diameter three feet, three feet from ground to summit of the vault. Two diameters at right angles AB CD divide the white ground into two semicircles ACB BDA. Lying on the ground two white bodies, each in its semicircle" (Beckett, "Imagination Dead Imagine"). Rigorously visual and controlling of the physical environment, "Imagination Dead Imagine" has a plot and characters, yet they have both been reduced to simple frames. The characters have no characteristics that might suggest their personalities or appearances or individuality. They are no one and therefore could be anyone. Such an approach, described by John Barth in "A Few Words About Minimalism" is meant to leave the story unornamented, as Beckett seeks to "strip away the superfluous in order to reveal the necessary, the essential." Author Duncan Chesney argues further that Beckett reduces his work to the point where it lacks any logical following at all: "Beckett had long exercised a practice of aesthetic self-denial, of conventional elements of drama and prose fiction, or rather (since such elements as character, setting, plot, and so forth cannot be entirely eradicated) of their plausibility or believability" (645). Therefore because Samuel Beckett's work lacks explicit authorial intention, understanding his pieces has only one requirement: imagination. The artistic content of the work lies in the reader's own interpretation of what they think Beckett was attempting to say. Ultimately, even Beckett might not even understand his own commentary; he's more interested in directing the reader than he is in conveying his own message. Much like the music of John Cage, Beckett's work does not require patronage or education or a determined level of class to be appreciated.

Yet to claim that both Cage and Beckett are excluded from the conceptual and fiscal preconditions of highbrow art is to arguably disregard the evolution of the minimalist form throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Is there not something elitist about understanding the artistic history, staged form, and social commentary behind both Cage's and Beckett's work? Undoubtedly their artistic style was innovative in the postwar period, but does that mean that it was separated completely from the highbrow? In Walter Benn

Michaels' essay, "Neoliberal Aesthetics: Fried, Rancière and the Form of the Photograph," Michaels points out that although the original idea behind 4'33" was to refuse to impose the composer's intentions on the listeners, Cage's intentional lack of artistic intention causes his work to drift into highbrow domain: "when you seek to create a work in which only the accidents matter, then not only is the recognition of your intention to do just that crucial, but also the audience's actual experience becomes irrelevant—all that that matters is that they recognize your intention... the identity of the work consists in nothing but its 'point'" (Michaels). It could be argued that an informed, highbrow understanding of history and aesthetics is necessary to arrive at Cage's 'point' and that Beckett's "Imagination Dead Imagine" requires a similar educational background because of his artistic direction—or lack thereof. However, the question of Beckett and Cage being potentially considered as highbrow minimalist artists ultimately lies in what specifically the 'right' or 'correct' point is to understand about this kind of minimalist work. A middle class individual might take something completely different away from a piece by Beckett or Cage than a high class individual—who is to say which of these experiences is legitimate? To claim that an interpretation by one spectator is correct while another is not, especially when the intention of the work in question is to be unintentional, is precisely the kind of classist, establishment argument that middlebrow minimalism challenges.

However, the minimalist fiction born after the era of Cage, Judd, and Beckett—specifically the work of Raymond Carver—is clearly popularized to a point in which it does not require any level of historical or formal understanding to be enjoyed. Writers such as Lydia Davis and Raymond Carver absolutely follow Judd's, Cage's, and Beckett's example in simplifying their artistic message through reduction. In Carver's piece "Neighbors" he tediously outlines the behavior of Bill and Arlene Miller in their neighbors' empty apartment: "He finished the drink and took off the suit. He rummaged through the top drawers until he found a pair of panties and a brassiere. He stepped into the panties and fastened the brasserie" (12). Carver never explicitly comments on the peculiarity of Bill Miller wearing his neighbor's female undergarments, but instead succinctly continues on with the story. This is because Carver does not consider his or his characters' thoughts, opinions, or feelings as being necessary elements to include in the piece. In Robert Clark's analysis of Carver's career and work, "Keeping the Reader in the House" he notes that,

The core idea that differentiates the mode [minimalism] from other movements is that prose and poetry should be extremely efficient, allusive, and implicative...The language in this type of fiction tends to be simple and direct. Narrators do not often use ornate adjectives and rarely offer effusive descriptions of scenery or extensive detail about characters' backgrounds. (106)

Clark's analysis reinforces the minimalist belief that the interpretive significance of the artwork by the reader is more important than the artist himself. Carver's contemporary, Lydia Davis, borrows from this seemingly mundane style in "Story," except this time she tells the story from the first person, cutting out the artist's presence as a narrator altogether: "I get home from work and there is a message from him: that he is not coming, that he is busy" (3). Thoughts and feelings are not conveyed—only action. Davis relies on the reader to pull emotion and subjectivity from the objectivity that she provides, and let the audience infer the rest. Like Beckett and Cage before them, to understand work written by Davis and Carver does not require a nuanced aesthetic understanding of form or history; their work is both for and about their middle class, middlebrow audiences.

Without a doubt this work can be considered as middlebrow; but why exactly is this distinction so much clearer for Carver and Davis than it was for their predecessors, Cage and Beckett? What exactly distinguishes these authors from their early minimalist peers? Minimalism under the likes of Carver is derisively dismissed as "K-mart realism...Diet-Pepsi minimalism" (Barth) precisely because of its commercial and popular appeal. In fact, according to Mark McGurl this kind of minimalism closely borders what he would consider lowbrow culture: "a domain of professional activity and camaraderie in which the desperate tackiness and dailiness of American lower-middle-class life is meant to be retained but somehow, against all odds, dignified, aestheticized" (281). This later form of minimalism stands in stark contrast to the intentionally complex and aesthetically conscious works of Cage and Beckett, in that Carver and Davis are much more concerned with connecting

to their audiences by directly depicting their expected middle class readers in their middlebrow work, rather than producing art that presents larger abstract concepts on which their audiences should reflect. Carver and Davis arguably supplant their own content into ready-made aesthetic frameworks established by Cage and Beckett before them; the difference between the two lies precisely in their levels of abstraction and innovation. Carver and Davis play into the hands of an already established artistic style; for example, their work lacks authorial intention not necessarily to achieve any greater end regarding the audience's response, but arguably because the precedent set by Beckett and Carver does not require them to have one. McGurl critiques specifically Carver's minimalist form as such: "its literary products have no history—no history to speak of, let alone monumentalize...in the lower-middle-class world of 'Carver Country'...[minimalism] is completely disconnected from the nexus of money and media, race and identity, personality and power (279). A summarized critique might be that Carver's minimalism lacks depth and a durable historical connection; its aesthetic importance is limited by the primacy of a temporal audience. Can the work of Carver and Davis survive without their middleclass, middlebrow readers to identify with their stories? Arguably, this difference in duration is precisely what separates early minimalist work from its later forms. However, despite these internal differences, the work of Beckett, Cage, Carver, and Davis fall within the aesthetic middlebrow space between highbrow and lowbrow culture because of their accessibility and absorbability—though admittedly they seem to be leaning towards opposite ends within the middlebrow spectrum.

What was so contemptible about a middlebrow form that was accessible to a wider populous of people, such as the middle class? Why exactly do critics of minimalism dislike this kind of art coming out of mid-century America? In his analysis of Raymond Carver's work, Robert Clark perhaps best outlines the primary concern held by minimalism's toughest critics: "Minimalist stories often require readers to 'assemble' images and allusions in order to make a coherent, complete narrative" (107). It is precisely this kind of aesthetic agency by the spectator that is lamented by critics of minimalist art. In his essay "Art and Objecthood," Michael Fried dismisses minimalism as theatrical, and considers Donald Judd's new aesthetic form to be "the negation of art... because it is concerned with the actual circumstances in which the beholder encounters literalist [minimalist] work" (838). Fried's concern with minimalist work is that its aesthetic significance does not exist without an audience. In fact, it cannot reasonably be called art without spectators precisely because it exists solely for them. What value does Cage's music have without his audience? What do the works of Beckett, Davis, and Carver achieve without their readers to infer the details they intentionally omit? Minimalism emphasized the individualized, environmental, and temporal experience of the average person, and Fried feared that the artist's craft, as well as the quality of highbrow art, were being lost in the new form. Fried's view of art is that it should cause an individual to lose themselves and their awareness in a separate object; not make the viewer or reader more aware of their own presence. For this reason he believed that "art degenerates as it approaches the condition of theatre" (843) because by encouraging the audience's response and not the author's aesthetic capability, minimalism subordinates the agency of the artist and subsequently, the value of their artwork.

But how exactly are these formal artistic objections to minimalism rooted in classism? Critics of the form disliked that the audience was more involved in the aesthetic process, and furthermore, that their involvement in such a process relied less and less on a refined understanding of art, but rather more upon a deeper understanding of themselves as spectators. This is the point where Fried's own anti-minimalist manifesto echoes Greenberg's blatant objection to kitsch because of its emotional, commercial, and popularized middlebrow appeal. Fried was against the progress made in postwar society and the subsequent evolution of aesthetic standards that followed because they implied that the artist need not excel in their craft and the viewer need not study aesthetics, form, or history to understand form. An increase in spectatorship and a decline in specialized skill could only suggest that the quality of the art was falling in standard. The more people came to see these art forms, the farther it fell from the highbrow distinction. However, because minimalism required some basic understanding of artistic concepts, imagination, and deep feeling, the lowbrow distinction was not appropriate either. Minimalism, in the eyes of the critic, lived among the middlebrows. Anyone could experience and enjoy Cage's music

or Beckett's plays or Davis and Carver's writings, because there were no socioeconomic limitations that prohibited them from doing so. Essentially, Fried took issue with the accessibility of minimalist art. The more art became accessible in its theatricality, the more audiences failed "to register the enormous difference in quality between, say, the music of Carter and that of Cage or between the paintings of Louis and those of Rauschenberg..." (843). Minimalist work was popularized by an unprecedented reliance on the individual, specifically emphasizing its availability to the average man instead of the intellectual, the patron, or the aristocrat. As Clement Greenberg feared in his essay "Avant-Garde and Kitsch", minimalist artists and authors began to close the gap between the highbrow avant-garde (art considered as intellectual and aesthetically complex) and kitsch (art Greenberg believed was for the masses; commercialized and emotional) by breaking down the 'requirements' of understanding complex art and texts.

In the very same essay Clement Greenberg also outlines what has become an intriguing complication for minimalist art in the contemporary era. Greenberg conceptualized avant-garde art as functioning to keep 'true' culture alive in the face of capitalism and kitsch, though paradoxically this form "has always remained attached [to society] by an umbilical cord of gold" (Greenberg 542). Essentially, Greenberg noted that the survival of the avant-garde was dependent on the funding of art by an elite ruling class. At the time he wrote his essay, Greenberg was well aware that the rise of academicism and commercialism were indicative of the decline in power of "the rich and the cultivated" (542) but A.O. Scott fulfilled Greenberg's worst fears when he outlined a new social hierarchy being established in contemporary times: "The highbrows were co-opted or killed off by the middle, and the elitism they championed has been replaced by another kind, the kind that measures all value, cultural and otherwise, in money." Essentially, the class and cultural distinctions discussed in this essay are more impermanent than they appear. It could be argued that minimalism can only be considered middlebrow for a limited amount of time in American history, and that the soaring prosperity that surrounded the growth of the middle class can also be held responsible for the commercialization of culture. Modern art, especially minimalism, is becoming increasingly popularized, as well as tied to capital, as the U.S. has moved out of the postwar era into the contemporary era. Modernist art, specifically minimalist works, are appearing more frequently in galleries, universities, markets, and among the wealthy: "The art world spins in an orbit of pure money. Museums chase dollars with crude commercialism aimed at the masses and the slavish cultivation of wealthy patrons" (Scott). This begs the larger question: is minimalism, and modernism in general, becoming the new highbrow culture? According to Scott, it would not be inaccurate to say that minimalism is attached to society by an umbilical cord of gold, but Greenberg might be alarmed to know that such an attachment was motivated by popularization, and that the other end of the cord is controlled by the new societal elite: the middle class.

The growing demands of the middle-class in the postwar era called for a new art form, unlimited by elitist requirements such as education and money, and free from the institutionalized boundaries of highbrow and lowbrow culture. As Clement Greenberg noted, "a social interval has always existed in formal culture, as elsewhere in civilized society, and whose two termini converge and diverge in fixed relation to the increasing or decreasing stability of a certain society" (546). However, when the instability of this dual cultural system was exposed in the postwar era, minimalism was the art form that responded to the needs of the middle class that had blossomed from between the highbrows and lowbrows. Artists like Judd, Cage, Beckett, Davis, and Carver created reduced and simplistic works that needed only to interest their audiences—the aesthetic process was slowly turning toward the average spectator and away from the artist, their craft, and their work. Critics such as Greenberg and Fried decried and lamented the minimalist form as being degenerate, in that it encouraged commercialization and popularization by middleclass individuals, and jeopardized the integrity and quality of highbrow art. However, these arguments were rooted in prewar classist structures and systems that contrasted starkly with progressive middlebrow culture in midcentury America—and yet minimalism has arguably realigned itself with this same kind of social inequality in the modern era, only this time drawn by the capital offered by the middle class masses. Ultimately minimalism's appeal and absorbability among middle class artists and audiences alike challenged the boundaries of aesthetic form as much as it challenged prewar socioeconomic norms.

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## Processed Food: Its Creation and Endurance in the American Diet

By Liana Ochoa

Food serves as an essential source of energy for human beings, the substance by which we find nourishment to support the basic means of life. However, food no longer serves as just a source of energy, but also in contemporary society a source of palatable satisfaction capable of delivering instant gratification to the sense of taste. Along with this capability to instantly gratify taste, food can also appeal to people because of its convenience to a fast-paced lifestyle in regard to time, cost and availability. Processed food, a relatively new but now common type of food, has both an attribute for taste and convenience, making it a standard, daily fare in many American homes. The growth in the consumption of processed food is a result of lifestyle changes that occurred in the twentieth century, catalyzed by historical events and technological innovations over time that food companies have responded to by adapting their marketing and food production methods to society's needs. Americans began to eat processed food because of these changes, but their having come to eat so much of it is a result of food companies marketing processed food in such a way as to convince consumers that it is the best choice of food to eat through enticing advertisement techniques, corporate distribution of processed food products, economic stratagem, and environmental distractions in food settings.

Changes in lifestyle that prompted the consumption of processed foods were generated by late nineteenth-century changes attributed to industrialization and the twentieth-century World Wars. Industrialization was the first catalyst of change, transitioning the mode of work so that mass production was possible using assembly line techniques. The significance of the era is that it introduced the first factories and methods of creating products that could be made outside of the home, thereby providing the means for new ways in which goods could be created. In the twentieth-century, the United States' participation and contributions in World War I and World War II expanded the food processing that had already begun in the late nineteenth century with industrialization, due to the need to feed Europe's citizens and American troops with dense caloric and nutritional foods that contained pork, beef, butter and sugar that could last the overseas journey (Veit, 2013, p. 12).

Although industrialization was initially fueled by war, it opened a new domestic market that was advantageous for processed food companies. The processed and prepackaged food that was made for soldiers began to be produced for the general public, even more so than before the wars because women were joining the workforce and could no longer devote a large amount of time for domestic duties, such as preparing food (Schlosser, 2001, p.4). Thus, the transition of women from the home to the labor force developed the necessity for a way in which cooking could be facilitated, and food companies figured that processed food provided the means for women to make meals that required less preparation time. The growth of the domestic market meant that the food industry needed to expand their sales and the way in which the food was processed and packaged enabled it to remain fresh for a longer period of time, so that companies could expand their sales by selling products in places far from the processing site (Smith, 2013, p.450) to reach more stores, supermarkets and homes than ever before.

In addition to the historical events of industrialization and World Wars, domestic technology created during these time periods contributed significantly to the adoption of processed food in American culture, thereby increasing its consumption. The number of kitchen appliances that were created enabled food to be prepared differently within the home. Processed food was already modified at the manufacturing site, but domestic technology allowed for the home to be its own sort of production facility. Take for example inventions such as the refrigerator and freezer. Both allowed for food to be preserved even longer than the packaging, which gave meal makers the ability to store food up to or past its expiration date. In addition, after the first World War electric stove tops became popular because electricity became more affordable (Sobey, 2010, p.156) and helped cook food faster than say, warming it over a fire. In 1945, microwaves (the invention from magnetron tubes that were used during the war to detect planes) were discovered to be able to instantly heat and reheat foods in a matter of minutes (Higgins, 2014, p.20). Such innovations labeled the era after the Second World War as "the Golden

Age of Food Processing” (Schlosser, 2001, p.113). Food preparation inside of the home changed, as did food that was accessible outside of the home. After the Second World War, the establishment of highways, thanks to President Eisenhower’s Interstate Highway Act, and the widespread ownership of cars “gave rise to early drive-in chain restaurants” (Finkelstein & Zuckerman, 2008, p.17), the precursors to modern day fast food chains. A remarkable technological achievement, the automobile became a popularly owned commodity and made Americans “so lazy they don’t want to get out of them to eat” (Schlosser, 2001, p. 17). The advent of the car facilitated both American consumers and companies alike. For the consumers, the car made traveling easier and faster, thereby increasing the pace of lifestyle. At the same time, companies recognized this faster pace and adjusted, creating restaurants now known as fast food restaurants in order to accommodate. Further, automobiles also allowed processed food companies to transport their products over greater distances, increasing their distribution of sales to places that before highways and automobiles would have been unreachable (Smith, 2013, p. 450).

The historical events of industrialization and World Wars engendered lifestyle changes, creating new needs and demands from society that food companies responded to by molding their marketing techniques. Processed food was born as a result of the nineteenth and twentieth-century historical events, and appealed to consumers by fitting their new lifestyle changes. At this point, processed food was making its way as a conventional type of food due not only to its attributes of being modified and packaged so that it lasted longer than normal, fresh food, but because of food companies’ promotion of processed food. When food companies realized the potential of processed food because of its long package life and easy preparation for consumers, they molded their marketing so that processed food would become not only one of many choices of food available, but the most enticing food choice available so that processed food would be a lasting food phenomenon and not merely a short lived trend.

Strategic advertising enabled and still enables processed food companies and restaurants to increase consumer purchasing by portraying processed food as the best type of food to buy. Advertisements for processed food as early as the beginning of the twentieth-century first began as simple enticements to market the “efficacy of its packaging” (Carroll, 2013, Ch.7, para. 34) and by the 1950s made “processed foods [look] better than fresh ones, more space-age and up to date” (Schlosser, 2001, p.114). Beginning in the 1950s, advertising nearly became more important than the product. It didn’t matter that a company had a product if it didn’t have the means to sell it, so more modern techniques of advertising utilizing psychology were applied. Advertising and marketing have striven to furnish a product with aesthetic appeal, namely a “design” that is “simple, memorable and archetypal (Schlosser, 2001, p. 20) to psychologically induce a consumer to buy that product. A study conducted to examine the impact of product labeling found that “product labels are an important point-of-purchase information source capable of influencing consumer decision making” (Trudel, Murray, Kim, & Chen, 2015, p. 255). This study highlights the significance of how food products are portrayed, and demonstrates the amount of cognitive influence the appearance of a product has on consumers.

Food companies capitalize on the positive emotional and societal elements associated with eating, meaning that processed foods are marketed to convey feelings of contentment. While advertising techniques have historically associated products with positive emotions and social belonging, recent studies have shown the extent to which these techniques influence consumer choice. One such study reveals the technique of “product labeling” (Trudel et al., 2015, p. 255) called branding. Companies and restaurants create brands that offer familiarity and reassurance to consumers by offering food products that are “always and everywhere the same” (Schlosser, 2001, p. 5). The special purpose of branding, or rather its unique marketing effect, is that it encourages consumers to repeatedly purchase the brand’s products based on of these feelings of familiarity and reassurance. Thus, a consumer can potentially be attracted to a product before even realizing whether it is because of the appearance of the package or brand recognition. Another approach tactically used by advertising is social conformity. In an additional psychological study, researchers sought to understand the magnitude of social conventions in regard to food choices, noting that individuals move towards social norm because of a preference for social conformity (Aldrovandi, Brown, & Wood, 2015, p. 244). By making processed food an item of popular commodity, like advertising that it is favored by celebrities or athletes, companies and restaurants can therefore pressure consumers

to purchase food based on the idea that they are following societal conventions. With psychological knowledge of how to manipulate consumer decision making, companies and restaurants successfully limit consumer choices to purchase and consume processed food.

Consumer preference of processed food is further assisted by its widespread distribution and availability. The highway system, large automobiles such as trucks, and shipping containers made it possible for food to be transported over greater distances (Smith, 2008, p. 450) to stores in places that were hard to reach by train. Fast food restaurants, multiplied with the growth of highways and some of the first fast food chains opened near free way off ramps (Schlosser, 2001, p. 22). Since then, fast food chains have “infiltrated every nook and cranny of American society and spread to every corner of the nation” (Schlosser, 2001, p.3). The wide availability of fast food restaurants, a type of processed food service, facilitates the ease with which consumers can access quickly prepared, economically cheap food that “makes life easier, not just for those preparing a meal, but also for those eating it” (Scholliers, 2015, p. 4). In order to reach the greatest number of customers, many companies and restaurants locate themselves in as many places as possible. Take for example, McDonald’s, one of the biggest fast food companies in America. In his 2001 book, *Fast Food Nation: the Dark Side of the All-American Meal*, Eric Schlosser recorded that at the time McDonald’s owned 28,000 restaurants worldwide and 2,000 new ones were opening each year (p. 4). Taken more than a decade ago, Schlosser’s findings are now considered outdated, but offer insightful information as to just how extensive one fast food company is in reference to its global reach. Moreover, just to provide an idea of how gargantuan the processed food industry is “three-fourths of world food sales involve processed foods, for which the largest manufacturers hold over a third of the global market” (Stuckler & Nestle, 2012, p. 1). The widespread availability of processed food so that people can find it nearly anywhere makes it convenient in regards to locality and the minimal time or energy needed to find processed food.

Another appeal of processed food is that it is economical in regard to both price and time. Affordability is a major factor when purchasing goods, especially when more than one product is being bought at a time as is common at the supermarket. When faced with the choice between fresh food and processed food, comparison of the prices over the years shows that “the prices of healthier foods have become relatively more expensive and the prices of unhealthy foods, those with lots of added sugars and added fats, have become cheaper” (Finkelstein & Zuckerman, 2008, p. 24) providing leverage for processed food because people reason that they are saving money by purchasing the cheaper option. Reasons for the decline in price of processed food are the result of federal subsidies. Two of the most highly used processed food ingredients include corn and soybeans. After the Great Depression the government established subsidies given to farmers who grow these crops, encouraging the growth of corn and soybeans rather than other fruits or vegetables, which in turn harvests an abundance and makes it extremely cheap for food companies to buy and use in their products (Finkelstein & Zuckerman, 2008, p. 24-25). Because there is less supply of fruit and vegetables due to the lack of subsidies, the price remains relatively high in comparison to processed food that uses subsidized crop ingredients. Even without the monetary value in mind, processed food offers what fresh food hardly does: “time saving, portability, handiness” (Scholliers, 2015, p. 4). Fast food restaurants in particular adopted the “principles of a factory assembly line” (Schlosser, 2001, p. 20), which helped make food more time efficient for consumers. The means by which companies can provide processed foods at low prices while fresh food prices may fluctuate perpetuates the purchase of processed food by consumers.

Fast food restaurants manipulate the environment in which food is eaten to promote unhealthy food choices. A study was administered to apprehend the significance of the environment in which food is eaten to understand how it contributes to food choices. Taking a number of families and placing them in either quiet, undisturbed accommodations or loud and diverting venues, the study discovered among other things that “stressful situations...relate to increased consumption of unhealthy foods such as energy dense sweets and salty snacks” (Fiese, Jones, & Jarick, 2015, p.10). The stressful situations were those characterized by the loud and diverting venues, where the families were unable to eat normally due to noises or other hindrances. Proposing that the environment is the greatest factor for food consumption, the study limits the environment to that of a family meal.

The study researches the family environmental effect on eating choices, which I propose extends to the greater environment that surrounds people in everyday life. Instead of a mere family environment, the greater environment in which people live that includes food advertisements and multiple processed food stores and restaurants affects the consumption of processed foods by inundating consumers constantly with busy noises and images, thereby creating a somewhat mentally “stressful situation” (Fiese, Jones, & Jarick, 2015, p.10) that distracts from the focus of eating food.

The processed food industry has utilized many methods of marketing including advertising, availability, convenience, and environmental exploitation to increase the consumption of processed foods. Indeed, the extent to which processed food companies have exercised these strategies has succeeded in implementing processed food in many Americans’ diets. However, despite all of this evidence some people propose that there is actually an increase in fresh food consumption.

Some people argue that the consumption of processed food has decreased since the late twentieth century because of an increase in fresh foods. The proposition finds this justification in the numerical growth of initiatives such as farmers markets, noting that “between 1994 and 2014 the number of farmers markets in the United States jumped nearly fivefold, from 1, 755 to 8, 268” (Kiener, 2014, para. 18). While the escalation in numbers is quite impressive, it is important to recognize that this happened over a period of twenty years just to add 6, 513 farmers markets that were only open an average of eighteen weeks out of the year and served only around 2, 760,000 customers a week according to a USDA survey taken in 2000 (Payne, 2002, p. 4, 29). Compared to the growth of processed food as mentioned earlier using McDonald’s as an example, Eric Schlosser wrote in his book *Fast Food Nation: the Dark Side of the All-American Meal* that “[McDonald’s] opens almost two thousand new ones each year” (p.4). In terms of proportional comparisons, this means that it takes McDonald’s a little over three years to accumulate more than six thousand restaurants compared to the twenty years needed for farmers markets. Therefore, this position is partially validated because it is true that farmers markets are increasing, suggesting that people are concerned about their intake of processed foods. However, the numbers aforementioned supporting this indicate that it is only a small proportion of the population and not a great number of people to truly suggest a paramount shift in the overall amount of consumption of processed foods.

After examining the factors contributing to processed food consumption, it can be hard to distinguish if whether or not the American lifestyle induces processed food intake or whether the production of processed food prolongs the American way of life. The relationship between the two is extremely significant because it affects the consumption of processed food, which is the main focus of the paper. Looking closely, historical events created both a market for processed food and processed food itself, and companies reacted to these changes by ensuring processed food would endure in the market, utilizing advertising, distribution methods and economic appeal. In this way, the consumption of processed food largely depends upon the continuance of the American lifestyle, where people lead a relatively fast paced life that is contingent on the convenience of products to make life easier overall. The American lifestyle and processed food consumption therefore share an entwined and co-dependent relationship that is enhanced and promoted by processed food companies. Unless radical or substantial changes in lifestyle take place, then the consumption of processed food is likely to last long past its expiration date.

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