



The Write Stuff

**Showcase of
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**THE
WRITE
STUFF**

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The Tempered Mentality of AI

After finding myself descending ever further into the rabbit hole of AI technology that I'd been exploring, I turned to *YouTube* to distract my mind from the disconcerting scenarios that AI had conjured. Settling for a video on the impending extinction of chocolate did nothing of the sort. Instead, the mysterious algorithms of the media platform brought me back to where I began, suggesting a video on OpenAI's new text-to-video model *Sora*. Reluctantly, I clicked on it as I wondered what could possibly be next for this rapidly evolving innovation. I was greeted with clips of puppies playing in the snow, an aerial view of California's Big Sur coastline, a crowd of people walking down a Tokyo street, and more. Unremarkable as these scenes might seem, knowing that they were generated by AI from only a few lines of text input and many with almost indistinguishable realism was shocking. Despite being impressed by OpenAI's endeavor to push the limitations of what is possible with computer programs, I questioned what ends were sought to be achieved by them in a world already abundant with puppy videos.

In the *Guardian* article "The Stupidity of AI," author James Bridle gives a simple answer: money. He gives a detailed look at the fraudulent creation of this sort of AI and the corporate greed from which it was born and warns readers against carelessly placing their trust in it. Despite unveiling these negative connotations of the technology in its most prevalent forms, he ultimately encourages readers that good can come from the use of AI in ways more nuanced than those of corporate tech companies. With AI likely to continue its rapid growth, finding seemingly endless niches to fill regardless of any need, I find Bridle's cautious optimism to be a refreshing outlook for its possible future. However, I remain wary of the more sinister applications that might also be realized by AI use outside the constraints of corporate responsibility.

To provide a better understanding of what AI is currently capable of, Bridle examines two of OpenAI's other models: *DALL·E* (a text-to-image generator) and *ChatGPT* (a large language model chatbot). They were created by gathering enormous amounts of public text and image data from the internet and analyzing patterns

in that data between image characteristics and their descriptions or between words and sentences. As Bridle importantly notes, “AI image and text generation is pure primitive accumulation: expropriation of labour from the many for the enrichment and advancement of a few Silicon Valley technology companies and their billionaire owners.” OpenAI and companies that have developed similar AI are profiting by using the work of others without their consent or any regard for their ownership of it.

While I believe that the ethical implications of this practice alone are cause enough for hesitation in personal use of these products, consideration for their use in private enterprise is even more disconcerting. According to Bridle, these AI could be used to produce a broad variety of content for companies, effectively eliminating the need for human talent even if not truly replacing it. So, not only is the creative property of people from all walks of life being used by these companies, but those who make a living by it stand to lose the most if the very thing their work helped create were to take over their livelihood. It is clear to me then that further developments like *Sora* are driven primarily, if not singularly, by profit motivation. Having no stake in that myself and considering the current and potential damage these technologies can cause others gives me heavy pause when thinking about using them.

To further compound the reasons why it might be wise to avoid AI, Bridle also casts doubt on trusting their abilities as advertised. As Bridle writes, “The belief in this kind of AI as actually knowledgeable or meaningful is actively dangerous. It risks poisoning the well of collective thought, and of our ability to think at all.” If we believe that AI can understand us when asked a question, we are more likely to be influenced by the potentially false information it provides. Relying on a computer to give us answers (even if correct) to replace reasoning those answers ourselves might put us out of practice, just as using a calculator to do mathematical functions can hinder our ability to do so without it. As access to AI becomes increasingly more ubiquitous in our everyday lives—the top of a search browser, a button on our phones, a glowing light on a smart speaker—I’ve witnessed people ask all sorts of questions of it. Some were seemingly simple, leaving me to wonder why they needed to be asked. Others were more complex or obscure, which were often met with useful answers, but just as often not. While it’s possible for AI to provide useful information, this should not be assumed of it given its lack of true intelligence.

With the questionable ethics and unreliable knowledge of *DALL·E*, *ChatGPT*, and their like, is there any respectable use for AI? Bridle seems to think so; it just lies in the possibilities of AI outside of the large companies where the technology is prolific today. Bridle continues the article to explore a Māori community that, with the help of non-profit Te Hiku Media, has created their own model of AI to preserve their indigenous language. This was no small feat—requiring decades of Te Hiku’s archival data, thousands of recordings from Māori community members, and the computational power to process it all—but it was worth it to keep their language alive. And the Māori didn’t only keep it alive, but kept ownership of it as well, with data used to create the AI model remaining the property of the Māori community (Bridle). If there is any hope to see AI developed to a substantive potential, it will likely require innovation by those not seeking to use it solely for their own benefit. Bridle concludes that, “We deserve better from the tools we use, the media we consume and the communities we live within, and we will only get what we deserve when we are capable of participating in them fully.” It is possible for AI to be much greater than *DALL·E*, *ChatGPT*, or *Sora*, but that possibility lies in imaginations and will only be realized with competency in utilizing the technology.

While Bridle offers a compelling view on current and future accomplishments of AI created by entities that aren’t beholden to profit, I believe there is the possibility for this to go awry as well. Though some of the big tech companies may lack ethics, they are still persuaded by the public’s perception of them, thus less likely to program their AI for anything truly reprehensible. Individuals and other entities without this concern are free to create and use AI as they like, bound only by law at best. Currently, I believe this leaves a large margin for immoral and potentially dangerous use of the technology. Although this is not reason to abandon hope for the future possibilities of AI, I think it’s a clear indication to consider appropriate caution and regulation for the technology if it is ever to be broadly realized as the useful tool it can be.

This essay was submitted to ChatGPT with the prompt, “I’m going to give you a paper. Please list areas of this paper that are confusing and ways I can revise for clarity. Also, please list any grammatical mistakes. Please do not rewrite my paper.” A copy of Chat GPT’s response is provided below. All changes and additions are included in the essay as it is written above, and instances where changes were not made are annotated in italics.

Appendix: AI Suggestions for Revision

Areas of confusion/revision suggestions:

1. **Clarity on Personal Experience:** The beginning anecdote about the *YouTube* video might be clearer if you specify the connection between AI exploration and the distraction provided by YouTube. It's not immediately clear why you turned to *YouTube* and how it's related to your exploration of AI technology.

No change – I believe this suggestion is primarily due to GPT3.5 lacking knowledge of Sora. I feel this is already clear

2. **Transition between Personal Experience and Bridle's Article:** The transition between your personal experience with AI exploration and the introduction of Bridle's article could be smoother. You could explicitly state why you are referencing Bridle's article and how it connects to your experience.

No change – same as above, although I do agree the transition could be smoother.

3. **Explanation of AI Models:** When discussing AI models like *DALL·E* and *ChatGPT*, provide a brief explanation of what they do. This will help readers who may not be familiar with these models to understand the context better.

No change – I originally wanted to provide more explanation of this but decided to cut some of it due to the word limit. I also thought readers would already have some understanding of this, but I wasn't entirely sure what audience I should be considering.

4. **Conclusion and Future of AI:** The conclusion could be expanded to clarify your stance on the future of AI. Do you advocate for more regulation or a different approach to AI development? Providing more clarity on your perspective would strengthen the conclusion.

Changed “Though not reason to abandon hope for the future of AI, I think it's a clear indication to consider appropriate caution and likely regulation for the technology when looking towards a future where it could be regarded as a useful tool.”

to – *“Although this is not reason to abandon hope for the future possibilities of AI, I think it’s a clear indication to consider appropriate caution and regulation for the technology if it is ever to be broadly realized as the useful tool it can be.”*

5. Structure and Flow: Ensure that each paragraph flows logically into the next, creating a cohesive narrative throughout the paper.

Changed “As if only to compound the reasons why it might be wise to avoid AI, Bridle also casts doubt on trusting their abilities as advertised.” to – “To further compound the reasons why it might be wise to avoid AI, Bridle also casts doubt on trusting their abilities as advertised.”

Changed “With not only the merit of what AI can offer in question, but also the legitimacy of how it is able to provide it, is there any respectable use for it?” to – “With the questionable ethics and unreliable knowledge of DALL·E, ChatGPT, and their like, is there any respectable use for AI?”

Grammatical mistakes:

1. “I remain weary” should be “I remain wary” unless you specifically mean tired instead of cautious.

Changed “weary” to “wary.”

2. “Reluctantly, I clicked on it wondering what could possibly be next for this rapidly evolving innovation.” - Consider breaking this into two sentences for clarity.

Changed “wondering” to “as I wondered.”

3. “While I believe that the ethical implications of this practice alone are enough cause for hesitation in personal use of these products...” - Replace “enough cause” with “sufficient cause.”

Changed “enough cause” to “cause enough.”

4. “Some seemingly simple, leaving me to wonder why they needed to be asked.” - Add “were” after “some seemingly

simple.”

Added “were” after “Some.”

5. “Others more complex or obscure, which were often met with useful answers, but just as often not.” - This sentence structure is a bit awkward. Consider rephrasing for clarity.

Added “were” after “Others.”

6. “While AI has the possibility to provide users with useful information or direct them to it, this is not a quality inherent of it and certainly actual intelligence isn’t either.” - Consider rephrasing for clarity, possibly separating into two sentences.

Changed to “While it’s possible for AI to provide useful information, this should not be assumed of it given its lack of true intelligence.”

7. “So, there is some hope for future potential in AI, but it likely requires innovation by those not seeking to use it solely for their own benefit.” - Consider revising for clarity, as the sentence is a bit convoluted.

Changed to “If there is any hope to see AI developed to a substantive potential, it will likely require innovation by those not seeking to use it solely for their own benefit.”

8. “Unethical as some of these big tech companies may be, they are still persuaded by their public perception and less likely to do anything truly reprehensible with their technologies as a result.” - Consider rephrasing for clarity, as the sentence structure is complex.

Changed to “Though some of the big tech companies may lack ethics, they are still persuaded by the public’s perception of them, thus less likely to program their AI for anything truly reprehensible.”

Overall, the paper effectively raises concerns about the ethical implications of AI technology and presents a nuanced perspective

on its potential uses and misuses. Clarifying the connections between different sections and revising for grammatical mistakes will enhance its coherence and readability (“I’m going to give you a paper”).

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“I’m going to give you a paper. Please list areas of this paper that are confusing and ways I can revise for clarity. Also, please list any grammatical mistakes. Please do not rewrite my paper.” prompt. *ChatGPT*, version 3.5, OpenAI, 7 Mar. 2024, chatgpt.com/share/4366858f-d1d3-4855-a8fe-cea2ecfa9338?oai-dm=1.

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ENL 102

The Language Between Us

It is evident that when I speak a different language, I am seen as inferior, or some will say, “I cannot understand what you are saying.” It is not that they do not understand, but they refuse to accept my variation of the English language. Moving here from Jamaica in 2014, I accepted a vacancy as a referral coordinator at a medical office. A day came when I had to call a medical office to ensure the referral was received. During the call, our conversation turned when I used the word “zebra” to indicate that a “z” was present in the patient’s name. Out of nowhere, the caller started an argument with me because of how “zebra” was pronounced, and she claimed I was incorrect. Look at how one word sparked outrage as we argued about who was grammatically correct. We all must embrace the variations of the English language and challenge the notion of correct or proper language use.

In Jamila Lyiscott's (2014) TED Talk, *3 Ways to Speak English*, she focuses on the themes of language, identity, and language diversity. Lyiscott explains that she is "articulate" because she knows all three languages and is "trilingual." She discusses how she speaks three languages: her home language, academic and professional English, and slang when socializing with peers (Lyiscott, 2014). She advocates for communities to recognize and tolerate the diversity of languages. As complex as we make it, language has formed our identity in many ways, shapes, and forms. Lyiscott touches on how language develops us as individuals and as a culture. Lyiscott refers to the "English language being a multifaceted oration subject to indefinite transformation," which means that language is forever changing around us due to the influence of cultural variation, so we should all adapt to the coming change. We should stop the idealistic notion that the so-called standard English is the proper language. As Lyiscott states, "The only God language is the one recorded in Genesis." Lyiscott refers to the notion that we consider the Book of Genesis sacred and divine and, in turn, deem the language as "correct" or "pure."

The way she conveys these themes is by sharing her personal experience to make it more relatable to the audience. She imprints her emotions in our minds when emphasizing how society viewed her for being a Black woman speaking the so-called standard English language, and it is only then that she is recognized as being "articulate." In other words, speaking the so-called English language makes a person intelligent, and you are judged in society just by your use of the English language. Lyiscott (2014) wants us to denounce Western civilization and stop conforming to the concept that standard English is superior to all other languages. She knows the laws of English, but that does not stop her from "switching it up" because, as Lyiscott states, her language and history were taken from her people, so language was created to keep the culture of her people alive. During slavery, African Americans were separated from their native languages and cultures and were forbidden to practice anything related to their culture. Hence the formation and development of African-American Vernacular English.

As an immigrant, this scenario is very relatable in so many ways. As a Caribbean woman, I was taught the Queen's English, so the pronunciation and spelling of some words may differ from American English. As Lyiscott (2014) states, our language was

taken from our people, so we had to create a language to preserve our culture.

Originally developed on Jamaican plantations due to the lack of a common language, my Jamaican dialect, Patois, evolved into a form of resistance used by enslaved people. Despite being forced to learn English, the enslaved also spoke this dialect, which was often not fully understood by enslavers. This allowed enslaved people to keep their escape plans and acts of rebellion against the harsh conditions and ill-treatment hidden.

Lyiscott's *3 Ways to Speak English* resonates profoundly and has shed light on the importance of recognizing and respecting the various forms of English worldwide. Her call to embrace language variation also challenges the notion of the so-called standardized English language. This viewpoint encourages diversity by eliminating language inequalities that have silenced voices. Being of Caribbean heritage, I have never considered being silenced because of my dialect, but looking back at all the criticism and backlash I have encountered, I can honestly say individuals with rigid beliefs about language proficiency have all tried to silence me due to my multilingual talent. I now appreciate my ability to navigate multiple variations of the English language in any context and not feel fear.

The need to diversify the English language is a much-needed notion. Lyiscott's TED Talk encourages us to respect the many ways English is spoken by allowing people as a society to express themselves. She wants us to be mindful that the English language is constantly evolving, and it represents the fabric of human existence. Lyiscott (2014) talks of how speaking these three languages has shaped her identity and the cultural richness that it brings. She also highlights the importance of embracing, recognizing, and celebrating accents, dialects, and linguistic forms.

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Is Cape Cod Zoned Out?

Let's face it, the issue of securing affordable housing on Cape Cod is slowly spreading like a cancerous tumor, ignored by both doctor and patient. With each passing day, many individuals on Cape Cod are left with the decision of either uprooting their entire livelihoods and relocating to wherever they can find suitable dwellings or picking up additional jobs to cover rising housing costs. Because of a limited housing selection, residents have fewer choices compared to people in the rest of the state and country. Locating multi-family housing units is a challenge due to more than 80% of the homes on Cape Cod being single-family units, in contrast to the 52% and 62% in the state and nation respectively ("Regional Housing"). Obtaining housing at an affordable rate is a challenge in Cape Cod communities. One possible solution to this issue is to revise current zoning regulations, a strategy that has been implemented effectively by other countries around the world.

Zoning determines the specific use of a piece of land and the types of buildings that can be erected on it. Julian Cyr, senator from Truro, alluded to the fact that Massachusetts has given power to municipalities to decide the specific uses of land in each territory (McCormick). This includes the ability to make changes to zoning regulations that would facilitate the development of multi-family apartments and proper sewer management systems, opening the door to larger housing units (McCormick).

Revising and updating zoning laws to reflect the growing housing demand in Cape Cod communities is crucial. Doing so ensures that the ability to have access to affordable dwellings is not based on the ever-changing status of the real estate market, but on the needs of residents desiring stability. A recent evaluation of Cape's zoning regulations revealed that single-family dwellings are approved on 75% of zoned land, while multi-family dwellings with more than two units are only approved on 2% (Senatori). With such restrictions in place, it is impossible for land spaces to be used to their full potential. Implementing new zoning regulations that allow for the development of multi-family units in potential areas would create opportunities for affordable housing on Cape Cod. A mixed-use zoning bylaw would permit the establishment of multiple residential, commercial, or even industrial properties in

the same district. Buildings deemed obsolete or underused could be redeveloped to ensure that the communities benefit from these structures in appropriate areas (“Mixed-Use Model”). Regulations and building codes should not remain in place solely to preserve a picturesque view by restricting the sizes, shapes, and number of structures being built in a community. Municipalities must approach old zoning laws with an open mind to foster community development and meet the needs of those seeking an affordable place to live.

Japan has demonstrated that zoning regulations, such as mixed-use bylaws, are possible and effective. The supply matches the demand, rent is uncontrolled, and there are fewer restrictions on density and height, which keeps the prices of homes affordable (Davis). Masahiro Kobayashi, a director general at the Japan Housing Finance Agency, stated that “a reason why housing prices in Japan are not rising as fast as in New York, for example, is the large number of housing starts” (Davis). Over a ten-year period, Japan has steadily built approximately one million single-family homes and condominiums annually (Davis). The reason for the country’s success is that Japan’s zoning regulations are controlled by its national government, which modified bylaws that were preventing an increase in supply, permitting structures that varied in shape and size (Davis). With only 12 zoning ordinances, Japan places no restrictions on height in many residential areas and allows the construction of offices and retail stores in the same zone, rather than limiting development to just single-family homes on large parcels of land (Durning). By shifting its focus to the welfare of citizens, rather than worrying about how buildings of different sizes, shapes, or heights might appear next to each other, Japan has proven that one of the hindrances to affordable housing is the mindset of those who object. Thankfully, “In Japan, a broad public interest in abundant housing has usually trumped parochial housing obstructionism” (Durning).

This proposed solution is also supported on a national level. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), municipal zoning laws in Massachusetts have led many communities to push back against building multi-family homes and affordable housing units (“Massachusetts Passes”). Lowering voting requirements from a two-thirds supermajority to a basic majority will facilitate an easier process of changing zoning regulations, resulting in an increased number of homes being built and opening doors of opportunities that have been closed to many

individuals and their families for years (“Massachusetts Passes”). Placing the need for multi-family housing units at the forefront is the way forward. This approach will continue to challenge zoning regulations that assume it is preferable to see a single-family home on a plot of land (McCormick).

Regardless of the numerous attempts to convince municipalities and some residents of Cape Cod that making changes to zoning regulations will fix the issue of affordable housing, the objection to this solution is that the proposed increase in density to facilitate affordable housing may not align with the overall aesthetic of Cape Cod and could potentially impact the quality of water. However, with proper planning and funding for improving water systems, these multi-family dwellings and mixed-use structures can be built without negatively impacting the environment (Fraser). Andrew Gottlieb, Executive Director of the Association to Preserve Cape Cod, dismissed the objection by stating that “we have quainted ourselves to death, and we can achieve a variety of social benefits as well as environmental benefits if we’re a little bit smarter about how we choose to do development” (Fraser). After all, it would be extremely unfair for municipalities to maintain current zoning regulations solely because the appearance of new developments does not match that of older homes. Should Cape Cod be allowed to maintain its ornamental look, while many of the residents are struggling to find an affordable place to live? This would be quite unjust to long-time Cape Cod residents of 40, 50, 70, or even 80 years who find themselves displaced due to the unavailability of affordable housing.

A second possible solution would be to implement rent control measures that would protect low-income tenants from increasing prices. Housing and rent prices continue to rise as the demand for homes surges. Implementing rent control measures would mean an individual earning minimum wage would not have to exhaust themselves between multiple jobs just to cover their rent. However, this would only discourage landlords and developers from providing quality, well-maintained homes to low-income tenants (Fazio). Even if an individual is offered an affordable dwelling at a significantly lower cost, the purpose of having a home is defeated if the home’s condition is unsuitable. That’s why revising old zoning regulations, which currently hinder the development of multi-family homes and mixed-use structures, is the solution to Cape Cod’s housing crisis.

The affordable housing crisis continues to threaten Cape Cod residents, and revising zoning regulations is the best solution. Japan implemented this strategy proving its effectiveness, and the National Low Income Housing Coalition confirms that doing this will open avenues of opportunities for individuals to have access to affordable housing. As house prices escalate, Cape Cod residents are facing the challenge of securing affordable housing. With this proposed solution, municipalities must recognize the importance of ensuring that Cape Cod residents have access to affordable housing, thereby fostering an inclusive housing environment that exemplifies equality.

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Levi Hartley
ENL102

Understanding the Invasion

In the fall of 2014, orchards, farms, and tree nurseries in Pennsylvania discovered swarms of unfamiliar spotted insects preying on their crops. The affected plots were drenched in honeydew and stank with a rotten sweet odor. The bugs devoured the farmers’ livelihoods, tree after tree, beyond the point of recovery. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture confirmed these swarms to be the spotted lanternfly, and since 2014, the spotted lanternfly has continued its invasion of farms throughout the United States (Macgregor, 2020). This insect is rapidly multiplying. Despite the best efforts to eradicate the spotted lanternfly, they continue to disrupt habitats and agriculture practically undeterred. Understanding how spotted lanternflies communicate and reproduce is essential to fighting them off.

The spotted lanternfly is originally from East Asia. Here in the United States, without natural predators to cull their population and with an abundance of trees to exploit, spotted lanternflies are incredibly invasive insects (Macgregor, 2020). Their invasion has spread across New England, finally arriving in Massachusetts in the last couple of years. A reproducing population of spotted lanternfly was first observed in Fitchburg, Massachusetts in 2021.

Evidence of the spotted lanternflies' rapid expansion is relayed by Jeanine Farley (2023) of the *Cambridge Day* newspaper, who writes, "The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources looks for and removes eggs masses this time of year. Last winter, crews removed more than 5,500 egg masses from trees, rocks, and machinery" (p. 4). In the span of one year from the first recorded population, thousands of egg masses were discovered and removed in 2022. Thousands more remained undetected, continuing the invasion in 2023.

The big question is, how can the spotted lanternfly be stopped? Conservation efforts and scientific studies continue nationwide to combat the spotted lanternfly problem. Massachusetts and all of New England are closely watching the conservation practices in Pennsylvania and their relative success. Circle traps, glue traps, and whole trap trees are being utilized. The controlled introduction of natural predators and parasites to control the lanternfly population has even been considered (Macgregor, 2020). For methods beyond pesticides, traps, and deterrents, it is necessary to understand exactly how the spotted lanternfly functions and behaves. Knowing this, some farmers have allowed researchers to intentionally infect their crops with spotted lanternflies to directly study the insects. Martin Kubek (2020), a farmer who donated a crop of his grapes, says, "Somebody's got to do something. Here we have an invasive species that could destroy all grapes in the Eastern U.S. And what are we doing about it?" (as cited in Macgregor, 2020, p. 13).

Through studying the insects' behaviors, the question of how to stop the spotted lanternfly becomes more nuanced. Researchers are asking, how do they communicate and how do they reproduce? A study by Hajar Faal (2022) and fellow researchers puts forward a compelling answer to these questions. As the title, "Evidence of Pheromone Use in a Fulgorid, Spotted Lanternfly," suggests, Faal and colleagues connected the reproductive signaling of spotted lanternfly to pheromones over other known means of communication (Faal et al., 2022). Past research has shown families of insects closely related to the spotted lanternfly utilize sound waves and vibroacoustic communication. Spotted lanternflies are also known to respond to the kairomone methyl salicylate. This is a chemical signal that alerts them to their preferred food sources, tree-of-heaven and grape plants. But there has previously been little research into how this insect communicates for reproduction (Faal et al., 2022).

Faal (2022) and fellow researchers were able to determine the presence of pheromones using whole-body extracts from adult spotted lanternflies at controlled points in the mating cycle. The researchers observed the insects' behaviors in response to these extracts. "Adult spotted lanternflies from different physiological states were tested for attraction in a dual-choice olfactometer" (Faal et al., 2022, p. 1). More simply, lanternflies were tested to see whether they walked toward the smells and chemical signals of other lanternflies or toward control samples. Given the binary choice, female spotted lanternflies displayed no specific attraction behaviors to the whole-body extracts. Male spotted lanternflies, however, were consistently attracted to the extract of other lanternflies before the mating period. The males were specifically attracted to the female extracts during the mating period. These observations in behavior and sex-specific attraction indicate the presence of pheromone communication in spotted lanternflies (Faal et al., 2022).

The researchers posit that the isolation of spotted lanternfly pheromones could help improve the effectiveness of chemical signal traps that are already in use. "The identification of pheromones and their development into effective lures would greatly facilitate the early detection and management of [spotted lanternflies]" (Faal et al., 2022, p. 5). Determining the exact chemical composition of spotted lanternfly pheromones was limited by the methods of extraction and analysis. The researchers suggest further study and different techniques that could give a more detailed look into the exact chemicals at play (Faal et al., 2022).

Returning to the big question, how can the spotted lanternfly be stopped? The findings by Faal et al. (2022) are a promising answer. Eradicating the spotted lanternfly from the eastern United States will require every tool, weapon, and trap available to farmers and conservationists. A practical pheromone trap derived from the research of Faal et al. (2022) would disrupt the rate of spotted lanternfly reproduction. While a pheromone trap is limited to a select portion of males in the population, combining pheromone and kairomone lures could help deter the invasion of the spotted lanternfly and protect environments across the country (Faal et al., 2022).

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Danielle Sawyer
ENL101

The Awakening

We never know the moment that will change our lives—that one specific moment when everything comes into focus. Suddenly, it seems so clear you feel like the universe itself is speaking to you. For me, that moment took place July 20, 2011, sometime after 1 a.m. at Tobey Hospital in Wareham, MA. A day that was supposed to be filled with joy, happiness, and congratulatory conversation was anything but. The air was filled instead with grief, confusion, and fear.

The doctor came in. I couldn't stay silent any longer; I had to tell him the secret I had kept for the past eight-plus months. I say "eight-plus" because I was not even sure how long it had been. I wasn't keeping track; no one was. I was an addict, and I was in labor. I could not reveal that to anyone in fear of what might happen, but that early morning, it had to come out. The secret felt like it was burning a hole inside me. First, I was honest with my father, and he went on to call my mother and my sister. The anxiety I suddenly felt, thinking about how everyone was taking the news, was immeasurable.

Once everyone had arrived at the hospital, fear set in. The conversations were minimal. *How could you do this? What were you thinking? Why didn't you ask for help?* The truth was I didn't have an answer to any of these questions; I was numb. There was something powerful inside me that wasn't allowing me to make decisions; it was all-consuming, and it was a disease. As I sat there, I wondered: *Would this baby have ten fingers and ten toes? Would it be healthy? Was it a boy or girl?* We waited in anticipation, trying to keep the atmosphere light, but it felt impossible. I remember looking over at my sister, and the disappointment across her face stung. Typically, they don't allow more than one or two people in a delivery room, but they could see my family was scared, almost like they were in mourning. The version of me they thought they knew had died. I felt like I was being suffocated by the tension in the room.

I remember anxiously waiting in fear that something was wrong or would go wrong immediately. I heard the heartbeat on the monitor speeding up; the baby seemed in crisis. A few minutes later he was born. When he was placed on me, he instantly stopped crying. The only thing I could do was weep. The only words I mustered up were, "I'm sorry," and I was. Within a few moments, my baby was shivering; it happened so quickly, and it was terrifying. He was taken and placed on oxygen. Only parts of his tiny, perfect face could be seen behind an oxygen mask.

In that moment, the one that would go on to change my life and help inspire me to change so many more, it happened. I suddenly had this out-of-body experience where it almost felt like I was on the ceiling looking down at myself, and this realization swept over me, more powerful than anything I had ever felt before. In my mind, I could see this baby on breathing tubes and feeding tubes. The trauma of watching them cut his pacifier in half to fit in his mouth was soul-wrenching. I could hear a voice in my

head, my own subconscious saying, “This baby is fighting for his life and you’re actively killing his mother.” This was the most profound thought I will ever have; to this day, I can hear it. I made the decision to do whatever it took to change, to be deserving of this baby’s forgiveness one day, if he survived.

Once I was released from the hospital, I was able to visit my baby. There was no denying the pain I had inflicted on him when I was face-to-face with it. I made the decision to enter treatment as I knew I could not be the mother he needed until I was healthy. That was the start of a life I could have never even begun to dream for myself a few days before.

Not only did my son survive, but he thrived. We both did. I’ve always believed that humans have experiences to someday be able to pass on knowledge and guidance to others when they need it. While I am not proud of my past life and what happened, I used the experience to help others. I became an example of what is possible if you make one decision that could change everything.

Today, I have a beautiful, healthy family. My son is one of three. I have used my experience to build programs to help others struggling. Some of the work I have done has been the most fulfilling I will ever do, aside from raising my amazing children. I think back to July 20, 2011, often. I think back to that experience I had and that one moment that changed everything. I am eternally grateful for that awakening, and instead of looking back with guilt, shame, and disappointment, I look back at it with compassion, understanding, and hope. That day I made one of the most courageous decisions I have ever had to make. Little did I know it would fill me with a faith I had never known before.

The Black Death

Throughout nearly a decade in the mid 14th century, havoc and fear were felt across medieval Europe as the plague spread, eliminating a third of the population. The Black Death was commonly seen as “divine punishment for mankind’s sins.”¹ This plague left a considerable impact on the world and changed the course of history. There was a significant change in how the world functioned during and after the plague. The general population felt severe impacts in religious settings, economic difficulties, hospital advancements, and all aspects of everyday medieval life. Some argue that the plague was a blessing that helped push society into the “Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, the Age of Enlightenment and more.”²

Some survivors claimed that there was amelioration in human morality, evidenced by an increase in marriages and a stronger focus on and acceptance of religion: “swearing and gambling had so diminished that manufacturers of dice were turning their product into beads for saying prayers.”³ Meanwhile, other survivors claimed that the plague had negative effects on morals, “lowering virtue throughout the world.”⁴ The *Chronicle of Jean de Venette* mentions that even though marriage rates increased and “fertility [was] beyond the ordinary,” the new population that *replaced* the one the plague wiped out was not beneficial to the world: “the world was not changed for the better but for the worse by this renewal of population.”⁵ People noted that “there was an orgy of greed with the glut of merchandise available in the aftermath” and survivors turned against each other because of this greed and covetousness.⁶

Knowledge of disease and the spread of infection was still lacking in the 14th century, and the population did not know whom to blame or what was causing deaths so quickly. Many believed that humanity was being punished by God. Most accepted the punishment, but some, the Flagellants, took responsibility and

1 Kennan, “Pandemics in the Parish,” 80.

2 Armstrong, “Pandemic Fault Lines,” 3.

3 Galli, “When a Third of the World Died,” 4.

4 Galli, “When a Third of the World Died,” 4.

5 Slocum, “England,” 405.

6 Galli, “When a Third of the World Died,” 4.

punished themselves.⁷ Men and women, stripped to the waist of clothing, gathered and marched in the streets as they beat themselves or each other with whips as punishment for their sins, which they believed had caused God to unleash his wrath and spread plague and mass death across the world.⁸ As explained by Jean de Venette: “they formed circles and beat upon their backs with weighted scourges, rejoicing as they did so in loud voices and singing hymns.”⁹

Many Christians who did not accept the plague as a punishment from God blamed the Jewish population. They convinced themselves and others that the Jews were responsible for so many deaths by “infecting the wells and water and corrupting the air.”¹⁰ Many Jewish people were convicted of spreading poison.¹¹ Some were tortured into confessing their act of poisoning the water and air in numerous towns.¹² Agimet of Geneva, arrested at Châtel, confessed to conspiring with a rabbi to poison the wells of several European cities, stating that the rabbi gave him “a little package...[containing] some prepared poison and venom in a thin, sewed leather-bag.”¹³ Many Jewish people were blamed, persecuted, beaten, and killed for their “involvement” in the plague.

Churches were greatly impacted by the plague. Many believed that God had punished humanity for their wrongdoings and therefore relied heavily on the church to help them. Giovanni Boccaccio writes in *The Decameron*: “there came the death-dealing pestilence, which, through the operation of the heavenly bodies or of our own iniquitous dealings, [was] sent down upon mankind for our correction by the just wrath of God.”¹⁴ Because parish clergy were exposed to the disease by reading the last rites to the dying, they endured a very high mortality rate.¹⁵ Since the church and its clergy had such a significant role in “appeasing God” and were believed to have the ability to prevent or slow the spread of this disease, there was immense worry about the mortality of priests.¹⁶

7 Slocum, “England,” 405.

8 Slocum, “England,” 405.

9 Slocum, “England,” 405.

10 Slocum, “England,” 405.

11 “Internet Jewish History Sourcebook”

12 “Internet Jewish History Sourcebook”

13 “Internet Jewish History Sourcebook”

14 Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron of Giovanni Boccaccio*

15 Kennan, “Pandemics in the Parish,” 80.

16 Kennan, “Pandemics in the Parish,” 80.

As concerns continued to grow, the Bishop of Bath and Wells declared an emergency mandate allowing all nonordained people, including women, to listen to confessions of those on the verge of death:

We understand that many people are dying without the sacrament of penance, because they do not know what they ought to do in such an emergency ... Make it known speedily and publicly ... to everyone, but particularly to those who have already fallen sick, that if when on the point of death they cannot secure the services of a properly ordained priest, they should make confession of their sins to any lay person, even a woman if a man is not available.¹⁷

In hopes of solving the pressing issue of a lack of priests, Pope Clement VI approved emergency ordinations.¹⁸ This, however, caused a different concern and resulted in complaints that “the quality of the clergy was falling because unsuitable candidates were being rushed through and admitted to [the] priesthood.”¹⁹ As clergy were seen as highly educated and held such power, people were concerned about their positions being filled by just anyone: “many were illiterate and little more than laymen, who if they were able to read at all were unable to understand what they read.”²⁰ Additionally, many people grew upset that some of the new clergy weren’t as selfless as clergy should be but were just “as frightened and self-serving as the populace.”²¹ The newly ordained clergy were taking advantage of the desperate during this dire time, “gouging people for their services.”²² This caused feelings of extreme anger among the people and in some instances, even violence.²³ An example given by Galli was in Worcester, England, where buildings were set on fire and monks were attacked.²⁴

As experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, though centuries earlier, the Black Death also caused economic hardship and inflation. With the death of so many, there was a severe shortage of laborers: “such a shortage of hands and servants that

17 Kennan, “Pandemics in the Parish,” 80.

18 Kennan, “Pandemics in the Parish,” 81.

19 Kennan, “Pandemics in the Parish,” 81.

20 Slocum, “England,” 406.

21 Galli, “When a Third of the World Died,” 4.

22 Galli, “When a Third of the World Died,” 4.

23 Galli, “When a Third of the World Died,” 4.

24 Galli, “When a Third of the World Died,” 4.

no one knew what ought to be done.”²⁵ People noticed and started demanding higher wages.²⁶ The King of England established rules that employers should not pay workers more than they had earned previously, and when they did not obey, they were penalized: “[the king] inflicted heavy fines upon abbots and priors...then the king caused many labourers to be arrested and put them in prison.”²⁷ Eventually, a significant lack of labor and inflation had a severe impact on society. Necessities increased in cost by four to five times, which led to landlords making rent adjustments “in order that the tenants should not go away on account of the lack of servants and the general high cost of living.”²⁸ Despite the authorities’ efforts to resist laborers’ demands for higher wages, the situation grew so desperate that adjustments and changes were necessary—returning to the way it had been before the plague was impossible.

Though there was a lot of chaos and confusion during the plague, this crisis helped the development of hospitals. Hospitals had already existed for centuries prior to the plague, one of the first being Hôtel-Dieu in Paris, established in 651 CE, and another in Lyon, established in 552 CE.”²⁹ Hospitals were originally intended as lodging for travelers, with the word “hospital” originating from the Latin word “guest,” *hospes*.³⁰ Interestingly, before the plague began, people with infections and diseases would be turned away.³¹ Hospitals eventually became institutions for the sick, and during the plague, they became so overcrowded that people were turned away.³² However, they did operate as “isolation centers” and helped ease the spread of the disease.³³ Hospitals slowly evolved into institutions that modern society recognizes and played a role in the later advancements of treatments, cures, and medicine.

Eventually, these advancements resulted in people gaining the knowledge and ability to find the source of the plague—where it came from, why, and how it killed so many people. Although not all scientists agree on exactly where the plague originated, most agree that it began somewhere in Mongolia during the late 13th

25 Slocum, “England,” 406.

26 Slocum, “England,” 406.

27 Slocum, “England,” 406.

28 Slocum, “England,” 406.

29 Wuithiran, “The Birth of the Hospital, 37.

30 Wuithiran, “The Birth of the Hospital, 37.

31 Wuithiran, “The Birth of the Hospital, 37.

32 Wuithiran, “The Birth of the Hospital, 37.

33 Wuithiran, “The Birth of the Hospital, 37.

and early to mid-14th centuries.³⁴ After discovering revolutionary techniques of extracting DNA from bones of skeletons, scientists and researchers concluded that the Black Death was caused by the spread of the bacteria *Yersinia pestis*.³⁵ Further testing of this pathogen led scientists to learn that *Y. pestis* separated into four branches referred to as “The Big Bang,” which exist.³⁶

Some argue that *Y. pestis* on its own wasn’t strong enough to cause such a high mortality rate and that other factors contributed to the massive number of deaths.³⁷ Since “plague is not a human disease,” it has different effects on populations in different areas: “plague amplifies in dense urban conditions but is far less visible to human perception when it passes through rural or wild terrain.”³⁸ After many studies on *Y. pestis*, it was determined that the pathogen hadn’t evolved much over the centuries and that it “was not very much more virulent in medieval times.”³⁹ This led researchers to believe that other factors contributed to the Black Death’s high mortality rates.⁴⁰ When the bacteria arrived, Medieval Europe was in the midst of a drastic environmental change: the Little Ice Age.⁴¹

The Little Ice Age brought downpours that resulted in rotting crops and cool temperatures which quickened the travel and spread of *Y. pestis* as it did other pathogens.⁴² Hunger and famine spread, the Hundred Years War had already begun, people started moving from rural areas to crowded cities, infected soldiers traveled around, and sanitation and hygiene were lacking—all of these factors could have contributed to the severity and high mortality of the Black Death.⁴³

Regardless of whether other factors contributed to the Black Death, such as compromised immune systems due to famine and lack of sanitation, the plague was often documented as “frequently sudden, agonising, and even disgusting.”⁴⁴ Though the

34 Kane, “Real Cause.”

35 Kane, “Real Cause.”

36 Green, “The Four Black Deaths,” 1603.

37 Kane, “Real Cause.”

38 Monica H. Green, “The Four Black Deaths.,” *American Historical Review* 125, no. 5 (2020): 1603, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhaa511>.

39 Kane, “Real Cause.”

40 Kane, “Real Cause.”

41 Kane, “Real Cause.”

42 Kane, “Real Cause.”

43 Kane, “Real Cause.”

44 Kennan, “Pandemics in the Parish,” 81.

death from plague was excruciatingly painful, Christianity still had a strong influence on what was to come after death. In *The Book of the Craft of Dying*, an anonymous author wrote “for a Christian man to die well and soundly ... he must know how to die,” and continued, “bodily death is the most dreadful of all terrifying things [but] spiritual death of the soul is as much more horrible and detestable as the soul is more worthy and precious than the body.”⁴⁵ This mentality led more people to join parish guilds (established prior to the Black Death) to “have a proper burial and have their ascent to heaven eased through the guild’s intercessory masses.”⁴⁶ The members would pay an annual subscription and an entry fee to feel comforted about their souls’ migrating peacefully to heaven after death.⁴⁷

In *The Pardoner’s Tale*, Geoffrey Chaucer tells an imaginative story of three “rioters” sitting in a tavern when they witness a corpse being carried and are warned about Death, the “stealthy thief.” As the revellers are warned:

He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence:
And, maister, er ye come in his presence,
Me thynketh that it were necessarie
For to be war of swich an adversarie.
Beth redy for to mete him evermore.⁴⁸

The rioters are determined, as surely most people were, and continue to be, in crises where lives are in jeopardy and death is prominent, to “slay” the “stealthy thief.” As one of the rioters proclaims, they need to be united to defeat death:

Herkneth, felawes, we three been al ones;
Lat ech of us holde up his hond til oother,
And ech of us bicomen othes brother,
And we wol sleen this false traytour Deeth;
He shal be slayn, which that so manye sleeth, By Goddes

The Black Death is recorded as one of the deadliest pandemics in human history, claiming millions of lives. Amidst the devastation and high mortality rate, the plague also contributed to economic upheaval, shifts in power and religious dynamics, public health advancements, and changes in cultural attitudes. It

45 Kennan, “Pandemics in the Parish,” 83.

46 Kennan, “Pandemics in the Parish,” 83.

47 Kennan, “Pandemics in the Parish,” 83.

48 Benson, “Geoffrey Chaucer’s Description.”

is a reminder that although a crisis brings forth chaos, fear, and devastation, it can also lead to the transformation of a society. It is important to acknowledge what changes past crises have brought in order to better prepare for the future.

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Causes and Effects of Gun Violence

In 2020, Kyle Rittenhouse got into his car in Antioch, Illinois and drove to Kenosha, Wisconsin to patrol the streets during a Black Lives Matter protest (Bosman). He was tackled by an unarmed Kenosha resident, Joseph Rosenbaum, who was shot four times; Rittenhouse also shot and killed Anthony Huber (Bosman). He was charged with two counts of homicide, as well as attempted homicide, curfew violation, unlawful possession of a firearm, and two counts of reckless endangerment (Bosman). As a 17-year-old, Rittenhouse was not found guilty on any counts (Bosman). To reflect on the Rittenhouse scenario, gun violence occurs across the United States in various ways, yet the causes and effects are often lumped together or overlooked. Many say mental health is a main cause of gun violence, but according to the National Institute for Health Care Management, “it is estimated that 96% of the [gun] violence that occurs would continue even if the elevated risk of violence among people with mental illness was eliminated” (“Gun Violence: Impact”). So, if the cause of most gun violence is not strictly mental illness, the United States is faced with the question of what the major causes and their effects are. While there are many causes, one which seems to carry a lot of weight is poverty. The socio-economic status of people contributes to the level of gun violence in a given area. Looking at the socio-economic status of different regions with varying levels of gun violence, as well as two of the effects, which are the economic consequences of a gun death in America and the subsequent diagnoses and disorders of gun violence victims and their families, will illustrate how economic disparity contributes to the prevalence and impact of gun violence.

The socio-economic status of the American citizen determines whether they will be a more susceptible victim of homicidal gun violence. In a youth-specific study performed by the JAMA Network, it was noted that “firearm-related mortality risk increased in a stepwise manner with increasing county poverty concentration” (Barrett et al.). The level of poverty that a specific county possessed correlated to an increase in gun deaths. The study looked at homicides, suicides, unintentional deaths, and the total firearm-related mortality rate by year and concluded that more than

50% of firearm-related deaths correlated with high concentrations of poverty, and two-thirds of firearm homicides were also associated with living in areas of highly concentrated poverty (Barrett et al.). Looking at county-level concentrations of poverty in percentages, the study found that from 2007-2016, counties with 20% poverty levels or more had 14,960 firearm mortalities, whereas those with 0-4.9% poverty levels experienced only 248 gun deaths (Barrett et al.). As seen in Figure 1, gun homicides most affect areas with a 20% or more poverty concentration. Gun-related suicide rates among the two groups are more similar, but still higher in poorer communities (Barrett et al.). Importantly, suicides made up 54% of all U.S. gun deaths, and homicidal gun deaths made up 43% of gun deaths in 2021 (Gramlich). Still, it can be said that “higher levels of some forms of violence victimization and perpetration (including suicide) are found among disadvantaged groups” (“Gun Violence: Prediction”).

Places with higher gun death rates, like Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, are also known for having high rates of poverty (DePietro). In 2017, soon after the JAMA Network’s study was completed, the Census Bureau indicated that Mississippi (21.5% of population living below the poverty line), Louisiana (19.6%), and Alabama (18.1%) were among the top ten states with the highest poverty rate with Mississippi having the highest, Louisiana having the second highest, and Alabama having the seventh highest (DePietro). As noted prior, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama are cited as having some of the highest gun death rates per 100,000 (Gramlich), so this positive correlation between gun death rates per state and percentage of population below the poverty line may indicate a direct cause of gun deaths in these areas.

Gun violence also affects the economic prosperity of both victims and non-victims of gun-related injuries. Those who are not directly victimized by gun mortality are often indirectly affected by the economic consequences stemming from gun violence. Each taxpayer in America pays an average of \$1,700 for each gun death (“Gun Violence: Impact”). Gun violence negatively impacts employer revenue, medical costs, income losses, justice system costs, and even quality-of-life costs (“Gun Violence: Impact”). Also, “higher rates of gun violence can have negative impacts on the housing market by affecting the perceived desirability of areas” (Beyer). Those places with higher gun violence rates cost less to live in, which promotes the influx of poverty-stricken citizens, also

adding to the problem of poverty increasing gun violence rates.

A victim is also greatly affected monetarily by a gun-related injury. Monthly medical costs after experiencing a gun injury increase by \$2,500 and \$3,000 depending on the age of the victim (“Gun Violence: Impact”). While it is difficult to calculate the value of a human life, the CDC estimates that each person lost to homicidal gun violence represents an average economic loss of \$11.94 million. (“Wisqar’s Cost of Injury”). Additionally, the CDC estimates an average of \$9,208 per person for medical costs due to firearm injury (“Wisqar’s Cost of Injury”). The “value of pain and well-being lost by survivors of firearm injuries, decedents, and their families” (“Gun Violence: Impact”) points towards a cycle of injury and hurt that promotes more spending and less of an ability to escape the low-socio-economic living environments where gun violence thrives.

Finally, substance, pain, and psychiatric disorders and diagnoses stem from gun violence. According to one source, for every 1,000 individuals experiencing gun injury, more than 200 are diagnosed with pain disorders directly after their injury—a number that increases in the following months. Approximately 90 suffer from substance use disorders, and roughly 90 are diagnosed with psychiatric disorders (“Gun Violence: Impact”). As seen in Figure 2, pain, substance, and psychiatric disorders increase during the first month after experiencing a gun injury. People who suffer from mental health disorders after a gun injury may be prone to post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, and struggles going through their day-to-day lives without becoming paranoid and triggered (Epps). For youths, this toxic stress can affect their level of academic achievement. For example, survivors of “the Sandy Hook elementary school shooting saw decreased test scores in math and English” (Beyer). Gun violence to individuals contributes to pain, substance use, and mental disorder diagnoses.

Poverty is one of the many causes of gun violence in the United States. Poverty hinders access to help for mental stressors post-injury and creates an economic burden for the victim and the taxpayer. Additionally, taxpayers who are not directly injured or killed still must pay taxes to make up for gun violence each year. Gun violence is a pressing issue for those in poorer communities, especially affecting the states of Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama, which all have highly concentrated areas of poverty as well as high gun death rates per 100,000. In summation, the economic causes and effects of gun violence are visible in each

person's life today as gun violence prevails in all corners of America.

Figures

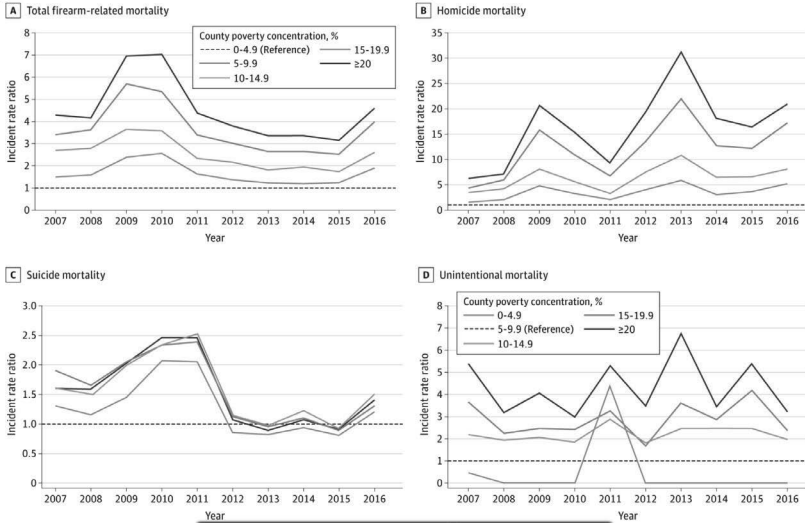


Figure 1. “Incident Rate Ratio for Youth Firearm-Related Mortality Stratified by County-Level Poverty Concentration, 2007-2016” (Barrett et al.)

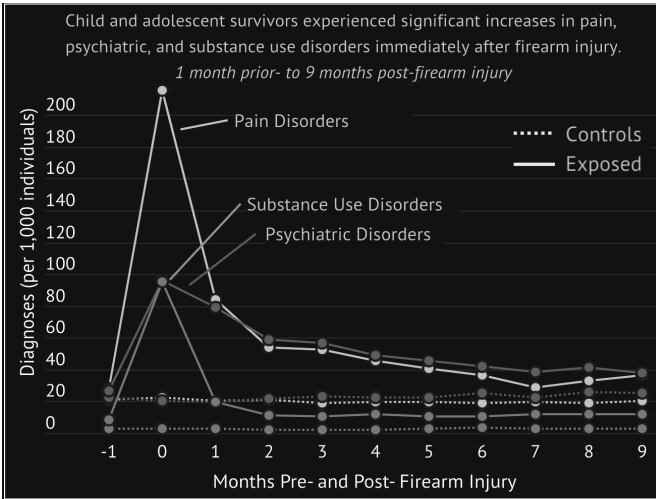


Figure 2. After-effects of gun injuries (“Gun Violence: Impact”)

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ENL101

Managing Emotions for a Better Future

Have you ever looked at your bedroom and suddenly realized how messy it’s become? You may see piles of laundry, scattered objects, or maybe a massive amount of clutter staring back at you. That is where I was recently, facing this mini hoard of items that completely overpowered my room. No one wants to come home and wind down in a place like that, so I did what anyone would do. I said, “I’ll get started on this tomorrow, it’s just too much for me to deal with today.” Then it became the next day, and the next, and before I knew it, it was the following week. I avoided that bedroom like the plague until one day I couldn’t.

This massive amount of stuff felt like a physical weight on my shoulders. I began to ask myself, “How do I start?” or “Why

can't I just do it and stop procrastinating?" Self-loathing and anxiety overwhelmed me. At one point I just wanted to get rid of everything and start fresh, but that would not solve the real issue. That's when I learned that I wasn't simply procrastinating. My emotions were building to the point where the task at hand felt like climbing an impossibly tall mountain. It was all too much. How do I lessen these awful feelings?

To truly understand procrastination, we must first uncover the underlying emotions that are entangled with it. In the article, "Why You Procrastinate," written by Charlotte Lieberman, we begin to learn and understand the emotional struggle behind procrastination. Lieberman explains the foundation of procrastination isn't how productive you are, it's that your emotions need to be acknowledged and handled properly (Lieberman). She writes, "Even if we intellectually recognize that putting off the task will create more stress for ourselves in the future, our brains are still wired to be more concerned with removing the threat in the present" (Lieberman). To better understand why we can't do the dishes right now, and why we can't declutter the fridge, we must realize our brains don't work like this. Our first thought is to put off the chore and do something that makes us happy. That can be seen as scrolling through endless videos, going out with friends, or ironically watching the reality TV show *Hoarders* and thinking to yourself, "well, at least my mess hasn't gotten that bad." The problem is that our mental health has a huge impact on our everyday tasks and future tasks. The people in that show have serious mental health issues, and they must work so hard to get their lives back, all while working on themselves so they can have a healthy mind and home.

My own bedroom haunted me, and my mindset wasn't very healthy at the time. The feelings spinning in my head prevented me from taking care of myself and my environment confirmed this. The longer I left my surroundings in this condition the worse my mental health got, and I was having a difficult time breaking out of this cycle. Speaking with my partner, he helped me understand my habits from an outside view. I was allowing myself to be completely consumed by my feelings when facing this task. He made me aware of my actions and helped me strengthen my mindset and take things at my own pace. With some time, energy, and focus I was slowly seeing improvement and my emotions became far less consuming.

There are so many events that happen in our lives that affect

us deeply. Sometimes it feels like moving forward is impossible and you're stuck, like you're backed into a corner. Lieberman writes, "we're even less able to make thoughtful, future-oriented decisions in the midst of stress" (Lieberman). When faced head on in stressful situations, we must see how our actions impact our future. Looking to the future tends to feel like a pressing weight but it doesn't have to feel this way. Setting a goal and seeing it through can feel phenomenal. The relief and assurance once it is complete is unbelievably worthwhile.

Looking at the situation as a whole can be daunting. The best thing you can do is focus on one thing at a time. As Lieberman suggests, "break up a task you're tempted to avoid into bite-sized chunks" (Lieberman). Tackling a cleaning nightmare can be simple, even if it doesn't feel that way. Start with a load of laundry; already you start to feel relief getting one thing checked off the list. Now picking up all the random things (that somehow accumulated) off the floor doesn't seem too bad. Before you know it, you can see the floor! Those accomplishments may seem small, but they have a massive impact and help lessen the negative thoughts. Now it's easier to move onto the bigger things and you begin to think more positively, every chore becomes easier and less of a weight to bear.

There may be times where you need to forgive yourself. Lieberman speaks about being more compassionate toward yourself. This doesn't mean you have to physically do anything, it's simply a commitment to combat tasks with self-acceptance and forgiveness (Lieberman). Our own happiness is obtainable even with the many obstacles we face. Procrastinating is such an easy thing to do that you may not even realize you're actively doing it. So, the next time you feel overwhelmed by emotions, as if you are standing still before an impossible task, instead of putting it off hoping it may become easier, start by forgiving yourself and easing your mind. Simplify the assignment into pieces so that the task at hand feels like it's within reach. You have the power to take control and accomplish anything.

Work Cited

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“The Spirit of Caesar in the Soul of a Woman”: Artemisia Gentileschi’s Use of 17th-Century Gender Norms to Shape Her Reputation

“Never has anyone found in my pictures any repetition of invention, not even of one hand,”¹ wrote the Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi. Throughout her career, Artemisia took subjects frequently depicted by her male peers and elevated them. The women in her paintings are dignified, strong, and unapologetic. Artemisia’s heroines were unprecedented, much like the artist herself. Artemisia was born in Rome in 1593, the oldest child of Orazio Gentileschi, a prominent Tuscan painter. After the death of her mother, when she was 12, Artemisia began caring for her three younger siblings. At the same time, she began to study painting under her father. When she was 17, Agostino Tassi, a student of her father’s, raped Artemisia. He promised her they would marry. However, when Artemisia’s father discovered Tassi was already married and had no intention of marrying Artemisia, he took Tassi to court for violating his family’s honor. Tassi was brought to trial, and Artemisia was tortured during her testimony. Tassi was convicted but served no time in jail.² Following the trial, Artemisia married another lesser-known painter and moved to Florence. In Florence, she began to develop her career as an artist and to receive recognition. In 1616, she received the honor of being the first woman invited to join the Florentine Academy of Art. Eventually, she moved back to Rome, and later Venice. She spent the last years of her life in Naples, where she likely died in 1656 from a plague outbreak.³ Artemisia faced an uphill battle in becoming a respected artist. Women were held back from the field due to the severely restrictive gender roles at the time. Artemisia, however, used those roles to her advantage. To present herself as a talented painter while still maintaining a reputable character, Artemisia used and subverted gender roles in her art, her letters, and her social interactions.

1 Gentileschi to Ruffo, November 13, 1649b, in *Lives and Voices*, 199.

2 Barrington, “The Trials and Triumphs.”

3 Gasparotto, “The Woman, The Artist.”

Artemisia's art has often been looked at through the lens of her assault. The rape itself would have been extremely shameful, marking Artemisia as a "dishonorable" woman for having her chastity violated.⁴ The pervasiveness of this idea is backed up by M.E. Weissner, quoted in Gina Strumwasser's *Politically Incorrect: Women Artists and Female Imagery in Early Modern Europe*, who claims that "court records indicate that the worst thing a man could be called was 'thief' while for women it was 'whore.'"⁵ The dishonor associated with Artemisia's assault could have been remedied if Tassi had married her. His deception thus ruined the only chance she had to move beyond the public shame the assault had brought her.⁶

The idea that a woman's chastity was paramount is supported by early feminist writers Lucrezia Marinella and Moderata Fonte. Marinella's *The Nobility and Excellence of Women, and the Defects and Vices of Men*, published in Venice in 1600, had prompted conversations about gender dynamics to flourish in the Florentine social circles Artemisia would enter upon her arrival in Florence.⁷ Fonte's *The Worth of Women*, written in 1592 but published posthumously in 1600, is constructed as a dialogue among seven women discussing the virtues of women and vices of men.⁸ Both books were written to challenge the idea that men were superior, and both spend a significant amount of time decrying men and their ways of oppressing women.⁹ They also both spend a significant amount of time discussing the virtue of chastity and men's role in the loss of it. In a section in which she praises the virtues of chaste women, Marinella lists dozens of mythological and historical victims of rape. For the most part, these women fall into one of two categories: rape victims who committed suicide out of shame, and women who committed suicide to avoid rape.¹⁰ There is also mention of a rape victim who "generously and voluntarily" allows her father to kill her instead of continuing to live with the dishonor being a victim of assault has brought.¹¹ Marinella does not devote any time to victims of

4 Strumwasser, *Politically Incorrect*, 50.

5 Strumwasser, *Politically Incorrect*, 50.

6 Strumwasser, *Politically Incorrect*, 50.

7 Gasparotto, "The Woman, The Artist."

8 Cox, introduction to *The Worth of Women*, 1.

9 Cox, introduction to *The Worth of Women*, 13.

10 Marinella, *The Nobility*, 93-104.

11 There is also mention of a rape victim who "generously and volll

rape who do not commit suicide, or are not murdered to preserve their honor. In her discussion of the “nobility and excellence of women,” those who were assaulted and continued to live their lives despite the dishonor associated with their trauma are not deemed worthy of inclusion.

This is not to say that Marinella is unsympathetic towards victims of rape. In fact, she writes that

...almost every bad deed that has been, is, or will be done by women had, has, or will have its origin in the evil nature of many men. This happens in two ways. The first is when the villainous and wicked example set by many men corrupts some pure, innocent creature. The second is when, with persuasion, obstinacy, insolence, insinuation, and promises, men induce pious women to commit cruel and wicked or else dishonest and lascivious deeds.¹²

In no uncertain terms, Marinella blames men for their violence against women. Yet, regardless of whether they deserve to pay the price for the crimes committed against them, Marinella only praises women who were “honorable” enough to commit suicide, or “strong-willed” enough to avoid rape (often by means of suicide).¹³ There is thus an implicit suggestion that those who do not avoid getting raped, and do not kill themselves in the aftermath, are lacking the strength and honor of those who do. Fonte also spends a significant amount of time placing the blame for rape squarely on the shoulders of men. She has her characters express the utmost empathy for women who have been raped, including those who are forced into prostitution as a result.¹⁴ However, she still declares that these women have been stripped of their “natural feminine dignity and power.”¹⁵ Although neither author blamed women for acts of violence committed against them, they also did not challenge the idea that assault automatically ruined a woman, marking her with shame and dishonor. As Marinella and Fonte demonstrate, the idea that a rape survivor should live in shame was prevalent even among the most progressive schools of thought. In addition to the barriers

11. There is also mention of a rape victim who “generously and voluntarily” allows her father to kill her instead of continuing to live with the dishonor being a victim of assault has brought.

12. Marinella, *The Nobility*, 128.

13. Marinella, *The Nobility*, 93-104.

14. Fonte, *The Worth of Women*, 88-89.

15. Fonte, *The Worth of Women*, 89.

she faced as a victim of assault, Artemisia also faced significant barriers in her career just by being a woman. As Katy Hessel writes in *The Story of Art Without Men*, “Whereas boys from lower social classes could be apprenticed to learn, most female artists were either the daughters of artists or daughters of wealthy and encouraging noblemen. Alternatively, and only if they were educated, they could join a nunnery, where basic activities included copying texts and adorning manuscripts.”¹⁶ Even with access to a studio, female artists faced restrictions men did not. Women operated mostly in portraiture and still-life. These were genres that did not require access to spaces where women were prohibited unchaperoned.¹⁷ Neither portraiture nor still-life required the number of models that history painting did. This put female artists at a significant disadvantage as they were prohibited from studying the nude form.¹⁸ This was a massive roadblock that men never had to even consider, much less overcome. The hiring of models also made history a more expensive genre to work in. As Artemisia herself attests in her letters to her patron, the expense of female models could be “staggering.”¹⁹ Hiring models, however, was necessary for the complex and multifaceted compositions found in history and Biblical paintings.²⁰

Portraiture and still-life, while deemed more appropriate for women, were subject to gendered criticism that deemed them as requiring less skill and being less beautiful. The “feminine style” was deemed “washed-out,” a criticism never leveled at Artemisia.²¹ Elisabetta Sirani, another woman who worked in the history genre, was also never criticized in feminine terms, nor were her paintings accused of being too “feminine.” Both Artemisia and Sirani were able to avoid accusations that their paintings were too feminine by working in a field that was deemed inherently masculine.²² But the barriers for women to enter this field made it virtually impossible. Artemisia and Sirani were both the daughters of respected painters, Orazio Gentileschi and Giovanni Sirani, who both worked in the

16 Hessel, *The Story of Art*, 13.

17 Hessel, *The Story of Art*, 13.

18 Hessel, *The Story of Art*, 13.

19 Gentileschi to Ruffo, November 13, 1649b, in *Lives and Voices*, 198.

20 Strumwasser, *Politically Incorrect*, 49.

21 Modesti, “‘Il Pennello Virile,’” 140-141.

22 Modesti, “‘Il Pennello Virile,’” 138.

same fields their daughters would work in.²³ Although the challenges faced by Artemisia were nearly insurmountable, it is unfortunate, yet accurate, to describe her position as one of privilege. Her skill can be attributed to no one but herself, but her ability to hone that skill was precipitated by being the daughter of a painter who taught her and supported her career. A glimpse into how female artists were perceived can be found in Marinella and Fonte's writings.

Marinella makes only one mention of a female artist, a brief mention of the ancient Greek painter Anaxandra.²⁴ Fonte goes further, naming a contemporary female artist, as well as an in-depth discussion of art itself. As the women are debating the merits of poetry, painting, and sculpture, the Queen (one of the women in the dialogue) says, "...the painter has to be of the first quality if *he* [emphasis added] is to do justice to the art."²⁵ Although painters are assumed to be male, Fonte soon challenges that assumption. Shortly after the Queen speaks, a question is posed:

"Who is there alive today who is worthy to be called a remarkable and celebrated painter?" asked Cornelia.

"I've heard people mention Signor Giacomo Tintoretto, and a daughter of his, apparently supremely talented,

said Lucretia.²⁶

The only other living painter mentioned in this conversation is Paolo Veronese.²⁷ Fonte chose to mention only three living painters, one of them being a woman. She made a clear effort to impress upon her readers that women could not only become painters, but their skills could rival those of her male peers.

Further on, one of the women expresses her desire for an artist to emerge who can truly depict man and his follies:

"Oh!" exclaimed Leonora. "If only it were possible to find a painter or sculptor skilled enough to paint or sculpt the form of men's inner selves from life, so that women could see the secret regions of their hearts on open display and men could no longer deceive the poor guileless souls with the false appearances they present to the world. Because even if it's true (as Lucretia pointed out) that some women are fully aware of men's malice but still cannot help falling in love with

23 Modesti, "'Il Pennello Virile.'" 133.

24 Marinella, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, 91.

25 Fonte, *The Worth of Women*, 226.

26 Fonte, *The Worth of Women*, 226.

27 Fonte, *The Worth of Women*, 226.

them and allowing themselves to be duped, there are nevertheless many others who, if they realized what men were like, would no longer fall victim to all the vile tricks men play on them, with their deceptions and their plausible lies.”²⁸

Leonora never specifies the gender of her fantasy painter, although the text would imply that only a woman would be able to see through the “false appearances” that men don. Artemisia’s work certainly meets Leonora’s desire, and we can assume many other women also wished to see art that accurately reflected the world they saw around them. The average woman, when looking at Artemisia’s work, may have felt as though they were finally seeing a reflection of the world they lived in. Artemisia’s ability to view the world through women’s eyes was a crucial weapon in her arsenal. To paint men as they truly are, as Leonora describes, answered a need many women must have had and set her paintings apart from the crowd. This would likely be very beneficial in procuring female patrons and buyers.

While her lived experience as a woman set her apart from her male peers, Artemisia’s choice to paint historical and Biblical paintings set her apart from her female peers. She worked in a genre that was virtually dominated by men. This meant her work would be directly compared to their work, and not to the work of other women, likely in still-life and portraiture, which were considered inferior. By directly competing with men, Artemisia positioned herself not just as an artist whose talent surpassed other female painters, but as one whose skill was equal to that of the men around her. Her confidence in her skills, as shown in her letters (discussed later), may have led her to believe that she would be seen not only as an equal but also as a superior.

This genre choice also allowed Artemisia to depict the same subjects as her contemporaries. Many of the stories she painted were ones that had been painted countless times before. By adding her own work to the canon, she positioned herself to be directly compared to the rest. The quality of her work speaks for itself; there is no doubt that, when placed side by side with a male-generated painting depicting the same subject, Artemisia’s skill would shine through. One example is the story of Judith. Judith was a popular subject for Renaissance and Baroque painters. The story, found in the apocryphal Book of Judith, depicts the Jewish

28 Fonte, *The Worth of Women*, 227.

city of Bethulia besieged by an Assyrian general, Holofernes. Judith, a widow in the city, sneaks into the Assyrian camp where Holofernes invites her to dine with him. She gets him drunk and decapitates him in his sleep. The Assyrians are defeated the following day thanks to Judith's actions.²⁹ Caravaggio's depiction of Judith (fig. 1) shows the subject as a dainty young woman. Judith needs the guidance of her maid to decapitate Holofernes. She is concentrating intensely on the task yet is also somewhat confused. She needs the woman to commit the deed. Judith's maid, not Judith herself, seems to be the one spearheading the assassination. The maid is not confused, nor is she dainty. She is determined, focused, and furious. Holofernes is screaming, but not necessarily fighting back. Out of everyone in the painting, the one showing the least amount of emotion is Judith. She does not seem like an intimidating woman; she doesn't even seem like she wants to be killing Holofernes.

The difference between Caravaggio's Judith and Artemisia's Judith is striking. In Artemisia's *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (fig. 2), Judith is not dainty, nor is she passive. Judith is brutal and methodical. She is powerful. The fact that Holofernes is actively fighting back further implies that Judith is formidable. While the act is violent, it is not evil. Judith is determined in a way that lets the viewer know she is taking the murder seriously and is doing it for a legitimate reason. Her maid, of a similar age to Judith, is assisting her by holding Holofernes down as Judith runs her sword through his neck. The maid is determined like Judith, but she is not the instigator. She is *assisting* Judith, not commanding her as in Caravaggio's depiction. There is no doubt here that killing Holofernes was Judith's idea.

Many have read this painting as a response to Artemisia's rape. Judith looks almost identical to Artemisia's self-portraits. But this Judith is not a victim; she is fighting back in the most aggressiveway possible. Judith, and by extension Artemisia, is reclaiming the power that men took from her. Judith is engaging in behavior that would not be seen as appropriate for a woman. Artemisia is thus also implying that she is not going to behave exactly as a woman is expected to behave; she is going to have power over her life. The very act of painting Judith already went against the norms for women painters. Artemisia further breaks those norms by showing a powerful, active, heroic woman. The strength exhibited by her maid is also notable. Holofernes is a

29 Zirpolo, *Historical Dictionary of Baroque*, 303.

powerful general, yet two women can subdue him. The fact that Holofernes is desperately fighting back attests to the incredible strength the maid has. Another one of Artemisia's depictions of Judith, *Judith and her Maidservant* (fig. 3), shows her holding the sword used to kill Holofernes in a proud and victorious stance. Judith has succeeded in her mission, and she feels no shame. She feels empowered. It is a stunning depiction that subverts the expectations the viewer would have had not only of Judith, but of Artemisia as well. By painting a subject in such a similar way as Caravaggio, Artemisia invites viewers to compare them. Artemisia's Judith becomes a clear response not only to Caravaggio's depiction, but to all previous depictions. The painting is not just telling the audience that Judith is powerful, but also that she is more powerful than other artists had depicted her.

Another subject in which Artemisia's depiction veered from those of her male counterparts is Lucretia. In ancient Roman mythology, Lucretia was the wife of a Roman king praised for her virtue. One night, a man of the nobility raped Lucretia. The following day, she informed her husband and father of the rape. She then committed suicide to save herself from the shame. Lucretia was a popular subject during the Renaissance and Baroque eras. According to Lilian Zirpolo in the *Historical Dictionary of Baroque Art and Architecture*, "The story had become an emblem of ideal chastity maintained at all costs."³⁰ Artemisia painted Lucretia several times throughout her life. Commonly, artists' depictions of Lucretia either depicted the rape itself or the moments after she stabbed herself. It is impossible to ignore the fact that Lucretia is partially naked in almost all these depictions, such as Bartholomeus Spranger's *Death of Lucretia* (fig. 4), or Domenico Fiasella's *Lucretia* (fig. 5). The depictions of the rape always show her fully nude, while the depictions of her suicide mostly restrict her nudity to her chest, although some painters chose to depict her as fully nude during the suicide. Certainly, for depicting a suicide in which the subject stabs herself in the chest, showing the subject topless makes sense. Yet there is an erotic aspect to these depictions, exposing her fully. Her nudity is perhaps a way of directly tying her rape, and by extension her chastity, to her suicide. As her chastity has been lost, her modesty has also been lost, or she no longer cares to preserve it.

Artemisia's depiction provides a refreshing change (fig. 6). Artemisia's Lucretia is preparing to stab herself in her left breast, 30 Zirpolo, *Historical Dictionary of Baroque*, 335.

which she grips aggressively in her hand. Her dress is partially undone, slipping down her torso, but the fabric covers her right nipple and most of her breasts. Her hand covers the left breast. She is in a state of undress but not nudity. The viewer is thus directed to look at her face and the agony present on it. Artemisia's Lucretia preserves her modesty and what comes through is that a victim of rape can still maintain her virtue. Lucretia's right thigh is also peeking out from under her dress. This seems like a choice less designed to sexualize her than to point out her distress. Her dress looks hastily undone, implying her decision was not made easily or calmly. The distress is further evident on her face. This depiction of Lucretia is notable not only for the absence of nudity but for the fact that Lucretia has not yet stabbed herself. The painting captures the moment where Lucretia is deciding whether to kill herself. The agony on her face tells the viewer that the decision is not an easy one. Artemisia's choice to show Lucretia pondering her suicide instead of going forward with without hesitation gives the heroine a more complex thought process. It calls into question the idea that being raped is so shameful that life is not worth living afterward. Lucretia killed herself to preserve her honor. By showing Lucretia hesitating, or at least pondering, Artemisia is calling into question the idea that suicide was the only way for Lucretia to keep her honor. By challenging the idea that rape victims should live in shame or not live at all, Artemisia is also attempting to remove the stain her rape placed on her reputation. In addition, the fact that she could undergo such a traumatic experience and come out of it with the ability to produce such stunning artworks is in itself a challenge to the idea that a woman's life should either be defined or completely ended by sexual assault.

Another subject Artemisia frequently visited was Susanna and the elders. The story of Susanna and the elders is from the apocryphal Book of Daniel. A young woman, Susanna, is bathing alone when two old men threaten to levy adultery charges against her should she refuse to comply with their sexual advances. She is sentenced to death after she refuses their advances and is charged with adultery. Daniel, a young man called upon by God, questions the two men separately to expose the holes in their story. Susanna is freed, and the men are put to death.³¹ Artemisia depicted Susanna and the elders at least six times throughout her career, with her first known painting being a depiction of Susanna (fig. 7). Her original painting doesn't show the men grabbing Susanna, but instead

whispering very close to her ear as she attempts to push them away. Susanna is nude, but her arms and folded dress cover almost everything except one nipple. This is typical of other depictions of Susanna at the time. Even so, Artemisia's Susanna is showing less of her body. The men are also notably coming up behind her. They are approaching her from behind a short wall. Every one of Artemisia's depictions of Susanna would have the same setup: two elders hanging over a wall or fence in front of which sits Susanna. Other depictions often showed the men coming at Susanna from the sides with no wall between them.

Artemisia's depiction then differs in that the men in her paintings see less nudity than the men in the other paintings. The audience actually sees more of Susanna's body than the elders can see. Artemisia avoids showing the elders touching Susanna. As in her depiction of Lucretia, which, unlike most other painters, captures the moment before her suicide, Artemisia depicts Susanna before the elders touch her. The wall also places a boundary between them. The men leaning over are visually much more of an invasion of space than in other paintings. Susanna's nakedness here is not meant to be arousing. It feels like a violation for the audience to even look, especially knowing that, due to the composition of the painting, the audience is the one viewing Susanna's nakedness more completely than the elders. Throughout her career, Artemisia would depict the subject many times. Each time, her Susanna was either more covered up or was positioned to show less skin. The composition was always very similar, with Susanna in front of a fence or wall and the two elders leaning over it, almost touching her.

In her 1622 painting (fig. 8), 12 years after her first, Susanna's arms and fabric are draped intentionally over her breasts and crotch. Her face is much less distressed, though not unbothered. This Susanna almost seems annoyed. A later depiction was in 1649 (fig. 9). This depiction is very similar to the one from 1610 in composition. Susanna sits in front of a balustrade, with two elders approaching her from behind. In this depiction, they are farther away than in the others. They are barely invading the space of the wall, but Susanna is pushing them away just as forcefully as she did in the 1610 depiction. While one of the elders seems to be reaching Susanna, they don't seem as threatening as in the other depictions. Meanwhile, this Susanna seems more threatened. Her face is not in as much pain or fear as in the 1610 depiction, but her body language shows her aggressively pushing them away.

Artemisia's final depiction would come in 1652 (fig. 10). While the setup is very similar, this depiction has a significant break with the others in that Susanna is partially clothed here. Her dress is thin, and she's showing a nipple, but she is wearing a garment. The other depictions showed the clothes bundled up. Although she seems extremely caught off guard here, much more than in the other depictions, the men still invade her space. Even so, her pose and expression could be interpreted either as her pushing them away or just reacting in surprise; it's unclear how threatened she feels. Comparing this version to the 1610 version, it's clear how Artemisia's depictions of Susanna changed from a woman terrified of the aggression of men. The 1610 version was completed before her rape. The Susanna she painted after her rape seems less fearful than the ones before. Here, Artemisia shows that sexual violence is a true violation, but shows this without showing the violence. The men in her paintings never touch Susanna, but the walls make it clear that they are invading, nonetheless. Artemisia's Susanna is thus not a victim of assault at this point but a woman who has been violated. Her fear in the first painting is palpable and certainly evokes a response from the audience, but her subsequent paintings, where fear is lessened and occasionally replaced by annoyance, display a woman who isn't exactly shocked that this is happening. Artemisia's depictions have a much less erotic nature than the norm at the time.³² Artemisia is thus veering from expectations and allowing her subjects to maintain more dignity than previously granted. As with Lucretia, this approach gives Artemisia more dignity by proxy.

Many of Artemisia's subjects bear a striking resemblance to her. It was common for female painters to use themselves as models due to a lack of resources.³³ However, Artemisia was certainly capable of depicting women who did not look like her, as we can see in her first known painting, *Susanna and the Elders*. Depicting her heroines with her face could be read as a necessity or as a statement. In particular, the use of her own face for Judith draws a parallel between her experience and Judith's experience that is impossible to ignore. Artemisia's *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* (fig. 11) is one of the strongest examples of her using her gender to stand out from the crowd of male painters she was in. Here, she depicts herself as Pittura, or the personification of painting. Her depiction follows the guidelines set by the *Iconologia*.

32 Zirpolo, *Historical Dictionary of Baroque*, 500.

33 Hessel, *The Story of Art*, 58.

The *Iconologia*, by Cesare Ripa, is a guidebook for representing allegorical concepts and figures in art. Published in 1593, the book became immensely popular. The *Iconologia* says that Pittura, the representation of painting itself, is female.³⁴ Her male counterparts could not portray themselves as Pittura as Artemisia could. She thus had an advantage over her male peers; she could portray herself both as a painter and as painting itself. It is a stunning assertion of her skill and confidence, a powerful statement that could only be made by embracing her femininity.³⁵

Artemisia painted *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* in London, where she was helping her father complete a ceiling mural for Queen Henrietta Maria.³⁶ Breeze Barrington, in “The Trials and Triumphs of Artemisia Gentileschi,” further describes the painting itself as an advertisement, given that it was painted shortly after she arrived in London. “Here is the artist, new in town, and on the lookout for prospective patrons. In the painting, she is inviting the viewer to visit her studio. Keeping the canvas out of view encourages them to imagine what she might paint for them. They too could have Artemisia on their wall.”³⁷ Artemisia abides by much of what Ripa prescribes for artists depicting Pittura. However, she makes one important infraction: Ripa advises that painters depict Pittura with a gold chain, shimmery fabric, disheveled hair, and cloth over her mouth. Artemisia’s Pittura has all these qualities, except for the cloth. The omission is a statement since it would be expected for the cloth to be present. Artemisia refuses to be silent.³⁸

Upon arriving in Florence, Artemisia had several articles of clothing made by her father-in-law, a tailor.³⁹ These articles were almost certainly purchased to keep up with the fashions of the time. While it was true that staying relevant stylistically was important for artists of any gender, it was especially true for female artists. Sheila Barker, in *Artemisia’s Money: The Entrepreneurship of a Woman Artist in Seventeenth-Century Florence*, writes that “In Artemisia’s case, the appearance of a higher social status not only would have facilitated her access to the social circles of well-heeled patrons and to the female households of the

34 Barrington, “The Trials and Triumphs.”

35 Zirpolo, *Historical Dictionary of Baroque*, 482.

36 Barrington, “The Trials and Triumphs.”

37 Barrington, “The Trials and Triumphs.”

38 Barrington, “The Trials and Triumphs.”

39 Barker, “Artemisia’s Money” 65.

Medici court, but it could have also helped insulate her from the dishonorable suspicion that was sometimes cast on professional women.”⁴⁰ Artemisia not only had to fight the dishonor of being a “professional woman” but also the dishonor of being a victim of assault. Thus, investing in clothing was an important financial and professional decision as removing the dishonor from her name would likely help her attract more patrons. In addition, Artemisia’s frequent self-insertion into her paintings meant that she would likely have been seen as a walking advertisement for her art. Delving deeper into her clothing purchases supports this theory. Records show that some of the garments Artemisia purchased fit the description of garments seen on the powerful women in her paintings. Barker points out that Artemisia purchased a deep purple satin dress as well as many items with gold trim. In *Judith and Her Maidservant*, Judith wears a deep purple satin dress with gold trim.⁴¹ In addition, many of Artemisia’s heroines wear a yellow dress, which appears to be the same one in many instances. It can be inferred that this was similar to a dress Artemisia owned.

As seen in *Self-Portrait of the Allegory of Painting*, Artemisia made sure there was no separation between art and artist. Her clothing purchases made sure viewers and buyers could not look at Artemisia without seeing her work, which would strengthen the idea that she was not only an artist, but she was also the art. Tying herself to her art so strongly also helps guard her art against theft. In her letters to her patron, Artemisia details being taken advantage of in business:

As for my doing a drawing and sending it, I have made a solemn vow never to send my drawings because people swindled me. In particular I just today found out that, in order to spend less, the Bishop of St. Gata, for whom I did a drawing of souls in Purgatory, commissioned another painter to do the painting using my work. If I were a man I cannot imagine it would turn out this way, because when the concept [*inventione*] has been realized and defined with lights and darks, and established by means of planes, the rest is a trifle.⁴²

For Artemisia to establish her own presence so clearly in

40 Barker, “Artemisia’s Money,” 65.

41 Barker, “Artemisia’s Money,” 65.

42 Gentileschi to Ruffo, November 13, 1649b, in *Lives and Voices*, 199.

her art means that taking her *inventione* would be obvious. She is right that, if she were a man, she would not be treated as poorly. But she is also using her association with her female subjects as a way of protecting herself against intellectual theft. The first known biography of Artemisia was Cristofono di Ottaviano Bronzini's *Della dignità et della nobiltà delle donne*, which contained brief biographies of notable and acclaimed women. Bronzini's biography of Artemisia is one of his longest, and it is highly inaccurate. The story Bronzini presents is drastically different from Artemisia's actual story. Bronzini lived in Florence and was in the same social circles as Artemisia.⁴³ If he were to publish a biography of her that was almost entirely fictional, his peers, if not Artemisia herself, would have called him out on it. If Bronzini wanted to be seen as a credible biographer, choosing to lie about Artemisia seems to be a poor choice. Sheila Barker, in *The First Biography of Artemisia Gentileschi*, presents an explanation: Artemisia herself was the one who gave Bronzini the inaccurate biography.⁴⁴ This explains why he wrote something easily disprovable and why the biography is not a distortion of facts as much as it is complete fiction. Operating under the assumption that Artemisia, or someone close to her, fed Bronzini the version of events he wrote, the biography becomes another way Artemisia crafted a narrative around her life.

The biography claims that Artemisia's father was strongly opposed to her desire to paint, which is obviously untrue. Artemisia's father was the one who taught her to paint and even praised her skills in a letter to Christina of Lorraine, Grand Duchess of Tuscany, saying, "Having studied the profession of painting, after three years she had practiced so much that I can now say that she has no peers, having created such works of art that perhaps even the most important masters of this profession cannot achieve."⁴⁵ The biography claims that Artemisia, in order to kill her hopes of becoming an artist, was sent to a convent by her father, which is where she learned to paint. This claim emphasizes her piousness, a quality necessary for a woman of reputable character. This claim also removes her father as her teacher, instead positioning Artemisia as a naturally skilled painter who succeeded despite her father, not because of his teaching.

The claim that Artemisia was at a convent also serves

43 Barker, "The First Biography of Artemisia," 417.

44 Barker, "The First Biography of Artemisia," 417.

45 Gasparotto, "The Woman, The Artist."

another purpose: removing the sexual assault by Tassi from the narrative of her life. Scholars have assumed that the assault was public knowledge by the time Artemisia moved to Naples. However, the claim that Artemisia was at a convent during this time calls the assumption that the assault was public knowledge into question.⁴⁶ If all her contemporaries were aware of the rape, why would it be not only excluded but actively avoided in Bronzini's biography? It seems counterintuitive for a biographer to make such an easily disprovable claim. The claim does serve a purpose either way: If indeed all her contemporaries were aware, this claim emphasizes to them that the impact the assault had on Artemisia's life was negligible and emphasizes her piety. If her contemporaries were not aware, it removes the stain the assault would have placed on her altogether. She would have been assumed to be a virgin until she married, which preserves her "purity."

The biography asserts that, while learning to paint at the convent, Artemisia's talent was innate and given to her by God.⁴⁷ By claiming her talent is from God, Artemisia lends authority to her skills. She is starting at a disadvantage compared to her male counterparts because she would have been assumed to have inferior skills to theirs. Artemisia certainly emphasizes her own hard work but makes it clear that her skills are a gift from God as well. This changes her skills from something she was taught into something innate, which subverts the expectation that women's innate painting skills were either not there or inferior. If God himself gave her talent, he did so for a reason. This also makes her skills seem less feminine, as she uses a male authority figure as her teacher. Having a male authority figure as her teacher would certainly lend her more credibility and make her stand out against both her male and female counterparts. Artemisia could have easily used her father as this figure, which would have been true. Instead, she used God as this figure. This makes her talent seem divine while also emphasizing how hard she works by making it seem as though she is self-taught.

Artemisia did not just shape the narrative of her life through Bronzini's words. Her use of her gender to further her career is evident in the letters she wrote to her patron, Don Antonio Ruffo. The letters discuss finances, and Artemisia must repeatedly remind Ruffo that she is at a disadvantage due to her gender,

46 Barker, "The First Biography of Artemisia," 415.

47 Barker, "The First Biography of Artemisia," 415-416.

despite her work being acclaimed.⁴⁸ In closing one letter, Artemisia claims she has “...the spirit of Caesar in the soul of a woman.”⁴⁹ This is a powerful quote for many reasons. She is not denying that she is a woman, or even denying her own femininity. She does not say she has the spirit of Caesar instead of the soul of a woman, or the soul of a woman without the spirit of Caesar. Artemisia skillfully combines both the masculine and feminine in this line, granting her positive qualities of both genders.

Insisting she has the spirit of Caesar distinguishes her from other women, and even from men. She is asserting herself as a conqueror, a legend, the archetype of a strong man. These are not qualities traditionally assigned to women. Thus, she also claims she has the soul of a woman, which somewhat softens her assertion that she has the spirit of Caesar without negating it altogether. She’s also saying that the spirit of Caesar is taking a form that is a little more feminine if it is found in the soul of a woman. This ensures that she does not veer so far into “masculine” territory as to be seen as ill-mannered.

In another letter, Artemisia counteracts the assertiveness and, by extension, the masculinity she displayed in the previous letter. She panders to Ruffo and appeals to his ego, saying, “My master always concerns himself with favoring me despite my unworthiness.”⁵⁰ By placing Ruffo above her in worth, she plays to his ego while also appearing to understand her “place” as a woman. She also tells Ruffo that she doesn’t price her works ahead of time for fear of losing God’s grace, but that, for Ruffo, she will make an exception. This places Ruffo almost second to God in Artemisia’s life. She admits to compromising her finances and some of her principles. Previously in the letter, she claimed that her talent was a gift from God.⁵¹ By doing something that makes her fear she’ll lose God’s grace, she’s also placing Ruffo above her own talent. She’s putting her skills, given by God, on the line for him. This demonstrates his superiority while also subtly still insisting that he let her price her works as she pleases, since her very skill is on the line. It is a simple request, and if he doesn’t heed it, she might lose the very skill that makes her valuable to him in the first place. In this way, Artemisia is both submitting to him

48 Gentileschi to Ruffo, November 13, 1649b, in *Lives and Voices*, 198.

49 Gentileschi to Ruffo, November 13, 1649b, in *Lives and Voices*, 198.

50 Gentileschi to Ruffo, November 13, 1649b, in *Lives and Voices*, 199.

51 Gentileschi to Ruffo, November 13, 1649b, in *Lives and Voices*, 199.

while still fighting for herself.

In conclusion, Artemisia subverted the standards set by male artists to distinguish herself. Artemisia subverted gendered expectations, making and depicting her heroines in ways that were rarely, if at all, seen in male painters' depictions of the same heroines. Her heroines are powerful and heroic, going against the idea that women were meek while also being dignified and moral. Her choice of women who were victims of sexual violence as subjects works to counter the shame Artemisia's assault would have brought on her. Bronzini's biography, which she likely had a hand in shaping, emphasizes her feminine qualities and serves to further distinguish her from other painters while also attempting to remove the dishonor the assault would have marked her with. Finally, her letters show that she could be assertive regarding the quality of her work without abandoning the expectations set for women at the time. Artemisia could do more than wield a brush; she could wield the restrictive expectations placed on her to her advantage.

Figures 1 through 10 are available in the online version of The Write Stuff.

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