THE
WRITE
STUFF

Volume 26, 2016

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How My Father's Death Triggered My Depression

The most important event in my life was when my father, Edward Waegelein, died. It was in a house fire, on the morning of April 1, 2001. This event permanently scarred me, by tainting my perception of the world around me with adolescent memory loss, depression, and PTSD. To explain why my father's death influenced me so dramatically, I must stress how important he was to me.

When I was a small child, my father was the most important person in my life. I idolized him, to the point of wanting to imitate him in every way. In the morning, I would get dressed in the same order as he did, and similarly eat what he ate in the same order. In the evening, I would listen with rapt attention to his storied past, or I would be entranced at his musical skill as he freestyled on a variety of stringed instruments. I would spend as much time as I could around him. Before I began school, he taught me how to read, write, and do basic arithmetic. He tried teaching me about how the world worked at a young age. He would watch educational TV with me, like The History Channel, The Discovery Channel, National Geographic, and various other channels from Dish TV. He explained to the best of his ability what we were watching. He was a life-long learner, and wanted to instill in me that desire for knowledge.

When my father was a newborn, he had malformed eyelids, requiring surgery to remove them. As a teen, he survived a car crash that crushed his legs. Three years after being told he wasn't ever going to walk again, he managed to regain full ambulatory motion. He then enlisted in the Army, serving in the Vietnam War. By the time I was born, his vision was impaired to the point of being declared legally blind. I don't remember what happened that caused his vision to degrade.

Shortly after my little sister was born, my father broke his back while working at the Pilgrim Nuclear Generating Station. He was bedridden for a couple of years, and was effectively wheelchair-bound for the rest of his life after that. He didn't want to accept that, and always tried to push himself. He refused to use the wheelchair in the house, instead opting to walk with a cane

whenever possible. He was the type of person who wanted to do things for himself, and could not accept his injuries as a reason to rely on others. I'm not saying he was correct, but he had the drive to constantly push himself, despite the difficulty or availability of assistance. That drive, as well as a lot of other reasons not relevant to this topic, pushed my mother into splitting with him and moving out.

His need to do things on his own compounded with his visual impairment was the reason that the first house fire happened. One night, he decided to light a fire in the fireplace, and from it, a burning piece of paper fluttered onto a nearby couch. The couch cushion caught fire, and his attempts to smother it were unsuccessful. Once he realized that the fire was out of his control, he somehow awoke the four other people in the house (myself, my brother, my sister, and my half-sister) and got us all out safely. Months later, when my father bought a new house for the whole family to move into, my brother and I decided to stay with him while my sister and half-sister instead opted to stay with my mother and her not-yet-new-husband.

Now that I've set the stage, I'd like to touch again upon my relationship with my father. Specifically, I want to bring up the last interaction I had with the man. I was 11 years old, and was starting the rebellious phase of childhood adolescence. I had gotten in a fight with my father over something childish and stupid; I wanted to put some video game systems in a tool shed we had and create outdoor gaming room. Of course he said no, as putting electrical toys in a leaky wooden shack is an obvious bad idea, and I went to bed angry not long after. I don't remember the last thing I said to him, but I do remember it was said in anger. For years, this has haunted me. I bring this up because it taught me something very important: never go to bed angry. As foolish a fight as it was, I can never undo the fact that the last interaction I had with my father was a bad one.

That morning, at what I'm assuming was around 3:20 AM, I awoke to the sound of my father screaming. I raised my head up, and through the open doorway saw the glow of a raging fire on the hallway wall. At first I thought it was a bad dream. I laid my head back down on my pillow, but the screaming didn't stop. "Come on, Jeramy (an old nickname based on my middle name), you have to get up!" I heard a voice I didn't recognize inside my head. My eyes shot open, confused, and as I realized this was real, I scrambled out of bed.

As I stood, I noticed the dark clouds of smoke billowing

into the room. I grabbed the sheet I had wrapped myself in, and placed a corner over my mouth in an attempt to reduce the amount of smoke I inhaled. I ran down the hall, turned to the living room, and saw flames covering the far wall and reaching up to the ceiling. I dropped to the floor to get under the smoke, attempting to get some idea of where my father was, and started to panic. "I'm going to die right here on this floor!" I thought. I got to my feet, barreled down the stairs, and out the front door, where I saw my brother.

My brother clasped me in a hug. He fled when he heard the screams, and was too scared to go back inside to find me once outside. I didn't blame him; I wasn't about to go back inside the burning building to find our father. We quickly came to the agreement that every second spent not slamming on a neighbor's door was a second wasted, and ran across the street to do just that. After about half a minute of beating on their door and screaming for help with no response, I felt completely hopeless. Should I run to another neighbor's house? I did know a couple of people in the neighborhood. As I started to run to another house, the window above the door opened.

I don't remember what the woman said when she started shouting, but the woman who owned the house's tone went from anger to shock to fear in record time. In what felt like seconds, everyone in the house was awake, the fire department was called, and I was sent to the bathroom to wash the soot off my face. I looked at myself in the mirror. My hair was singed. My face was black with ash, save for the lines from tears rolling down my face. I was wearing a disheveled t-shirt and underwear. I don't know how long I spent staring at myself in the mirror, but I didn't move until someone knocked, asking if I was all right. It could have been seconds, or minutes. I was effectively paralyzed, locked in on my own eyes. I had a difficult time looking at myself in the mirror for years after.

I quickly ran water over my face, opened the door, and was handed some clothing, which I promptly put on. I stepped outside and watched the fire burn, still hearing my father's screaming over the popping wood. I tried to reflect on the fact that this was the second time in two years that everything I ever owned was destroyed in front of me, but it was hard to focus on the material aspect when I could still hear the death screams of the most important person in my life. In hindsight, my father was probably not still screaming then, but at the time, I couldn't get the sound

out of my head. I sat there watching with my brother until the fire department and ambulances arrived. I was brought inside, and strapped to an oxygen tank, where I drifted off to sleep.

I awoke hours later in the ER surrounded by my sister, half-sister, mother, and stepfather. I remember telling my sister that I thought our father got away, unable to believe that he was really dead. I don't remember much of my childhood after this point. My memories are spotty and incomplete at best.

I didn't want to talk to a therapist or psychologist, and I didn't process my grief. I tried to internalize everything, to hide what I felt. I replayed the events of that night over and over again in my head for months. Eventually I did talk to a psychologist, but I was against taking medication. Talking about my father helped clear my head, but I didn't take any steps to repair the damage that was done. I became antisocial, and spent more time losing myself in facts or fantasy than dealing with reality.

I started intentionally sabotaging myself in school. I distanced myself from other people, trying to avoid making connections. Once I bombed my first year of high school classes, I was sent to the Wareham Cooperative School, which we called "The Annex." Two years after I went there, it started transitioning to a place where at-risk teens were given more directed, personalized attention instead of a half-day school-to-work program, which led to my dropping out.

Once I turned 18, I moved to Florida, where I ended up getting easy access to alcohol to drown my emotional pain. My depression had worsened, and after about a year, I felt like I was at too great a suicidal risk to be without family. My sister drove to Florida and back to get me. I moved back in with family, which helped stem my depression for a time being.

After a few years, I moved out again, and my depression came back in full swing. I buried myself in my job, an overnight stint at Walmart, and when that didn't work, I moved closer to my family and transferred to a different Walmart, where I eventually was fired. After losing my job, I couldn't continue paying my rent, and I slept on a friend's couch for a year and a half. I eventually got another job, and after less than a month, had an emotional breakdown leading to a week-long stay in New Bedford's Community Crisis Stabilization (CCS) unit.

Here, after a decade, I finally accepted the fact that I need treatment for the depression I had felt for so many years. I needed to learn how to start accepting and processing the grief I

felt. Through the CCS, I was recommended to the therapist and psychologist I use today. They've helped me undo the damage that a broken psyche and a decade of bad decisions have wrought. I wouldn't know where I would be today without them.

I don't often think about my father anymore. I can't remember what his face looked like, or how the songs he would play went. I've come to accept what happened, and how powerless I was to stop it. I've learned how to deal with loss and death. And I've gained the ability to adapt to what life throws my way. The circumstances of my father's death are the most horrific thing that could have happened to me, but I've finally learned how to be a stronger person at the end of it all.

Lindsey Agnes
ENL 101 Honors

The Psychology of Design

Design psychology is a relatively new field that can offer a multitude of different career options and requires knowledge of a wide array of psychology topics and concepts. The idea behind design psychology is that an important part of designing anything, whether it is the interior of a space or the graphic for a logo, is to know who is being designed for and what the function of the design is. Understanding the way the mind works and how people react to different stimuli is a crucial component of designing with the basis of psychology. There are two main types of design psychology: interior design psychology and graphic design psychology. Both areas of study use the same basic psychology principles. The designing process should involve more than just attention to aesthetic pleasure. The key is to learn the foundations of cognitive, environmental, and behavioral psychology in order to understand their effect on elements of design, and how people will react to their surroundings based on this knowledge.

Psychology is the study of the mind and behavior. It applies theories and principles to groups and individuals in order to better understand them. It is important to know the fundamentals of psychology that apply to design before the creative process is explored. Cognitive psychology, environmental psychology, and behavioral psychology all work together to create an in depth understanding of people and how they think and act under different

circumstances and when presented with different stimuli. Cognitive psychology is the study of how people think. It explores such mental processes as attention, memory perception, and creativity. If designers can understand how a person's focus and arousal level can be affected by certain shapes, colors, or structure, then they can manipulate those features in order to change someone's thinking. Environmental psychology explores the interaction between individuals and their surroundings. Whether they are natural environments or social settings, each scene can affect a person in a different way. Environmental psychology is especially important for interior designers to understand. The nature of their creativity is to explore what surroundings are best for certain functions and for the people who inhabit these places. Behavioral psychology, or behaviorism, focuses on the idea that mental processes can be noted within observable behavior. Designers interested in changing a person's behavior should first observe their reactions when they are surrounded by different environments or when presented with different shapes and colors.

Usually when designing a room inside of a house, people only take into consideration the aesthetic appeal of the space. What is often disregarded is the psychological effect that design can have on the subconscious mind. To make sure that a home isn't giving off the wrong impression or creating a negative mood, it is important for designers to understand the psychology of decor. Color is a large component of how people experience the world around them. What they don't realize is that color has a distinct impact on mood and emotion. "Modern color psychology dates its origins to the early 19th- century when Johann Wolfgang von Goethe published his book, *Theory of Colours*" (Mastroeni). Most researchers and designers agree on the modern color theory, and what each shade evokes. The primary colors- -red, yellow, and blue- -each offer definite qualities. Red is recognized as a stimulant; it is a color that increases enthusiasm. Yellow is associated with optimism and happiness. Blue has a calming effect on the mind. The secondary colors are green, orange, and purple. Green is a soothing natural color that can relax the mind. Orange, like the color red, stimulates activity and can offer a sense of energy. Purple is an uplifting color that is associated with royalty and luxury. Natural colors like gray and brown often give a sense of serenity and help with relaxation. Black is associated with power and white represents clarity and purity (Ilagan). When choosing the color of an interior space, a designer must take into

consideration the effect colors have on the mood of a room.

"In his book, *The System of Objects*, sociologist Jean Baudrillard argues that every object chosen to fill a space helps to inform its function. But, beyond that, every item that fills an interior acts as an expression of our own personalities and desires" (Mastroeni). In interior design, the possessions filling a space can be just as important in dictating the impression of the environment as the color of its walls. Baudrillard proposes that objects say something about their users or owners. There are four ways of an object obtaining value: function, exchange, symbolic, and sign. The functional value of an object is its designated purpose. The exchange value of an object is its economic value. The symbolic value of an object is the emotional significance that an object may have. The sign value of an object is its value within the overall market of objects. Its value is determined based off of the status it holds in relation to other objects. Using the concept of "use-value" in buying furniture or decorations for an interior space can give the designer more control over the impact that an environment can make.

Perception of Space is an important concept for interior designers to understand. In order to make homes and other environments appear more open and welcoming the space must be used in a certain way. Furniture size, color, and lighting can all be altered in order to make a space appear larger. Proxemics come into play when designers are faced with an environment that will be occupied by many individuals. Proxemics study the amount of space people feel necessary to have between themselves and others. The concepts of Crowding and Personal Space are observed. Making sure there is enough space between people so that they are comfortable is crucial for a designer to take into account.

"Developed by German psychologists in the 1920s, Gestalt theories explain how people tend to organize visual elements into groups, and how the whole is often greater than its parts" (Taylor). When it comes to graphic design, the Gestalt principles often come into play ensuring that an image is engaging and memorable to the observer's mind. Similarity, continuation, closure, proximity, and figure-ground are the five principles that Gestalt theorists use to explain how the brain applies meanings to figures and symbols. The Gestalt principle of similarity occurs when a figure is composed of objects that appear similar to the eye. Instead of being seen as many separate shapes, the mind is able to put them together and the person sees the figure as a whole rather than the

sum of its parts. The Gestalt principle of continuation happens when the eye follows through a path of direction in an image that leads to another object. The brain is able to perceive this direction and understand that in order to obtain the complete meaning of the image; both objects must be seen as a whole. Closure occurs when a shape is not complete but contains broken lines. The eye is able to draw them together and essentially fill in the missing pieces of the puzzle until the image can be seen as a whole. The principle of proximity is when shapes are placed close together, they can be seen as a whole. The Gestalt principles of figure and ground occur because there is a clear object in the foreground (the figure) and the rest of the image creates the background (The Gestalt).

Many times the use of graphic design in the media and on the internet is used to market a product or advertise for a corporation. Social and behavioral psychology concepts can be used to predict the likely behavior of a person presented with a graphic advertisement. Designers can attain an upper-hand when creating graphic designs for advertisement or display, if they have an understanding of visceral reactions and social influence on the human psyche. Visceral reactions are subconscious brain signals working to give our conscious body a reaction to an image. They are rooted in our genetic material so we can not control them. This makes images that evoke visceral reactions very powerful because they work beneath our conscious brain activity. Visceral reactions are consistent within different ages, personalities, and cultures; therefore, designs can be used to predict reactions fairly easily (Johnson). Social influence on reactions to design and decision-making can predict changes in human behavior. The six principles of social influence are reciprocation, authority, commitment, scarcity, liking, and social proof. People feel obligated to return favors and reciprocate social behavior. People respect authority and are generally submissive to those who have power over them. Commitment or consistency states that people want their values and previous behaviors to align with their current decision making processes and social behaviors. Scarcity explains that the more unavailable a resource or product is, the more likely a person is to want it. The more people like another, the more they will want to say yes to that person. Social proof states that people are more likely to behave like the people around them (Johnson). Both the concepts of visceral reactions and social influence can be used by designers to influence people towards a desired action.

Today, there is so much competition for designers. New trends for interiors of homes, and flashy online advertisements

come in such abundance that even consumers are faced with overwhelming decisions. If a designer has the psychological background knowledge about their client or designated audience, they have significant leverage over other designers that do not have this information. So many of the elements of design can be manipulated in order to push the buyer or client toward a desired purchase or evoke a specific emotion or mood. There a quite a number of different concepts and principles that can be applied to different types of design, so it is important that the function and audience of a design are the first things taken into account. Whether it is for interior design or graphic design, a background in psychology is useful knowledge for a designer to have.

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A Model for the World

In any election, whether it be national or local, the health care of that country is sure to be a hotly contested issue. This is true for nearly every country, year after year. That is because human health and disease is a constant, it is not a war that can be won, it is not a plan that can be solved with a big enough budget, and it is not something that will go away if candidates ignore it. Whether it is First World countries such as the United States or England or struggling Third World countries in Africa, there is constant debate on how to improve the health care system to better reach rural communities, treat and prevent illness, and keep costs reasonably low. These countries look to other health care systems to pick the most successful features and try to emulate them in their own system. However, the country whose health care system that is most often ignored, despite its great successes, is Cuba. With its low infant mortality rate, high life expectancy, and its history of treating diseases as well as preventing them, most countries have dismissed Cuban health care system and its potential aspects in improving rich and poor countries alike. Epidemiologists Richard Cooper, Joan Kennelly, and Pedro Ordunez-Garcia state:

> Cuba represents an important alternative example where modest infrastructure investments combined with a well-developed public health strategy have generated health status measures comparable with those of industrialized countries. . . . If the Cuban experience were generalized to other poor and middle-income countries human health would be transformed. (817)

Countries around the world should look to Cuba's health care system to improve their own. Developed nations can learn from Cuba's cost-effective strategies, and poorer nations can adopt a similar system to produce similar results.

The history of Cuba's transformation in its approach to health care is important in understanding how it was able to turn itself from a country with an infant mortality of over 80 per 1000 live births in the 1950's (Campion and Morrissey 297) to the current 4.2 per 1000 live births (Lamrani), which is actually lower than United States' infant mortality rate. In 1959, after the Cuban revolution, two-thirds of the country's 6,300 physicians lived in the capital of Havana (Cooper, Kennelly, and Ordunez-Garcia 818).

This created a system in which the people living in rural areas had little to no access to medical care. Throughout the 70's and 80's, Cuba began a policy of having some of its doctors live in these rural areas to care for those living far from major cities. Cuba also began building polyclinics across the country, which became an "organizational hub for 20 to 40 neighborhood-based family doctor-and-nurse offices" (Reed). Today there are over 498 polyclinics across the nation, each serving between 30,000 and 60,000 people. Cuba then began to extensively train large numbers of family doctors with the goal of having physicians and nurses living on every block. This resulted in the current ratio of one doctor per 120 families. Furthermore, this increase in the availability of doctors and medical facilities all came at no cost to the patient. The government of Cuba manages the budget so the population has access to completely free health care. In addition to health care, medical school is also offered for free to Cuban and international students (Reed).

        Despite Cuba's low GNP, on par with countries such as Bolivia and Argentina, it has managed to accomplish great feats in public health. It was the first country to eliminate polio in 1962, and measles in 1966, it has the lowest AIDS rate in the Americas, and the highest rate of treatment for hypertension in the world (Cooper, Kennelly, and Ordunez-Garcia 818). Cuba also has the same life expectancy as the United States at 78 years. Maternal and infant health is also a main focus of the health care. With the advent of *Programa Nacional de Atencion Materno-Infantil* in 1970, communities and the government work together to build favorable environments for new and expecting mothers. Mothers are educated for the treatment of their newborns and inspections on work and home ensure the child is not exposed to harmful toxins. Then with the collapse of the Soviet Union (a major trading partner) in the early 1990's, it caused an economic crisis that affected pregnant mothers above all. Their total caloric intake was drastically reduced, which increased the incidence of low birth weight. To combat this, the Cuban government set up cafeterias and maternity houses for pregnant women. Within two years, the health of women of child-bearing age and infant mortality returned to normal, well before the economy had (Cooper, Kennelly, and Ordunez-Garcia 820).

        All of this has been accomplished in spite of Cuba's low GNP and the economic embargo by the United States. One reason for the medical successes is the country's focus on preventive care, not solely curative care. Doctors work with patients to

educate them on health hazards such as pollutants and trash, and even inspect homes for signs of still water that can be breeding sites for mosquitos carrying the Dengue virus. Although smoking rates are still high in Cuba and smoking in public places, though prohibited, is commonplace, policies and strategies are being made to change this. Communities with especially high rates of smoking have polyclinics which offer counselling meetings for smokers a few nights a week. Doctors can also be called upon to be sociologists and social workers, visiting homes to analyze household composition and family dynamics and how that can relate to a patient's wellbeing (Rubio).

Cuba has also extended its focus on health to other parts of the world, providing aid for countries in Latin America and Africa. It has a history of sending in physicians and nurses to areas of disasters. These include sending doctors to victims of Chernobyl, giving disaster aid to Central America after hurricane Mitch, and staffing a hospital in Haiti. (Cooper, Kennelly, and Ordunez-Garcia 821). Cuba has also worked with the Venezuelan government by placing physicians and dentists in the poor and rural communities of Venezuela as well as agreeing to educate thousands of new Venezuelan physicians. In 2004, a partnership among the two countries called "Operation Miracle" was launched with the goal of treating the poor who suffer from cataracts and other eye diseases, as well as providing eyeglasses and contact lenses for those with vision impairment (Lamrani). This, of course, was all provided free of charge. In the last decade, nearly 3.5 million people have had their vision restored because of this program. In 2014, Cuban pharmaceutical companies launched a vaccination campaign against malaria - which kills 630,000 people a year, most of them children - in 15 West African countries. Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary General of the United Nations said of Cuban doctors, "They are always the first to arrive and the last to leave. They remain in place after the crises. Cuba can be proud of its health care system, a model for many countries." As of 2008, there were 37,000 Cuban health care workers in 70 countries (Campion and Morrissey 297).

Biotechnology and biopharmaceuticals are big areas of investment in Cuba. As a way to deal with the strict economic embargos and the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba began to develop its own pharmaceutical industry. Not only is it able to provide most of the necessary pharmaceuticals to its population, it also exports to other nations. They were able to produce the first vaccine for meningitis B and a vaccine for *Haemophilus influenzae* type b as a result. Initiatives have begun between US corporations and the Center for Molecular Immunology in Havana to work on cancer research and vaccines (Cooper, Kennelly, and Ordunez-Garcia 819).

Although the Cuban health care system has many positive aspects, there are still areas for improvements. Cuba is still a developing country, so although it has a surplus of physicians and clinics, it lags behind in new technology and cutting-edge treatment. Since it is a universal health care system, there is no other option for individual preference or choice. The patient has no other choice than to be a part of the public health care system, for better or worse, since there is no private health sector in Cuba. Physicians are only paid about $20 a month, however they do receive government benefits such as housing and food subsidies. Edward Campion and Stephen Morrissey give the example of a neurologist whose hospital only got a CT scanner 12 years ago. U.S. students have reported that, "operation rooms run quickly and efficiently but with very little technology" (298). Many of these limitation of resources and technology in hospitals is blamed, however, on the economic embargo placed by the U.S.

The Cuban health care system, although not perfect, can be very useful to countries around the world. The main reason it has been dismissed as nonviable for the capitalistic and democratic nations around the world is the misconception that Cuba's health care and its political principals are firmly linked. This is an incorrect way of thinking and countries should start looking at the Cuban system independent of other political factors. Poor countries in Africa and Latin America should look to the Cuban health care system as an example of the possibilities that a nation with low GDP and economic embargos can achieve. Cuba in the 1950's and 60's was on the same level of infant mortality and life expectancy as many of these poor African and Latin American countries. However, they were able to turn themselves around in less than two generations to become a country that is on par with the most economically powerful nation in the world, the U.S., in many health aspects. This proves that many points of the Cuban system, whether it is its dedication to mothers and young children, the determination of putting a doctor on every block, and doing all this at minimal costs with little technological resources has made the Cuban health care system one of the most valuable in the world.

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Prevention for Opioid Drug Abuse in Massachusetts

On April 2, Kathleen Errico of Haverhill woke up at 3:45 a.m. to find that her 23-year-old daughter, Kelsey Endicott, had lost her life due to a heroin overdose. Ms. Errico shares that her daughter, "turned to drugs to make her feel normal," and that Kelsey wasn't aware of how heroin, "would devastate her family and tear it apart, how it would take her job and leave her penniless, or how it would steal her son from her arms." Kelsey's son, whose second birthday is soon approaching, now lives with Ms. Errico (MacQuarrie and Farragher). Unfortunately, cases such as Kelsey's are becoming increasingly common in Massachusetts, calling for a much-needed resolution to the opioid epidemic.

Drugs contributing to the opioid epidemic include heroin as well as prescription painkillers such as morphine, oxycodone, and hydrocodone ("Opioid Addiction"). In Massachusetts, the number of hospital visits related to opioid painkillers has roughly doubled from 2007 to 2014, with 31,000 visits in 2007 rising to a staggering 57,000 visits in 2014 (Freyer). A notable increase can also be seen in the number of opioid-related fatalities in the state. In 2000, 338 unintentional fatal opioid overdoses were

recorded in Massachusetts ("United States"). The number of opioid-related deaths has continued to rise each year with 561 fatalities in 2008, 668 fatalities in 2012, and 1,099 fatalities in 2014 ("United States"). This data displays a 21% increase in the number of opioid-related fatalities from 2013 to 2014, and a 65% increase from 2012 to 2014 ("United States"). The increase in the number of opioid-related deaths in recent years has also shown to be more prevalent in certain areas of the state. Freyer shares, "The Berkshires, Southeastern Massachusetts, and the Lawrence-Lowell area have the highest concentrations of residents who visited the hospital with opioid-related problems." It has also been found that those earning less that $50,000 a year are more apt to be affected by opioid abuse (Freyer). As more people are affected by opioid abuse every year in Massachusetts, it is essential to understand what is causing this epidemic.

The amount of opioid medications prescribed as well as the immense availability of heroin is driving the opioid epidemic. While opioids were once only regularly prescribed to patients battling cancer and other terminal illnesses, there has been an increase in the use of opioids to treat, "chronic nonmalignant medical conditions, like low-back pain, sciatica and various musculoskeletal problems" (Friedman). With a rise in the number of conditions using painkillers to combat pain, more and more opioid prescriptions are being distributed to patients. In fact,the medical use of opioids has multiplied by ten in the past twenty years, with about half of all prescriptions prescribed by pain specialists now being opioid pain relievers (Friedman). Addiction to these medications has become increasingly common due in part to the immense amount of opioids in circulation in the United States. In 2012, an estimated, "259 million prescriptions were written for opioids, which is more than enough to give every American adult their own bottle of pills" ("Opioid Addiction"). Along with the massive amount of opioid prescriptions prescribed, the abundant availability of heroin is driving this epidemic. Heroin is both easily obtained and is inexpensive (Freyer). When the supply of an opioid painkiller is cut short, heroin can become a cheaper alternative for someone struggling with opioid addiction. Both the availability of heroin and the amount of opioid painkillers being distributed can be partially blamed for driving this epidemic.

As seen in the number of opioid-related deaths in recent years, the number of families affected by opioid abuse is growing. Families are being torn apart while individuals are losing their lives to opioid overdoses. Studies have shown that those who

are addicted to opioids live nearly fifteen years less than people who are not addicted to the painkillers ("Findings of Opioid Task Force"). In addition to this, "People who are abusing opioids are also at a higher risk for liver disease, Hepatitis C, and HIV infection" ("Findings of Opioid Task Force"). Effects of opioid abuse have also been observed to affect children. Freyer shares that in Massachusetts, "The rate of babies born dependent on opioids increased more than fivefold from 2004 to 2013, and in 2009 was three times the national average." These numbers will continue to rise if steps are not taken to try and prevent the progression of this epidemic.

While treatment for opioid abuse is extremely important, Massachusetts has one of the most effective substance abuse treatment systems in the United States ("Findings of the Opioid Task Force"). With the amount of opioid-related deaths continuing to rise each year, focusing on the prevention of opioid abuse would have the most beneficial effect on solving the epidemic. The use of a mass media campaign focusing on the dangers of opioid abuse would effectively reduce the amount of opioid-related hospital visits and fatalities in the state by educating the public on the risks and dangers associated with the misuse of opioid pain relievers.

Mass media campaigns essentially work by repeatedly exposing specific messages to large populations by means of radio, television, billboards, magazines, and newspapers (Wakefield, Loken, and Hornik). Constant exposure to specific messages generates responses that can ultimately lead to positive change. By frequently addressing specific messages to viewers, discussion of the particular topic becomes more common, which can lead to changes in behavior (Wakefield, Loken, and Hornik). Many campaigns also choose to involve content that produces an emotional response for its viewers (Wakefield, Loken, and Hornik). In regards to the opioid epidemic, emotional responses could be obtained by sharing stories of fatal opioid overdoses from family members of those who have lost their lives due to opioid abuse. Constantly airing these stories in the form of brief commercials or other forms of media would spark conversation throughout communities, bringing more attention to the issue. In addition to this, revealing facts and statistics relating to the growth of the epidemic would put an emphasis on the severity of opioid abuse in Massachusetts. The attention and conversation drawn from these commercials would ultimately lead to a change in the misuse of opioids. A mass media campaign regarding the dangers of opioids would effectively reduce opioid-related hospital visits

and fatalities in Massachusetts as it has been proven to be effective in other scenarios.

The use of mass media campaigns has shown to be effective in regard to the decline of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities in the United States. In 1982, the number of drinking and driving deaths was roughly 21,000 people, which accounted for around 50% of all motor vehicle deaths that year (Green). During this time, the Advertising Council, a company that produces public service advertising, began creating advertisements that aimed to reduce drinking and driving fatality rates (Green). The 1990s brought phrases from "Drinking and Driving Can Kill a Friendship" to "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk" (Green). Messages such as these proved to be effective amongst the public. In 1999, the United States recorded approximately 12,500 alcohol-impaired driving fatalities, which was only about 30% of motor vehicle fatalities in that year (Green). The use of media campaigning continued throughout the 2000s with a campaign aimed at buzzed driving. Targeting men aged 21-34, the phrase "Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving" helped contribute to bringing the number of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities to less than 11,000 in 2009 (Green). The use of media campaigning has been proven to effectively reduce the number of drinking and driving fatalities in the United States.

The use of mass media campaigns has also shown to contribute to the declining use of cigarettes in the United States. In 1965, a little over 42% of adults smoked cigarettes in the U.S. ("Trends in Current Cigarette Smoking"). The introduction of antismoking campaigns began to focus on the advantages of quitting smoking and emphasized the hazards associated with smoking (Wakefield, Loken, and Hornik). These media campaigns helped contribute to the decline of smoking among adults in the U.S. to roughly 23% percent in 1999 ("Trends in Current Cigarette Smoking"). In recent years, a more aggressive approach was taken to combat cigarette use among Americans. In 2012, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) managed the campaign "Tips from Former Smokers," which aimed to encourage smokers to quit smoking (Liss). This campaign created powerful, emotional responses among many viewers. The ads featured tips from former smokers whose lives have been dramatically affected by smoking. Despite only lasting for three months, this campaign encouraged over 1.6 million smokers to try to quit smoking and successfully helped over 100,000 individuals do so (Liss). The use of mass media campaigns in recent years has undoubtedly

contributed to the reduction of smoking among adults in the United States to just under 17% in 2014 ("Trends in Current Cigarette Smoking").

The impact of mass media campaigns has also been observed in Australia. A study in Australia assessed the effectiveness of the media campaign "SunSmart" in regard to the prevention of skin cancer (Wakefield, Loken, and Hornik). The company encourages and promotes the wearing of protective clothing, the use of sunscreen, and the avoidance of direct sun exposure during peak sunlight hours of the day (Wakefield, Loken, and Hornik). Various forms of advertising were used throughout the campaign. The fifteen-year study found that there was a reduction in the prevalence of melanoma in the areas exposed to the campaign, especially among young individuals (Wakefield, Loken, and Hornik). This use of media campaigning from the company "SunSmart" displays the great influence that media campaigns are capable of.

While mass media campaigns have proven to be effective in producing positive changes in society, some people would argue that they take years to produce any significant change. Although media campaigns can in fact take time to result in substantial change, the effect that a mass media campaign would have on the opioid epidemic would be worthwhile. With the continued efforts of various treatment facilities for opioid abuse in Massachusetts, the use of media campaigning would function to educate the public on the dangers of opioid misuse and would consequently reduce the negative effects that opioid abuse has on society.

One alternative solution to preventing opioid abuse in Massachusetts is limiting the amount of opioid painkillers prescribed to patients. Recently, an opioid bill has been passed in Massachusetts that aims to prevent the misuse of opioid painkillers. This bill limits a seven-day supply of medication for initial opioid prescriptions in the state (Miller). By doing so, the bill would help decrease the number of opioid painkillers in circulation throughout the public. A decrease in availability of opioids would help to prevent the start of opioid abuse among individuals. Although the bill could reduce the start of opioid abuse, it would not prevent those who are already addicted to opioids from seeking more medication. Individuals who are already addicted to opioids may turn to heroin when supplies of other opioid painkillers are cut short. A mass media campaign would better serve in preventing opioid abuse, as it would target those already affected by opioid abuse, those at risk for being affected, and the general public.

Another alternative solution to preventing opioid abuse in Massachusetts would be to make use of substance abuse prevention programs throughout communities in the state. These programs would educate the public of the various risks and dangers associated with opioid abuse. Schools, workplaces, and town community centers could host these programs. Although these programs would serve to educate people of the dangers of opioid abuse, they would not reach out to large audiences. Also, not every school district or workplace would agree to host these programs as it would take time away from productivity. If these programs were to be held after school and work hours, fewer people would attend because many people do not believe that they are at risk for opioid abuse. The use of mass media campaigning would be more effective in the prevention of opioid abuse as it would constantly deliver messages to large audiences.

With the amount of both opioid-related hospital visits and fatalities in Massachusetts rising each year, steps need to be taken to prevent further growth of this epidemic. Alongside the efforts of treatment facilities for opioid abuse in the state, a mass media campaign would help to prevent the misuse of opioid painkillers. Educating the public of the dangers and risks associated with opioid abuse would help to reduce the overall use of opioid painkillers. Focusing on the prevention of opioid abuse by means of mass media campaigning will effectively help put an end to the opioid epidemic in the state of Massachusetts.

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Two Paths

A white elephant is a possession which its owner cannot dispose of, and whose cost, particularly that of maintenance, is out of proportion to its usefulness ("White-elephant"). White elephants are one of Hemingway's symbols in "Hills Like White Elephants," a story which, if taken literally by the reader, is about a woman, named Jig, and a man who have drinks at a bar near the train station and argue about something initially vague to the reader. However, Hemingway's brilliant skills show that the short story goes much deeper, and the author sets a dark tone and atmosphere through use of symbols, settings and the development of the characters through their dialogue. Hemingway's engaging and realistic story is made up of short words, straightforward sentence structures and vivid descriptions. His minimalistic style and focus on surface elements, without explicitly discussing the underlying themes, suggest that the couple is searching for something that once was. The symbols, setting and dialogue slowly unfold and reveal a deep gulf between the protagonists because the decision they are trying to make is too profound to show each other their inner fears.

This deep gulf of conflict between Jig and the man is shown through symbols throughout the short story. Weeks and Lewis discuss the symbolic significance of Hemingway's title in their work, "Hemingway Hills: Symbolism in 'Hills Like White Elephants.'" The authors explain how "emphasis by position and repetition" (75) show the importance Hemingway gives to the comparison of white elephants. "Besides the reference in the title, there are, within this very short three-page story, two references to the whiteness of the hills and four to them as white elephants" (Weeks and Lewis 75). The first time Hemingway mentions the white elephants is in his title, which lets the reader assume the comparison might just be part of the setting. However, the second time they are mentioned, is when they are compared to the countryside: "The girl was looking off at the line of hills. They were white in the sun and the country was brown and dry. 'They look like white elephants,' she said" (Hemingway 444).

The contrast of the light and the dark shows the deep gulf of conflict between Jig and the man; it suggests the "limitations and aridity" (Weeks and Lewis 75) of the couple's relationship. The decision that the two protagonists have to make is profound, and it does not seem surprising for a couple to struggle throughout

the decision-making process. The comparison of the color, the rounded contour of the hills and the contrast between sorrow and joy, good and bad, portrayed in the colors sets an atmosphere that is vibrantly full of coming change and conflict. Throughout the story, the white hills are mentioned a few times more before finally the man mentions "an awfully simple operation" (Hemingway 445). The man mentions the operation, and as a first-time reader, it seems to come out of nowhere. The symbol of a white elephant in Hemingway's story can now be interpreted as the unplanned pregnancy; in the subsequent argument, the couple discusses the possibility of the abortion. At this point, the symbolic significance of the title and the frequent mention of the hills become unambiguous to the reader. Weeks and Lewis explain, "A number of images and emotional reactions flood the reader's mind as the dialog swiftly makes clear that the girl wants the baby, not the abortion, which he says will make no difference in their relationship and which hypocritically he persists in assuring her he does not want if she objects to it" (76). The man is very calm and describes the procedure as common while the girl is hesitant, at times ironic, and questions more than just the physical aspect of the operation. She is expressing through her questions that she is hoping that their relationship will go back to the way it was prior to the pregnancy and seems deeply afraid of losing the man's love. Their different opinions and the fact that neither of them is able to clearly speak about their feelings forms a deep gulf which sets the tone of the story as quite dark underneath the seemingly ironic conversation about drinks and the sunny countryside.

This underlying dark atmosphere is also confirmed through the conversations of the two main characters in Hemingway's short story. Timothy O'Brien comments specifically on the dialogue in his analysis, "Allusion, Word-Play, and the Central Conflict in Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," and he provides more insight into the fact that neither of the characters is speaking clearly about what they need and desire. The dialogue, with the exception of some shorter paragraphs, carries the entire story and shows the reader the opinions of Jig and the man without their actually discussing the underlying source of disagreement. O'Brien explains that Hemingway demonstrates the features of the genders, "the male's rejection of emotional language and his goal-oriented vocabulary and the woman's imprecise, emotional, relational language" (19), to support the central contrast in the story.

Hemingway shows the reader the couple's disagreement

in the dialogue but doesn't allow his characters to freely speak of their desires. It seems the author has the couple dancing around in circles without ever getting to the core of their aspirations. The only way Jig can express how she feels seems to be through irony or sarcasm. "That is the only thing that bothers us. It's the only thing that's made us unhappy," the man says to Jig, who ironically responds, "And you think then we'll be all right and be happy" (Hemingway 445). This example shows that the man's language in the story overpowers the conversation, and the situation is complicated due to the man's controlling knowledge, which Jig doesn't seem to know how to respond to. O'Brien believes that, "when the girl is expressing her most extreme sense of alienation, her own awareness of her condition" (22), she is trying to touch the man's heart and develop feelings inside of him because deep down inside she is afraid of the aftereffects of the decision. She states, "once they take it away, you never get it back" (446). O'Brien writes, "The man's response is predictable, as it works . . . to rearrange, even deny, her feelings" (O'Brien 22). The man's response, "Come back in the shade . . . . You mustn't feel that way" (Hemingway 446), confirms this observation. The woman's submission throughout the dialogue in most of the story and her then surprisingly firm last words, "I feel fine. There is nothing wrong with me" (Hemingway 446), show that the man's progressive attempts to see the pregnancy as a sickness are only his opinion, and she discovers her own voice, which she decides to share with him in the end. Even though Jig is an independent woman, the couple being not married, her voice in the dialogue and her fear prove that the underlying tone and atmosphere in Hemingway's story is dark and full of fear of the future.

Not only do the characters fear what the future may hold, but they also seem to be searching for something that once was, which becomes comprehensible through the settings in which Hemingway places Jig and the man. Fletcher discusses the important role of the story's setting, connecting both the nature and overall significance in the story and the depth of the conflict. The parts of the story that are not direct dialogue are mostly descriptions of the surroundings, and even prior to being introduced to the characters, the reader receives a detailed description of where this story takes place. Fletcher states, "The train station, somewhere between Barcelona and Madrid, is located between two lines of rails, which in turn lie between 'this side,' and a range of hills in 'brown and dry' country, and 'the other side,' lush and fertile land with 'fields of grain and trees along the

banks of the Ebro'" (17). The railroads serve as a divider between the couple's positions on the topic. This tension in the setting, between once again a good side and a bad side, shows and prepares the reader for the conflict that is about to arise. It also shows the couple what once was, and the situation in which they now find themselves. The trees, river and green represent the couple's longing for something they once had, now gone, which they may never have again. Their current relationship is full of darkness, and the happy times are overshadowed by the decision they are about to make. Hemingway shows this by writing, "The girl stood up and walked to the end of the station. Across, on the other side, were fields of grain and trees along the banks of the Ebro. Far away, beyond the river, were mountains. The shadow of a cloud moved across the field of grain and she saw the river through the trees" (446). The cloud is a metaphor for the baby, throwing a shadow on the couple's relationship, and Jig notices that she is the one who needs to make a decision. She might have realized that their relationship has been too shallow to rely on the man to understand her feelings.

Despite the implied intimacy of their past, their relationship has been both superficial and tenuous, as it is suggested in the description of the bags: 'There were labels on them from all the hotels where they had spent nights.' Now the intimacy has been removed by an urgent problem, Jig's pregnancy, which requires a commitment the man is unwilling to make and the girl is unwilling to demand because pleasure has been the *summum bonum* of their existence together. (Fletcher 17)

The girl has realized that it is more important for her to do what she believes will be the right decision. Shortly after the detailed description of the settings around the couple in the end of the story, the girl demands to stop talking about the issue, which could also be an indicator of the decision she made on her own when she saw the river through the trees. Since the conflict is shown by the differing landscapes on each side of the track, it is tempting to see a connection between the resolution and the two sets of tracks (Fletcher 17). However, the tone continues to be enveloped by a dark mist, and even though the overall atmosphere seems to have been uplifted in the end of the story, Hemingway never completely releases the tension because it is up to the reader to interpret the conclusion.

Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" is strung through with many symbols which are meant to show the deep gulf between the girl and the man. The symbols explain to the

reader the significant contrast between sorrow and joy or good and bad. In this way, the story's setting shows the conflict, and the good sides and the bad sides to the decision that the couple is about to make. The couple is searching for something that once was, maybe something they once had and can never get back. The dialogue shows the development of the individual characters and their perspectives on the issue. It shows how they are hiding their thoughts, covering up their deepest fears and concealing from each other what they actually want. The short story is written with precise patterns in its grammatical structure, and Hemingway's terse sentences have much more to them than just their surface words. The open ending of the short story shows that it is less important to know the path chosen than the significance of the two choices, which will both affect the characters for the rest of their lives.

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We All Die the Solitary Death of a Moth

It is said that one experience can never be perceived the same way by two people. This is certainly true in the case of watching a moth die, as told through the eyes of two authors, Virginia Woolf and Annie Dillard. Written as a response to Woolf's "The Death of a Moth," Annie Dillard's "Death of a Moth" uses the same theme, a reflection on death as a lonely and tiny experience in the vastness of the universe, but produces a different tone than Woolf, shedding light on the emotional state of both authors at the time of writing these pieces. Dillard's piece is a weathered, but determined, reflection on a moth's death, whereas Woolf's piece is a hopeless analysis.

Virginia Woolf's death by suicide is an important component in understanding much of her work. She struggled for years with imbalances in her moods, now known as Bipolar Disorder. From the first sentence, Woolf's voice comes through with a resigned, bitter outlook. "Moths that fly by day are not properly to be called moths; they do not excite that pleasant sense of dark autumn nights and ivy-blossom which the commonest yellow-underwing asleep in the shadow of the curtain never fails to rouse in us" (Woolf 191). Woolf's feelings about herself and her life seem to come through as she speaks so negatively about how useless the day moth is, reflecting her own sense of emptiness and negativity towards herself and her life. As Woolf was known to slip into depressive states, so does the mood of the story as the air is described as becoming cool and transitioning from summer to fall. Woolf describes idly watching a moth on a windowsill reflect the energy of life around her, and workers outside, as it beats itself across each pane of glass. She pities the fact that this creature has only a moth's part in life, even more insignificant than other creatures, whose experience of life is more complex than the simple, foolish, daily activities of this unaware moth. After a short time, she notices that the moth has stopped its dancing and seems to be unable to get upright. She realizes that the moth is about to die. Transfixed, she describes,

> The helplessness of his attitude roused me. It flashed
> upon me that he was in difficulties; he could no
> longer raise himself; his legs struggled vainly. But, as I
> stretched out a pencil, meaning to help him to

> to right himself, it came over me that the failure and
> awkwardness were the approach of death. I laid the
> pencil down again (Woolf 192).

Woolf relates to the moth,the helplessness of life and death, and the idea that even if others do something to help the struggle, it will always be in vain as all must die. In the final moments of the moth's life, it struggles violently and manages to stand upright once more, before finally succumbing to its fate. She remarks on the quietly remarkable rebellion of the act the moth performed, an act of mighty defiance, that normally would have gone unseen.

All of this speaks to the way Woolf viewed her own life, and the hopelessness she eventually succumbed to. Her interpretation of watching a moth struggle, then die, seems to be an empathetic interpretation of the theme. She dies her own death as moth.

Dillard, on the other hand, recounts an experience while camping wherein a moth flew directly into the flame of a candle and became stuck in the wax, burning to death.

> Two years ago I was camping alone in the Blue
> Ridge Mountains in Virginia. I had
> hauled myself and gear up there to read,
> among other things James Ramsey Ullman's
> The Day On Fire, a novel about Rimbaud that
> had made me want to be a writer when
> I was sixteen; I was hoping it would do it again.
> (Dillard 194)

At the time that Annie Dillard was writing "Death of a Moth," she found herself struggling to come to terms with the success of her previous work, Pilgrim at Tinker Creek (Pike 194). It comes as no surprise that in seeking to rediscover the part of her that loved writing while being overwhelmed by fame, she would write a companion piece to Virginia Woolf's"The Death of a Moth," as a way to tap into her influences from the great authors who came before her.

Dillard appears to be relating to her own experience with fame as she describes witnessing the moth burst into flame as it became stuck in the wax, forming a second wick that burned through the night until she blew it out.

> She burned for two hours without changing,
> without bending or leaning—only
> glowing within, like a building fire glimpsed
> through silhouetted walls, like a

hollow saint, like a flame-faced virgin gone to
God, while I read by her light
kindled, while Rimbaud burned out his brains
in a thousand poems, while night
pooled at my feet. (Dillard 194)

Returning home after camping, Dillard saw the abstract pattern on her bathroom floor as a collection of moths.

Dillard's voice throughout her story does not project the hopeless tone of Woolf. Instead, her choice of diction and imagery reveals a frustrated, weathered, yet wiser parallel to the death of the moth. Though she watches the moth burn to death, stuck in the wax and bright with fire, she is now able to reflect on and identify the moths emerging from the pattern on her bathroom floor. Having gained insight from her experiences, she can identify the moths because she feels she has seen them in every form. When people have lived lives in which they have had opportunities to feel like burning moths, they learn about life and death in ways that they would not otherwise come to understand. Dillard's personification of the moth as she watches it becomes trapped and transformed into a second wick illustrates her ongoing search for meaning. Even though this moth's death could have gone unnoticed, enormous only in the moment that it ceased to be, Dillard takes what could have been a lonely and hopeless portrait and uses it as fuel for her flamelike desire to persevere, even if it is a painful experience.

As the moth continued to burn and cast light, even in the macabre state of becoming one with the candle, she too will continue to burn on, despite the odds. She knows the many states of a moth as she knows her own place in the many forms of struggle in the universe.

Virginia Woolf and Annie Dillard both explore the death of a moth as a metaphor for their lives, and the loneliness and insignificance of death. Both authors interpret the experiencebased on what they were going through at the time. While Woolf chose an untimely death by committing suicide, Dillard is still alive, which reflects the differences in the way they viewed the moths they encountered.

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ENL102

"The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" by Katherine Anne Porter: The Portrait of a Woman Scorned and Scarred

Ellen Weatherall suffered psychological trauma when she was left alone at the bridal altar. Although she went on to marry and live a full life, this trauma had a profound impact on her ability to love. She was never again able to open herself completely, to forgive or to trust. Her business-like dealings with the world left her empty and the "bargains" she made with god did not give her the comfort she sought at the end of her life. Katherine Anne Porter suffered losses in her life, and drew from her own experiences when crafting this story. Porter gives us a parable which illustrates the harm caused by carrying a life-long grudge. When Ellen Weatherall refused to forgive, she lost the ability to see the "light" of love in others, in herself, and in her god.

Porter was born Callie Russell Porter. Her mother died just before she reached her second birthday. Her father moved the family in with his mother, Catherine Anne Porter, and Porter was raised by her strictly religious grandmother. Porter suffered

a second loss when her grandmother died just nine years after her mother's passing. Porter must have felt a strong attachment for her grandmother, for after her first divorce she changed her name to Katherine Ann Porter ("Porter" 248-49). Unrue describes Porter's father as "apathetic" (238), clearly unable to love and support his grieving daughter. Porter nearly died during the 1918 influenza outbreak ("Porter" 248; Haussamen 306). Porter converted to Catholicism in 1910 ("Porter" 248), but may have become disillusioned with the faith when, while living in Mexico, she saw how Catholicism had been used to subvert the native culture (Unrue 234). Porter's early losses and the resulting trauma may have impacted her own ability to form close, lasting relationships. Porter was married four times, each marriage ended in divorce ("Porter" 248-49).

In the short story, "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall", it is apparent that Porter is drawing from her own life experiences to provide an intimate portrait of a dying woman reflecting on her life. Hendrick sees direct parallels in the death of Ellen Weatherall and the death of Catherine Anne Porter (177, 179). Haussamen presents a convincing argument that Porter's near-death experience is directly reflected in Ellen's experience (306-07). Unrue, whose essay explores Porter's attitudes toward religion, notes that Porter's experience with Catholicism is clearly demonstrated in this story (235). Both French and Wiesenfarth seek to interpret this story through the human reactions to loss (French 318-19; Wiesenfarth 357). Katherine Anne Porter knew first-hand the pain of loss and the resultant damage to the psyche. She draws directly from this knowledge in crafting the character of Ellen Weatherall.

Similar to the trauma suffered by Porter through the loss of her mother and grandmother, Ellen Weatherall suffered psychological trauma when she was jilted. This damage, caused by the loss of love and trust, impacted her behavior and her ability to relate to others. Children who experience the loss of parents, and adults who are betrayed in relationships, both lose the ability to trust others. Dietrich notes that early parental loss can result in adults who are, "…not able to feel close to others, wherein a part of their affective life is unavailable for involvement" (906). In other words, children who suffer the loss of a parent may build psychological barriers between themselves and other people to avoid being hurt again. Fife observes that betrayal, "precipitates a loss of trust" (344). Ellen was betrayed when George failed to show up for their wedding. To protect herself from further hurt,

Ellen built barriers between herself and others.

Ellen suppressed her anger and pain, married John and raised her family, but she never got over the wounds she suffered when she was jilted. Fife provides insight into the characteristics demonstrated by someone suffering from trauma caused by betrayal, including the inability to form attachments and to emphathize with others (348-54). Ellen chose to marry John, not for love, but because it was her duty to do so. French notes, "Love, the one crucial thing that would have validated her marriage to John, was missing…" (324). On her death bed, it is revealing that Ellen thinks of John without emotion. She would like to see John and point out that she did just fine on her own (Porter 58). Ellen, "used to think of him as a man…" (58), certainly a passionless reference to her deceased husband. Perhaps even more revealing is the passage where Ellen remembers her young children gathering around as she lit the lamp, "The children huddled up to her and breathed like little calves waiting at the bars in the twilight" (Porter 59). On a farm, calves and other livestock are not loved, they are expendable resources. The comparison between the children and calves is a disturbing analogy. Porter presents the portrait of a woman who cares for her husband and children because it is her responsibility, and possibly because they are of some value to her, but not because she loves them.

Ellen moves forward with her life by carefully controlling every aspect, including her family, her home and her relationship with God. According to Unrue, Ellen, "…suppresses the trauma and searches for meaning in orderly rows, one of which is a path to God, or truth" (249). This careful ordering of every aspect of her life demonstrates a compulsion to control. If Ellen can carefully control her world, she cannot be hurt again. French sees Ellen's behavior as "constructive avoidance" noting that "dusting the bronze lion every day was obviously not an important task in running the farm" (320). Wiesenfarth notes, "…she thought by being orderly she could be human" (357). Ellen Weatherall wanted to, "tuck in the edges" and "have everything clean and folded away" (Porter 57). There was no room in her life for the messiness found in relationships, no space for anything she could not completely control, no room for uncertainties in her faith.

As Ellen is dying, suppressed thoughts of George, the man she loved and who left her at the altar, resurface, "For sixty years she has prayed against remembering him and against losing her soul in the deep pit of hell" (Porter 60). She would like to tell

George that she, "was given back everything he took away" (61) yet she suddenly realizes that there was, "something not given back" (61). Ellen realizes something has been missing in her life, something vital. At this moment, when she needs it the most, she has no ability to break through the self-imposed isolation and be comforted by the love of those around her. These thoughts cause Ellen unbelievable agony, yet she cannot find solace in what Father Connolly is offering: forgiveness and the love of God (61). Unrue notes, "the order that characterized Granny's life has been a deceptive order, no meaning at all" (248). As she is dying, her carefully constructed world slips out of her control. Ellen is unable to find the meaning she so desperately needs.

If Ellen Weatherall had been able to forgive George, her life and her death would have been very different. Fife describes the role of forgiveness in healing wounds caused by, "a significant betrayal of a relationship" (347). Forgiving George would have allowed Ellen to see beyond her own feelings of betrayal and hurt and would have helped to remove the barriers she erected to isolate herself, separating her from loving her family and her God.

According to Fife, the act of forgiveness requires humility (355). Fife describes forgiveness as a process, not a single event (360). Without this process, the injured individual may, "…find painful, bitter or angry feelings emerging again" (Fife 360). This is just what Ellen experienced sixty years after the jilting.

Ellen, a good Catholic, could have regularly attended confession and received forgiveness for her sins. The priest visits regularly and speaks with Ellen about her soul. He talks about confession in a joking manner, perhaps encouraging Ellen to avail herself of this rite (Porter 61). The reader learns that, "Granny felt easy about her soul" and is quite sure of her path straight to God (61). Ellen believes, "All is surely signed and sealed as the papers for the new Forty Acres" (61). In this passage, Porter provides evidence of Ellen's hubris. Ellen did not need to be forgiven, and she certainly was not going to forgive anyone else.

Ellen Weatherall lived a full life, but she died a bitter woman. Haussamen observes, "…Weatherall's dying, right up to her last moment, is of a piece with the anxieties and anger that have filled her life" (307). There was no redemption, no last minute salvation. French writes, "She did not let love, or God, lead her; she did not let God, or love, determine the path of her life" (323). Wiesenfarth echoes these sentiments, "…in spite of doing more than many another person might have done in similar

circumstances, she has lived a less than truly satisfying life" (357). Up until the very end, Ellen seems to think that she can do things her own way. At the very moment that she should be most able to let go and to trust in something more, the reader can envision Ellen shaking her fist at God when things don't go according to her plan, "I'll never forgive it" (Porter 63). Rather than go toward the light, she uses her last breath to extinguish it (63).

Writing from first-hand knowledge of love and loss, Porter has provided the portrait of a strong and capable woman forever scarred by the loss of love and her inability to forgive. As Porter's writing moves seamlessly between the first and third person, between Ellen's thoughts and the omniscient narration, the reader is drawn deeper into Ellen's mind as she heads toward her death. Porter's life experiences, as well as her own near-death experience, enable her to craft a deeply personal story. Only Porter, or someone who experienced a life similar to hers, could write this story in such a personal way. The result is breathtaking; the reader is left happy to be alive, thinking of the condition of his or her own soul.

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ENL102
Hope, Tragedy, and the Art of Building Imaginary Fences

The art of drama and the expression of the human emotional spectrum has been captured through the act of plays since the Golden Age of Ancient Greece. Oftentimes referred to as the Aristotelian and Sophoclean oeuvre, the Greeks created a masterpiece of poetic structure known as the tragedy. The critically acclaimed playwright, August Wilson, once said, "Tragedy is the greatest form of dramatic literature. Why settle for anything less than that?" (Weber). Like many other famous playwrights before him, Wilson adopted the structure of the Greek tragedy and made it the framework for numerous characters and plays involved in his Century Cycle—the epic dramatization of the African-American experience during the twentieth century. A provocative play on the external stresses of African Americans during the late 1950s, *Fences*, written by August Wilson, depicts the hardships of being black amidst the persistence of racial tension during the stirrings of the Civil Rights Movement. A classic tale about battling adversity, the play modernizes the structure of the Greek tragedy, by imbuing elements of the tragic hero into the central character of Troy Maxson.

An integral component to the elaborate scheme of tragedy is known as the tragic hero. For millennia, the characterization of the Greek tragic hero remained static and seldom changed. Until 1949, when legendary playwright Arthur Miller wrote the play, *Death of a Salesman*, which debuted the tragic main character of Willy Loman—an ordinary yet self-deluded salesman caught between fruitless ambition and the pressing realities of life. This marked the beginning of the everyday tragic hero. In 1983, August Wilson took this one step further with the introduction of the formidable Troy Maxson. Both an ordinary man and of color, Troy is more exceptional than Willy Loman and an anomaly among previous tragic heroes of Greek tradition. A unifying trait of all tragic heroes is that they are plagued by a curse set forth by their ancestors; for example, the House of Atreus endures terrible tragedy because of the heinous act Tantalus commits against the Gods of Olympus. Much less gruesome, the House of Maxson has a curse of its own, displaying a tendency to produce young men within a cycle of damaged black manhood, but the circumstance of its causation has far more historical significance than Greek myth.

Troy's mother abandoned him when he was young, but his

father stayed due to a strong sense of obligation for family. This value would become the strongest virtue of Troy. His father was brutal and extremely abusive, holding in anger that came out as physical violence towards Troy. Consequently, Troy should have been abusive too, but he controls that aggression for the sake of his family. Truly a noble conviction, considering the scars of his past. Mollie O'Reilly notes that, "Troy wrestles with his father's legacy, and his family in turn struggles with the fallout from his mistakes. Wilson suggests that forgiveness is the key to moving forward as individuals and in community," (O'Reilly). Because of his troubled upbringing, Troy relies on his own experiences and stubbornly sticks to racism and segregation; even though, Troy lived during a time right on the cusp of change, he could not see that. Seeing the world in terms of his own past, Troy relies on instinct, "His frame of reference is as cramped as the batter's box he imagines himself standing in, alone, facing down death," (O'Reilly). As a provider, Troy does love his family unconditionally, he just has an odd way of showing it. Troy subverts his own needs and wants to suffer for the prosperity of his family. The sins of the father and the curse on the House of Maxson repeat in Troy's generation, but at a lesser magnitude, showing hopefulness for the younger generations.

The Greek tragic hero is defined by the seven elements of Greek tragedy. The hero is born of royalty, virtuous by nature and suffers from excessive pride the Greeks called hubris. The hero has a tragic flaw that makes them fallible and highly-susceptible to a grievous mistake. In turn, this leads to a dramatic fall from glory followed by a self-realization. The hero is then justified by a punishment resulting in the audience's pity. The final element of tragedy is a storytelling mechanism called the Greek Chorus, which is a homogenous group that chants and sings, modeling the reactions and feelings of the audience. Together these elements comprise the basis of the tragic hero, some of which may play a diminished role or be left out entirely.

As an African-American garbage collector, Troy Maxson is an outlier to the lineage of royal tragic heroes. Troy is a man of virtues that he inherited from his father. Although he committed crime and adultery, rehabilitation is always available to the man genuinely seeking it. Troy's dutiful and hardworking nature makes him a virtuous man; however, Troy is extremely prideful even when obviously in the wrong. After being caught cheating on his wife Rose, Troy wants to continue his affair unabashedly, "Do you understand what I'm saying. I can laugh out loud… and it feels good. Rose I can't give that up," (Wilson 1061). Troy displays the

hubris commonly associated with tragic heroes, even though he is amply capable of making choices to change his stubborn ways. Instead, Troy is unable to express his affection, "keeping much of his emotions inside, building imaginary fences between himself and his family and friends," (Galens). Troy transgresses against each of those he cares about, "I'm gonna be somebody's daddy," (Wilson 1060), ending eighteen years of marriage with Rose. "The white man ain't gonna let you get nowhere with that football noway," says Troy (1044), trying desperately to protect his son Cory from the disappointments of his life, unaware that times are changing. Race is becoming less of a factor in the world of sports, but "Troy is bitter and resentful at the opportunities lost because of the color of his skin," (Galens). Troy is absent for most of his son Lyons' life, "you should have been there when I was growing up," says Lyons (Wilson 1035). Then he disregards the marital advice of his longtime friend, "She loves you, Troy. I'm just trying to say I don't want to see you mess up because I love you both," says Bono (1058). He signs his brother—albeit unknowingly—over to the hospital, "You did Gabe just like you did Cory," shouts Rose (1064). By the play's end, Troy succeeds in alienating himself from the family he dedicated his life to providing for, "failing to grasp the emotional part of the job," (Galens).

There is a familiarity within Troy's flawed character, Joan Herrington wrote, "Of all Wilson's plays, *Fences* most closely follows orthodox western views of tragic form," (Weber). Near the end of the play, Troy experiences the downfall of his hubris as an exile in his own home. Rather than admit his wrongdoings and mend his fractured relationships, Troy quietly dies, escaping his long overdue realization. As punishment, Alberta—the mistress—dies during childbirth, forcing Troy to crawl back to Rose with the crying newborn. Rose being the resolute woman that she is, willingly accepts responsibility of the child. At this point, many may feel disdain towards Troy and want to see him suffer at greater length; still, looking beyond the apparent faults on the surface of Troy lies an intrinsically good natured human being worthy of sympathy. Combined with his troublesome childhood and second-class citizen status, against the odds with two strikes already on the board, Troy rose above adversity exhibiting true characteristics of a tragic hero in the modern day.

Not only does *Fences* portray the qualities of a tragedy, but the ending, in which Gabriel overturns the melancholic tone of the play, suggests that elements of comedy take part as well.

Gabriel is Troy's brother who was injured in World War II and is now mentally disabled. Gabriel can be seen throughout the play singing about his scavenged fruits and vegetables, preaching the gospel of St. Peter, and chasing off the hellhounds. But there is more to Gabriel than just his shenanigans, quite simply, "Although Troy is central to Wilson's story, Gabe is central to Wilson's vision and paradoxically his most complex character," (Wessling). Gabe represents a remnant of the Greek Chorus since he is but one man compared to the fifteen indoctrinated by Sophocles himself. Gabe fulfills all of the functions that the Greek Chorus are meant to perform. He provides background information to the audience, for instance, when Troy says, "Hell, I can't read, I don't know what they had on that paper!" (Wilson 1064). It is learned from Gabe being signed over to the hospital that Troy cannot read. Also, Gabe can be heard singing various songs just like the traditional Greek Chorus. At Troy's funeral, Gabe suddenly appears and is ready to tell St. Peter to open the gates of heaven and accept the repented soul of Troy Maxson. Wielding a trumpet with a broken mouthpiece, "he is exposed to a frightful realization and begins a dance of atavistic signature," (1079), Gabe's unusual act of improvisation can be seen as comic relief calling out to the audience for a universal feeling of delight. This infusion of tragedy and comedy puts to rest the redeemed soul of Troy Maxson, "filling the last scene even in his absence, when his son joins his half-sister in singing Troy's song about Blue that good old dog, acceptance of and forgiveness for what Troy and his world had made of him prepare the way for Gabe's bringing the light," (Weales). All of the living parties affected by Troy's life have since forgiven him and are content with what happened.

August Wilson's Century Cycle is the voice of the African American influence in dramatic literature. African-American culture has deep roots in the soil of the American experience and a permanent imprint on dramatic literature thanks to Wilson's remarkable work, "For Wilson, the issue was about more than actors; the critical question was whose stories are deemed worthy. He bristled at the suggestion that African-American artists like himself should aspire to the standards of white European culture, as though acknowledging the full humanity of black Americans required erasing their history," (O'Reilly). Rather than conform to the limitations of the classical Greek tragedy, Wilson preferred diversifying his characters and storylines with details pertinent to African-

American culture that would enrich the cultural experience of those who watched his plays. Wilson has become a precedent for aspiring black artists who also desire to stray away from the conventional tragic structure. It was stated by Wilson that *Fences* was the least favorite of his plays because of the external pressures he faced during its production. Perhaps Wilson wanted a different fate for Troy, "By having Troy's son make a gesture of forgiveness at the last minute and thereby help deliver the protagonist to the spiritual realm, Wilson may have been attempting to put his singular stamp on a work he considered severely compromised by a European tradition that called for one towering figure to suffer a tragic fate," (Weber). Indeed, it does seem as though the spiritual deliverance of Troy at the end of the play was a hurried act of submission. By allowing Troy to find redemption, Wilson instils an undertone of hopefulness for the future, while meeting the standards of traditional European tragedy.

In regards to theater, there appears to be a far greater lack of diversity compared to other entertainment industries, "August Wilson touched off a vigorous debate in the theater world when he declared, in 1996, that colorblind casting is an aberrant idea and a tool of cultural imperialism," (O'Reilly). During the '60s, Wilson was actively interested in Black Power politics and their focus on change. When asked in 1987 if he was a Black Nationalist, Wilson replied, "Sure. I still consider myself a Black Nationalist," (Weber). Wilson further explained, "I simply believe that blacks have a culture, and that we have our own mythology, our own history, our own social organizations, our own creative motif, our own way of doing things," (Weber). During the '60s and early '70s, when the winds of change blew at full speed, there was a clear consensus among African Americans that urged black artists to adopt their own styles of poetic structure and reject traditional European methods. No doubt, racism and discrimination are made unmistakable in *Fences*, "Wilson's plays are potent reminders that the past, present, and future of African American lives matter, that the fact of the black presence in the United States is fundamental to the very existence and prominence of the nation," (Scott). Troy Maxson metaphorically represents the struggle of African Americans born into adversity. Troy's individual struggle highlights the many that span across the generations of America, but at the same time, unites black communities in a common dream of achieving progress.

Hope is the driving force of *Fences*, fundamentally giving

the play an optimistic perspective on the complexity of African American life. Going beyond that of tragedy and comedy, *Fences* is the amalgamation of pain, despair and solitude answered beautifully with love, forgiveness and redemption. There is hope in a better future for African Americans and by extension, all of humankind. Troy's life may have been the substance of tragedy, but his life did not end in vain, for his youngest son and daughter have their entire lives ahead of them, in a future rapidly progressing towards equality. Although Troy is by definition a tragic hero, he would never admit to such a title. Wilson reinvented the meaning of a tragic hero by giving Troy a common identity and placing him in a time period heavily saturated by racial bigotry. Round characters like Troy have the ability to impact ideals greater than themselves simply by the tragic nature of their individuality. Contemporary tragic heroes are the vessels in which emotion is transformed over the duration of a play, then made palpable for the audience to effectually experience and interpret onto their own lives.

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ENL150

Waiting for the End: Apocalypse Myths

As the year 1999 came to a close, a rumor began to spread on the lips of people around the globe. That rumor, known as Y2K, was of a deadly computer virus that would spread across the planet, causing the entire world's electronics to malfunction and leading to the destruction of the human race. Similar whispers of doomsday crept up in 2012, when people prophesized that the Mayan calendar would reset to zero as a sign of the end. Obviously, neither of these events became reality, but they are far from the only ones of their kind. The threat of nuclear war, pollution, and climate change in the modern era has given humanity a fair amount of new fears about mass extinction, but in truth, man has been fascinated with the end long before he invented the hydrogen bomb. The Holy Bible, the book that is the cornerstone of faith for so many people across the planet, contains one of the most vivid and frightening depictions of world destruction in all of recorded myth. Like the biblical authors, the Vikings of the northern lands have a similar apocalyptic event that they thought would come to pass: Ragnarok, the Twilight of the Gods, a day when gods and men alike would perish in one final battle. But why? While these two myths tell very different stories, their themes and symbols are surprisingly similar. Though there are differences between the stories, the similarities between the two can be used as an indicator in determining the common theme of the apocalypse myth – chiefly, the need for reassurance that good shall prevail – as well as a microcosm of the struggles of humanity.

To understand why cultures create apocalypse myths, we must first understand the circumstances of the culture that created them. The years following the founding of Christianity were very difficult for the followers of Jesus. The Roman emperors of the time considered Christians a threat to the power of Rome since the Christians refused to worship the Roman gods. Several Roman emperors persecuted the Christians mercilessly, either by crucifying them or feeding them to lions or other wild animals. The emperor Nero was a particularly notable enemy of Christianity in the early years. Nero was a highly unpopular emperor, and he often scapegoated Christians to distract the Romans from his own crimes. His persecution was so aggressive that he would become identified with the Biblical Antichrist (Renard 368). Though the exact date that the Book of Revelation was written is up to debate, many theorize that it was written in the later years of the Roman Empire as persecution of Christians became increasingly harsh.

Unlike the Christians, who lived in a relatively mild Mediterranean climate, the Norse people lived in the harsh northern parts of the world. Up in that cold climate, fierce winters were a harsh reality, and they were deadly to crops and to people alike. The Vikings were a hardy people, but the climate of their native land did not support an easy living. This cold climate forced the Vikings to set out and conquer other lands, waging war and pillaging in order to find the essentials necessary to live. Evidence also suggests that in the year 536 AD, a large "dust veil" occurred in Europe, shrouding the sun and causing the climate to become unnaturally cold for some time (Graslund). This brief climate change would have proven disastrous for crops and livestock, and would have definitely left an impact on the people who survived it.

The circumstances of cultures often dictate the symbolism that they use in their stories. In the case of the Norse people, their familiarity with bitterly cold winters led them to personify the force in their stories. The chief enemies of the Aesir (the Nordic gods) in most Nordic myths are the frost giants, representations of the bitter cold given flesh. These giants will band together, along with other enemies of the gods, at the coming of Ragnarok to usher in the end of the world. The arrival of Ragnarok is also heralded by an especially harsh winter, known as *Fimbulventr* (Fimbul Winter), which lasts for three solid years (Bulfinch 359). It would not be a stretch to assume that the dust veil event of 536 AD may have inspired this mythical ice age. The Fimbul Winter will be so devastating to the world that mankind will become

especially savage, and war will spread far and wide throughout the world. The Norse personify other fears into evil creatures in their myths as well. The wolf, a predator and potential threat to livestock, becomes a dominating force in the form of Fenrir, a giant wolf who is prophesized to devour Odin in the final battle. Two other wolves, Skoll and Hati (or Managarm), appear in the story where they devour the sun and moon, respectively (MacKenzie 182). The chaotic nature of the sea that the Vikings had to cross is represented by Jomungandr, a giant sea serpent who is large enough to circle around the whole earth.

Like the Vikings, the Christians personify their fears and enemies in their stories. As stated before, Christians were heavily persecuted and branded enemies of the Roman Empire in their early years. Because of this, the evil creatures of the Book of Revelation seem to represent that fear of the pagan powers that dominated their lives. The Apocalyptic Beast that appears in the story is likely a reference to Nero, the most infamous opponent of Christianity. This beast is described as a horrifying amalgamation of different animals, such as having a bear's feet, a lion's mouth, seven heads, and written on each of his seven heads is an insult blaspheming God (Taylor 1012). That the creature is composed of animals that the Romans would have fed Christians to is not a coincidence. Christians have a long-standing fear of the natural world and of the creatures in it. Whether this is a result of being eaten by lions, or a reaction to pagan religions personifying natural forces is unclear, but the Book of Revelation clearly paints the animal world in a negative light. Sexual sin is highly attacked throughout the book, particularly in the form of the Notorious Prostitute who may be a mockery of pagan goddesses (Taylor 1015). Satan himself appears as a seven-headed dragon in the book, the ultimate symbol of the power of chaos and natural forces. Though the Norse have a notable fear of certain natural forces, the Christians display a very clear animosity towards much of nature.

Though the Norse and Christian cultures have very different creeds, they do use common symbols and similar ideas in the two stories. The apocalypse in both stories is announced through the call of a trumpet; both stories contain visions of the sun's light beingextinguished. Fire destroying the world is another common theme; whether from the flaming sword of the fire giant Surtur or from the flaming hail God rains down. Perhaps the most poignant point of the two myths is their portrayal of evil. Evil is a different beast to the different cultures, but to both the Norse and the

Christians, it always appears monstrous. Yet for all its fearsome appearance, evil is ultimately rendered impotent before the powers of good. At the battle of Ragnarok, it does seem that evil is overpowering, for it manages to slay most of the Aesir and burn the entire universe down. Yet, from the ashes of the World Tree Yggdrasil arises a new world, with new gods and men, freed from strife or war. Both good and evil perish in the flames of Ragnarok, but only the force of good is strong enough to remain; evil ends up destroying itself. The Bible presents this idea in a different way. As with Ragnarok, evil, in the form of Satan and the Beast, is imposing, capable of tremendous power. Yet the feats of magic that they perform are mere illusions, ultimately no match for the power of God (Taylor 1013). It is equally important to this idea that God is represented throughout Revelation as a lamb, a creature of innocence and peace. As Gary Renard states in his book *The Disappearance of the Universe*: "Ultimately, evil is overcome not by force but by love. That's what the lamb is about. Love is stronger than fear, and that's what the Bible means when it says good will always overcome evil" (Renard 370).

The Book of Revelation ends with the return of Jesus Christ to Earth, the abolishment of sin, and the ascent of all mankind towards a new and brighter future. Yet the path to that future is laden with death and destruction. Both the Norse and the Christians understood that in order to build a new, better world, the old world must be torn down. Yet they do not face this future with despair. It is a particularly powerful idea that Odin and the other Aesir ride into the battle of Ragnarok with full confidence despite knowing they will not survive. For they, along with all the other people of the world, hold hope for a better tomorrow. That hope, more than anything, is the key to why cultures create apocalypse myths. The struggles of good and evil mirror the internal struggles that man must face on a daily basis, which become struggles within communities, then within nations, and then throughout the world. When people talk of the end of the world, they often do so out of fear for their own time being ended. But the Norse and Christians know, or at least believe, that there will be another dawn long after the sun sets on the age of man.

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