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Doomsday

The “2012 Doomsday” phenomenon can be traced back to 1955 with the discovery of the first completely intact Mesoamerican Long Count Calendar (colloquially known as the Mayan calendar). This specific calendar is now known as “Monument 6” and still stands at Tortuguero, an archaeological dig site in the Mexican state of Tabasco (Krupp 26). Monument 6 is the only Mayan artifact to mention the date of December 21, 2012 specifically (Waxman 17). Of course the long count date is starkly different from the current Gregorian date. Waxman writes:

The Mesoamerican Long Count Calendar is a vigesimal [base 20] calendar which never repeats itself. The date is derived by counting off the days which have passed since the self-proclaimed creation date of the Maya people. Although many of my contemporaries may wince at this statement; this date roughly correlates with August 11, 3113 BCE in the Gregorian calendar. . . The Maya set time periods ranging from the single ‘k’in’ (which is equal to one Gregorian day) all the way up to the three-hundred-ninety-four year period known amongst Middle American scholars as a b’ak’tun. (10)

He describes five numerical “slots” in which each period of time is represented, ranging from the k’in to the longer b’ak’tun with k’in beginning on the right and ending with b’ak’tun on the left (Waxman 23). For example, the date of December 20, 2012 would be represented by 12.19.19.17.19 in long count format, marking the end of the thirteenth b’ak’tun since the creation. December 21, 2012, the beginning of the fourteenth b’ak’tun, would be represented as 13.0.0.0.0. He explains that the arrival of the end of a thirteenth b’ak’tun would have been greeted with glee and celebration by the Maya, as they believed on that date they would transcend this world and usher in the birth of the new, Fifth World (Waxman 87). Waxman continues to explain that the ancient Maya were not obsessed, as many believe, with the end of the world and would have greeted the close of the thirteenth b’ak’tun with elation rather than apprehension (87).

For thousands of years at least, man has been predicting the hour of his own demise. From a cornucopia of eschatologies to prophets, seers, and shamans, the level of research, work and conjecture on this issue borders on obsession. In recent times this hour is widely thought to be the impending date of December 21, 2012. Some believe that the ancient Mayans ended their long count calendar on this day because

they foresaw the end of the world. But the debate rages; if indeed the Earth will end in just over a year, how will it happen? Various sects of Christianity believe that the Rapture will arrive. Others assert that the planets will reach a perfect solar alignment, reversing Earth's poles and thus extinguishing humanity. Still others cling to the prophecies of Michel de Nostradame and believe he indicated an apocalyptic event transpiring in 2012. Others are sure that there is a NASA conspiracy afoot and that a gigantic planetoid, dubbed "Nibiru" or "Planet X," is hurtling toward Earth. Whatever the method, masses of people are panicking the world over and the paranoid speculation is seeping off of the internet and into the mainstream media, garnering heavy play even on CNN and in the pages of The New York Times (Sitchin 102). NASA is receiving hundreds of emails and letters a day from terrified people asking if they should put down their pets, or even their children, to save them from suffering in the end times (Krupp 23). People are so caught up speculating about how the Earth will burn that they forget to ask why it is going to burn in the first place. The answer is simple: it isn't.

The main point of this issue is the mistaken belief that the Mayan Calendar ends. It does not end; it rolls over, following the cyclical nature of their calendrics. Obviously Bertrand Hanson, an anthropologist, wasn't aware of this when he wrote his article entitled "Your 2012 Survival Guide" for Discover magazine. He writes, "The ancient Maya were so adept with astronomy that they successfully predicted and recorded the phases of the moon eight-hundred years into the future. Surely this level of proficiency demonstrates that they knew what they were doing So why end the calendar in 2012? . . . They knew something big was going to happen" (Hanson 42-43).

Indeed, the Maya may have thought something "big" would happen, but they never mentioned the end of the world in any context (Waxman 88). Although the question of why the long count calendar "ends" is prolific in various forms of media, another point goes with it hand-in-hand. Many people mistakenly believe that the Maya ended the calendar on December 21, 2012 because the solar system will reach a perfect alignment on that date and thus cause a magnetic pole reversal on Earth, extinguishing the population. Astronomers refute this. Hanson agrees though and writes "The Mayans predicted that all of the planets would align perfectly with the sun. When did they say this once-in-a-billion-year event would transpire? You guessed it: on the very last day that they carved into their calendar. This cannot be coincidence" (44). It is difficult to trace this fallacy to its origin. Waxman explains " Another common misconception is the belief that the

Maya predicted a solar alignment on this date [December 21, 2012]. I cannot assert why or where this notion came to be but in my forty years of study I have never come across a single instance supporting this claim" (80). Generally, the scientific community regards this idea as a complete fabrication (Krupp 25). Astronomer E.C. Krupp, writes, "Contrary to some claims, the planets (and Pluto) will not line up on the supposed doomsday date. Not that it would matter; planetary alignments have no effect on Earth, despite loud claims otherwise" (Krupp 26).

Another fabrication regarding the "2012 Doomsday" is the mythical planet Nibiru, or Planet X. According to Zecharia Sitchin, an astronomer who is also an ancient alien enthusiast and coiner of the name Nibiru, Planet X is a gigantic planetoid over four times the mass of Earth (2). This celestial body is apparently on an elliptical orbit within the solar system and on December 21, 2012 is going to collide with Earth or at least pass so close that it will aggravate the sun, causing horrific solar storms (Sitchin 3). Before debunking this notion it is important to consider the source. Although Zecharia Sitchin coined the name "Nibiru" after the mythical "twelfth planet" of the ancient Sumerians (Sitchin 30), he was not the one who initially stoked the speculation surrounding this concept.

Lois Hamilton, an astronomer and contributor to Sky & Telescope magazine wrote an article titled "The Origins of Planet X," in which she attempts to trace this theory back to its origin. She writes, "The true origins of the 'Planet X' theory can be traced back to 1993, to a Wisconsin woman named Nancy Lieder. Lieder runs a website called "Zetatalk" which is still active today" (Hamilton 12). Hamilton continues to tell the tale of Nancy Lieder. So the story goes, Lieder was abducted by grey aliens from the Zeta Reticuli system in late 1993. After being released back on Earth, Lieder became aware that they had implanted a communications device in her brain allowing telepathic communication between her and the aliens. Their first communiqué named Lieder as their official emissary and also warned of a large planetoid on a collision course with Earth. Lieder has been postponing a full body scan to establish the validity of her implant story for over a decade (Hamilton 12). When Sitchin writes in his book *The Twelfth Planet*, "Planet X certainly exists. I've seen it myself many times and to have my contemporaries tell me it doesn't is like me telling you the very book you're holding doesn't exist" (3), he begs the question: Is he aware of the dubious origins of this whole notion

Another dimension of this debate is created by the prophecies of Michel de Nostradame and their possible implications, although the

scientific community and many religious communities have renounced Nostradamus-related theories. Still many believe the fifteenth-century prophet to have predicted such events as Hitler's invasion of Poland, both World Wars, the Kennedy assassination and many other world-shaking occurrences. Zecharia Sitchin is one of those people. He writes:

Although my career revolves around science, I do not reject the possibility that forces of the occult exist. Nostradamus' *Les Prophecies* is a monumental text. . . In quatrain 11:46 he writes 'After great misery for man, an even greater one approaches/When the great cycle of the centuries is renewed it will rain blood, milk, famine, war and disease. . .' I interpret the 'great cycle of the centuries' to mean the end of b'ak'tun thirteen. (Sitchin 5)

However, Carlos Giogigioli, a history professor, credits Nostradamus with nothing more than being a clever story teller. In his article "Nostradamus and 2012" he attempts to debunk much of the mysticism surrounding the man. He writes:

It would seem that he [Nostradamus] is deliberately vague in his predictions and for good reason. He asserts that he authored *Les Prophecies* through a mixture of astronomy and what he calls 'judicial astrology'. To this day no one knows what exactly 'judicial astrology' entails nor how it could be applied to predicting the weather let alone the end of the world as we know it. (Giogigioli 30).

Another of Nostradamus' prophecies, Quatrain 2:26, is often grounds for debate among the believers in the 2012 doomsday. John Anthony West is one of these believers and has spent the last decade interpreting the writings of Nostradamus. His interpretations are compiled in his essay "Serpent in the Sky." West writes:

For me, apart from quatrain 11:46, quatrain 2:26 is the single, most compelling argument for the validity of Nostradamus' end times predictions . . . and reads 'Immediately following the great rebirth, a spark will be struck/ And from this spark will come a great fire in the sky, dragging with it a tail of sparks and flame.' It doesn't take a genius to see the relationship between Nostradamus' writings and the phenomenon of Planet X. (183)

Although many authors, historians and astronomers agree with this interpretation (West 190), Carlos Giogigioli does not and

makes the point that although many learned men have all arrived at the same interpretation of this quatrain, it is just that: an interpretation (32). Giogiglioli adds that not only is this an interpretation, but it is an interpretation of a translation, as Nostradamus' Les Prophecies was written in French. Most of those defending Nostradamus' credibility are not French-speaking and must therefore use an English translation, leaving "a monstrous space for error" (Giogiglioli 33). Even in a debate which is laced with paranoia, pseudoscience, and conspiracy theories, true believers in Nostradamus' prophecies are a rarity even among doomsday enthusiasts (Giogiglioli 31).

Barring the occurrences of large planetoids pulverizing Earth or the poles reversing and flinging the human race into space, there is always the belief that the world will erupt in war, fire, and famine, also known as the Christian Rapture. Key proponents of the theory that the Rapture will occur on December 21, 2012 include large swathes of conservative Protestants, Presbyterians and many among the Christian Reformed Church (Camping 23). One of these proponents is the Reverend Harold Camping, a California radio host and minister. In 1994 he made a controversial prediction that Rapture would arrive on May 21, 2011. When that date failed to deliver wrath, Camping wrote an article for *Endtimes: Christian Reader* saying, "Although many of you may have noticed that the holy Rapture has not arrived, today is not without meaning . . . [A] spiritual judgment has swept the Earth rather than a physical one. But fear not for the time of Rapture has merely been postponed. Before long, the end times will be at our door and even the doubters will bask in the true power and beauty of the Lord" (Camping 23). Camping continues to say that he noticed a mistake in his calculation for determining the arrival of Rapture: he had used the Julian calendar and should have used the Gregorian (24). He explains that the new, true date of Rapture will be December 21, 2012. Camping himself admits there have been over forty prominent, false predictions of Rapture dating back to William Miller's prediction of 1844 (26).

The scientific community has been "grudgingly vocal" when addressing the plethora of possibilities surrounding the 2012 phenomenon (Hamilton 12). So when there was no rebuttal to the possibility of the arrival of Rapture in 2012, the silence was noticeable (Claeys 3). Although no formal texts have been written refuting the notion of a 2012 Rapture, there have been murmurs as to why the scientific community feels this is a "non-issue" (Bruce 12). Alexander Bruce, a professor of theology as well as a geologist, touches briefly on this subject in his book *2012: Science or Superstition*. Bruce writes:

I, personally, don't believe in the likelihood of a

Rapture-like event occurring, but I won't refute the possibility. As a man of both science and religion I walk a rare middle ground. Beliefs are beliefs and I will not tell you what to believe in. But when dealing with scientific fact there is no speculation; it is concrete and there is no cause to have faith . . . I cannot debunk the idea of Rapture definitively and, therefore, I choose not to speak on it. (47-8)

It would seem most of the scientific community shares the idea that religious beliefs have no place in science and Rapture is just that: a belief and not a theory.

The proponents for a 2012 apocalypse rely almost entirely on conjecture, misinformation, and pseudoscience propagated by internet phenomena. When confronted with the scientific facts of the debate there are a few points which cannot be argued. The Mayan calendar does not end, abruptly or otherwise. It rolls over due to the cyclical nature of the long count (Waxman 1). The Mayans never predicted a solar alignment within thirty years of 2012 (Krupp 24). The "Planet X" phenomenon originated from a Wisconsin woman (who was later diagnosed with bi-polar disorder) telling an alien abduction story (Hamilton 14.) Nostradamus was a clever writer but even the most educated interpretations of his words are still mere interpretations and cannot be construed as factual by definition. The only wildcard is the arrival of Rapture, but in the last two centuries there have been over one hundred notable predictions which have not come true (Bruce 12), and it would seem that the chances of the most recent prediction coming to fruition is an unlikely prospect. So is the world going to come crashing down at the end of 2012? If it does it will not be by way of any of the reasons that millions of people have been fooled into believing. In the words of E.C. Krupp, "So please, don't put down the puppies. You're going to miss them in 2013" (26).

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ENL 101

In Their Own Words: A Study of Dolphin-Speak

Many scientists believe dolphins speak a language of their own; however, claims that animals have language skills similar to humans are controversial. The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between humans and dolphins, to examine studies related to human-dolphin communication, and to evaluate the possibility of humans understanding the language of dolphins. Studying these animals is crucial to understanding the natural world and the place of humans within it. There are practical reasons why it would be helpful if people understood dolphins. There has recently been an unprecedented number of dolphin strandings on Cape Cod, and scientists are baffled. Recently, a total of sixty-one stranded dolphins died (Olsen D2). In fact, if people could understand why dolphins strand themselves, they might be able to prevent needless deaths.

Humans have a mainly positive history with dolphins, and there are eyewitness accounts of dolphins helping humans. For example, in 1962, Ashley Montagu and John C. Lilly presented "The Dolphin in History" at a symposium at the Clark Library in Los Angeles. According to their studies, in 1945 the wife of a well-known trial attorney was saved

from drowning by a dolphin. “She stepped into a body of water and was instantly pulled under by the strong current. With hope running out and chances of survival slim, a dolphin gave her a shove out of the current toward shore and saved her life” (qtd. in *The Mind of the Dolphin*). In addition, a celebrated rescue occurred in 2004 in New Zealand, when four swimmers were saved from a great white shark by a pod of dolphins. Rob Howes, a lifeguard, was in the water. He said six dolphins appeared and herded the swimmers together. At first, he thought the mammals were being playful but soon realized he and the others were in danger. “They started to herd us up; they pushed all four of us together by doing tight circles around us. The shark was only about two meters away from me, the water was crystal clear. They had corralled us up to protect us” (Jones).

Since dolphins seem to react positively toward humans, humans pack dolphin shows to get a better view of these amazing creatures, curious about the way dolphins appear to demonstrate a high degree of intelligence. For example, a dolphin named Kelly at the Institute for Marine Mammal Studies in Mississippi was trained to bring trash from her pool to her trainers in exchange for fish. One day, she grabbed a seagull when it flew into her pool, waited for the trainers, and then gave it to them. It was a large bird, and so the trainers gave her lots of fish. This seemed to give Kelly a new idea.:

The next time she was fed, instead of eating the last fish, she took it to the bottom of the pool and hid it. When no trainers were present, she brought the fish to the surface and used it to lure the gulls, which she caught to get even more fish. After mastering this lucrative strategy, she taught her calf, who taught other calves, and so gull-baiting became a hot game among the pod at this dolphinarium. (deRohan 18)

With their large brains, dolphins may even possess enough intelligence to have their own language. Beliefs about dolphin language are recorded starting with Aristotle. In his work, *Historia Animalium* (The History of Animals):

Aristotle makes many pertinent observations about dolphins, including the fact that they bear their young alive, suckle them, breathe air, and communicate by underwater sounds. Aristotle made a rather startling statement about dolphins: “The voice of the dolphin in air is like that of the human in that they can pronounce vowels and combinations of vowels, but have difficulties with the consonants.” (Johnclilly.

com)

However, claiming that dolphins have their own language with meaning and syntax is a different concept from stating that they can understand human speech. Scientists are trying to record all their sounds and body signals; at this time, they are still unable to decipher them.:

At Kewalo Basin Marine Laboratory in Hawaii, Lou Herman and his team tested a dolphin's ability to comprehend our language. They developed a sign language, and the results were remarkable. Not only do the dolphins understand the meaning of individual words, they also understand the significance of word order in a sentence. (deRohan 16)

Other studies have been conducted related to dolphin language. For example, in the 1970s, John C. Lilly attempted to communicate with wild populations of dolphins; however, this effort failed. In the 1980s, Lilly organized a project that endeavored to teach dolphins a language that was produced by a computer. He also formulated a futuristic laboratory where humans and dolphins could talk as equals and develop a common language and hoped that people would treat dolphins as sentient non-humans (Lilly on Dolphins). According to his own website, Lilly admonishes, "The senseless killing of cetaceans must cease. As intelligent beings, with a morality to respect intelligent beings, we must recognize that we are not alone on the earth. We must recognize and develop relations with the Cetacean Nation" (johnclilly.com).

Although early experiments failed, many experts still believe that dolphins have a language of their own. "Each dolphin has a unique sound it makes that is unlike others; this is known as its signature" (Kassewitz). It has been documented that dolphins actually imitate the signature of other dolphins and call each other by name. Additional research, conducted by Stephanie King of the University of St. Andrews, studied pairs of wild bottlenose dolphins imitating each other's signature whistles.

"Dolphin language" is sometimes referred to as "Dolphin-Speak" and is hard to comprehend because the sounds are difficult to differentiate. In addition, when conducting tests, it is not easy to figure out which dolphin is speaking because most dolphins don't open their mouths to produce sounds. (Kassewitz)

Dr. Denise Herzing is founder of the Wild Dolphin Project in

Savannah, Georgia. She has been studying dolphins for twenty-five years. Dr. Herzing has been attempting two-way communication with dolphins, using basic artificial sounds and getting them to associate the sounds with four large icons on an underwater “keyboard.” “Dr. Herzing is now working with Thad Starner, an artificial intelligence researcher, on a project called Cetacean Hearing and Telemetry (CHAT). They want to work with dolphins to ‘co-create’ a language that uses features of sounds that wild dolphins communicate with naturally” (MacGregor 211). In another study, Jack Kassewitz of the SpeakDolphin Project “spoke” to dolphins with their own sound-picture words. Dolphins in two separate research centers understood the words, presenting convincing evidence that dolphins employ a universal “sono-pictorial” language. Dolphins were able to use simple and complex sentences involving nouns and verbs, revealing that dolphins comprehend elements of human language, as well as having a complex visual language of their own (Kassewitz). Dr. Horace Dobbs, an authority on dolphin-assisted therapy, said of this study, “I find the dolphin mechanism for sonic imaging proposed by Jack Kassewitz plausible from a scientific standpoint. I have long maintained that dolphins have a sono-visual language so I am gratified that this latest research has produced a rational explanation and experimental data to verify my conjectures” (Kassewitz).

What is in the future for dolphin-human communication? In 1978, Dr. Davis Nathanson started practicing dolphin-human therapy, developing language experiments involving children with Down’s Syndrome and dolphins. The results were startling; children retained more and learned four times faster (Gouva, et al). In addition, divers are currently testing dolphin recognition of symbols and words with the use of underwater computer systems such as iPads. In the future, with modern technology, scientists hope to prove whether or not dolphins have a language of their own (MacGregor 210).

“Dolphins have been declared the world’s second most intelligent creatures after humans, with scientists suggesting they are so bright that they should be treated as ‘non-human persons’” (Leake). Scientists are hopeful that one day dolphins will be able to communicate their feelings to humans. If that happens, maybe people will begin to realize that dolphins are intelligent animals and deserve humane treatment. There are several difficulties facing dolphins today. In parts of the world they are stranding themselves and no one knows why, and in other areas they are corralled and clobbered to death because they compete with local fishermen. If humans and dolphins had a common language, humans might better comprehend how

these creatures feel and appreciate their need to survive. In fact, it is essential that people listen to these sentient animals, and as John Lilly (Lilly on Dolphins) urges, respond with human kindness and understanding.

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The Relationship of Humans and Time

As this sentence is being read many things are changing. Every person on Earth has gotten older, the Sun's position has moved, and the second hands of clocks are now pointing in a different direction. The commonly accepted reason for this is that time has passed. Philosophers have debated for centuries about the nature of time and its relationship with human beings. The world of Science Fiction has taken this idea and authors have continuously played with and manipulated the relationships between people and time. Although manmade, time has a tangible effect on most people. Some "enlightened" people may realize that time cannot be found in nature and argue that humans are not affected by something that is just in their minds. Both sides of this issue have put forth compelling and accurate arguments. Due to the fact that there is an endless supply of opinions on the relationship of time and humans, science fiction writers have taken it upon themselves to address this problem. One way to address time is by saying there is no real past or future, only the present. The past and future are simply symbols and representations of choices people have made, and are making, which inevitably lead to choices they will make in the future. This concept can then be split further into two conflicting sub-categories. This time theory creates the debate over whether or not time has any influential connection with a person's psyche. Another way to discuss a person's relationship to time is through the body. People have a tendency to blame time for the deaths of their loved ones. "She was very old." "It was his time to go." These statements are often used to discuss the passage of a person from the living to the dead. But does time have anything to do with life? Science fiction literature tries to address this question.

A good way to explore a person's relationship to their past, present, and future is to look at "Take Your Choice" by Sakyō Komatsu. In this story, a man is presented with the opportunity to choose his future by teleporting into a parallel universe. He is given three options. The first world has superior technology. Brilliant architecture and flying people are moving about in this world. The second option is a simple society. This world has a small-town living style, but it is beautiful and can be described as utopian. The final option is a world identical to the one the man is in. The one difference is that in the near future a catastrophe occurs and everybody dies. Surprisingly, the man chooses

the third option. The reader soon after finds out that this teleporting business is a scam. The reader also finds out that a great majority of people choose the third option. In Jules Verne's masterpiece "Master Zacharius" there is a strong co-dependence between time and Verne's main character. The esteemed clockmaker, Master Zacharius, has completely revolutionized the clock-making trade with his beautiful works of art. However, it is not just these clocks that depend on him. His clocks inexplicably stop working, causing his mental and physical health to decline. The only way to save himself is to fix the clocks. "Start the Clock" written by Benjamin Rosenbaum tackles the nature of time in the completely opposite way. Rosenbaum's short story expresses the idea that humanity and time have no relationship at all. Following the lives of forty-year-olds who are still in children's bodies, Rosenbaum shows that a person grows up through experience and biological growth, as opposed to time being the major catalyst. Ursula LeGuin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" shows how not having a relationship to time can cause mental deterioration. In a utopian society LeGuin creates a small child who sits alone in a dark cellar. In order for Omelas to prosper, the child must remain secluded and alone. Due to this child's living arrangements, it has become mentally handicapped. Finally, "The Terminal Beach" by J.G. Ballard is set in a dystopian landscape. Alone on a nuclear testing island, Traven quickly begins to lose his physical health. In addition, he has gone crazy and is stuck in his mind. In search for his family Traven travels deeper and deeper into the island and into himself. This story shows that decay and life are influenced by factors other than the procession of time. Each of these stories tackles a different idea about what time means to humankind. It is clear that no option is the correct one. However, none of them are incorrect.

Science Fiction offers various insights regarding the connection between humans and time. A person is the culmination of what their past did and what their present is doing. The idea behind this is that time is not a series of numbers and dates, but a series of events and choices. In "Take Your Choice" it is evident the man would prefer to know what his future holds over living blissfully without knowing. Most people have experienced an unpleasant surprise in their lifetime. Most people have experienced the uncertainty of life and the trouble that it can bring. It is this past experience that creates a present desire to know what lies in the future. The story is explicit about the main point it is making: "People have a strong desire for destruction....Though they may speak of peace and humanism when they open their mouths, in their minds...they all want to witness the

end of the world..." (Komatsu 958). However, the implicit meaning is that people want to feel comfortable knowing their future even if it is an uncomfortable future. This desire is based on the past. The French existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre, explores the relationship between the past, present, and future in "From Being and Nothingness." Sartre asserts that the present is fully dependent on the choices a person has made in the past. This inadvertently alters and shapes the person's future. Not only that, but his future and present shapes his past. Sartre explains how his past is shaped by his present and future, "I alone in fact can decide at each moment the bearing of the past....[B]y projecting myself toward my ends, I preserve the past with me, and by action I decide its meaning" (Sartre 667). Sartre asserts that his past is given meaning when he makes decisions in the present, which will inevitably lead to more options in the future. Sartre's version of time is not about dates and numbers, but of the relationship of the many versions of himself. However, there are many who argue time is just numbers and dates and has nothing to do with people.

Science Fiction literature sometimes suggests that there is no relationship between time and the human psyche. As "Start the Clock" begins, one cannot help but notice the fact that children are trying to buy a house from a real estate agent. The house also happens to have a pirate theme. Suze, the main character, asks the real estate agent if "Pirateland" is inhabited by all Nines (Nines are forever stuck at the physical age of nine years old). As the agent tries to respond by reciting laws about ageism Suze says, "I know the law. But who else wants to live in Pirateland, right?" (Rosenbaum 652). In saying this, Suze is showing that although she is "old" enough to buy a house, her emotional depth is that of a nine-year-old. She and her friends want to live in a pirate themed house. There is a clear juxtaposition between mental and emotional maturity. Psychologists today agree that experience leads to mental maturity, but that a person's emotional development requires biological growth. It is clear in the passage how correct that is. Time has had no influence on Suze's development. Due to her physically young body there are certain hormones and chemicals her body is not producing yet. These chemicals start during puberty and they are an integral part of emotional development. Fernandez and his associates conducted a study of gonadal hormonal control and emotions. "In Gonadal Hormone Regulation of the Emotion Circuitry in Humans" they say, "The amygdala is thought to generate emotional responses, and the prefrontal brain regions to regulate those responses. Overall, studies that have investigated women during different phases of the menstrual cycle suggest that progesterone and

estradiol may have opposing actions on the amygdala and prefrontal cortex” (Fernandez et al. 40). What they are saying is that the amygdala (an almond-shaped portion of the brain that deals with the emotional side of memory storage) is treated with chemicals that are produced during a women’s menstrual cycle. Since Suze is “a Nine” certain chemical reactions in her brain are not taking place, thus stunting her emotional growth regardless of how many important experiences she lives through. On the other hand, given a normal aging process, it can be detrimental to have no sense of time.

People can lose mental stability when their sense of time is removed. It is common knowledge that sensory deprivation is a powerful weapon in torture. But why is it so effective? People use sensory clues to remain connected with time. Light or dark tells people the time. Outside noise can give hints as to whether it is the morning, afternoon, or night. The reason sensory deprivation is so effective is that it shatters an individual’s sense of time. A person can no longer distinguish between five minutes and five hours and that is what makes them go mad. In “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” LeGuin describes the life of a small ten-year-old left alone in a basement. “It has one locked door, and no window,” she begins. “The door is always locked and nobody ever comes, except that sometimes—the child has no understanding of time or interval—sometimes the door rattles terribly and opens...” (LeGuin 211). The child is also described as “feeble-minded” and that this has come from fear, malnutrition, and neglect. It is evident in this passage that this child’s development has become stunted and withered due to solitary confinement and a lack of sensory stimuli, including time. Although this is simply a story, the effect it describes happens every day in the prison systems. In Rhodes’ article, “Pathological Effects of the Supermaximum Prison,” the effects of solitary confinement are addressed. The article lists one side-effect of solitary confinement after another. Rhodes describes the living conditions in painstaking detail. “Confined in single, sometimes windowless, cells for 23 or more hours a day. they are completely dependent on the prison staff who walk the tiers, pushing meals, mail, and toilet paper through ports in the heavy doors of the cells” (Rhodes 1). The effects of this lifestyle are then described. “Many prisoners experience extreme states of rage, depression, or psychosis” (Rhodes 2). Again, like in LeGuin’s story, these inmates are suffering simply from not knowing what time it is. Although the mental effects are huge, there are those who argue that time is connected to humans physically as well.

A connection between time and the physical well-being of a

person is seen in science fiction literature. In "Master Zacharius" Jules Verne depicts a haunting relationship between a master clockmaker and his pieces. While the story includes many metaphorical warnings, perhaps the most explicit warning is that time has a tendency to kill everybody. As Verne's short story progresses, Master Zacharius' health declines as more and more of his watches come back to him broken. As the story reaches the end of its second-to-last chapter, a grand clock in a church causes Zacharius to truly lose his health as it fails. "The large hand of the clock, having reached twelve, had abruptly stopped... Gerande hastened to her father's aid. He had fallen down motionless" (Verne 495). Verne's character has clearly fallen very ill as this mammoth clock dies. Master Zacharius' health steadily declines throughout the story until the very end. His life is completely interwoven with the lives of the clocks. This shows the co-dependency of the two. Although the relationship in the story is represented in a metaphorical context, the Centers for Disease Control conducted a study that supports the physical connection humans have with time. In the 2008-2009 study on health-related decline in the elderly a clear connection was made. Statistics such as complete tooth loss, unexplainable injury, cancer, viruses, etc. were all taken into account. The study showed a positive trend that the older people were the higher the percentages of certain ailments were. For example, 18% of the elderly in 2008-2009 suffered from complete tooth decay and tooth loss (The State of Aging). It is hard with such solid data to argue the fact that age is a large factor in one's physical health. It is in all health books that children can heal far better than the elderly. When comparing the healing time of children and the elderly, the only factor that is present 100% of the time is age difference. Despite these cold hard data, there is a strong counterargument stating that time is irrelevant when it comes to physical health.

Perhaps it is lifestyle that causes physical decay and not time. In "The Terminal Beach" Traven is alone in a deserted nuclear testing facility. Unfortunately, he has become crazed and introverted, forgetting about the basic necessities of life such as nutrition, shelter, and safety. Eventually, he is discovered by scientists. One of them notes, "August 5. Found the man Traven. A strange derelict figure, hiding in a bunker in the deserted interior of the island. He is suffering from severe exposure and malnutrition, but is unaware of this..." (Ballard 929). It is evident that Traven's lifestyle is killing him; it is not time. It has become cliché for a person to say "My body is my temple" but it is true. What good is time to people if their bodies fail them early? David Snowden, an epidemiologist, wrote Aging with Grace:

What the Nun Study Teaches us About Leading Longer, Healthier, and More Meaningful Lives.” His study was geared toward watching the longevity of the teaching sisters of Notre Dame, showing the value of quality life, not quantity life. He found that it is not impossible to have both. This book has chapter upon chapter describing the vibrant health of 78 ninety-year-olds and even some who lived past one hundred years. Snowdon found many factors that affected how healthy these women were throughout the decades. His team assigned point values to emotional words and then looked through autobiographies the nuns wrote in their twenties. As it turns out, those who used very few positive words lived an average of 86.6 years. Conversely, those who filled their autobiographies with strong emotion lived an average of 93.5 years (Snowdon 193). He also found that current emotional health was a huge factor. “Evidence is now starting to accumulate from other studies that prayer and contemplation have a positive influence on long-term health and may even speed the healing process” (Snowdon 202). Dr. Snowdon and his team uncovered dozens of factors that affect longevity. In fact, he even states that pizza is good for the brain. There is an enzyme that comes from eating heated tomatoes mixed with fats that minimizes brain decay over the years. Therefore, pizza is brain food (something all college students have known for generations.) To say somebody died of old age, or looks old is simply inaccurate. Time does not contribute to physical decay; poor living does.

Science Fiction literature makes societal comments all the time. Usually there are certain philosophical undercurrents in many of the points being made. One such point is man’s relationship to time. This problem is so expansive that there are philosophers and scientists who have dedicated their entire lives to resolve this issue. The authors of Science Fiction literature each have their own theory about time and each one can be found in the real world. One such theory is that time is not numbers but events. In “Take Your Choice” it is clear that the future is directly connected to events of the present, which were negotiated by events of the past. Komatsu takes a clear existential stance on his position with to time. Jean-Paul Sartre deeply explains Komatsu’s position in his book *Being and Nothingness*. Another way to look at time is through the mind. Many Science Fiction writers address how time is related to human consciousness. One answer is that there is there is no connection. The second answer is that there is a deep one. Arguing the stance of the naysayer is the story “Start the Clock.” Rosenbaum clearly believes that time has no place in human development. A person develops through life experience and

physical growth, not metaphorical physical growth, but literal growth. Science supports his claim. A study on emotional development through hormone creation states that emotional depth comes from experiencing life and having the correct chemicals. On the other hand, one can say that time has a real connection to the psyche, and again science will back this claim up. In Ursula LeGuin's short story, the feral child has clearly been ruined by having sensory deprivation. Psychology and sociology text books will reassert again and again how growing up without a sense of time and human connection will mentally retard a child. LeGuin knew this and thus painted a very real picture of what a child in that position would be like. A psychologist who studied prison inmates, Dr. Rhodes would agree with LeGuin's imagery. Rhodes' article not only speaks of the haunting effects of solitary confinement, but also includes images that were painted by one of her inmates. These images are truly horrifying. There are those who will spend their time arguing about the mental connections, but there is also a strong connection (or disconnection) between time and a person's physical health. "Master Zacharius" is a story showing that time will consume and kill everybody. Zacharius' death comes from the expiration of time. This does not sound so farfetched. In fact the CDC has data showing that the older someone gets the higher their health risk factors are. But opponents of this theory say that it is lifestyle and not time that ruins a person's health. In "The Terminal Beach" Ballard's character Traven suffers severe physical decay that is oddly reminiscent of an elderly individual. However, it is not the ticking clock that rapidly ages him, but the way he treats his body. In his study of the nuns of Notre Dame Snowdon agrees that how people take care of themselves indicates their age, not their birth certificates. In his study Snowdon describes ninety-five-year-olds writing books, playing tennis, and gardening, and fifty-year-olds in wheel chairs requiring the services of assisted living. He found a significant correlation in mental and physical stamina stemming from how the nuns took care of themselves and their genetics. Age was never an overriding factor to him.

In order for people to live truly happy lives, they must first decide what their relationship to time is. Just as with theology, dreams, ambitions, and desires, people cannot be happy until they understand their own relationship with time. A person who does not understand what they want out of life, where they are going, and what they believe or don't believe in can never be the best person possible. This person will float through life unable to accomplish much due to a lack of direction. The same holds true for what one believes

their relationship to time is. If someone needs to feel in control of their destiny then they may follow Komatsu and Sartre in their belief system. If somebody believes their mental or physical well-being is solely dependent on time, then they may live life to the fullest when they are young and slowly slip away silently in the night. This person may go sky-diving, and eat junk food all day, and drink until the bars close. At the end of their life they may have no regrets other than how short it was. However, if someone believes that there is no correlation between time and their well-being, but that well-being is based on their quality of taking care of themselves, they will take on life differently. This person may not experience the most fulfilling events. They may be chewing on carrots getting eight hours of sleep a night, and only partake in red wine on the weekends (but just a glass or two). True this person will live a long and healthy life, but at what cost? Will they die with regrets? It is important to understand one's personal philosophy of time. This decision must come from understanding who one is as an individual and how one wants time to play a role in their existence. A cautious person who plays it safe may not want to live as if time is the only factor, or live like Sartre, knowing that life is determined by their decisions. Someone who wants to go sky-diving into shark-infested water may not want to imagine a life in which time dictates their demise. If people can live with a solid understanding of their own philosophy, then they will be able to enhance their own existence by quelling potential fears of death.

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ENL101

The Inner-Workings of Digital Photography

With the abundance of extremely simple point-and-shoot cameras on the market today, lots of people don't seem to appreciate how smart and detailed their cameras are, and that there are many things ticking inside of digital cameras that give them the photographs they know and love today. Digital photography is a great medium of art, and understanding the inner workings of a camera can help a photographers create what they are aiming for, with knowledge including technical terms that describe the inner-workings, the processes that go on within the camera, and how an image is captured.

There are many important features such as the aperture, shutter speed, and image sensor that can make or break a photograph. The aperture and shutter speed are only two of the many settings photographers can manipulate. Aperture is a setting that allows the user to control the diameter of the shutter opening. This contributes to the exposure of the image, as well as depth of field. “The second function of your aperture is depth of field, which is the range from

which subjects, at various distances, are in focus. Depth of field changes as your aperture changes” (Arbabi 25). Another important setting is the shutter speed, which is easily defined by its name. When adjusting this, the photographer is determining how long the shutter will stay open. This affects exposure as well; and the slower the shutter speed, the more sensitive the camera will be to movement. When doing sports photography, for instance, the user will have to opt for a very quick shutter speed, but compensate for it with a wider aperture. This way the image will be well exposed, and have the motion-stopping effect most sports photographers desire. These terms help photographers define the effects they wish to create with their camera, but to do that they need to know what is going on within the camera.

A digital camera can be a complex piece of machinery, but breaking it down into smaller components makes it much easier to understand. First, there is a lens attached to every camera body, which is basically a glass cylinder through which light passes. The path for light does not end at the lens, though. Once it gets past the lens, it bounces off two mirrors and projects onto another, so that the photographer can see what the image they will take will look like, through the view-finder. The light also travels to the exposure meter and autofocus sensor, which help the user take a more focused and better-exposed image (Busch 13-14). The only place the light is blocked from is the image sensor, until the photographer presses the shutter button. The shutter is a piece of plastic behind the lens, which shields the image sensor from light. When activated, the shutter opens a circle of a certain diameter depending on aperture setting, and when it does, the light from the image in front of the camera travels to the image sensor. An image sensor is a small mechanism within a digital camera that works to capture an image.

Digital cameras are similar to film cameras, except for one obvious factor: digital cameras don't use film. In place of it, they have something called an image sensor that is mounted on the focal plane that film would slide across. These image sensors work much like film, and just as the latter is covered with an emulsion of light-sensitive crystals that clump together when exposed to light, an image sensor is covered by photodiodes, which are small electrodes that are also sensitive to light. These photodiodes are electrically charged before every picture is taken, and when exposed to light, they release a certain amount of the voltage that was stored in them, depending on how much light strikes each particular cell. After this happens, the camera measures the voltage of every cell in the image sensor (Long 87). The information from this process is amplified and sent to an

analog-to-digital converter. "Analog" is another word used to describe film cameras, or any device that is not digital. The converter takes the signals from a photograph and translates them to digits that can be read by the small computer that's also built into the machine. There, it is processed, and finally saved to a memory card inside the camera.

Understanding the workings of a digital camera can be extremely helpful when taking a photograph, and can give photographers much more control over the images they capture. It's good to know the terms used to describe effects the camera makes, how the camera works, and how an image is captured.

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Opportunity Cost

Opportunity cost is the sacrifice made to achieve something desirable. That something could be a successful society, a profitable firm or corporation, an advertisement, or a personal decision. Opportunity cost can be easily described as the value of an opportunity lost. This idea is critical to economic thinking. Societies in general produce what costs the least for them to make. The theory of opportunity cost also applies to a firm's decisions regarding productivity. Marketers often advertise a low cost for goods or services without taking opportunity cost into account. Individual decisions in daily life, unfortunately, often do not incorporate opportunity cost into the decision-making process.

The highly valued alternative to a decision is equal to the opportunity cost of that decision. According to Hubbard and O'Brien:

The opportunity cost of any activity—such as producing a good or service—is the highest-valued alternative that must be given up to engage in that activity. The concept of opportunity cost is very important in economics and applies to individuals as much as it does to firms or to society as a whole. (8)

There are multiple options in economic decisions, but under most conditions there are two: the decision made and the decision forgone. The opportunity cost of any decision is the option forgone. Decisions may be as complex as what goods a country produces or as simple as what day someone goes grocery shopping. The critical resource, time, is the basis for these choices. Time is a resource which, once lost, cannot be recovered. Often in economic decisions time is of the essence, and its efficient use is imperative to a successful operation.

The integration of opportunity cost can also be seen in relation to comparative advantage. "Comparative advantage," as defined by Hubbard and O'Brien, "is the ability of an individual, a firm, or a country to produce a good or service at a lower opportunity cost than competitors. People, firms, and countries specialize in economic activities in which they have a comparative advantage" (209). Since most successful societies utilize comparative advantage, the lifestyle of their people is determined by the goods or services they produce. Idaho makes potatoes because the state has the climate and geographical features to do so at a low cost. Their workers are used to a farmer's lifestyle of long days and hard work. China manufactures toys for the United States because they have the plants and human resources to do so. Their employees are used to long days, staying inside for long periods of time, and living in nearby company housing.

In business, managers often make decisions based on opportunity cost, but many do not, which explains why some small businesses fail. Some small business owners find themselves working day and night. Their opportunity cost would be giving up interaction with their friends and family, possibly losing them or the business. People's duties in a firm and positions that become obsolete can both be adjusted by this theory. In a large company, John is great at typing but a bad salesman. Joe is skilled oppositely and is a great salesman but a bad typist. Right now they are each doing both jobs. Using the theory of opportunity cost, their manager has both work in the field they are proficient in. This decision has lowered the opportunity cost

in both selling and typing, because the productivity has been raised in both areas without adding more employees. When duties are changed based on opportunity cost, often the decision is based on the productivity of the employees. Another change due to opportunity cost is unproductive positions. As Dryburgh writes:

If I had a pound for every hour I've spent forecasting and revising forecasts, the total sum would be greater than the value itself. It's an activity that is at best useless and at worst actually counterproductive. Here's why. Opportunity cost. Time spent forecasting is time spent not doing something more useful, such as selling, collecting cash, making more money next year. All these activities show a return on time invested; forecasting doesn't. (16)

In a college admission bulletin the advertised costs of going to school are often given. Seen in the admission bulletin advertised by Cape Cod Community College, "Two years of education equals \$9,740" (Cape Cod 15). The school advertises a certain cost for a two-year commitment to attend. That cost is in actuality much higher when opportunity cost is taken into account. Nights studying, days missed at work, and time not spent with family all add to the total cost of going to school. In actuality, there are a number of highly valued alternatives that will be missed by attending school. These may not be missed by the student, but the school's attempt to advertise cost is certainly not complete. It doesn't take opportunity cost into account.

Opportunity cost can also be subjective. When a person needs to make a decision, opportunity cost is involved. "Because of scarcity, whenever a choice is made you must pass up another opportunity; you must incur an opportunity cost" (McEachern 21). If someone decides to go to a movie rather than do chores, the opportunity cost of the movie is not getting the chores taken care of.

Once a person realizes the total cost of the decisions made in life, the decision process itself can change. It's also helpful in business to know exactly what the value of the missed opportunities equate to. When people see an advertisement for a long-term commitment at a cost, hopefully they think of the value of what they will lose if they make that commitment. Opportunity cost, as a theory, has its influence on most everything people see around them. More important, opportunity cost should be incorporated into everyone's day-to-day personal and business decisions.

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ENL101

Cyberbullying: More Than Name-Calling

Even though the old adage, "sticks and stones," indicates that words don't hurt, this is very far from the truth. Not only can words hurt, but they also target and victimize people who are vulnerable, who cannot fight back, and in some cases, lose all hope and take their own lives. Nowhere are hurtful words more apparent today than in the case of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is a relatively new term, coined in sync with the new technology and the use of the Internet. "This new widespread phenomenon is just like any other type of bullying. It hurts, it embarrasses, and it gets to the victim" (Tatevosian). As more people become connected in cyberspace, the problem is growing at a rapid rate. "Today's students combat bullying not just in the schoolyard--but through text messages, emails, and social media sites where anonymous posts can leave permanent pain" (Barack). Because it is perpetrated online or through cell phones and other devices, it does not generally include physical violence or theft. Bill Belsey, a Canadian educator, defines cyberbullying as follows: "Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group that is intended to harm others" (Roome 11).

Cyberbullying takes many forms. In the book, *Teen Cyberbullying Investigated*, Judge Tom Jacobs presents a powerful

collection of landmark court cases involving teens and charges of cyberbullying, which includes sending insulting or threatening emails or instant messages directly to someone; spreading hateful comments about someone through emails, blogs, or chat rooms; stealing passwords and sending out threatening messages using a false identity; and building a website to target specific people (Jacobs 3). SMS, which stands for Short Message Service, may be used to send messages intended to hurt victims. The bad thing about SMS bullying is that it is anonymous, and it could be anyone sending the messages. But the bully doesn't always send mean messages to the victim; sometimes they send malicious rumors to all their contacts about the victim (Sameer and Patchin 24).

One of the most devious kinds of cyberbullying is called cyberbullying by proxy; this deceitful method of harassment "gets someone else to do the bully's dirty work. Most of the time other people are unwitting accomplices and don't know they are being used by the cyberbully" (Shanty). This form of victimization is particularly insidious because it sometimes gets adults involved in the harassment.

The most typical way a cyberbullying by proxy attack occurs is when the cyberbully gets control of the victim's account and sends out hateful or rude messages to everyone on their buddy list pretending to be the victim. The bully may change the victim's passwords so they can't get into their own accounts. Friends of a victim get angry, thinking the victim sent the messages without knowing they have been used by the cyberbully. (Aftab)

Cyberbullying is a serious problem, not just because it hurts people, but because it kills people. The three stories that follow are only three of many that involve young people driven to suicide because they had been harassed or stalked on the Internet. They had no defenses against the onslaught of what the bully chose to share online; they had no laws to protect them. In the end, they gave up, and now it is only telling their stories that might prompt lawmakers, schools, and parents to listen and to act on their behalf.

The case of fifteen-year-old Phoebe Prince is an example of how bullying got out of hand; after constant and vicious online harassing, she came home from school one day in January and hanged herself. She had been subjected to bullying from schoolmates for months prior to her suicide. "The investigation revealed relentless activities directed toward Phoebe to make it impossible for her to stay at school," district attorney, Elizabeth D. Scheibel said. "The conduct of

those charged far exceeded the limits of normal teenage relationship-related quarrels” (Eckholm and Zezima A14). While the case received a lot of attention, and six adolescents in Massachusetts faced criminal charges for their actions, it’s too late for Phoebe.

The cyberbully is not always a young person. Megan Meier died believing that somewhere in this world lived a boy named Josh Evans who hated her. Six weeks after Megan’s death, her parents learned that Josh Evans never existed. He was an online character created by Lori Drew, then 47, who lived four houses down the street thirty-five miles northwest of St. Louis, Missouri (Maag). According to a New York Times editorial, Lori Drew bullied her daughter’s classmate by creating a fictional MySpace profile for a sixteen-year-old boy named Josh and uploaded a picture of the boy without his knowledge. “Josh” began to flirt with Megan and eventually told her that he was no longer interested in her and that the world would be a better place if she weren’t part of it. That was too much for the thirteen-year-old to handle, so she took her life (“Vague Cyberbullying Law” A24).

Hate groups are increasingly using the World Wide Web, according to a report by the Anti-Defamation League, an organization that fights bigotry and has been monitoring the use of the Web by hate groups since 1995 (Sabella). Hate crimes include those perpetrated against people for reasons of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disabilities, and other differences. The case of Tyler Clementi can be considered a hate crime, but is also an example of cyberbullying. The eighteen-year-old freshman at Rutgers University jumped from the George Washington Bridge on September 22, 2010. He committed suicide after learning that his roommate used a webcam to record his sexual encounters and sent the video over the Internet. Dharun Ravi, Tyler’s roommate, also posted twitter feeds and sent hurtful text messages to convey to the public that Tyler was having “sexual dates” with a boyfriend. Mr. Ravi also showed his webcam pictures to students on the Rutgers campus. After Tyler Clementi jumped to his death, a post was discovered on his Facebook page. It read, “Jumping off the gw bridge sorry” (“Tyler Clementi” A21).

Cyberbullies are often referred to as trolls. Most people have heard the tale of the Three Billy Goats Gruff. In modern day society, the word troll has an additional meaning that is just as nasty as the creature that lived under the bridge. In fact, the Oxford English Dictionary defines troll informally as follows: “a provocative email or posting intended to incite an angry response or a person who sends such an email or submits such a posting” (Roome 19-20).

Cyberbullying laws should exist in all states. As of 2011, thirty-

two out of fifty states have laws against cyberbullying, but these were slow in coming. With an ever-increasing number of serious cases of cyberbullying and school violence, Judge Tom Jacobs states that clear laws dealing with cyberbullying are needed more urgently than ever (Jacobs 8). In the case of the three stories outlined in this paper, however, the law did not protect the victims. Despite the uproar after the suicide of Phoebe Prince, the students responsible were not given jail time. Three of the teens received probation and community service, while two others were only sentenced to probation. All five struck plea deals with the prosecution. In exchange to pleading guilty on the misdemeanor charge of criminal harassment, the more serious charges they faced were dropped (Webley). However, the Massachusetts legislature stepped up work on an anti-bullying law that passed on May 3, 2010. The law requires school staff members to report suspected incidents and principals to investigate them. It also demands that schools teach about the dangers of bullying (Ojalvo). In the case of Megan Meier, the jury acquitted Lori Drew of intentional infliction of emotional distress but convicted her of accessing a computer without proper authorization in violation of the federal Computer Fraud and Abuse Act. Her crime was violating MySpace's terms of service ("Vague Cyberbullying Law" A24). Finally, in the Tyler Clementi suicide, Dharun Ravi was not charged with cyberbullying. Rather, he was charged with bias intimidation (a hate crime based on the victim's sexual orientation) and invasion of privacy. Although he was not charged in Mr. Clementi's death, his actions cast a spotlight on teen suicide and anti-gay bullying and illustrated the Internet's potential for tormenting others ("Tyler Clementi" A21).

Young people from across the United States took part in a recent survey about online abuse from their peers; 42% of them had experienced bullying online and have had it happen to them more than once. A shocking 58% of the children who took the survey had not told their parents about instances of online bullying, leaving them feeling hurt, alone, depressed and singled out (Shanty). As Debbie Roome states, "Cyber-bullying is a form of exercising control over another person" (Roome 7). However, harassment and humiliation have taken on new forms in Cyberspace. Cyberbully trolls hide behind counterfeit identities. With anonymity, they feel secure in nefariously using words, pictures, and videos to destroy the lives of others, because laws have not yet caught up with their Internet crimes. Until the legal system is able to prosecute perpetrators, the victims of their vicious attacks will continue to suffer. Words not only hurt, but as many stories about cyberbullying demonstrate, they can be deadly.

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The Hindu Nagas: Slithering in Between Good and Evil

Snakes have always had a reputation of being conniving, slimy, mischievous, and on occasion deadly. This reputation has held strong for many centuries. Throughout ancient stories snakes have been associated with devilish acts, treachery, and death. For example, in the classic Christian story about Adam and Eve the Devil, in serpent form, tempts Eve to eat an apple from the Tree of Knowledge. Also the Greek myth of the evil Medusa and her snake hair associates this animal with evil. In Hindu myths, the snake is considered a nature spirit possessing both a positive and negative reputation. Throughout Hindu myths, the snake has symbolized fertility, death, protection, vindication, and vengeance. In these ancient stories, snakes are depicted more often doing something helpful than being destructive. Therefore, based on these stories, it is taught in Hinduism to respect the snake and to not cause it harm, for it could bring good luck and prosperity.

Hindus depict snakes as generally having a friendly disposition, clever, charming, and good-looking. They are sometimes pictured as human from the waist up and having the tail of a snake. Some are pictured with a stretched out neck like a cobra. They are found dwelling around wells, rivers, lakes, and around anthills. It is said that snakes hide their treasure of gold in anthills (Cotterell 102).

The snakes, or “nagas,” have varying meanings throughout Hindu stories. Hindu and Indian mythologies dates back to 7200BC (Walker). One meaning snakes portray is fertility and rebirth. It is taught that the molting/shedding of the snake’s skin symbolizes a new beginning (Ashliman). The snake is said to transform from one life into a new; out with the old skin, and in with the new. Many Indians believe that snakes help crops prosper. Guardianship and protection is another role represented by snakes. Vishnu, “the preserver,” lies on a snake bed with the snake Sesh’s multiple heads hanging over his head. Snakes can also be found on ancient architecture and sculptures around the borders of temples serving as protection against all evils. However, Hindu mythology also displays the snake’s negative tendencies and meanings. One negative symbol associated with snakes is death. India is home to the majority of species of poisonous snakes. A snake’s venom is known to be highly poisonous; however, according to Hindu myths, if you respect the nature of a snake, then

you shall not be harmed (Hemenway 59). A snake will not attack unless provoked. The teachings of “treat others how you would like to be treated” is reflected in almost all Hindu teachings. Lastly, a common symbolic meaning for a snake is vengefulness, or, vice versa, to be vengeful is to be acting like a snake. Make a snake unhappy and it will take revenge (Ashliman).

The Hindu myth of Muchalinda & Buddha displays the serpent Muchalinda as a protector. Muchalinda is a gigantic serpent genie who dwells under the Bodhi tree of Enlightenment. This happens to be the same tree the great Buddha meditates under. One day as Buddha was meditating, Muchalinda felt a storm brewing. Buddha was too entranced in his thoughts to notice. So Muchalinda started to coil around him seven times then, using his hood to cover Buddha like an umbrella. As the storm passed, Muchalinda turned into his human form, turned towards Buddha and bowed. Buddha replied, “Enlightenment encompasses all” (Cotterell 78). All creatures and spirits have a good spirit inside. This act of kindness Muchalinda showed towards Buddha resulted in Buddha trusting serpents to protect his written scriptures.

The Hindu god Shiva also wears a snake around his neck as protection. The snake is coiled around three times, representing past, present, and future (Walker 78). Both Buddha and Shiva are importantly viewed gods in the Hindu culture. To have a snake trusted by both distinguished figures in Hinduism indicates that nagas are not essentially evil creatures.

In the tale of Rahu and Ketu, a snake acts as a help rather than an enemy. A war had erupted between the demons (Asuras) and gods (Devatas). The gods went to Lord Brahman (the creator) to ask him how they could defeat the demons. Brahman’s response was to churn the ocean. Through the churning of the ocean they found a nectar of immortality and powerful strength that helped them defeat the demons. However, churning the ocean was a lot of work so the gods asked for help from the demons. The king of the serpents, Vasuki, was to become the rope. A mountain next to the ocean supported Vasuki. Lord Vishnu, in the form of a tortoise, became the base and the churning process began. The gods held the tail of Vasuki, and the demons held the head. They began to churn the water and many objects came out of the ocean, including a poison, agriculture, animals, and then the nectar. In the end the Devates and Asuras battled over the nectar, resulting in the splitting of one of the demons. This split became associated with an eclipse (Ashliman). Thanks to Vasuki they were able to churn the ocean. This is another example of a Hindu story highlighting a snake’s positive attributes.

In modern Hinduism, the snake is still celebrated as a symbol of fertility. In some regions festivals are held to celebrate the snake; one is called "Nagapanchami." The Nagapanchami festival features performances by snake charmers, dancers, musicians, and other performers. One ritual performed at this festival consists of pouring milk on a snake's head. The idea that snakes enjoy milk stems from two Hindu scriptures. One says that the cow is sacred; therefore, its milk is holy and a cleanser. The offering of milk towards a snake is a symbol of respect and kindness.

The second is from the story of "The Gold-Giving Snake," a myth about a farmer who encounters a snake on his property. He tries to please the snake, so in return the snake blesses his crops. The farmer believes the snake to be the goddess of the fields and in order for them to prosper, he should show respect to the snake. To show his respect, the farmer offers a bowl of milk to the snake. The next day when the farmer pays a visit to the snake, there is a gold coin in the bowl. The farmer continues to offer the snake thanks and milk. In return the snake leaves him gold coins, and his crop begins to blossom. One day the farmer has to go into town, so he asks his son to go by the anthill and give the snake some milk. The son disobeys his father and tries to kill the snake and steal his gold hidden in the anthill. However, before the boy can strike the snake the snake attacks him. The snake bites the son and kills him. The farmer is distraught when he comes home; he knows his son disrespected the snake. His son's deed leaves the serpent angered. The serpent gives the farmer one last cursed pearl and tells him never to visit him again. The lack of understanding killed the farmer's son. This story displays a snake becoming vengeful only when it is wronged. A snake will not attack unless provoked. Due to this tale pouring milk on a snake is supposed to bring good luck and a prosperous year (Dallapiccola 35).

Snakes are a common character in Hindu myths. However, instead of representing a hovering evil spirit, they are portrayed as nature spirits with a positive purpose. They are depicted as clever, charming, and easy on the eyes instead of dark, slimy, creepy, and sinister. Snakes in the Indian culture are viewed as good creatures compared to beliefs held in the conditioned USA, where most are scared of snakes. Hinduism is a religion based on the belief that life is a neverending cycle of transformations and reincarnations. There are divine spirits in an unseen world, one Supreme Being who created all, and an enlightened master (Buddha). Hindus believe that the laws of cause and effect, both in thoughts and speech, reflect the outcome of a person's life. The goal is to think good thoughts, show good gestures,

and speak with love, not hate (Hemenway 43). Some of these core beliefs are reflected by the life of a snake. The snake shedding one skin for a new skin is its reincarnation stage. The snake is beginning to transform. Also a snake holds no possessions, and therefore is looked upon as having pure freedom. Hinduism challenges its followers by testing their attachments to worldly goods. The characteristics of a snake's life have been compared to those teachings of Hinduism from generation to generation.

Traveling through the world's mythologies, one finds that many symbols are common due to exploration and common questions. When cultures and countries were developing thousands of years ago, many ideas were spread through trade. India's large subcontinent and location meant that many travelling traders passed through. These encounters with traders from different parts of the world reflected into Hindu beliefs. However, not all the symbols of the world are the same within different cultures. Hindu mythology from India is a perfect example of symbolizing a creature, considered in the West as vicious, as protective and charming. Hindu culture revolves around nature and the understanding of one's self, along with the spirits around us.

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Langston Hughes' Fight for Racial Equality

As one of the greatest poets of the 20th century, Langston Hughes created several poems whose themes convey powerful messages concerning racial equality for African Americans within American society. Hughes crafted these poems to give insight about the history and struggles of African Americans to those who were prejudiced and to inspire African Americans to continue to fight for equality. The themes found within "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," "I, Too," and "Harlem" not only had a powerful impact on poetry, but on society as well.

In the poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" Hughes' main theme is the extensive history of African Americans. By comparing the history of rivers to the history of African Americans, Hughes makes it clear that African Americans were the original Homo sapiens and, like the rivers, African Americans are strong and will remain.

In 'The Negro Speaks of Rivers' the characteristic is stability which, ironically, has developed from the instability of the speaker's experience. The impermanence of his situation (as an enslaved African), from life on the Euphrates of ancient history to the Mississippi of relatively modern times, has toughened his mind and skin, making him as stable as the rivers whose rise and fall in importance have not destroyed them: 'My soul has grown deep like the rivers' (Ikonne 84).

The theme of this poem had an effect on American society in two ways. For those who were prejudiced, it pointed out the fact that African Americans have a strong history. They have achieved great feats; for example, Hughes writes, "I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it" (Hughes 1134). In the African American community "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" was a source of pride and a reminder of the longevity and strength of the African American. It is clear that Hughes intended this poem to be both informative and inspirational.

In contrast to the recollection of African American history in "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" Hughes looks to the future in his poem "I, Too." The persona of this poem is that of an African American who is sent to eat in the kitchen when company arrives but he remains positive and knows that one day in the future he will have his place at the table. Although the poem is written from the perspective of an individual, the persona is meant to take on the voice of all African Americans. Once again Hughes is speaking to both sides involved

in the segregation of African Americans and white Americans. He is positive that African Americans will gain their civil rights and believes that those who are racist will "[not] dare, Say to me, 'Eat in the kitchen,'" and they will "see how beautiful I am, And be ashamed" (Hughes 1137). "I, Too" also provides support, hope, and inspiration for the African American community. Hughes acknowledges that while African Americans may not have their place just yet, if they stay positive they will earn their rightful place at America's table. This idea is made apparent when Hughes writes, "But I laugh, And eat well, And grow strong" (Hughes 1137). The persona of the poem does not react negatively to being sent to the kitchen; instead, he will grow strong and stay positive. Hughes certainly had unity on his mind when he wrote such an uplifting poem.

The poem "Harlem" has a theme concerning the dreams of oppressed African Americans and what will happen to those dreams. Hughes' persona in "Harlem" never self-references and as a result readers are to think for themselves as to what will happen to a deferred dream.

The absence of a strong personal or individual identity is a given in the poem, and the poet neither despairs over its loss nor projects its return or fulfillment. Instead, Hughes engages in a dialogue with the African-American culture that provides his sense of identity, both celebrating and critiquing it (O'Brien 163).

Hughes is exploring the possibilities in what will happen to the dreams of his fellow African Americans. He believes some have given up hope and allowed their dreams to "dry up, like a raisin in the sun..." (Hughes 1148). Others have deserted their dreams and allowed them to "fester like a sore- And then run..." (Hughes 1148). They have run away from their dreams and given up hope. Hughes even speaks to those who have tried to achieve their dreams by being kind to white Americans. Hughes believes their dreams "crust and sugar over-like a syrupy sweet..." (Hughes 1148). Although he critiques African Americans for deferring their dreams, Hughes sees these deferred dreams as a spark that will ignite the wick for change. When he wrote the final line "Or does it explode?" (Hughes 1148) Hughes showed that he believed the built-up frustrations of all the dreams deferred might explode in a clash between the oppressors and the oppressed. The deferred dreams will lead to unity, change, and an explosion in American society.

With powerful poetry such as "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," "I, Too," and "Harlem" it is clear as to why Langston Hughes can be considered one of the most influential African Americans in the history

of the United States. Langston Hughes not only gave hope to the African American community, but he also told their story and gave them a voice. The themes expressed in his poems were vital to the fight against racial inequality at a time when America was so greatly divided.

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The Masks We Wear

Mask is a word that conjures images of children trick-or-treating on Halloween or a masquerade ball, both of which are wonderful memories shared by many people. However, for some there is another side to the same word. "Mask" is a word that makes some people think of lies, manipulations, and deceit. The denotative meaning, according to Webster's English Dictionary is: "a cover or partial cover for the face used for disguise; something that serves to conceal or disguise" ("Mask"). Perhaps this is what Joyce Carol Oates was thinking about when she wrote "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" Maybe Angela Carter was thinking about different masks that people put on when she wrote the short story "The Company of Wolves." Both of these works of short fiction express strikingly similar connotative meanings behind this word, yet contrastingly different ways of telling the same tale.

Joyce Carol Oates is an author of many talents. She has written novels, short stories and essays, some of which are penned under the pseudonyms of Lauren Kelly and Rosamond Smith. In her work of short fiction "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" Oates weaves a tale of deception, manipulation, sexuality, and lies. The tale begins with a pretty fifteen-year-old girl named Connie, who struggles with her identity. Being the protagonist, Connie appears to consider herself a skilled flirt that can handle any situation, as most fifteen-year-old girls do. Connie has come to display two different personas. She is a girl of two minds, one that is displayed at home, while the other comes out everywhere else. To show this concept, Joyce Carol Oates writes, "Everything about her had two sides to it, one for home and one for anywhere that was not home" (Oates 63). Connie is deceptive with her parents to get her way; however, lies, manipulations, and her own sexuality do not work in her favor when she is confronted by the antagonist of the story, Arnold Friend.

Arnold Friend first comes in contact with Connie when she goes to a drive-in restaurant across from the theatre where she and some friends are supposed to be seeing a movie. Connie doesn't pay much attention to Arnold at first, not until she encounters him again in her own driveway. At this meeting, Arnold comes off

as manipulative, cunning, and fake. He practices romanticism as a method of control, while using the illusion of being a younger man to lure her in an attempt to make her feel more at ease. Connie has a strange feeling when she speaks with Arnold, that he is not what he appears to be, and she finds herself in a conflict between common sense and the manipulations that have become Arnold Friend. Oates defines this by describing Connie's emotions as she experiences an epiphany while dealing with Arnold:

Connie stared at him, another wave of dizziness and fear rising in her so that for a moment he wasn't even in focus but was just a blur, standing there against his gold car, and she had the idea that he had driven up the driveway all right but had come from nowhere before that and belonged nowhere and that everything about him and even the music that was so familiar to her was only half real. (Oates 70)

In this way, Oates is showing the reality of the situation in that Arnold Friend is not who or what he appears to be. He is wearing a mask to disguise his true identity while trying to lure Connie outside for his own devious purposes. This same concept also works for Angela Carter's "The Company of Wolves;" however, Carter tells the tale in a much more gruesome and disturbing way.

Angela Carter is best known for the magical realism she brings to her stories. Carter is not just an author; she is also an editor and translator. In Angela Carter's work of short fiction, "The Company of Wolves," she creates a tale that uses a melancholy, almost sad tone when referencing the protagonist character of the wolf. Carter shows this by revealing what appear to be the emotions of the wolf:

That long-drawn, wavering howl has, for all its fearful resonance, some inherent sadness in it, as if the beasts would love to be less beastly if only they knew how and never cease to mourn their own condition. There is a vast melancholy in the canticles of the wolves, melancholy infinite as the forest, endless as these long nights of winter and yet that ghastly sadness, that mourning for their own, irremediable appetites, can never move the heart for not one phrase in it hints at the possibility of redemption. (Carter 133)

In this respect, the hidden yearnings of the wolf are revealed, and there is no longer a question as to the wolf's state of being. However, being a wolf, he uses deception and illusion to gain trust and control, while still being cunning and manipulative. Sexuality and desire are being worked to lure the victim into a false sense of security.

Whereas the beginning of the story is entirely focused on

the wolf, the remainder comes into play with a young girl named "Red." "Red," the antagonist of the story, is just reaching puberty and is confident in herself and in her judgment. "Red" is independent, persistent, and unafraid of things she doesn't understand. At the beginning of her journey, she is warned of wolves and naked men in the woods and is given a sharp knife to carry with her. Toward the end of her travels, she encounters a "handsome man" with a rifle who appears to be hunting. They strike up a conversation that leads to a wager when he pulls out a compass, implying that he can reach her destination before does; the prize is a kiss.

In several instances throughout the story, Angela Carter intertwines the cunning, deceptive nature of the wolf with raw sexuality and manipulation that is not seen in typical fairy tales. A good example of this is when "Red" finally reaches her destination and realizes she has been deceived by the handsome man:

Who's there, he quavers in granny's antique falsetto. Only your granddaughter. So she came in, bringing with her a flurry of snow that melted in tears on the tiles, and perhaps she was a little disappointed to see only her grandmother sitting beside the fire. But then he flung off the blanket and sprang to the door, pressing his back against it so that she could no longer get out again. (Carter 137)

In this instance, "Red" realizes that this handsome man is not what he portrays himself to be, forcing her to use her wits and womanhood to save her own life.

She closed the window on the wolves' threnody and took off her scarlet shawl, the colour of poppies, the colour of sacrifices, the colour of her menses, and, since her fear did her no good, she ceased to be afraid.

"Red" understands that she has no choice but to give in to the wolf or lose her life. This concept is clarified when "Red" begins to play into the desires of the wolf.

The girl burst out laughing; she knew she was nobody's meat. She laughed at him full in the face, she ripped off his shirt for him and flung it into the fire, in the fiery wake of her own discarded clothing.... [She] will lay his fearful head on her lap and she will pick out the lice from his pelt and perhaps she will put the lice into her mouth and eat them, as he will bid her, as she would do in a savage marriage ceremony....

[See!] sweet and sound she sleeps in granny's bed,
between the paws of the tender wolf. (Carter 138-
139)

As "Red" and the wolf are involved in this cat-and-mouse game, all masks come off and the manipulator becomes the manipulated when "Red" turns the tables and gives herself willingly to him in the hopes of being spared her life.

Both of these works of short fiction have the same tale to tell. Both Joyce Carol Oates and Angela Carter have a slightly different concept of a familiar story. While Oates' story "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" is set in post-fifties America, it still has the same deception, manipulation, cunning and sexuality that Carter's "The Company of Wolves" has. The only seemingly arbitrary fact is that Carter's story is set in a drastically different time. Even though these stories seem to be in contrast to one another, the overall theme remains. Not everything is as it appears to be. We all wear masks for various reasons; some are worn to deceive and manipulate, while others may be worn out of desire and a yearning for comfort that may never come.

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A Horrific Tale Bathed in Irony: Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Cask of Amontillado”

In his short story “The Cask of Amontillado” Edgar Allan Poe soaks the theme of revenge in a continuously flowing stream of irony. The central irony is that, while Montresor imposes two rules upon himself for a successful revenge, he fails in carrying out either one of them.

The irony in this story begins with the title itself and weaves its way through to and including the very end. The “cask” in “The Cask of Amontillado” might very well refer to a “casket,” the tomb in which Fortunato ultimately meets his terrible fate after insisting on going there to examine and taste a cask of wine. Montresor craftily lures Fortunato into his trap by bringing up a rival connoisseur, Luchesi. Every time Fortunato hesitates, Montresor makes brief mention of Luchesi, suggesting that he could taste and evaluate the Amontillado instead of Fortunato. Priding himself on his supposed knowledge of wines, Fortunato waves off Luchesi’s expertise and calls him an ignoramus, saying that Luchesi “cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry” (Poe 727). He makes himself a true fool in his jester outfit, considering that Amontillado is in fact a type of sherry.

Fortunato continually dishes out these insults, not only about his rival Luchesi, but also about Montresor, e.g. “These vaults,” he said, “are extensive.” “The Montresors,” I replied, “were a great and numerous family.” “I forget your arms.” (729) and “You are not of the masons.” “Yes, yes,” I said; “yes, yes.” “You? Impossible! A mason?” (729). Even though Montresor does not tell the reader what the “thousand injuries of Fortunato” (727) and the insult he “ventured upon” (727) were about, one can tell that Montresor is not lying about it, as Fortunato continues to insult Montresor on their way into his vaults. Therefore the assumption can be made that, at least from Montresor’s point of view, there is a valid reason for taking revenge. And he does so in a most ironic way.

During their way to the cask of Amontillado Fortunato ironically remarks that he will not die of a cough. Little does he know how true his assumption is, since he will die of suffocation. Montresor’s

response "True-true..." (Poe 728) is scorning in a way, if only Fortunato were aware of the irony in it.

Reaching the "inmost recesses of the catacombs" (729), Montresor hands Fortunato a bottle of "De Grève." The wine "De Grève," however, does not exist, though Poe may be referring to "Graves," which would pose another irony because Montresor is providing Fortunato with his "grave." The ironic tour through the vaults culminates in Montresor showing Fortunato that he has had several opportunities to get away and escape his terrible fate: "Pass your hand," I said, "over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed it is very damp. Once more let me implore you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you..." (730).

The final and central irony lies in Montresor's revenge itself. It is Montresor's understanding that "a wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong" (727). Taking those self-imposed rules into consideration, it can be said that Montresor does not successfully take revenge.

At no point during their journey to Fortunato's death does Montresor make clear why he is deceiving Fortunato with the intention of killing him. Fortunato is hoping that Montresor is playing a joke on him and in fact "seems to have no idea why he is being punished at all" (May).

Bearing in mind that Montresor is telling his story fifty years after it happened to somebody who "so well know[s] the nature of my soul" (Poe 727), it can be assumed that Montresor is on his deathbed, dying of old age and finally confessing his crime. Since Montresor is able to tell his story in such great detail fifty years later, one may conclude that the murder has taken hold of his soul, and what he has done has tortured him all these years, so that he simply cannot forget it.

Furthermore, Montresor mentions that "my heart grew sick" (731), after no more sound comes from Fortunato. Henninger argues that "only one thing could make Montresor sick, the spoiling of his revenge" (323) because Montresor is unable to satisfy his own conditions for a successful revenge. Jacoby goes one step further on that theory. Agreeing with Henninger, he also claims that Montresor's heart grew sick out of "sudden disappointment as his carefully planned drama of revenge aborts..." (Jacoby 344). However, Jacoby argues that Montresor's disappointment is a result of "the untimely end of its [the drama's] main character...who dies still unaware of Montresor's motives..." and that "Fortunato ultimately gets the best of his adversary, if only by dying too soon" (344). However, if that were the case,

Montresor would have no need of excusing that sickness with “the dampness of the catacombs” (Poe 731).

The last evidence of Montresor’s failure in taking revenge according to his rules lies in his own family crest: “A huge foot d’or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel” (Poe 729). In other words, even though Montresor crushes the serpent, the serpent still holds on, its bite unrelenting, its fangs deep inside Montresor. May describes the image of the crest in relation to the characters very clearly: “If the foot is a metonymic representation of Montresor crushing the metaphoric serpent Fortunato for his bite, then it is clear that, even though Montresor gets his revenge, the serpent continues to hold on” (May). The critic further describes how ironic the heart of the story is: “The ultimate irony of the story then, is that, although Montresor has tried to fulfill his two criteria for a successful revenge, Fortunato has fulfilled them better than he has” (May).

Thus, Montresor fails in getting true revenge by his own standards, for Fortunato is he who laughs last.

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Life and Death in Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"

There has been much discussion about Frost's poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" and many different interpretations have been made. Some critics argue that the speaker in Frost's poem only lingers for a moment to observe the beauty of nature and then, although lured by the "lovely" woods, moves on. However, there is much more darkness in the speaker's mind than first meets the eye and thus the predominant theme in Frost's poem must be death.

Hochman asserts that "as abruptly as driver and horse seem to have stopped, however, the driver resolves to go and leave behind this at least somewhat alluring forest" (256), and he explains his claim with the plainest meaning of the final stanza's last three lines: "But I have promises to keep/and miles to go..." (Frost 1112). However, as Ogilvie points out, the reader is never told whether or not the speaker succumbs to the temptation of the woods, or actually moves on to fulfill his promises. Ogilvie highlights the fact that "the poet and his horse have not moved on at the poem's end" (230). Therefore, it can equally be assumed that the speaker decides to go into the woods and chooses to "lie down and let the snow cover and bury him" (Meyers 254).

The theme of death and the death wish being preponderant in Frost's poem can be recognized by carefully examining the metaphors in each stanza. In the first stanza the speaker makes clear that the owner of the woods is in the village and won't see him halting by the woods. In other words, the speaker won't be seen and thus be stopped, if he decides to end his life in the woods. That observation, however, at this point, must be assumed to occur somewhat unconsciously, since the speaker says he won't be caught "[watching] his woods fill up with snow" (Frost 1112). His death wish is present but still concealed within his mind.

Moving on to the second stanza, the theme of death continues, when the difference between life and death is presented in the third line: "between the woods and frozen lake" (1112). Water

generally represents life; without water the mortal body will perish. However, the lake is frozen, so the speaker is denied this source of life. All he can see is this evening being “the darkest evening of the year” (Frost 1112), which of course could refer to the winter solstice, but much more likely is a reference to the gloomiest time in his life.

The third stanza provides a warning of danger, not only in the form of the horse shaking its bells, but also in terms of the sound this stanza offers. The first two lines have a strong s-sound, reminiscent of a snake’s hiss, which is a symbol for evil: “he gives his harness bells a shake/to ask if there is some mistake” (1112). This very strong sound contrasts with the speaker recognizing the sound “of easy wind and downy flake” (1112), which has a rather calming effect. The warning is thus being ignored to once again indulge in the solitude of the speaker’s surroundings.

Finally, the fourth stanza gets straight to the point. The speaker sees the woods as “lovely, dark and deep” (1112), giving the impression that he embraces that darkness and is longing to finally be released from this “darkest evening of the year” (1112). The speaker realizes that he “[has] promises to keep” and “miles to go before I sleep” (1112), but there is no hint as to whether or not he decides to carry the burden of having to keep his promises and continue with his life. The speaker is contemplating both options.

If “sleep” in the last stanza refers to the speaker’s death or death wish, one might assume that the speaker decides to take his life, considering “sleep” is the very last word not only in the last two lines of the final stanza; but it is the final word of the poem.

The repetition of the last line can be interpreted as disappointment over having to go on with life due to the speaker’s responsibilities, or as emphasis on the speaker’s very apparent death wish and its actual fulfillment. However, those two lines can be read in a number of different ways. One way to read them might be to see the third line of the fourth stanza as the speaker making himself aware that he cannot just take his life, because there is so much more left to take care of. The fourth line, then, can be interpreted as the speaker being weary of having so much more left to take care of, and just wishing it to end. Hepburn writes about this effect in the final stanza:

Unger and O’Conner in their commentary about the poem assert that the effect of the repeated last line is to emphasize the choice made for moral action; but in fact the lulling rhythm and repetition, of both rhyme and phrase, deprive the assertion of force.
...Presumably the traveler goes home to supper, to his duties, and to the rest of his journey through life;

but these things are not in the poem. (Hepburn 245)

No matter how one might interpret Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," this poem is a great pleasure to read and indulge in. It is a journey as much for the reader as it is for the speaker.

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Mordred and Gawain-A Study of Neglected Characters

The film industry has made the Arthurian Legend popular and memorable, especially for those who don't like to read or haven't bothered finding good print sources about Arthur and his Round Table. Movies have been made to show Malory's version of Arthur becoming King of Britain: the pulling of the sword Excalibur from the stone. Movies have also been made showing the love triangle of Arthur, his wife Guinevere, and his knight Lancelot. Much has been shown of Camelot, the knights' adventures, and Avalon. What has been neglected are two important characters in the Arthurian Legend: Mordred and Gawain. In fact, even in Arthurian literature there is only sparse mention of Mordred, while at least Gawain receives the deserved attention. Yet the obvious contrast of darkness and light between Mordred and Gawain offers a great opportunity to explore both characters further and to show how one might be considered the flipside of the other, or how they display similarities, depending on the source that is being scrutinized.

Important sources (Malory and Monmouth) agree that Mordred betrays Arthur. They disagree regarding Mordred's relationship to Arthur, however. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain* Mordred is described as Arthur's nephew, the son of Arthur's sister Anna and Loth of Lodonesia. Monmouth later contradicts himself in calling Mordred Arthur's cousin, the son of Loth of Lodonesia and Aurelius Ambrosius' sister, who is never mentioned by name. Sir Thomas Malory, on the other hand, makes Mordred Arthur's son in his *Le Morte D'Arthur*; his mother is Margause, who is Igraine's daughter and thus Arthur's half-sister. In *The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Arthurian Legends* Ronan Coghlan states that according to J. Matthews, ". . . the story of Gawain's birth and his being set adrift in a cask parallels that of his brother Mordred and suggests that originally Gawain was Arthur's son, who fathered him incestuously on his sister. . ." (111). Taking that assumption into consideration opens a new door to the perception of the good and evil deeds of Mordred and Gawain, of their personalities, and who they really are at the core, thus explaining some of the similarities of both characters.

While Malory lets Mordred and Arthur kill each other, Layamon decides to have both Mordred and King Arthur killed by an unknown person, possibly a soldier from either side: "Then Mordred was cut

down, cut short from his days . . . while Arthur was shafted badly by a broad spear;/In fact he received fifteen fatal gashes" (Layamon 27, 28). Another version of the final battle can be found in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, a poem written by an unknown author. In this fine work Mordred not only kills Arthur in a last one-on-one battle, but he also murders the most esteemed knight Gawain, who dies by the hands of a Saxon baron in Layamon's *Brut*.

A completely different image is painted of Mordred in Nancy Springer's narrative *I am Mordred*. Springer lets Mordred come to life by telling his story through his own eyes. In *I am Mordred* Merlin is said to have prophesied Mordred's murder of Arthur—the son killing the father. This calls up a familiar image. Clearly, Springer leans on the drama of *Oedipus*. She not only provides the dark prophecy of the son killing his father, but also makes the father fear it so much that he decides to kill the newborn son. Arthur puts his infant bastard son on a boat and sends it out on the sea to die of cold and starvation. Similar to *Oedipus*, the boy is found—here by a fisherman and his wife—and raised without ever being aware of who he really is. When he is still a child, a strange woman by the name of Nyneve comes to get Mordred. She reveals to him his true name and his foretold fate. Mordred eventually grows up and reaches King Arthur's court to be named knight. He dreads his fate and sets out on a quest to find a way to avoid it. Springer shows vividly how Mordred's hate for Arthur—because Arthur tried to kill him—quickly turns into love for his father. Here, in contrast to other Arthurian literature, Mordred values the father/son relationship he should have with Arthur and hopes for nothing more than the King to call him "my son."

Nevertheless, Springer stays true to the Arthurian Legend inasmuch as she does not in any way let Mordred escape his painful fate. However, there is not a moment within Springer's narrative in which Mordred is depicted as the evil villain. Mordred loves his father and fears his inescapable fate to the very end. Springer finishes her story in a tear-evoking conclusion. Mordred seeks the help of a druid to give his soul into someone's safekeeping, as he can no longer bear the pain of his awaiting fate. He chooses King Arthur, the only person in the world he trusts, to take his soul. However, just before Arthur can receive that great gift, which he plans to return to Mordred eventually, Mordred's soul is stolen by a raven, and without a soul Mordred turns into the traitor he was fated to be and kills Arthur. Springer has an excellent talent in showing the many emotions billowing within Mordred, and she lets her emotional magic work to bring tears to the

reader with the final words of her narrative, when Arthur—resting in Avalon, severely wounded—says for the first and possibly last time: “Mordred, my son” (184).

Springer seems to be one of only few authors who allow Mordred to have honor and a good heart. A hint of honor can, however, also be found in “The Alliterative Morte Arthure.” After Mordred and Gawain have done battle, and Mordred has slain the good knight Sir Gawain, the king of Friesland asks if Mordred knows this dead knight who has killed so many of their soldiers. And Mordred answers in a most noble way:

He was unmatched on earth, sir, on my oath./He
was Gawain the good, most gracious of men,/And
the greatest of knights who lived under God,/The
man boldest of hand, most blessed in battle,/And
the humblest in hall under all the wide heavens;/
In leadership the lordliest as long as he lived,/And
lauded as a lion in lands far and wide;/Had you known
him, . . . You would weep for his death all the days of
your life. (The Alliterative 236)

It is clear through his speech that Mordred holds Gawain in high esteem, even while he is his enemy. Mordred does not get many opportunities to speak in Arthurian literature; therefore, it is difficult to obtain a good understanding of his character and his motives. In most of the literature he is portrayed as the pure villain, evil and treacherous. It is a nice change of pace then to read *I am Mordred*, as Springer sets up clear motives that are quickly overcome by love. Since most literature gives Mordred no other option but to be the despised villain, with no option to show a different side of himself, readers never get the chance to see behind that evil face and look for feelings, for reasons behind his actions.

Apart from finding honor in Mordred’s character, the reader might look for a motive. In search for Mordred’s motive one can look at Springer’s version of Mordred’s life and call it revenge, even though he never takes revenge in her narrative. In *I am Mordred* he becomes a villain only through fateful intervention. It proves difficult to find another piece of literature that gives Mordred as clear a motive as Springer does. In the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* King Arthur is being told that Mordred has not only declared himself King over Britain in Arthur’s absence, but has also taken Guinevere as his wife. Furthermore, in contrast to other Arthurian literature, it is said in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* that Guinevere is carrying Mordred’s child. It can be assumed that this brief mention is an attempt to give Mordred

a motive for his treacherous deeds. He must love Guinevere so strongly that betraying Arthur the way he does appears to him as being the only way to live out his affection, especially since Guinevere seems to return that love. The first evidence of this is the alleged child she bears, even though it is only a rumor: "And he has got her with child, so say those who have seen" (The Alliterative 232). The other evidence can be found in the battle of Arthur against Mordred, when the king realizes that Mordred is wielding his sword, Clarent, which only Guinevere had access to: "No one knew of that site, but Guinevere herself;/She herself had safekeeping of that splendid blade" (239). Being betrayed in such way by both his own son or nephew/cousin and his wife suggests a strong motive of love.

In Layamon's Brut, Mordred's motive is also hinted at, and it is the same as in the Alliterative Morte Arthure: Love. Even though Layamon describes Mordred as the "most wicked of men" (21) right from the beginning, which seems to be an attempt to make Mordred the undoubted villain, the author shows the bond between Mordred and Guinevere: "He is king, she is queen; they have cast you aside,/ since they're sure that you'll never return from the south" (23). He shows this bond even clearer when he writes about how Guinevere learns of Arthur's return and what she does with that news: "There was a vile follower in Arthur's fold/Who, when he heard Mordred's murder widely spoken,/Sent one of his lackeys . . . To inform Queen Wenhaver [Guinevere] what lay in store . . . The queen ran to Mordred, now her dearest consort,/And told him about the coming of Arthur the king" (24). In Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* on the other hand, Mordred is nothing more than a pure villain just for the sake of being evil and providing a foe to fight, while Guinevere still keeps her secret love—this time for the knight Sir Lancelot.

On the other side of the coin stands Gawain—a noble, most honorable, and seemingly perfect and pure knight of the highest standard. In the Alliterative Morte Arthure, although King Arthur declares earlier that he trusts Mordred most, he has great affection for Gawain, possibly much more than he has for Mordred. Arthur shows that affection when he mourns Gawain's death, unwilling to stop grieving: "Here lies my promise of ease, my prowess in arms;/My heart and my strength hung wholly on him./My counselor, my comfort, who carried all my hopes,/King of all knights that lived under Christ,/You were worthy to be king, though I wore the crown" (The Alliterative 237). Arthur kisses Gawain's dead body and the author writes that "his great heart would have burst with grief then and there," (237) if another knight and several great lords had not arrived to pull Arthur

out of his grieving state. Layamon, however, only shows a hint of that affection in Brut: "Dead is King Angel, one of the dearest of men,/And Walwain [Gawain] my nephew—I wish I had never been born!" (25). In "Brut" King Arthur mourns only briefly and his speech is not quite as dear as in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*. One can assume, however, that his outcry reflects affection for Gawain.

More indication of Gawain's honor can be found in J.R.R. Tolkien's translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. When the Green Knight appears at King Arthur's court during the New Year's celebration, he asks the king for an exchange of blows. Clearly Arthur and his knights believe that they will not suffer a mortal wound if they take down the Green Knight first. Therefore, Arthur finally steps up and accepts the challenge, whereupon the Green Knight hands him his axe for the first blow. Gawain, however, must wisely understand the risk that is being undertaken by the king and immediately offers to carry out the challenge in his stead: "I implore with prayer plain/that this match should now be mine" (*Sir Gawain* 36). Gawain does not advance without the explicit permission of King Arthur. In a way, one could say, Gawain saves Arthur's life that day.

Quite contrary to Gawain's usual image is that which Springer gives him in *I am Mordred*. Springer gives Gawain the "rough edge" by letting him make rash and inconsiderate decisions. Furthermore, Gawain drinks until he cannot think clearly any longer. When the knight Pellinore returns to Arthur's court with King Lothe's head, declaring that he has killed him, Gawain immediately decides that Pellinore must die—and that his death shall be without honor: "And as Pellinore was a knight of the Round Table, he could not be challenged; he would have to be ambushed" (Springer 80). Gawain shows no care about anything but his revenge for his father's death, even though Pellinore claims that he killed Lothe in fair combat. While Pellinore appears to be a dark, evil, and careless knight, Mordred still considers Gawain's plan to be murder. As the plan is put into action, Gawain offers Mordred a turn to hit or stab Pellinore. When Mordred refuses, Gawain says to him in disgust: "How do you ever expect to be a knight?" (87). In addition, Nyneve tells Mordred of another honorless deed of Gawain: "His first quest. He defeated a strong knight. The man lay on the ground begging for mercy, but Gawain swung his sword to kill him. As the blow fell, the knight's lady threw herself in the way, and Gawain could not stop the sword. He beheaded her" (83). However, Springer doesn't leave it at that. She weaves the thread of blood in Gawain's hands through the rest of the book. When, after Lothe's death, Gawain's mother begins a love affair with Lamorak, son

of Pellinore, Gawain rushes into her chamber in Tintagel and brutally murders her. Just as Springer is one of the few who give Mordred a motive and let him carry some honor, she also seems to be one of few, if not the only one, who portray Gawain as a somewhat villainous character.

Clearly, there are many ways to look at both Mordred and Gawain. They share similarities as well as display contrasts. It is sad that Mordred receives so little attention, when there is so much room for additions, amazing stories, and a variety of characterizations. It may be interesting to create a narration in which both Mordred and Gawain share the center stage, both with deep and complex personalities. There is clearly great potential for more than just pure good and evil in both of them. This would keep readers' interest alive as it would open new doors to an already remarkable legend and provide a fresh experience for all who love the Arthurian Legend. Taking a closer look at both characters shows that it is important to keep this fantastic legend alive.

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