Volunteer State
Community College

Best of
Student Essays

from the
2015-2016 Academic Year

Essays
&
Research Writing

Acknowledgements

Introduction

         Volunteer State Community College Best of Student Essays showcases some of the best writing being done by students at Volunteer State. Each year, instructors at Volunteer State nominate students who have demonstrated excellence in writing and invite them to submit an essay to our selection committee; that committee of Vol State faculty then works collaboratively to choose superior student work for publication. *Best Essays*, then, represents the exemplary writing of student authors, the support of their instructors, the efforts made by nominating faculty, and hours of hard work the selection committee does in reading and choosing the best of the best submissions.

         The purpose of this publication is twofold: first, to showcase exemplary student writing by Vol State students, and second, to provide our faculty with helpful tools for teaching writing and critical thinking skills to our students.

         The student essays published here exhibit the elements essential to high-quality, college-level writing. They are original, thoughtful, well-developed, well-organized, and carefully edited documents. The authors' voices are strong; the prose is engaging, and the pieces are written with a clear sense of audience and purpose. The work in this volume includes expository and personal essays, short research-based essays, analytical essays, and longer, more advanced researched arguments. The student submissions are separated into three categories, and one student in each category is awarded a prize for his or her work. Prize winners are chosen based on creativity, critical thought, organization, and an awareness of the fundamentals of good writing.

         Section 1 focuses on English Composition 1 (English 1010) expository writing, personal responses to topics, and essays which do not typically include formal research. The essays generally rely upon the rhetorical modes of narration, description, and illustration.

         Section 2 focuses on short researched essays written for English Composition 1. This category gives first semester composition students the chance to show off their beginning collegiate research skills without having to compete with more advanced writers. Good research essays employ rhetorical modes such as comparison and contrast and/or analysis of cause and effect as a means of critical engagement. They include research from a limited number of sources.

         Section 3 focuses on research essays written by students taking English Composition 2 (English 1020) and analytical pieces written for other courses such as literature surveys. The category also may include essays from other disciplines. The arguments are well-developed, and the research for these essays may be substantial.

         The student essays appearing in this publication were submitted between the summer 2015 and spring 2016 terms. We think they demonstrate both the excellence and diversity of student writing at Volunteer State. We would like to thank all the professors who nominated student essays and encouraged students to submit. We'd also like to extend our sincerest congratulations to the students whose work appears here. It is our goal to continue to develop this project, and to publish the best student writing at Volunteer State in a way that is meaningful to both students and faculty alike.

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Leslie LaChance, Committee Chair
On behalf of the Best Essays Committee
Fall 2016

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Prize Winner:

Section 1:
Expository Writing
English 1010

CATEGORY PRIZE WINNER

"Who's the Real Boss" is a narrative essay that presents the narrator's maturity process from childhood to adulthood and beyond. The essay's introduction presents a short incident that gets the reader interested and curious. The paper is organized in chronological order for the most part, but it includes very appropriate flashbacks that explain who the narrator was, is, and will be. The description is very convincing. For example, the details related to physical and mental abuse are real and painful, and so are the details related to love and kindness. The essay also includes an implied comparison of two father-child relationships, one between the writer and his father, and the other one between the writer and his daughter. The narrator's conscious decision to control his temper and empathize with his child is both moving and uplifting.

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Leslie Lyle

Professor Cori Mathis

ENGL 1010

28 September 2015

<center>Who's the Real Boss?</center>

"Honey, wake up; you're doing it again."

I did not have to ask my wife, Trish, what I was doing. The shaking, the sweat, and the tears had already revealed to me what had happened. Funny thing about nightmares, when I come out of them I always feel like a scared little kid. This recurring terror fest was headlined by my father. My dad could have been a centerfold for *Southern Trucker Magazine*, if there were such a thing. He was a proud, vulgar, narrow-minded bigot who had a strong taste for amphetamines and Budweiser, who was always right, and thought I was always stupid. He was somebody who called me a "pussy" for listening to Bruce Springsteen's "Thunder Road" instead of David Allen Coe's "If That Ain't Country," somebody who quit using a belt on me and just started kicking the crap out of me whenever he felt like it. Being at the receiving end of a violent parent's rage leaves a permanent etching in one's soul. It does not matter how well you may think you have adapted and moved on. On any given night you can be transformed from a mature, confident, strong adult, into a terrified teenager hiding beneath anything you can cover yourself with in the bedroom closet, praying, "Please God, just let him pass out this time."

The year 1997 came in like a hurricane. I could call it "The Year of Hurricane Savannah"

because, when my baby girl made landfall, our entire existence got blown into a totally new world. Due to Trish's health, we never planned on having children. Well, little Miss Savannah had other plans. Personally, the thought of being a dad really excited me. I have always been a big kid, so having a playmate sounded cool. Having no idea how to be a father was just a formality. From the time my daughter was born I winged it a lot, but she didn't seem to mind. To her I was the coolest dude around. Seeing the awe in my girl's eyes felt better to me than any substance I medicated myself with while trying to escape the seventies.

Unfortunately, about the time Savannah reached eleven, my coolness was nearly played out. We still had a great relationship; however, now it was me who was in awe. Seeing her mature so fast really caught me off guard. I was finding myself trying to keep up with whatever toy or show she was into at the time. I was slowly being replaced by The Disney Channel and Nick at Nite. Her world was all about *Hannah Montana* and *Full House*, and mine was working night shift and taking care of our farm. I started feeling irrelevant, like I was cut from the A team and busted down to a water-boy. I just didn't have time to invest in my daughter's interests. I could not believe what was happening; we were drifting apart.

One evening around six p.m., I was able to sneak out of work early. I was so pumped, finally a Friday night at home with my girls. It was in June, and I arrived just as the sun was setting. The lightning bugs were exploding up on our hill, and the swimming pool was a toasty eighty-five degrees. It was going to be perfect. Quietly, I snuck in the back door and went straight to Savannah's room. I knocked on the door and yelled, "Grab your swimsuit, girl. It's time for a pool party!"

She replied, "Dad, not now. Nick at Nite is having a *Full House* marathon."

The rejection burned me like a hornet sting. I stormed outside steaming mad, thinking, "I rushed home for this. She ditched me for Full Stinking House! Well, if I could get my hands on Bob Saget, I would body slam him and John Stamos. I wonder how she would like that?"

Then it hit me. I immediately flashed back to 1976. I was powering up the old man's Pioneer stereo, carefully wiping down side one of Bruce Springsteen's "Born to Run." I gently lowered down the stylus and was anxiously awaiting the opening harmonica solo to "Thunder Road." However, instead I

heard, "What the hell did I tell you about playing that faggot shit on my turntable, boy?"

Instantly, my dad's backhand smashed into the base of my skull, nearly knocking me unconscious. I fell forward into the turntable, and the needle plowed a scratch deep into the LP. I hit my knees and gained my wits just in time to dodge his size thirteen Dingo boot flying straight toward my ribcage . . . I then snapped out of my little trip down memory lane. What are you doing, Les? Is this who you are now? I realized the disdain my father had for anything that was important to me was as painful as the physical abuse. It caused me to despise him. I would not let my selfish insecurities become the catalyst that caused the same reaction in my daughter. I pulled myself together and came back inside. The three of us popped some popcorn, grabbed our pillows, and settled into a long night watching the Tanner family.

As my daughter matured, I matured with her. I became her wingman on all her new discoveries. I was able to witness her graduating from *Full House* to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and from the soundtrack of *High School Musical* to Maroon 5's *Hands All Over*. I even learned the words to most Maroon 5 songs, all while keeping my daughter's respect and admiration. Honestly, embracing every aspect of Savannah's culture is a challenge. For example, in my opinion, Adam Levine will never have the poetic power of The Boss. However, to Savannah, Adam is like William Shakespeare. So I guess if there is one thing I have learned from this whole parenting thing, it has to be: If my baby girl likes him, I love him.

"Ozone Falls" describes the maturity process of a teenage girl. The introduction includes a short summary of how she was going astray from the religious environment that her parents stressed. The rest of the essay presents the incident that would prove to be a turning point for the narrator. The description is outstanding. Ozone Falls is not only a state park, but a metaphor of our world. For the author, this place evokes the majesty of a creator and the dangers that we encounter in our travels through life. It is significant that the narrator chooses the trail to the top of the falls because a whole view of her situation provides the epiphany she needs to choose the path that would lead her to life, not death.

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Mary Carie

Professor Cindy Chanin

ENGL 1010

13 June 2015

Ozone Falls

When I was fourteen, I fell into the trap of hanging around with the wrong crowd. My new

friends and I were suspended for taking over-the-counter pills, and I started seeing the one boy who the

principal thought would be kicked out of the school. That boy and I were suspended the last two days of

classes for kissing in the hallway. My parents, devoted members of the Church of Christ, were incredibly

upset with my actions. The situation also began to take its toll on me. I was suicidal, and my parents' only

solution was going to church.

That summer, my parents forced me to go on a week-long camping trip with our church's youth

group to Cumberland Mountain State Park. I did enjoy my time with my friends and felt some satisfaction

from helping the elderly people in the county by painting their homes. However, when we lay down at

night, I cried myself to sleep as my thoughts screamed in my head of all I had been through.

We all took a small road trip to Ozone Falls on our last full day in Cumberland County. There

were two separate trails which we all contemplated going on. One trail led to the top of the falls while the

other led to the bottom. I opted to see the top with a few friends. I can still hear the babbling brook and

the furious rushing water cascading over the falls. Upon reaching our destination, we noticed that there

were no railings around to protect anyone from falling. Our surroundings were plants, a few trees,

enormous flat rocks, and open sky overlooking the lagoon below us. To the right of us we could see that the land had what appeared to be an amphitheater cut out of the earth. Above this concave piece of earth was a cliff. It was breathtaking.

Unfortunately, my suicidal thoughts returned at that precise moment. We had edged our way to overlook the cliff. I thought at that instant that I could jump or simply slip off the cliff. Thankfully, I froze. I took a careful step back and stared off into the amazement in front of me. I listened to my friends laughing and yelling below. I thought about what blessings I should be thankful for. I contemplated how my friends, whom I had known most of life, would feel if they were to witness my death. I considered a future where none of my present pains would matter. I considered my family, and even though I had been furious with my parents, I did not want to hurt them this way. Two of my uncles drowned years before I was ever thought of. This had devastated my mom as well as the rest of our family. I could not possibly put my mom through another horrific water-related death. She didn't deserve it. In that moment, I definitely chose life.

I hurried my way to the other trail to be with my friends. My personal perspective of Ozone Falls changed after joining them in the lagoon. My mood lifted even more when we serenaded a man rappelling off the concave cliff by singing the Tom Petty song "Free Falling." We stood under the waterfall for as many seconds as we could stand and swam in the water. I hid my tears of joy amidst the splashes from the falling water. I felt alive and free.

I have only been back to Ozone Falls once since that trip. Even as I type this narrative, the past abjection and revelations from so long ago in that place are causing tears to well up. I recall only wanting to go to the lagoon on my second visit and wanting to explore the giant rocks that sprinkled the land past the lagoon. I occasionally looked back to the waterfall and told myself, "Never again."

Ozone Falls was later used for the live "Jungle Book" movie, though they had to add tropical plants. I recognized it right away. That place has always taken me right back to that time and has made me thankful for the path that I did choose. It was a path that I had to walk down and not leap from.

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Kimberly Shearer

Professor Erica Williams

English 1010

10 September 2015

Ruffin' It

One of my humans opens the car door. What I see makes the hair at the tip of my tail stand up. I leap out of the car and instantly feelings of dread and disgust come over me. My paws land on the grungy ground covered in dirt, leaves, and small creatures with more legs than I have. I spent the entire car ride cleaning my snowy white paws after playing in the grass. It was all for nothing. One of my humans asks me to sit on this disgusting ground. I reluctantly oblige while the other grabs something long and dingy. She ties this long, dingy thing to my collar while the other end goes around the biggest stick I have ever seen. I stand there in the dirt while the humans unload strange things from their car. Then it hits me: is this what my humans were excited about? Is this "camping"?

I attempt to get used to my surroundings. I see this tiny creature with six legs that shouldn't even be able to carry air around us. It is in line with what seems like thousands of the same creature. They are weaving in and out of these brown and green objects on the ground that crunch beneath my paws. They piqued my interest, "What are these?" I followed them for a while, until suddenly something stopped me from investigating. It was that dingy, off white leash that was tied to me when we first arrived. I was bitter for a moment, but I don't really want to know what lies in the darkness between all those tall sticks in the ground. Maybe my humans knew what they were doing when they tied me to this enormous stick.

I lay down on the cleanest piece of land I can find and take a short nap, dreaming of home. Suddenly my nose jerks me awake. "What is that smell?" I get up slowly and look around to see what these humans have been up to while I was sleeping. Somehow they made a warm light appear from this hole in the ground. It was actually kind of comforting. The closer I got, the warmer my fur felt. I laughed to myself when I saw them holding sticks over the light. Everyone knows sticks are for chasing, not for holding over a light. Wait, what are on those sticks? My humans kept referring to them as "hot dogs" which terrified me and made my paws shake. Then they offered one to me. How could I eat this after what they just called it? It did smell quite delicious though, so maybe just a taste. It was divine. It just needed a different name. Soon they put the sticks down and allowed me to jump into one of their laps where I slept for what seemed like hours.

I woke up in the dark. The sun was gone but my humans were still right there next to me. The warm light was fading while they led me to the strangest kennel I have ever laid eyes on. I was quite surprised when they climbed in and motioned for me to come along. What kind of kennel is this? It felt so flimsy and unsecure. We all crammed in and settled in for some sleep. I love sleeping; don't get me wrong, but in this? Those same brown and green circles were attacking the sides and roof of this flimsy kennel. I have no idea how my humans did not find this terrifying. I had to stay up to protect us from all the mischief going on. It was exhausting. I could hear strangers all around. Some seemed to be right outside this thin, pitiful kennel. I continued to growl at them, even though my humans kept telling me to be quiet. I was just doing my job.

Finally the sun rose. It was the sweetest feeling. Coming off night watch, I could now get some sleep myself. Eventually my humans woke up and all felt peaceful again. I went outside and found the ball I had brought with me. "Camping" was getting better. My humans let me show off my jumping skills by throwing my ball straight into the air. I only caught it a few times, but they praised me anyway.

I imagine I would partake in this whole "camping" thing again. I would, however, demand a better kennel and a change in the name of the food we ate. My humans will always be my best friends, even if they do take me to these absurd places.

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Section 2:
English 1010
Researched Argument

The following essay examines some of the tactics terrorists use to recruit suicide bombers and considers as well the motivations of these bombers. Essay author Adam Tillis points out that not all bombers fit common stereotypes of radical fundamentalism. Tillis incorporates research to show that many bombers are educated and are recruited through schools. His research also suggests that while many are poor, some who engage in these assaults are well-off. The essay discusses the various forms of indoctrination that lead individuals to commit terrorist acts; it is an informative and informed look into this widespread global problem.

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Adam Tillis

Professor Cindy Chanin

English 1010

7 April 2016

<div align="center">The Lure of Suicide Squads</div>

The threat of terrorism has grown immensely in the past decade, being primarily fueled by righteous indignation and religious fervor. The ones caught in the middle are usually those used as a means to an end: the suicide bomber. A suicide bomber is someone recruited by a terrorist organization to detonate himself or herself, usually in a public space. This causes damage, mentally and physically, to those the terrorists are antagonizing. While the recruits used for suicide-terrorism are often volunteers of their own means, there are those caught in unlikely situations against their will for an evil dissent. While many of the extremists we see committing heinous acts of self-detonation are indeed poor, it's come to light that most of the people recruited for this task are not poorly educated or, as most would suspect, insane. As Jean-Paul Azam explains in "Why Suicide-Terrorists Get Educated, and What to do About It", "The emerging picture is that terrorists are in general men and women in their twenties with some secondary or post-secondary training, mostly in technical or engineering education" (358). The picture coming to light is that radicals are not being recruited in the streets and at mosques like we would assume—instead they are being recruited in schools. The ubiquitous picture of the insane radical bred during the 80s and 90s is fading away and being replaced by a brand new idea of a terrorist. We're now experiencing a new breed of highly educated individuals of sound mind and body. This cultural shift is noted by Anat Berko and Edna Erez in their paper "'Ordinary People' and 'Death Work': Palestinian

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Suicide Bombers as Victimizers and Victims", in which they write "Most observers agree that suicide bombers are rational individuals or 'rational fanatics' whose resort to suicide is based on reason or a result of specific cost-benefit analysis" (606). This has become a problem not just of the Middle East, but also western nations. With the advent of social media and its use by organizations linked with terror, homegrown terrorists have become a common instance.

     While the number of those who are "well-off" that join terrorist cells has grown in recent years, those with monetary need and religious uncertainty are being recruited as well in a similar way. As Azam observes, "In several Middle Eastern countries, terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda, Hamas or Hezbollah have a social arm that provides or helps finance educational services" (361). These organizations have become something of a charity, helping those in need of service while using it as something of a recruitment tool. Many find themselves unable to pay for education, especially post-secondary, and this is where one of these cells will step in. Sultan M. Hali, in his article "The Making of a Suicide Bomber", discusses Abdul Baseer, who was an attempted suicide bomber who was arrested before he could execute his attack:

> Like many who cannot afford a regular education, Baseer attended three Islamic boarding schools where children learn the Quran by heart and spend little time on secular subjects. The religious schools provide free board and lodging, but are widely criticized for indoctrinating students with an extreme version of Islam. At least one of the schools Baseer attended, Jamia Faridia in the capital, Islamabad, has been linked to terror. (51)

Many of these schools are indeed charities of predisposed affiliation. Some start in these schools as children and are indoctrinated all throughout their education. Their heads are filled with Islam and struggle and what they can do about it, up to and including *jihad*, struggle, or the act of maintaining one's religion. Classes are held daily and include teaching children the basics of a suicide jacket and the evils of secular countries, as reported by Hali (54).

     Among the new generation of "recruits" are those forced into cooperation with those who hold them captive; using kidnapped or miscreant children, psychological conditioning, or even drugging those

who normally would not cooperate is growing in scope of use. As Hali points out, "Powerful drugs may be used to induce the desired action from a suicide bomber. The drugs numb the senses and the individual's capacity to distinguish right from wrong. The suicide bombers are drugged into a stupor, which permits action but puts the mind to sleep" (58). A tactic used strongly with both the new-school breed and the aging generation of terrorists is subliminal messaging. Used like a trigger through brainwashing, a subliminal message can activate an unwitting participant into committing grievous acts. Hali explains, "It has been discovered that the indoctrinators of suicide bombers are frequently using the technique of subliminal stimuli to brainwash their wards" (58). The use of brainwashing is necessary to gain control of a population or recruit those opposed to their indoctrinators.

In this modern era where terrorism seems to be on the rise, those who wish to use guerilla tactic warfare are one step ahead of those with whom they are fighting. The devastating effect a self-detonation has is immense, and that is being exploited by terrorists. This tactic has been elevated by the terrorists through the deceitful use of men dressed in burqas and children wearing jackets lined with steel pellets, preying on unsuspecting victims. Mothers, daughters, fathers, and sons all join this fight for something they believe in, but they're all patsies in the game terrorists want to play: a means to an end that has no end. Modern governments use policies and treaties to negotiate with other countries, but terrorists send messages in blood. While the motives of those who choose to don the vest range from people in need of schooling, people in need of money, or even people who aren't aware they have been recruited, it is clear they've been used as a pawn.

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Berko, Anat, and Edna Erez. "'Ordinary People' and 'Death Work': Palestinian Suicide Bombers as Victimizers and Victims." *Violence and Victims* 20.6 (2005): 603-23. Print.

Hali, Sultan M. "The Making of a Suicide Bomber." *Criterion* 6.1 (2011): 46-74. Print.

Most fans of the horror film genre enjoy these works for their entertainment value, but in the following essay, Shannon Lamont argues that political and cultural forces of a particular era can have an effect on this popular type of film. By incorporating research from a variety of sources, Lamont looks at how cultural and economic excesses during the time of Ronald Reagan's presidency in the 1980s likely shaped the gory aesthetic of the horror films of the day.

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Shannon Lamont

Professor Sarah Passino

English 1010

21 November 2015

Dissecting the Eighties: Analyzing the Excessive Nature of Horror Films

During Reagan's Presidency

I firmly agree with director Guillermo del Toro when he told *Time* that horror films are a political genre ("10 Questions for Guillermo del Toro"). While most people will see the horror genre as dumb entertainment, I think there is much more to it. Horror films possess the ability to convey more than just how to dismember teenagers with power tools. Films in the horror genre are able to explore themes such as the nature of humanity, the uncertainty of death, and the relationship between humanity and technology, among other things. While the intent of a horror film may not be inherently political or anything beyond simple entertainment, it may still be able to reflect the era in which it was made. In keeping with this idea, I would say that the horror films of the 1980s do well to reflect the ideals of that era. I would like to begin by establishing that excess is a problem in the horror films of the 1980s. Next, I would like to argue that this excess is an issue because of viewer expectations and Hollywood's method of meeting said expectations, and Reaganism.

According to Karina Wilson, the 1980s was a time of materialism where "having it all was important, but to be seen having it all was paramount" ("1980s Horror Films"). To David Oliver Relin, the eighties were "a time of conspicuous consumption" ("When Greed was Good"). The horror movies of this decade in the grips of Reaganism reflect the excessive nature of the times; producers and filmmakers

embraced the "greed is good" philosophy that had so dominated the conscious of the era, which can be seen in their films. When it comes to what excess means in regards to horror movies, it can be defined by the abundance of violent images brought about from the advancements in special effects technology. Excess in the horror films of the eighties can also defined by the endless sequels and copycats of popular films, rampant merchandising, and the watering-down of content to appeal to mass audiences.

In trying to identify the causes of this theme of excess in the horror films of the 1980s, it would be prudent to start with the audiences of the decade. At the start of the eighties, viewers had already been accustomed to the idea of horror films being associated with violence. By this time, it was public consensus that the horror genre and violence were "virtually inseparable" (Cooper, 135) which lead to gore becoming one of the main draws of a horror film. Audiences in the eighties were more interested in seeing the spectacles of special effects wizards than anything else. This, in turn, sparked a competition of one-upmanship among filmmakers to deliver shocking gore to their ravenous fans.

These expectations for more gore from audiences and the rivalry among filmmakers to deliver is a parallel to the attitudes of the eighties as a whole. A famous Wendy's commercial during the 1980s asks a simple question: "Where's the beef?". In this advertisement, three elderly ladies are examining a hamburger with large buns and a small patty in between. During their discussion over the merits of this burger, one of the ladies angrily asks the question that would go on to become a popular catchphrase during the decade. This slogan perfectly encapsulates not only the "excess is best" mentality of the era, but also the horror audience. The people of the eighties were demanding more, bigger and better, with additional bells and whistles in the same manner that Clara Peller was demanding more meat with her burger. Horror fans paid the price of admission, and hoped to get their returns paid in blood and guts, similar to how the elderly Mrs. Peller wanted more beef for her buck.

The moviegoers aren't the only ones to blame for the excessive nature of horror in the 1980s. If one were to point a finger at the audiences for these films, they would also have to point towards the filmmakers and studios trying to satiate their demand for more. According to Stephen Prince, "the eighties were the first full decade in which the top box office films consistently earned increasingly huge

returns" (2). By this point, Hollywood had begun to embrace the blockbuster films; films which had more style than substance and appealed to mass audiences in hopes of recuperating the costs of the filmmaking process. This led to the reliance upon sequels, which were made in hopes of cashing in on the franchise name and covering the costs of production. Film sequels had become a symbol of "pure product merchandising" (Prince, 2), and were used in order to create a sense of "brand loyalty" among moviegoers.

If there's one thing that the horror films of the eighties are infamous for, it would be the "sequel-itis" that many series suffered from, and in no subgenre is this more prevalent than in the slasher flicks. Paramount's *Friday the 13*[th] series kicked off at the start of the eighties, and by 1989, there had been seven sequels made, with more on the way in the next couple of decades. New Line's *A Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise began in 1984 and managed to have four sequels by the end of the decade. Greg Cwik states that these films began as "passion projects of their creators" with little interference from the studios ("Why the Slasher Movie Was the Quintessential '80s Horror Subgenre"). What started, innocently enough, as so-called "passion projects" began to have more studio control exerted over them until they eventually became merchandise machines.   Many other horror films tried to cash in on the appeal of these franchises, finding only middling success, but still being able to reach an audience and turn a profit thanks to the relatively low budgets they were given.

What many filmmakers set out to do was to make their films up the ante on the amount of on-screen violence and nudity that they could get away with, in hopes of appealing to the rabid 15-24-year-old audience the studios believed these movies attracted (Wilson). These films were manufactured to ensure that they could make money while also delivering what the audiences at the time wanted. As special effects and makeup had reached a point at which the filmmakers' imaginations could run wild, audiences went into these films expecting a gory spectacle that only the magic of cinema could provide. For fear of alienating their core audience and losing out on potential profit, directors and special effects wizards concocted more elaborate scenarios in which viewers could see a person die. While they

oftentimes delivered upon their promises of delightfully disgusting visuals, these films began to lose their power to shock, leading to products that were more comical than horrific (Wilson).

Violence without context lacks weight, just as indulgence without restraint leads to emptiness. The idea that films had to provide ample amounts of blood and gore to stave off the hungry horror fans of the era exemplifies the excess of the eighties at its finest. Furthering this thought is the practice of the studios at the time in their rampant production of sequels, copycats, and merchandise, hoping to catch the trends before they faded away. The audiences in this time of consumerism screamed for more, and the filmmakers and producers were happy to oblige. The people of the eighties were all too willing to follow the trends if it meant they would appear wealthy, including the filmmakers, who were engaged in an endless battle to see who could provide more shock within a feature-length film. It can be said that the moviegoers are at fault for demanding more spectacle just as the blame could be shifted towards the creators for indulging their audiences' in that request. Ultimately, this supply and demand of excess in large amounts is symptomatic not only of the producers and consumers, but of the man in control of them all: America's 40th President, Ronald Reagan.

Ronald Reagan took office on January 21, 1981 with a goal in mind: "to restore America's glamour and greatness" (Relin). According to Robert Slayton, Reagan held the belief that every American could become wealthy ("The End of Reaganism"); that America was a blessed and special place. As Reagan entered the oval office, he brought with him a great sea of change, including tax cuts for the wealthy, a large growth in military spending, and the removal of a multitude of social programs, as well as a reduction of government restrictions on corporations (Relin). According to William A. Niskanen,

The U.S. economy experienced substantial turbulence during the Reagan years despite generally favorable economic conditions. This was the "creative destruction" that is characteristic of a healthy economy. At the end of the Reagan administration, the U.S. economy had experienced the longest peacetime expansion ever. The "stagflation" and "malaise" that plagued the U.S. economy from 1973

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through 1980 were transformed by the Reagan economic program into a sustained period of higher growth and lower inflation.

Reagan's "rag-to-riches" ideals, while innocent enough, were ultimately tainted by some of the changes ushered in during his administration. The tax cuts offered to the wealthy, in conjunction with the deregulation of corporations, meant that "greed" would become the chief deadly sin of the era. David Oliver Relin states that "as the economy grew, the business world began filling up with numbers of eager, ambitious college graduates taking the 'fast track' to material wealth" ("When Greed was Good"). Wall Street financier, Ivan Boesky, who was known for his fortune of $300 million, pushed the youth to pursue wealth. "'Greed is healthy,' he told a student group. You can be greedy and still feel good about yourself'" (Relin). People began to believe, as Reagan did, that it was possible to become as wealthy as the Trumps and Boeskys of the decade. In chasing this wealth, they consumed and demanded more. Without the social programs that once aided them, the Americans of the 1980s were held back from attaining their wealth, the odds of which were dismal ("The End of Reaganism").

Ronald Reagan's encouragement of Americans to seek wealth further strengthens this idea of "excess is best". At the beginning of the decade, Reagan was given the task of strengthening the U.S. economy. In doing so, he raised the spirits of the American people, giving them hope that they could reach the same levels of success as someone such as Donald Trump. In reality, Reagan influenced the American people to desire wealth, but only for the sake of having it and being seen with it. This led the filmmakers of the horror genre to show off the finest in cinematic carnage in order one-up the shock factor of the competition. This, in turn, caused audiences to demand more and create a sense of loyalty to their favorite horror series or creator, or the studios producing them.

On the whole, it is impossible for me to try and create a solution for a problem that has already been solved. By the 1990s, the gore-fests of the previous decade had begun to stagnate, being relegated to televisions and home video instead of the silver screen, and becoming parodies of what they once were. The excessive nature of the Reagan era had come and gone, leaving in its wake a period of recession. According to David Oliver Relin, "'The 1980s will go down in history as a very ugly decade', concludes

novelist James Michener. 'They will be remembered as a time when Americans pursued wealth instead of justice'" ("When greed was good"). I personally enjoy the horror films of the 1980s, but to ignore their excessive nature would ultimately devalue the progression of the genre since then. Besides, there is so much more to the genre than blood and gore, and there are talented filmmakers who are trying to push the boundaries of the genre in ways that force us to think about more about the elements of horror.

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Access to clean, safe drinking water is something people living in developed nations take for granted, but many people in the developing world are not so fortunate. Safe drinking water is not always easily accessible, and waterborne diseases pose serious health threats. In the essay below, Celina Nippa discusses the challenges residents of developing nations face in fighting waterborne diseases. Through research, she identifies several possible approaches to improving water quality world-wide.

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Celina Nippa

Professor Cindy Chanin

English 1010

9 March 2016

<center>Water for All</center>

Imagine not knowing where your water is coming from or if it is even clean enough to drink. This is a reality for millions of people around the world living in developing countries. In these countries, people walk hundreds of miles and spend hours searching for water because they do not have access to it at home. According to Jerry Anthony, roughly one in five people living in developing countries do not have access to clean water. This is why the lack of safe drinking water in developing countries has led to a global problem due to the absence of quality water and the spread of disease, but this issue can be solved by educating residents on techniques to purify their water.

The largest contributor to the lack of safe water in developing countries is that the accessible water is not clean. According to Marla Smith-Nelson, "…up to 50 percent of places with unsafe drinking water once had systems that functioned, but they fell apart due to lack of maintenance" (qtd. in Berman). These people now have to find a new source of water, which most of the time is a lake or stream. This water is poor quality and often contains contaminants that mostly come from fecal matter dumped into the rivers and streams where the drinking water originates. This is a common occurrence due to the fact that residents are not supplied with the correct sanitation facilitates, so they often use bodies of water for these matters. According to the United Nations, "Every day, 2 million tons of sewage and other effluents drain into the world's waters" ("Water"). Most countries do not have enough resources to monitor public waterways in order to ensure that they are clean and do not contain any pollutants. This not only affects the local water supply, but also crops grown locally by farmers. This is because farmers use the

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contaminated water to grow their crops and then sell them to the local residents. This shows that no matter what, residents are bound to come in contact with unsafe water.

The water quality in developing countries has caused sickness to spread that often has led to death. There are six main diseases caused by unsafe water, which are described by Gadgil:

> At any given time, about half the population in the developing world is suffering from one or more of the six main diseases associated with water supply and sanitation: 1. Diarrhea-caused by a number of microbial and viral pathogens in food and water; 2. Ascaris, 3. Dracunculisis, 4. Hookworm, and 5. Schistosomiasis, all by infestation with various worms leading to disability, morbidity and sometimes death; and 6. Trachoma-caused by a bacterium, leading to blindness). (254)

Most of these diseases are caused by water becoming contaminated with feces, bacteria, or parasites. However, these diseases can also be caused by water left after a natural disaster occurs. These diseases affect so many, with over 3.4 million people dying of waterborne illnesses annually making them the number one cause of death in the world according to Berman. Children are the most vulnerable to these diseases since they do not know what is clean water and what is not. This is why roughly 400 children die hourly due to waterborne sickness (Gadgil).

This issue can be solved by simply educating residents of developing countries on the effects of poorly treated water and how they can better sanitize their water. Most people living in these conditions do not even know that they are getting sick due to their drinking water. There are several techniques that can be used in order to insure that drinking water in these areas is safe. The first technique is to find a ground water source. Ground water is filtered naturally and protected from bacteria and other contaminants by several layers of rock and soil (Gadgil). This would give residents a water source that they know is safe to drink from because it is protected from being contaminated. The next technique is to use filtration. There are several different types of filtration that can be used, but biosand filters are the most effective. Biosand filters are made with cement and sand, which filters out 98% of waterborne diseases. These filters can also easily be transported or kept in the home. This will give residents an easy

and cheap way to make sure that their water is clean. The last and most important technique is to supply residents with latrines. The United Nations says that more than 789 million residents of developing countries do not have access to adequate sanitation facilities, which is why this technique is so important for the improvement of these citizen's lives ("Water"). This will give people access to the sanitation facilities that they need and will help keep them from contaminating the bodies of water that supplies water for the community. By applying all of these techniques there will be less disease spread, which in return will bring less death to developing countries.

The global issue of the lack of clean water in developing countries continues to get worse because of the poor quality of water and spread of disease, but it can all be solved by showing the community ways to purify their water. The people living in these countries do not have the resources or knowledge that can help them improve their lives by having access to clean water. This is why they need to be educated on ways to purify water, or disease will continue to spread and more innocent people will lose their lives. Water is essential to the survival of human kind, but billions of people still do not have access to it (Jawale). This is why action needs to be taken in order to better the lives of these millions who do not have the right to clean water like they truly deserve.

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Many students who begin college with the best of intentions and prospects for bright futures never finish their degrees. There are any number factors that can get in the way of completing college. The essay below looks at several of the most common problems faced by today's college students, including economic, academic, and vocational challenges.

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Winston Phillips

Professor Melissa Tyndall

English 1010

1 November 2015

<center>College Dropouts</center>

Many who finish high school and acquire a General Education Development (GED) certificate wish to move on to facilities of higher education to pursue a degree in a specific field. Some may wish to become doctors, lawyers, or nurses, while others may wish to become engineers, programmers, or contractors. All of these fields require a college degree of some sort in order for those jobs to be obtainable. These degrees can be earned through many hours of necessary college study and work. Today, however, America is seeing an increase in college students who fail to finish the necessary amount of work required to get a degree. The number of college dropouts, along with students who do not attend college, are increasing in the United States due to the cost of college, student disinterest, and difficulty of admission into college.

College cost is a rising epidemic that has plagued America for many years. College costs keep rising, and as they do so does the number of students who drop out before obtaining a degree. In fact, only 56 percent of the students who enter America's colleges and universities graduate within six years because of financial reasons, and only 29 percent of students who enter two-year programs complete their degrees within three years for the same reasons (Wauldron). These staggering numbers reflect the cost epidemic happening in American colleges. While some young men and women may not wish to pursue college education, many do and are unfortunately unable to do so. If they are lucky enough to have adequate funds to start college or obtain a loan, they typically run out of money fairly quickly or have accumulated a staggering student debt, which they may not be able to pay back. Studies have shown that,

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"the cost of college has nearly sextupled since 1985 and the total amount of student loan debt held by Americans surpassed $1 trillion in 2011" (Wauldron). Studies reported by the organization Collegeboard reveals that from 1974 to 1975, the average cost to attend a public, four-year college (including books, housing, etc.) was $7,938. That number has risen to almost $19,000 as of 2015 ("Trends in Higher Education"). Students who receive little to no financial help from parents or guardians are almost certainly not able to pay this monumental amount of money on their own without acquiring mountainous student debt. Many students are able to realize that their dreams of achieving higher education are virtually impossible due to these overwhelming financial obstacles imposed by American colleges. Many students do not attempt to attend college, or attend for a short time, after realizing the odds for success are against them. These factors leave America "in the dust" when comparing college completion rates to the rest of the world because out of:

> Eighteen countries tracked by the OECD (Economic Co-operation and Development), the United States finished last (46 percent) for the percentage of students who completed college once they started it. That puts the United States behind Japan (89 percent), and former Soviet-bloc states such as Slovakia (63 percent) and Poland (61 percent).
>
> (Wauldron)

These numbers show that, for the American college student, obtaining their degree is becoming more difficult. The money is not there, yet the prices continue to soar. While students may want to climb the mountain, they do not have the proper gear. If the cost of college and the number of dropouts continue to rise in the present fashion, colleges will eventually have to change their financial aid construction to fit the needs of their students. The present day college crisis is echoed by Joy Resmovits, a writer for *The Huffington Post* who reports that, " The growing inaccessibility of college, and the huge dropout rate is eroding the American Dream and weakening our nation's ability to compete" ("College Dropout Crisis Revealed In 'American Dream 2.0' Report").

While financial hindrance is definitely a problem college students face, student disinterest seems to play a key role in dropout rates as well. The pre-requisite system instituted by colleges around the

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country anger many students by forcing them to take classes not pertaining to their major course of study. These pre-requisite, or core classes, usually take two years to complete and cost the student a pretty penny, to say the least. Students, as expected, can become riled up due to this. Ossiana Tepfenhart, a college dropout who now works for *Elite Daily*, writes, "I dropped out because I was sick of dealing with classes that had nothing to do with my major. Other dropouts I've met dropped out due to a lack of funds" (Tepfenhart). Contrary to popular belief, many college dropouts are indeed successful. Tepfenhart goes on to note, "But, for every broke dropout, there is a dropout who went to trade school and is making a lot of money, a dropout who started his or her own business, or a dropout who is just plain comfortable with his or her income" (Tepfenhart). Many college students would rather learn a trade and try to make that trade successful without having to spend money for what they deem as "unimportant" classes. Some jobs that college students hope to procure simply do not require a college degree. Instead, they hire based on experience. Some of these jobs include writing, sales, modeling, construction, acting, dance or photography (Tepfenhart). While many dropouts are forced to leave institutions of higher education, many choose to leave and pursue their dreams without the help of a degree.

College competition for student acceptance is becoming more specialized and stiff every year. Getting into college has become an uphill battle, with each freshman class expected to outshine the prior group of applicants (Urist). Colleges are starting to reject "average-joe" applications and look for students who exude excellence. Many schools are joining this trend for the sake of reputation, higher-grade scores, and a sense of elitism that would bring forth massive state and alumni funding. In 2014, the University of Pennsylvania announced that "the class of 2018 was the most competitive class yet, with admittance rates dropping to below 10 percent for the first time in history" (Urist). The international market for attending American colleges has also increased over the years because:

> in growth economies like China, India, Korea and Brazil, and certain parts of the Middle East, there is a certain status associated with attending an American college—and not just traditional marquee names like UPenn and Harvard. In fact, state schools that historically

were easier for American students to get into, or were the flagship campuses for a state's

most qualified students, have earned international cachet. (Urist)

Apart from domestic competition for chairs in college, American young men and women are also competing with other applicants from around the world. Some countries, such as China are happy to pay the out-of-state tuition so that their children can obtain an American degree. Students who wish to attend schools with very limited acceptance rates now have a very low chance of ever being able to attend these schools. Some students, after finding out that they have been rejected, simply do not go to college or settle for a less desirable facility of higher education. This can lead to an over population of schools whose admittance rates are much higher, resulting in less specialized attention for the individual student, who may receive worse grades than what could have been achieved if he or she had gone to another school. This can lead to higher stress and the student eventually dropping classes altogether. With growing competition and international desire for American education, the average American high school graduate has a tough time being accepted into these more selective colleges.

College dropouts and high school graduates who do not attend college are increasing every year. Some simply do not have an interest in earning a college degree while others do not have the financial stability to stay in or even attend college. Others do not get accepted into college due to their performance in high school or competition imposed by the college. These factors all contribute to the rising dropout rate and can help colleges understand what needs to be done in order for these rates to change.

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It is hard to imagine a world without unfettered access to the internet, but some internet providers are lobbying for laws that could restrict access to particular content and require content creators to pay higher fees in order to use fast lanes in delivering their information.. Zachary Trouy's essay argues against that practice and makes a good case for why government should ensure an open internet for American consumers and for the content providers who serve them.

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Zachary Trouy

Professor Melissa Tyndall

English 1010

8 December 2015

<div align="center">Argument for the Open Internet</div>

Those in the United States who read published law and technology journals or frequent news outlets and technology-centric websites may have heard the terms "Net Neutrality" and the "Open Internet" thrown around without understanding what these terms mean or why these terms should matter more to the general public than they do currently. Net Neutrality and the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) definition of the Open Internet are defined as the "principle that Internet Service Providers should enable access to all content and applications regardless of the source, and without favoring or blocking particular products or websites" ("Net Neutrality"). Those terms hold vast significance, as many Internet users lack the privilege of going wherever they desire online, as they are restricted by their government or Internet Service Providers (ISPs) on where the user is allowed to connect. This may sound like an issue that users in areas such as the United States or the United Kingdom are free of, yet users in the United States have been affected by practices that attempted to hinder or prevent users from accessing particular content. To ensure future innovation and equal opportunities for users and providers across the Internet, while keeping Internet Service Providers highly profitable, it is of paramount importance to create an open Internet through regulation. Said regulations include prohibiting content blocking, bandwidth throttling, and paid prioritization to allow reliable and unfettered access to the expansive content available online.

Without proper regulations, Internet-based startups incapable of paying the required fee imposed by ISPs to access the ISP's data fast lanes would not be able to provide a satisfactory experience to end users, impeding the startup's ability to compete against larger and more well-established services. In the absence of Net Neutrality, "(1) the winner will be the one with the deepest pockets and not necessarily the one that is best in search; (2) it distorts the innovation race - new companies without deep pockets are eliminated from the competition; (3) it raises the cost of innovation and diminishes innovation overall" (Martinez 92-93). Opponents of Net Neutrality may question the potential damages that content and service providers may receive due to lacking fast lane privileges for Internet Service Providers, "a scenario in which content, application, or service accessibility is strongly limited, will lead to a 'patchy' Internet," rendering the content and services intolerable for most American consumers, likely convincing the users to search for an alternative (Martinez 34). Those opposing Net Neutrality may also claim that worry of ISPs creating fast lanes as a use of the slippery slope fallacy. However, when unregulated, companies have utilized fast lane strategies in the past, such as when:

> Netflix users around the U.S. started experiencing a significant drop in Netflix quality.
> When the highly anticipated second season of House of Cards was released in February,
> users around the country couldn't finish watching the show because Netflix kept
> reloading and. . .Thinking there was a problem on the access network, many users
> upgraded to higher-bandwidth plans, only to find the glitch persisted. By now, we know
> that many ISPs are not upgrading the connections or "ports" over which Netflix traffic
> enters their network because they want Netflix to pay a fee for that traffic. . .When
> Netflix finally caved and agreed to pay Comcast for interconnection, Netflix's quality
> quickly improved. (Schewick)

Internet Service Providers are not averse to regulating Internet services and content as they see fit, leaving no room for United States citizens to believe ISPs would change those ways either now or in the future, and as such, should be prevented from regulating the Internet.

In addition to throttling specific data running through their connections, Internet Service Providers have also shown their willingness to block content and services they do not agree with or which go against what they provide. The People's Republic of China's government takes this approach when it comes to their citizen's access to the Internet via GFC, or the Great Firewall of China. Utilizing specially made techniques, "it successfully blocks the majority of Chinese Internet users from accessing most of the Web sites or information that the government doesn't like" (Anderson). Similar techniques were used in the United States in December 2011; however, they were carried out with different intentions. AT&T Wireless, Verizon Wireless, and T-Mobile prevented Google Wallet from reaching each of their respective subscribers. Although the companies attempted to stay quiet about the reason for preventing the service, analysts quickly pointed out that cell phone carriers had partnered to develop a competing mobile payment service named ISIS, which at the time of the prevention was not ready to be launched. Many investors and innovators in the United States had already expressed worry about the lack of Net Neutrality laws, and this event served as an eye opener. If a company as large as Google could be blocked, the investors and innovators felt that smaller companies would be incapable of holding their own (Schewick). ISPs retain the keys to each of their subscriber's Internet access, and therefore hold the power to choose what data is allowed to flow through the Internet's "pipes," unless proper laws and regulations are set and enforced.

While allowing services and content providers unfettered access to the infrastructure and subscribers of an ISP may seem economically unfeasible to some, the profits accrued from the ISP's subscribers grossly cover any additional costs. According to a report the United States Securities and Exchange Commission filed in 2013, Time Warner Cable's "High-Speed Internet service has a 97 percent profit margin" (Kushnick). This simple research revealed that ISPs are capable of withstanding current data workloads and openness without worry of going bankrupt. Another important factor to consider is that consumers enjoy having many avenues to consume content and services. If "intentional blockage or degradation takes place in a competitive market, and the users value and need the blocked content, services or applications, it is only a matter of time before some competitor will offer them, and so

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operators who fall into this practice will experience client and income loss, decreasing incentives to continue" (Martinez 34). The argument that Internet Service Providers would not be able to sustain themselves if they were forced to allow all data that their subscribers requested to access holds no weight, as the provider's reap profit margins large enough to sustain themselves many times over.

A benefit of imposing the Net Neutrality regulations is the opportunity for any person or persons to create a career for themselves online using the skills they learned throughout their lives that they may have otherwise been unable to accomplish in a traditional workplace or setting. Having an open Internet "cheapens market entry by making it easier for users to switch and become content providers themselves" (Lee). This also allows some users to find newer and larger audiences faster and more efficiently than they previously could have. An artist who goes by the alias of Sakimi Chan receives over $33,000 every two weeks from supporters of her art ("Sakimi Chan's Patreon"). This copious amount allows Sakimi Chan to continue creating art without the worry of paying bills or other expenses, instead focusing solely on what she loves doing. A YouTube video creator named Felix Kjellberg, who goes by the online name PewDiePie, has created a similar situation for himself. In 2014, Felix generated $7.4 million dollars in revenue due to his massive fanbase of 37.7 million subscribers watching his content and the advertisements placed upon his videos. Those numbers presented a substantial increase from 2013, where Felix made $4 million in revenue from 27 million subscribers (Tassi). Unlike Sakimi Chan's content however, Felix's content is not as traditional. Felix's content instead consists of recordings of himself playing and reacting to video games in an exaggerated manner, a form of content that likely would never have been picked up and aired by large and established video content producers. An open Internet allows anyone to create a new life for themselves in traditional careers, with the benefit of global visibility, and in careers they otherwise would have not been able to hold.

Those who oppose the creation of Net Neutrality commonly raise the argument that regulation will strip ISP's of their ability to prevent subscribers from committing piracy. However, a lack of regulation would not give ISPs the ability to prevent piracy, as many methods are available to those who wish to pirate content that enable easy bypass through any barrier an ISP may set up. One way this can be

achieved with would be using a Virtual Private Network or VPN, which securely connects an individual to a server or service while encrypting the data and the information about where the data is coming from (Sebastian). As shown by Chinese users who circumvent the GFC, encryption renders the metadata of the content that ISPs wish to block inaccessible, preemptively removing the ability to selectively block content (Anderson). It may then be argued that VPNs should be made illegal, due to their ability to allow nearly untraceable piracy. However, while VPNs may create an easy solution for those wishing to commit cybercrimes, they are also widely used for accessing or sending sensitive information across the internet, negating the likelihood of its illegalization. An Internet without Net Neutrality would be as incapable of preventing piracy as an Internet with Net Neutrality, due to the privacy and encryption methods available to consumers.

Enforcing the Open Internet regulations set forth by the FCC is key towards creating and maintaining the innovative environment the Internet and its users currently enjoy. The FCC's proposed the following regulations:

No Blocking: broadband providers may not block access to legal content, applications, services, or non-harmful devices. No Throttling: broadband providers may not impair or degrade lawful Internet traffic on the basis of content, applications, services, or non-harmful devices. No Paid Prioritization: broadband providers may not favor some lawful Internet traffic over other lawful traffic in exchange for consideration of any kind—in other words, no "fast lanes." This rule also bans ISPs from prioritizing content and services of their affiliates. ("Open Internet")

Implementation of these regulations "ensure an open Internet now and in the future, the Open Internet rules also establish a legal standard for other broadband provider practices to ensure that they do not unreasonably interfere with or disadvantage consumers' access to the Internet," and ensures that "consumers can go where they want, when they want" ("Open Internet"). Without these regulations, United States citizens will likely begin to see less diversity in the content found online due to the higher

price of entry for content and service creators. This would also require users to choose an Internet Service Provider based on the content offered in addition to price, speed, and reliability.

Maintaining an Open Internet through enforcing the FCC's regulations is central to ensuring equal opportunities and future innovations on the Internet. ISPs would be prohibited from content blocking, bandwidth throttling, and paid prioritization while retaining a high degree of profitability. Through those prohibitions, individuals and Internet-based startups would benefit from a leveled playing field and the ability to realize business models previously made impossible. The advantages associated with Net Neutrality and the Open Internet vastly outweigh any potential cons or disadvantages, resulting in a situation wherein enforcing the FCC's regulations is the obvious choice for the foreseeable future.

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Section III

Advanced

Researched Argument

and Critical Analysis

Disease resistance to antibiotics has been rising steadily, especially in the United States. George Schroeder's essay examines the causes of this growing health crisis and considers solutions. The problem of antibiotic resistance is serious and widespread; the need to address it is urgent. Research presented here suggests that multiple approaches can and must be taken to eliminate resistance.

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George Schroeder

English 1020

Professor Patricia Highers

7 December 2015

Dramatic Changes are Needed for a Country on the Verge of Another Plague

Abstract

Due to the misuse and overuse of antibiotics, the United States has seen the problem of antibiotic resistant bacteria problem to get way out of hand. With no change, more and more people will die from MRSA and similar diseases while current antibiotics become less and less effective. This will continue until antibiotics are useless, and the country has to return to how it was a century ago when it had no more than household remedies to fight diseases like influenza or scarlet fever. The only hope is immediate action. The country must drastically cut back on its use of antibiotics in order to stop exposing so many bacteria and giving them the opportunity to mutate a resistance. It also has to continue to develop newer, stronger antibiotics to fight the bacteria that have already mutated a resistance and are infecting people. These two solutions combined will be enough to lower the number of antibiotic resistant bacteria before they can cause a plague.

Evaluation

In 1980 in the United States, roughly 3% of staph infections were diagnosed as Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA); in 2009 that number had reached a whopping 60% (Eisenstein). The number of antibiotic resistant bacteria in the country has been dramatically increasing over the past

few years, and if nothing is done about it, the results will be devastating. Already, over 2 million people a year get infected with a bacteria that is resistant to one or more antibiotics, and thousands die every year from bacteria that is resistant to all antibiotics (Manning, personal communication). It is estimated that two Americans die each hour from infections caused by antibiotic-resistant bacteria (*Antibiotics Are Dangerous*). Every year the number of antibiotic-resistant bacteria increases as the options for treatment dwindle (Eisenstein). If no changes are made, all antibiotics will be rendered useless, and the country will return to a time in its past where millions died every year from plagues caused by the common cold or strep (Manning).

Recommendation

The first step to beating antibiotic resistant bacteria is to discontinue the nontherapeutic use of drugs on factory farms, which is using approximately 80% of antibiotics produced in America (Peeples). Both the American Public Health Association (APHA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have declared their opposition to it after performing tests (Graham). The WHO recommended, "in the absence of a public health safety evaluation, [governments should] terminate or rapidly phase out the use of antimicrobials for growth promotion if they are also used for treatment of humans." (Graham). Denmark took this information to heart, banning the use of antimicrobials as growth promoters in 1999 (Graham). The WHO has since conducted tests in Denmark and found that there were no significant differences in the health of the animals or the bottom line of the producers (Graham). Because equivalent improvements in growth and feed consumption can be achieved by improved hygiene, there is hardly any economic benefit from using antimicrobials as feed additives (Graham). Seeing this, the European Union has followed suit with a ban on growth promoters that took effect in 2006 (Graham). It is time for the United States to listen to these recommendations by several prominent health organizations and ban the nontherapeutic use of antibiotics on every farm in its borders (Manning).

The second step to ending the antibiotic resistant bacteria problem is to stop overusing, underusing, and misusing antibiotics on the medical side. Biology teacher Angie Manning says, "We should only go get antibiotics when our immune system cannot naturally kick the infection." (Personal

communication). However antibiotic resistance cannot be blamed completely on doctors overprescribing. Approximately one third of Americans admit to having not finished their prescription (*Antibiotics Are Dangerous*). Ironically, patients who do not follow their prescriptions do even more harm than the doctors who overprescribe them (*Antibiotics Are Dangerous*). When patients do not finish their treatment, they give the bacteria that infected them an opportunity to grow back stronger and cause a more severe disease (*Antibiotics Are Dangerous*). Although it is still the responsibility of the patient to follow their prescription, it is easy to see why they view prescriptions as guidelines rather than strict rules. They know that there is always a clinic open somewhere that will write them another prescription for just about anything. Doctors have to stop writing prescriptions for antibiotics unless the drug is absolutely necessary to stop the patient's infection (Manning).

Some may accuse these ideas of drastically cutting back antibiotic consumption of being unrealistic or unproven. They would be mistaken; Norway has already implemented a solution similar to this one that has been giving the country fantastic results (Mendoza & Mason). Norwegian officials recognized that they were seeing a huge increase in cases of MRSA, an often fatal staph infection; however, they also noticed that there is an obvious correlation between the number of antibiotics consumed and the development of staph into MRSA (Mendoza & Mason). With this in mind, they launched a huge three-part plan to stop MRSA in its tracks (Mendoza & Mason). Norwegian doctors prescribe fewer antibiotics than any other country, isolate all MRSA patients, and track each case of MRSA by its individual strain (Mendoza & Mason). If the infection is bacterial and life threatening, doctors could prescribe a specific antibiotic that targets that specific bacteria. "No broad spectrum antibiotics should be given." (Manning). As long as doctors use antibiotics only when absolutely necessary and select for the right antibiotic to fight the infection, bacteria will not have a chance to mutate a resistance. In Norway about one percent of all reported staph infections turn out to be MRSA while in the United States 63 percent turn out to be MRSA (Mendoza & Mason). Norway's plan has virtually stopped the development of bacteria into antibiotic resistant bacteria and needs to be applied in the United States as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, the United States is already teeming with antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria that are getting millions of people sick (Manning). The country is in an arms race against the bacteria within its borders and has no options but to continue producing newer, stronger antibiotics until it can get its number of antibiotic resistant bacteria down (Manning). However, very few drug manufacturers are still producing new antibiotics because newly approved antibiotics do not have the commercial success they might have had at another time (Eisenstein). The manufacturers have practically abandoned antibiotic development for the development of more profitable drugs for chronic illnesses (Eisenstein). However, there are a few steps that Congress can take to promote the development of new antibiotics (Eisenstein). Congress should establish a federal anti-infective review board to guarantee antibiotics stewardship, create a number of economic incentives specifically designed to foster innovation in antibiotic development, and extend the right of a manufacturer to be the sole producer of an antimicrobial product from the current five years to ten (Eisenstein). The review board would make sure that all antibiotics produced were safe and being used for the correct purpose; meanwhile, the economic incentives and ten year patent would greatly lower the risk manufacturers take when they start developing new antibiotics (Eisenstein). If this plan is put into effect the United States will be far more prepared to combat a bacterial epidemic that is no longer such a foreign concept.
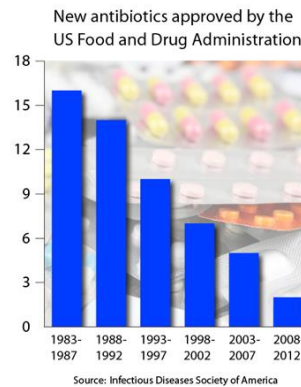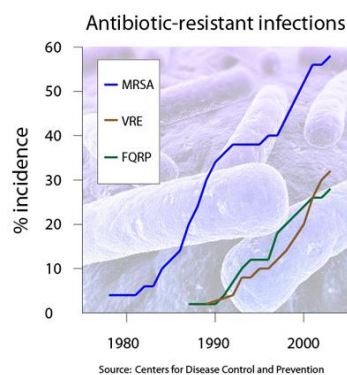
These changes in policy would have a few relatively minor negative effects in comparison to the tremendous effect it would have on the number of antibiotic resistant bacteria. Doctors cutting back on writing prescriptions as well as farmers no longer being allowed to buy large quantities of antibiotics to

feed to their livestock for growth purposes will definitely hurt drug companies' sales (Eisenstein). However, if these precautions are not taken, demand for their products will disappear because they will stop working.

If the United States is going to beat antibiotic resistant bacteria for good it will take the following measures: factory farms must stop feeding livestock antibiotics for nontherapeutic use, doctors must cut back on writing prescriptions while patients follow them to the letter, and drug manufacturers must continue to develop new antibiotics. Combined, these measures should greatly decrease the number of antibiotic resistant bacteria in the country.

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What is purpose of art? What is the place of the artist in society? How do we respond to art we do not necessarily understand or appreciate? These are a few of the questions that Franz Kafka's short story "The Hunger Artist" asks the reader to consider. Charles Dungy's analytical essay takes up these and other important questions about Kafka's work and about the story's themes.

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Art and its Audience: On Franz Kafka's "A Hunger Artist"

Art, in its best representation, whether that is through paintings, cinema, or literature, attempts to transcend the dullness of human existence. An ideal artist delves into subterranean human emotions and thus delivers essential meaning into an otherwise meaningless and directionless reality. Art untangles a tangled mind, revitalizes life's worthless oxygen. However, one must be willing to accept such lively assertions regarding art and complex art, which, generally speaking, invites myriad interpretations—as it rightly should—from consumers and critics.

Art can therefore sometimes produce absurdities and misunderstandings between an audience and an artist. Such confusions are on display in Franz Kafka's short story "A Hunger Artist." It is a story in which a hunger artist, a man whose public fasting (his art) in a cage throughout decades has mesmerized many observers at all hours even under the darting light of torches, now copes with a new reality of solitude, everlasting dissatisfaction, and vulnerable exhibition. He also experiences an audience's indifference, which is purely seeking simple amusement and is not discovering any comfort in his performance. The reflective narrative thrusts the significance of this honest artist, his art, and his skeptical audience of regulars into maximum display; they are an uninterested audience whom the hunger artist's persistent integrity fails to preserve or enlighten.

In upholding the somewhat vain creation of his inspired expression, an artist is at innocent peril with his audience. The hunger artist, following decades of supreme reign regarding public attention, begins to become a fashionable joke among adults who feel he is a "cheat," and simply "the children's special treat" (353, 354). The honest hunger artist represents any timeless creator of art who is in decline

concerning public popularity. Yet, the teasing adults joke for incredulous, suspicious reasons, while the children are "marveling at him" (353). This moment indicates that the adults, who are surely an experienced group, are projecting their lousy existence onto the hunger artist with cruel skepticism and merely seeing him as low entertainment and his art as unworthy of their time, their awareness: the adults do not take the hunger artist seriously. But the youthfully curious spectators admire his work. In a strict sense, only the youth now appreciate art, or at least they are the prime consumers of it.

The adult's mistrust of the hunger artist's authentic fasting is unwarranted, since the hunger artist has a group "of permanent watchers … [who are] usually butchers" and who reassure the onlookers that he does not cheat (353). These experts on food (or art) consist of two distinct groups. The first group keeps its distance and focuses on their card game, which signifies they are "obviously intending to give the hunger artist the chance" to eat (or belittle his art) (353). The second group, conversely, sits "close up to the bars" and hears stories from the hunger artist; and "after a weary night of wakefulness," he rewards them and their curiosity with "an enormous breakfast … at his expense" (354). The hunger artist has contempt for the former group because of the suggestion that he is an opportunistic cheater—these watchers fail to understand or believe in his art. He, however, admires the latter group for their veneration and keen observation of his art; therefore, he proudly provides them the main thing he denies himself: food (or life).

Kafka further underscores this deep distinction between a hollow audience and a knotty performer. The hunger artist still "fanatically devote[s himself] to fasting," while encountering "a whole world of nonunderstanding" and "positive revulsion" concerning his public act (356, 357). He also collaborates with an uninspiring impresario who desires to limit his art of fasting to forty days because "sympathetic support [begins] notably to fall off" at that point (354). Because of the impresario's lack of artistic backing and a widely uninterested audience, the hunger artist therefore has no use for his promotional skills. The hunger artist then leaves the lackluster impresario and subsequently joins the circus. This seemingly singular choice is nonetheless troubling for the hunger artist. As he desires, he can

now fast indefinitely, which the impresario publicly denies is attainable, and possibly break world records (or earn fame), but only doing so while others are continuing to show little respect towards his art.

The circus hires him for "his famous and long-known name" and thus not his art—the art few understand—and especially not for his professionalism and capabilities (357). He also continues to face the many uncompromising regulars, those who pine for the circus' easily understandable caged animals. These low-boil circus patrons must pass by his cage through a "narrow gangway," where even some stop "for a moment," to view such animals (357). But these very regulars are unwilling to have anything delay their viewing of animals and therefore do not understand the reasons "why they should [stop or slow down while] … on their way toward[s] the excitements of the menagerie" (357). In this rotten experience, the hunger artist begins "to shrink from them," because the impatient patrons force the curious observers to move along in haste (357). The hunger artist is beginning to accept the confusion that many people have about his art, for the regulars prefer simple circus tricks, such as the animals' "roaring at feeding times" (358). In other words, the art of fasting, of self-denial, is out of fashion. Instead, the art of sensationalism is ubiquitous, effortless, and pleasant. This art requires no introspection—not a single critical inquiry. That is, the amusing animal eats because that is its unconscious response, and it does what the regulars expect it to do.

The public's cruelty towards the hunger artist persists. People on the circus staff view the upkeep of the placards, which displays the number of days he has been fasting, as a "pointless" task; for no one has much interest in the hunger artist as neither he nor anyone else is keeping count of his numerous fasting days (358). The unwillingness to signal the hunger artist's success is a signifier of the unworthiness, the deception most people, including the staff and onlookers, have in viewing his artistic expression. Before his imminent death, the hunger artist has a telling exchange with an overseer to whom he explains, "I have to fast … because I couldn't find the food I like" (359). It is the notion that an artist has no choice in creating art: nothing else is satisfying. This artist suffers from eternal discontent, and thus must create art for the sake of living. The hunger artist soon bears a public death for his art of fasting. The comprehensible life that the hunger artist rejects, his caged replacement, "a young panther," fulfills,

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however. The regulars feel that "it [is] refreshing to see this wild creature leaping around the cage" (359). Unlike the hunger artist, the panther is alive, albeit unconsciously, and it eats freely without question. The panther also has no choice but to be in the cage. The animal is absent awareness and intellect and does not know what kind of life could exist outside a cage, whereas the hunger artist is aware of the sacrifices he made to in there.

The regulars prefer the panther's performance of luridness; for example, they crowd "round the cage, and [do] not want ever to move away" (359). In comparison, the hunger artist and his art engender introspection and critical analysis into what exactly he is after and to what end, whereas the young panther is merely present for the regulars to enjoy, granted they do so somewhat nervously. The panther's mind cannot question his limited space, the onlooker's expectations, or how he fails to meet them. The hunger artist is living through his art, and yet, the young panther, while literally more alive and energetic, is shallow, cut-rate amusement bereft of living artfully or critically. The panther is the antithesis of the hunger artist.

The timeless narrative of the hunger artist ought to be a genesis that establishes a novel understanding in how the public supports certain artistic accomplishments. In modern times, the common tactic is to embrace ephemerality that surrounds art and culture in general, namely, to overlook the questions that some artists may prefer the public begins to ask. However, a better method would be for individuals to evaluate any art with abundant curiosity, to imagine what the artist is conveying through her art, and to practice reluctance in dismissing an art's existence simply because of ignorance or complexity. Kafka is asking readers to become aware of such misrepresented art and artists—art that public critics, publicists, impresarios, and consumers might misinterpret. That is the treatment. People must not refrain from art that is asking something of them: asking for a bit of one's time; asking for the use of prior experiences and sound rationale; asking one not to mock the misunderstood, especially at the persuasion of others.

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Food security and food safety are two of the most important concerns humans face. In recent years, new technologies have been developed with the intention of improving the security of our food supply, but at what cost to food quality and safety? Brandi Phillips essay examines the potential consequences of one the most controversial forms of food engineering technology, Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs).

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GMOs: A Broken Technology

Technology is undeniably the driving force in today's society. Breakthrough technologies in the medical field and computer science have brought forth life-saving interventions and conveniences that have propelled the public to innovate and invent a better quality of life; the food industry is no exception. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have become a controversial subject of debate ever since their introduction into the food supply in the mid-1990s. A GMO is an organism-- plant, animal, or microorganism-- that has been genetically altered in such a way that would have never occurred in nature. Some people are skeptical about this new technology, and for good reason: the biotechnology companies that have developed GMOs have promised to create a healthier and better tasting food supply. However, they have failed consumers. Instead of doing what was promised, biotechnology companies have used their technology to market herbicide-laden, pesticide-producing cash crops for profit. With lax regulations from government, these genetically modified (GM) foods have dominated the food supply, all while the public remains in the dark regarding the dangers to health of consuming GM foods.

In this Information Age, consumers covet technological advances in many products, from medical devices to technological-based entertainment and pastimes; this drive to create more innovative versions of traditional goods and services has created an open market for technologically advanced foods. Before such advances, Barbara Ruhs, a writer from *Environmental Nutrition*, explains that farmers used a traditional agricultural technique of crossbreeding to manifest desirable traits of their products; crossbreeding was effective by selecting two varieties of the same plant and breeding them together naturally, enabling farmers to produce products with the combined preferred characteristics, such as

sweeter fruits (par. 5). Many people think this elemental balance of nature is best. However, detractors

counter by saying that this old-fashioned technique is time consuming, often taking years to create the

final product, and furthermore, the product's results are not as precise in comparison to GMO technology

(Ruhs par. 6). With today's society, technology is coveted and considered more practical than customary

techniques. Now, scientists have the technology to take "genes…from other plants, bacteria, viruses,

insects, animals, [and] even humans" and administer the preferred genes into the plant (Ruhs par. 3).

GMO technology allows food to be designed for optimum productivity. This technology was developed

to create foods that taste better, that have more nutrition and a longer shelf life, and that fight off diseases

(Ruhs par. 7). The problem is this: the new technology that biotechnology companies have promised

would improve the food supply is, in fact, harming it by, instead, going down a more poisonous path.

Rather than using new GM technology to create a more nutritious food supply, biotechnology

companies have chosen a path that is profit-driven. Jason McLure, honoree correspondent for various

publications, notes that in the beginning, biotechnology companies envisioned developing foods that

could generate more nutrients, combat diseases, and override environmental issues, within a biodiversity

of fruits and vegetables (722). Initial aspirations from scientists were to produce better quality foods.

Furthermore, David Hosansky, a specialist in environmental issues, explains that originally scientists also

planned to use GM technologies to create "livestock that [would] be disease-resistant, excrete less

environmentally harmful waste and produce leaner meat" (257). However, in reality, biotechnology

companies' agendas have changed course, with attention devoted to profits. Biotechnology companies

have developed a monopoly on monoculture cash crops: soy, corn, and cotton (McLure 722). Some

would argue that most corporations seek profits, and while this is true, there is a higher ethical

responsibility of food makers to put health above profits. Biotechnology companies have capitalized on

profits by creating specialized GM seeds that can withstand heavy doses of herbicide and produce its own

pesticides (McLure 720). These seeds enable farmers to plant crops that are more resistant to

environmental pests; it also saves farmers time, by permitting the farmers to spray weed-killer on the

plant directly, rather than having to painstakingly spray the weed killer around each crop, thus increasing

production and profits. Biotechnology companies, in turn, sell these specialized seeds, along with its corresponding herbicide they manufacture, directly to farmers, doubling on profits (McLure 723). Initially, many farmers saw this new technology as a way to limit pesticide exposure, but they instead contributed to biotechnology corporations' growing monopolies over their crops. McLure explains, "Farmers who buy Monsanto [biotech] seeds while they are covered by patents are barred from saving them from season to season as they may do with conventional crops" (723). As a result, biotechnology companies continue to make profits, season after season, by selling their GM cash crop seeds, coupled with the herbicide used on the GM seeds, directly to commercial farmers. It is unfortunate that biotechnology companies, armed with a miraculous and potentially salubrious technology, abandoned their initial health quest in order to heighten their profits for GM commercialized cash crops. Biotechnology corporations' motto to push approval for their GMO products, "We can help feed the world," has lost its luster as biotech companies instead seek to help feed their wallets.

Meanwhile, as biotechnology companies continue to accumulate profits with their seed- and-pesticide monetary combo, government regulators have been slow in developing appropriate safety practices on GM foods to protect consumers. It is the government's responsibility to regulate the safety of these new GM technologies practiced upon the food supply. Eric D. Hargan, former deputy secretary and regulatory policy officer for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, explains that The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are the primary components of the "two-pronged food safety regulatory system" that are supposed to inspect and oversee food safety (par. 1). However, due to the novelty and fast development of food technology, regulators lagged in implementing appropriate precautionary measures for GM food. For instance, the technology of DNA replication was first learned in the 1970s with the transferring of genes into bacteria. In response to fears over what could manifest with gene transfers, the National Institute of Health (NIH) was set up to oversee biotech research. Yet, because initial studies found that bacteria were actually weakened with gene transfer, fears receded and the NIH ended restrictions a decade later (McLure 726). Later, when DNA food experiments began in 1992, "GM crops [received] no more scrutiny than… [other] crops

produced through conventional breeding" (McLure 728). Furthermore, the FDA has allowed

biotechnology corporations to bring forth self-appointed review studies on their products rather than

seeking additional non-biased research (Hosansky 253). In addition, to further give biotech companies

more regulatory control, in the summer of 2012, the House of Representatives passed a new farm bill that

Colin O'Neil, a policy analyst for the Center for Food Safety in Washington, described as creating

"multiple backdoor approval mechanisms that would allow for premature commercialization of untested

biotech traits to enter our food system" (qtd. in McLure 721). To make matters more complex, "a 2008

study by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified 15 different federal agencies

responsible for food safety," leading to numerous inevitable gaps in consumer safety (Hargan par. 2).

Hence, due to government's lax and fractionated safety regulations, possibly dangerous and under-tested

GM foods have been able bypass necessary safety precautions, materializing in consumers' food pantries.

Due to government's faulty regulation of the food market, GMOs have become prevalent in the

U.S. food supply in the short amount of time since their introduction. According to the Grocery

Manufacturer's Association, GMOs comprise "75 to 80 percent of processed foods in the U.S." food

supply (Ruhs par. 1). Most Americans consume some type of processed food in their daily diet, making it

likely that every American consumes one or more GM product(s) every day. The most abundant GM

commercial crops grown are "soybeans, corn/maize, rapeseed (canola oil), cotton, and sugar beets" (Ruhs

par. 4). Nearly all processed foods are composed of one or more of such cash crops. According to the

USDA, in July 2012, GM soy accounted for 93% of soy grown in America, along with 80% of corn, and

73% of cotton (McLure 723). In addition, GM foods are sold around the world, but America has led in

production and sales of GM crops in the twenty years since they have been on the market (McLure 722).

Although some people do not see problems with this, current generations can be defined as the guinea

pigs of the GMO experiment by consuming an abundance of GM foods without the possible health effects

being thoroughly evaluated.

More recently, the abundance of GMOs in the food supply has begun to manifest insidious effects

on Americans' health. Most people have heard the saying, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away";

however, today, that apple may actually be making consumers sick. Continual ingestion of the most heavily used herbicide, Round-Up, sprayed on produce, such as that apple, is beginning to show correlations with chronic health problems. Pamela Coleman, a Farm and Food Policy Analyst at The Cornucopia Institute, explains that glyphosate is the active ingredient in the herbicide that biotech companies have engineered their cash crops to resist (par. 1). Furthermore, she blames glyphosate for increasing chronic diseases that plague Western societies: "The acute toxicity of glyphosate is relatively low, meaning that accidentally ingesting it will likely not cause immediate harm. Chronic toxicity-- the effects of continually ingesting glyphosate residues in food-- is cause for concern. Glyphosate interferes with fundamental biochemical reactions and may predispose humans to obesity, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and other health problems" (Coleman par. 4). It is logical that consumers have missed signs of the adverse chronic health effects in consuming a chemical substance that has only circulated within the food supply for a few decades. Moreover, such studies conducted on harmful health effects can only be done on animals, and their studies only last for a few months (Coleman par. 5). Thus, these studies are inadequate in determining the safety of consuming GMOs, with not nearly enough time devoted to foresee possible chronic health effects in consuming GM foods. In spite of this, as Coleman points out, although it is impossible to study chronic health concerns on short term studies, "it is possible to study the specific biochemical action of the pesticide, and then examine the diseases that have been related to malfunction of that biochemical pathway" (par. 6). Glyphosate has been found to kill beneficial bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract, which "depletes essential amino acids and predisposes humans to a host of chronic health problems... [contributing] to obesity, depression, autism, inflammatory bowel disease, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's" (Coleman par. 9). Glyphosate has also been shown to disrupt certain enzymes that "help to detoxify foreign chemicals (such as pesticides), regulate levels of vitamin D, and control cholesterol in humans" (Coleman par. 10). As common knowledge to most consumers, when human cells continue to be disturbed, deadly chronic diseases such as cancer are more likely to manifest. Worse yet, increased levels of glyphosate are being administered on cash crops (Coleman par. 15). Consequently, additional studies need to be conducted immediately on the chronic health effects of

ingesting continual low doses of glyphosate, and more importantly, it should have been done before unleashing large quantities of GMOs in the food supply.

While further studies are conducted evaluating the chronic effects of glyphosate, consumers undoubtedly should stay away from any GMO products in the meantime. However, this may actually prove difficult because foods with GMOs are not labeled. Statistics gathered by *ABC News* reveal that 93 percent of the U.S. public says that the federal government should require labels on foods containing GMOs (Langer par. 3). Such a high percentage of public unity is rare. In reaction, states such as Vermont, Maine, and Connecticut have heard the democratic concerns from their citizens and have passed mandatory labeling laws (Jalonick par. 3). In response, as *PBS Newshour* reports, the House of Representatives have passed the *Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act* (2015), which denies states the right to mandate GMO labeling (Jalonick par 2). This is alarming. For the government to passively ignore the demands of the American people, who are unified with a high percentage of public agreement over the issue of GMO labeling in the food supply, is disconcerting, but to actively pass a law prohibiting GMO labeling is an egregious infringement of citizens' democratic rights.

It is clear that there are some major issues regarding GMOs and its effect on the food supply in conjunction with the American public's safety. With government allowing the GMOs to flood the food supply, failing to demand sufficient health studies, and prohibiting GMO labeling, consumers are ingesting potentially harmful foods at an alarming rate. However, not all GMOs are created equal. The same technology that biotechnology companies have developed to make crops resist poison can also be used to help crops resist droughts and other elemental reoccurrences that destroy crops; likewise, the same proteins engineered by biotechnology companies to kill insects can also be engineered to create more vitamins and minerals, boosting nutrition. Technology has spurred the best and most innovative creations in society, and the food industry should be no different. How can the public convince biotechnology companies to abandon their profits and chemicals to resume the beneficial work they first advocated?

Consumers, food corporations, biotechnology corporations, and government must all work cohesively together to bring GMOs out of the dark ages of corruption, poison, and danger into a brighter,

more sufficient, and healthier America. First, consumers must vote with their wallets by purchasing Non-GM foods that, as a result, will motivate food corporations to adhere to the demands of its consumers and supply foods without GM ingredients. In turn, profit-seeking biotechnology companies will see their sales decline and will be motivated to use their technology to make a more nutritious food supply. Lastly, for future precautionary measures, the government must incorporate higher safety regulations to monitor the food supply. The technology is available; it is time to use it wisely.

Consumers hold the power to change the food supply; after all, consumers are the ultimate purchasers that the food industry needs to buy their products. Consumers need to vote with their wallets; withholding profits from foods with poison-resistant and insecticidal-GM ingredients is the first step in persuading food corporations to manufacture foods without unhealthy GMOs. With collective and persistent unity among purchasers, consumers can start the ripple effect that will turn the food supply from yielding the most in quantity, for profit, to yielding the most in nutrients, for health. For example, according to *Wall Street Journal*'s assistant editorial feature editor, Kate Bachelder, the growing demands from consumers are being heard, and large food corporations such as General Mills and Ben & Jerry's are starting to remove GM ingredients from their products (par 2). This is a huge win for consumers. The FDA solely gives food companies the right to voluntarily decide if they want to label GM ingredients in their products (Bachelder par. 18). Since the states are denied the right to mandate GMO labeling on foods, consumers have the power to change the food supply not with voting ballots, but instead with voting dollars. Consumers must get the ball rolling by withholding profits to influence big food corporations to make products without harmful GM ingredients.

To wake up giant food corporations, profits for GM foods need to decline, and since foods containing GM ingredients are not labeled, consumers have to specifically look for labels that reveal the product is GMO free. This limits purchases to foods labeled with the Non-GMO Project Verified seal or the USDA Organic label; both have a zero-tolerance policy for GMOs (Smith par. 2). Although most health-conscious Americans are concerned with the negative or unknown effects from eating foods with GMOs, detractors may still not be convinced that consuming current GM ingredients is bad for their

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health. Furthermore, it may be hard to convince critics without tangible evidence of the harmful correlations of its consumption, as reports are not yet available. In the meantime, in regard to the naysayers, perhaps they ought to look into the benefits in consuming organic foods. Organic foods are much more nutritious than either GM foods or their conventional counterparts, an observation which is backed by concrete evidence from Melissa Diane Smith, of *Better Nutrition*:

> Reviews of multiple studies show that organic foods provide significantly greater levels of vitamin C, iron, magnesium, and phosphorus than non-organic varieties of the same foods, [furthermore,] they also tend to provide greater levels of health-supporting antioxidant phytochemicals, such as flavonoids. And a 2013 study found that organically produced milk has a more beneficial fatty acid composition, which is helpful for promoting reduced inflammation in the body. (par. 9)

In addition, organic farming policies also support environmental healthiness, such as the health of soil and water quality used in organic farming. It prohibits substances as follows: "irradiation, sewage sludge, antibiotics, growth hormones, and synthetic chemical fertilizers and pesticides, many of which have been linked to health problems, including neurological and endocrine system disorders and cancer[s]" (Smith par. 8). Adverse health studies from direct consumption of GMOs over the course of chronic ingestion may take decades to complete, but the benefits to eating organic are clear. Therefore, with consumer dissent over the lack of food transparency and the negative health effects of GMOs, coupled with their refusal to buy products with GM ingredients, consumers will employ the winning formula to wake up the food industry to distribute a healthy, beneficial food supply.

With waning profits and the food corporations' refusal to create products with GMOs, the market for chemically-laden foods will slowly start to disappear; this will prompt biotechnology companies to choose a healthier avenue in developing their GM technology. Biotechnology companies may have some difficulty changing the cultural attitude toward their products because of the damage they have done to consumers' trust in them. Initially, biotechnology companies sought to make foods more sustainable and nutritious-- before money signs clouded their vision. With such temptations out of reach

and the demands for healthy foods coming from consumers and big food corporations alike,

biotechnology companies will be motivated to pick up where they left off by making foods healthier.

Truly, biotechnology companies have a lot of wrongs to make right. Today, consumers are naturally

weary of food technology, naming such GM products "frankenfood," or foods that do not naturally occur

in nature. According to Arthur Caplin, professor and head of the Division of Bioethics at the New York

University's Langone Medical Center, he argues that by refusing to label and by sneaking GMOs in the

food supply, the biotechnology companies have created an "environment of suspicion and distrust" that

will be hard to dismantle when it comes to GMOs (par. 12). Even Brett Begemann, Monsanto's

president and chief operating officer, "admits that Monsanto could have done more to educate consumers

about its products and keep the GM fear from festering" (Bachelder par. 17). It will be hard for

biotechnology companies, such as Monsanto, to gain consumer trust; however, it is paramount that they

do so because the food supply needs a weapon to combat production shortages, environmental disasters,

and diseases within the food supply (Caplan par.7). Bachelder asks readers to "[i]magine the world as an

apple" (par. 23). Begemann then explains, "Cut it in half, and then cut it again until you have it in

32nds…[One 32nd section is] the land we use for agriculture" and the peel is " the topsoil that feeds us

all." He adds that "it takes about 100 years to build an inch of topsoil. It takes [just one] bad storm on a

weekend to destroy it" (qtd in Bachelder par. 23). With farmable land being such a precious commodity

that is easily destroyed, it is vital to utilize the available land to feed everyone with healthiness in mind

for both consumers and the environment alike. Caplin provides a solution for commercial farming:

"The route to getting rid of chemical agriculture can run through organic farming. But it must also

incorporate genetic modification[s]… [while] trying to farm on a warming planet, short on water, with

many blight-threatened crops" dying (par. 22). Even if consumers are successful in changing food

corporations' practices by ejecting harmful GMOs from their products, there is still the issue of waning

food productivity, and GM technology is the solution. Biotechnology companies need to resume

research in developing seeds that can survive environmental challenges such as droughts, and they must

grow foods that have more nutrients than their conventional counterparts. People in the medical field are

becoming less weary of new GM technologies' abilities to enhance quality of life; it is time for

biotechnology companies to have the same impact on the food supply.

While biotechnology companies use their technology to benefit the food supply, government

needs to do their part as well to make sure our food supply is safe. To do this, government officials need

to create a cohesive regulatory system that leaves no gaps, that incorporates strenuous health tests for

foods, and that listens and adheres to the concerns of its citizens. This means patching up gaps with a

government-overseer devoted strictly to food safety, and giving out no more free passes for new foods to

bypass strenuous, non-biased testing, going directly to consumers' food shelves. The food supply needs

to be streamlined by inviting a cohesive regulation of the food supply that is rigorously regulated and

meticulously tested for health, including both acute and chronic levels of harm. Lastly, Congress should

be in favor with American public unity, not fighting against it; it is important for consumers to know that

government regulators have the health-safety of the American public as their top concern. Government

politicians need to listen to concerns of its citizens regarding food transparency, and pass laws relieving

the fears of its consumers, not raising skepticism. When corporations seek profits over ethics,

compromising the safety of food, it is ultimately the government's job to oversee such private, capitalist

sectors and to step in by policing the food supply.

GM technology in the food industry currently has a bad name, oftentimes evoking fear and

outrage. However, with the right guidance it can become the food supply's savior, by saving the

dwindling food supply and producing foods packed with beneficial properties. Technology has enabled

people to live longer and have a better quality of life. Although there are skeptics of the advancements in

technology, many people welcome the productivity and precision technology brings. With consumers

uniting to refuse the purchase of the current chemically-laced, insecticidal-GMOs, they will start a chain

of events that will cause big food corporations to deny GM ingredients, motivating the keepers of such

potentially miraculous technology, biotechnology companies, to make foods that are more nutritious and

sustainable than ever before in history. If we demand the best of technology, companies will supply it.

Government also needs to make valiant efforts in better regulating the food supply and its new

technologies, so profits never overturn safety. It is time for consumers to have a say in what they eat to

turn the GMO experiment from one of horror to one of innovation.

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Serious readers of literature discover important meaning and life lessons in an author's work. When that work is, itself, about a particular lesson, as is the case with Toni Cade Bambara's short story "The Lesson", we learn through the experience of the characters in the story and the choices an author makes to convey those experiences. Steven Wall's analysis of Bambara's work takes a close look at the author's use of symbolism as a group of children learn about economic inequality on a trip to a famous Manhattan toy store. Wall's essay is a good example of how close reading of a literary text can teach us a great deal about an author's choices and a text's meaning.

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22 March 2016

<center>Lessons in the Toys</center>

Toni Cade Bambara was a prominent African American author, college professor, and political activist. She was born in 1939 and lived in Harlem for some of her childhood. Her writing was heavily influenced by the civil rights movement. The majority of her works were about politics and injustice, particularly in the black community, and her protagonists were frequently sassy young females. One of her most popular works is the short story, "The Lesson," which was published in 1972. In "The Lesson," Sylvia and her friends take a trip with their teacher, Miss Moore, to F.A.O. Schwarz, a toy store in downtown Manhattan. As the children see the different toys on display they begin to understand pieces of the lesson that Miss Moore is trying to teach them. The children grow more and more uncomfortable as they realize how out of place they are in such a fancy store. They also become increasingly aware of the huge gap between their socioeconomic statuses and the ones of the white people that the toy store caters to. The microscope, paperweight, and toy sailboat described in the story are significant symbols that represent lessons for the children.

The first toy that is described in the story is a microscope. Big Butt sees the microscope and decides it is the toy he would want to buy if he had money. This prompts Miss Moore to tell the children about all of the types of things he could use it for. This toy is also significant because it shows that wealthy white kids in Manhattan pretend and play make-believe that they are doctors or scientists, which

is nothing at all like what Sylvia and her friends pretend to be. This shows a difference in their cultures beginning at childhood. The kids see that the price is 300 dollars and become discouraged, telling Miss Moore that by the time they would be able to save up that kind of money they would have outgrown it. Miss Moore responds by saying, "No, you never outgrow learning instruments" (Bambara 98). This line establishes the greater importance of the microscope as more than just a toy. The microscope symbolizes that education can be a way for them to escape the poverty that they have grown up in and make something better of themselves. The microscope also symbolizes the difference between the numerous educational and career opportunities afforded to white people and the scarce opportunities for black people in the 1960s. Finally, a microscope allows people to examine things on a closer level, which is exactly what Miss Moore is trying to get the children to do through self-discovery.

The second toy is a paperweight, and it is important because it makes them aware of what they do not have. The paperweight costs 480 dollars and it is made from semi-precious stones. The children don't know what a paperweight is, so Miss Moore explains that it is to keep the papers on their desks tidy and in order. She tells them this even though Sylvia notes that, "She know damn well what our homes look like cause she nosies around in them every chance she gets" (98). This shows that tidiness and order are important values to Miss Moore, and she wants the children to value them as well. The children are confused because, to them, it's nothing more than a really expensive rock, one that probably costs more than all of the other possessions their families own. The paperweight is something completely pointless for most of them. Besides Mercedes, they don't even own desks at home, much less any paper that would need to be weighted down and kept in order (98). It also augments the subtext of how poverty holds them down just like a paperweight does for papers on a desk.

The third toy is a fiberglass sailboat and, priced at 1,195 dollars, it is the most expensive item that the children look at in the toy store. The price is so outrageous to the kids that they all read it out loud in unison because they cannot believe what they are seeing. The sailboat symbolizes the extreme difference in incomes between the wealthy people in Manhattan and the underprivileged people of Harlem. Immediately after seeing the price, Sylvia gets really angry and can't quite understand why. This is an

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important moment in the story because it is a time when Miss Moore is able to break through Sylvia's tough facade and make her show something other than sarcasm or apathy. The children's awareness of this income gap is evidenced toward the end of the story when Sugar tells Miss Moore what she thought of the trip to F.A.O. Schwarz:

> "I think," say Sugar pushing me off her feet like she never done before, cause I whip her ass in a minute, "that this is not much of a democracy if you ask me. Equal chance to pursue happiness means an equal crack at the dough, don't it?" Miss Moore is beside herself and I am disgusted with Sugar's treachery. So I stand on her foot one more time to see if she'll shove me. She shuts up and Miss Moore looks at me, sorrowfully I'm thinkin. And something weird is goin on, I can feel it in my chest. (101)

This quote is especially significant for Sugar because it shows that Sugar is beginning to grasp the inequality that exists throughout their lives. At the same time she sees that Miss Moore may be much wiser than the kids originally thought. This toy is the one that finally causes Sylvia and the other children to reach some conclusions and ask hard questions about life that Miss Moore has been trying to coax out of them throughout their trip.

The central lesson that Miss Moore was trying to convey is never explicitly stated, but it can be discerned through the things that the toys symbolize. One of the best insights into Miss Moore's lesson comes earlier in the story when Sylvia thinks, "What kinda work they do and how they live and how come we ain't in on it? Where we are is who we are, Miss Moore always pointin out. But it don't necessarily have to be that way, she always adds then waits for somebody to say that poor people have to wake up and demand their share of the pie…" (100). This is one of the most important lines in the story because it sums up very well what Miss Moore is trying to impart to the children.

All of the toys in the story represent distinct life lessons that Miss Moore is trying to teach the children. Injustice and discrimination is rampant in the world and if the kids want to have a better life, no one is going to just give it to them; they have to rise up and take it for themselves. Sylvia finally realizes this at the end of the story when she says, "But ain't nobody gonna beat me at nuthin" (101).

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This line is crucial as the closing statement of the story because it shows that Sylvia is determined to do something important with her life. She refuses to be less equal than anyone else.

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1 November 2015

<div align="center">Understanding the Poet:</div>

<div align="center">The Political and Mythical Context of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in Augustan Rome</div>

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is without a doubt one of the most influential pieces of literature in the modern world: it displays the mythos, history, and attitudes of Augustan Rome, a civilization that has been dead for close to two thousand years. The *Metamorphoses* forms an interesting parallel with its writer; because of Ovid's position and experience as a Roman citizen he was imbued with a unique perspective: one of reverence, disgust, and impotent acceptance. While he may not have represented all of the classical values of Augustan society, he certainly held values of respect and dreamy-eyed lovesickness as his predecessors did. Ovid carries the sickening romanticism of Sappho, as demonstrated in *Amores,* and the satirical wit of Lucilius, which fed into the deviant and comedic elements of the *Metamorphoses* (Melville 382). The *Metamorphoses* also represents both the political and social change that occurred in Rome during the first century as well as the personal changes that Ovid experienced serving under Augustus Caesar and during his subsequent exile from Roman society. By exploring the intricacies of Ovid's writing, the role of mythological beliefs in Rome, and the life of Ovid, the *Metamorphoses* can be examined more closely, and the underlying themes and ideas can be given greater context.

To understand the *Metamorphoses* one must first understand the way in which Ovid uses mythology in his work. For example, Ovid twists the established mythology of Greek history by providing a "version of the Lycaon myth [that] contrasts with earlier descriptions of Lycaon in literature"; in this way Ovid demonstrates the fluidity of mythology in the society of the period (Balsley 62). It is important to note the period in which the *Metamorphoses* was written as "By the time that Ovid came to manhood… the Roman Republic had been transformed into an (ostensibly) benevolent despotism" which can be seen as the root of the pieces' theme (A. D. Melville ix). The aspect of constantly changing history and beliefs in Roman society can be seen as early as the creation story in Book One of the *Metamorphoses,* which is important because it is representative of the change that was taking place in Rome as republican political structures gave way to the Caesarian leadership structures that overtook Rome and resulted in political anxiety among the Romans because of their conflicted and rapidly changing government.

The changes in the *Metamorphoses* can be extrapolated to represent the shifting of previous myths and stories told by generations of Greeks and Romans before Ovid and gives insight into the malleable nature of orally central record keeping and communication (Ginsberg 223). In the *Metamorphoses* Ovid could be seen as an interpreter of classical mythology who tells it in an uncompromising manner, spinning the tales to his own whimsy. A specific twist of classic mythology can be seen in the opening lines of the *Metamorphoses* in which Ovid recites the tried and true creation story. Creation stories were common among early cultures, and the creation story in the *Metamorphoses* closely resembles popular Egyptian and Christian stories. The "Hymn to Aten", an Egyptian monotheistic hymn, closely resembles a Psalm, 104 to be specific, in the Hebrew Torah. One could infer that, in an understated way, Ovid was directly referencing the nature of change and fluidity in humanity by referencing a piece of mythology that had adapted to conform to the ruling culture over thousands of years. In his opening lines it becomes apparent that Ovid wished to speak about his ever-changing world and, ironically, the unchanging nature of the human soul and its desires, love and power through "apotheosis, divinization, the supreme change", which even Caesar Augustus sought (Melville xv).

It is also important to note that the form in which Ovid wrote the *Metamorphoses*: It is a glaring example of his disdain for the stiff, classical style. One can see Ovid's abandonment of convention in the structure of the poem, obeying the form of hexameter yet creating a poem in short self contained chapters; The *Metamorphoses* also revels in its inconformity to the classical Greek style of epic poetry as it lacks any central theme or telling facet about the society in which it was written, other than the broad context of change. Instead, "The *Metamorphoses*… asks questions, exploring and analyzing for the most part without comment", which creates a feeling of suspicious discontent with the ancient society and its conventions, an aspect specific to Ovid and, likely, few others (Melville xviii).

To truly comprehend the complex vision of the *Metamorphoses* one must look at the background of its author. Ovid was, predictably, a product of the artists that preceded him. The inspiration that he took from epic writers of times past is seen clearly in the *Metamorphoses* with the gods interfering in the affairs of humans, stories of the gods falling in love with humans, triumph and defeat seeded by romantic passion and blissful ignorance. Vergil's influence can be seen in the *Metamorphoses* as "transformations dominate the later books of the [Aeneid], since they run parallel to Aeneas' change into Roman leader, and Latinus' Latium into Augustus' Rome"; Ovid's exploration of change was relevant in Ovid's time because of the political turmoil of the period, and because the ideology of change and anxiety was a familiar idea amongst Greco-Roman people, a result of their tumultuous and often violent history (Papaioannou 34). The idea of fluidity and adaptability of Greco-Roman people is a deeply rooted theme that is represented in the *Metamorphoses* and serves as an insight into ideologies of the time.

Next, it is important to note the roles that Ovid played through his professions. In addition to his work as a poet and writer Ovid also served in political positions because he was well educated and could obviously speak well; this is important to note as writing and oration, or the art of speaking, was essential to Roman society during the period. Though not entirely cemented with physical evidence, as any objects, possessions, or documentation relating to Ovid no longer exist outside of his writings, it is assumed that Ovid was a lawyer or held some position relating to the law of the Greeks because of the *Metamorphoses'* multitude of legal and political terminology. Through the study of Ovid's work *Tristia* it can be explicitly

seen that Ovid identifies as politically employed, assuming the position of "single judge", meaning that Ovid provided a kind of mediated judgment for the citizens of Rome. The skills he attained in his work translated into the writing in the *Metamorphoses*; Ovid's role as a judge is likely attributed to his status as equestrian in Roman society giving him some hierarchal leverage over the lower classes (Bablitz 34). Balsley's article examining the Lycaon story in the *Metamorphoses,* observes, "Ovid as a poet has much in common with Ovid as a lawyer" asserting that Ovid, using the language and knowledge he gained working in the legal profession, translated his experiences into the *Metamorphoses* through the use of political metaphors like that of Lycaon who is punished after the attempted murder of Jupiter, which can be easily seen as a metaphor for the assassination of Julius Caesar shortly before the *Metamorphoses* was written (Balsley 50) The use of political metaphors was likely not an only an unintended side effect of his time in the legal system but also a way of communicating with Rome and the Greco-Roman people. Furthermore, Ovid's method of presenting opinion in the *Metamorphoses* is very similar to that of the political system of Roman society, providing many stories and anecdotal evidence to support a claim, appealing to logos, which is comparable to the gods judging humans in the *Metamorphoses*.

With this in mind, by examining the way in which Ovid writes about government in the *Metamorphoses* one can also contextualize and make assumptions about the political and judicial systems of the time period. Ovid comments, once again in the story of Lycaon, before Jupiter wiped out all humans except two from the earth, upon the legal system which was largely unfair and did not have any trials, which also ties into his themes of chaotic fate. In the story Jupiter simply turns Lycaon into a wolf, a representation of the beast-like nature of man, and then decides to begin anew by destroying the world in a Noah's ark style flood. This is indicative of the what the Romans would consider primitive and base forms of justice, and by contrast they likely saw councils of educated and powerful men to be the ideal form of judgment, which can be seen in the *Metamorphoses* in the intermittent plot framing scenes depicting the gods discussing the fates of humans and the crimes they commit and which are committed against them that results in each character's individual metamorphosis. The structure of councils and lively debate fall in line with the writings of the *Metamorphoses* and the oral traditions of Rome and

Greece; thusly it can be inferred that the legal structure of Augustan Rome was integral in Ovid's vision of Rome, though he was most certainly biased negatively toward the Roman hierarchy by the time he finished the *Metamorphoses* as a response to his exile.

Ovid's exile was arguably the largest factor in the refinement of theme and tone in the *Metamorphoses*. The related concept of censorship—the exile of words and ideas from a culture—is present throughout the work, and was likely a subject on that was on Ovid's mind. Though not pervasive throughout the piece, because a large portion of it was written before his exile, Ovid's banishment solidified one of many central ideas in the *Metamorphoses*: that the world is cruel and uncaring in its torrential mayhem of change. One can see examples of Ovid's change in demeanor about censorship in the first chapter of the *Metamorphoses* in which Ovid pays homage to Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus as Jove says, "When the blood of Caesar by mad impious hands was spilt… the human race and all creation shuddered, dazed with fear of instant ruin; nor dost thou rejoice Augustus, in thy subjects' loyalty…" but later shows signs of indignation in the tale of Jove and Io in which Io is turned into a bovine so as to be hidden from jealous Juno, robbed of her voice because of the lust of a deeply flawed god (A.D. Melville 7). These deeply personal aspects of the *Metamorphoses* serve as a poignant reminder that the drastic changes in power were not kind to all in Rome and that many suffered because of the paradigm shift that occurred.

The reason for Ovid's banishment is largely unknown, and as a result it is difficult to see any personal details of his exile in the *Metamorphoses*. In the *Metamorphoses*, however, it can be seen that many characters lose their voice or the ability to speak at all. In the first chapter alone Lycaon, Daphne, and Io are undeservingly turned into plants or animals by the gods. His frustrations are represented by the sorrow of Io and Actaeon as these characters are betrayed and left powerless due to their lack of speech, as demonstrated by Io when she is presented in her woe: "Would she complain, a moo came from her throat" represents the eternal sorrow that Io was faced with, a feeling that Ovid was intimately familiar with (A.D. Melville 20). Ovid even "compares himself explicitly to Actaeon at Tristia ii. 103 ff., and more than once insists in the poems of exile that the offence for which he was condemned was an error

(indiscretion) and not a scelus (crime)" once again reinforcing the idea that cruel and uncaring fate is the father of change in the mind of Ovid (Melville 392).

Ovid's political prowess, his social status, and his exile shaped and focused the ideologies held within, and the methods of communicating his ideas to the people of Rome through his political metaphors and epically influenced styling contributed to his composition of the *Metamorphoses*. The unstable political status of Rome in combination with the anxieties of the common people and the higher societies, including equestrians, helped to form the highly symbolic piece. The influence of the *Metamorphoses* can still be see in modern political structures, to some degree, and many modern concepts of justice are derived from the Roman ideologies portrayed in the *Metamorphoses*. With the correct contextual lens greater meaning and historical relevance can be interpreted from the ancient text and works to keep the piece relevant even to this day.

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Since the passage of the Affordable Care Act, more Americans have had access to affordable healthcare, especially in states that have chosen to participate in a Medicaid expansion and to create insurance exchanges. Tennessee, however, is not one of those states. Thus the state has a number of citizens who are still struggling to find affordable health insurance, despite efforts by Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam to pass legislation to improve access. Kyle Cooper's essay looks at how the failure of the state legislature to pass the governor's Insure Tennessee plan is affecting access to healthcare across the state.

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6 May 2016

<center>Tennessee Medicaid Expansion</center>

Medicaid is a federal program that provides health insurance mostly for low-income children and pregnant women. The federal government matches the states' costs for the Medicaid program, as long as the program follows broad federal guidelines about who qualifies for the insurance, and what the recipients must receive from the insurance. States can also make their own additional guidelines and benefits. The problem is that parents with a low income who earn slightly above the federal poverty level don't qualify for Medicaid, and fall into a coverage gap. These parents who can't afford insurance on their own need access to quality health care.

A report from William Fox, Mathew Harris, and Mathew Murray from the UT Center for Business and Economic Research stated that over 97,000 working people who would be eligible for Insure Tennessee, Bill Haslam's alternative Medicaid expansion plan, don't have health insurance (Fox, Harris, & Murray). A healthy workforce is crucial for a healthy economy, and the workforce won't stay healthy without access to preventative care before a major health issue arises.

Also, since many people are uninsured, they don't acquire health care until they are in need of emergency care. Emergency rooms have to treat these patients, and when the uninsured patients don't have money to pay the hospitals, the hospitals take a loss. As a result, hospitals are forced to shut down. Sam Stockard of *The Ledger* states that four rural hospitals in Tennessee have shut down since 2013, and

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that fifty-four hospitals are at risk of closing (Stockard). Hospitals shutting down is a big problem, especially in rural areas where the number of hospitals is limited.

Christina Juris Bennett, who wrote a book on the history of TennCare, noted that there has to be a willingness to "continuously improve the situation" for a program to thrive (Bennett). Medicaid has been around for over forty years and has been continually revised throughout the years. Recently, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was passed, requiring that people get insurance or pay a fine. The ACA came with a Medicaid expansion plan, expanding coverage for adults up to 138% of the federal poverty level. The federal government would match 100% of the states' expansion costs for the first three years, and then the match would decline to 90%. This insurance gap solution has worked well for the states that accepted it, but twenty-two states, including Tennessee, didn't accept it.

Instead of accepting the expansion, Governor Bill Haslam proposed his own plan for expansion called Insure Tennessee, which has two different coverage types:

- The new adult group, between 100% and 138% of the federal poverty level, can choose to pay small premiums for coverage under a different form of TennCare with incentives for healthy behaviors.

Or

- The group can choose a voucher that will pay a fixed amount toward their employer's health insurance plan. ("Haslam Announces Insure Tennessee Plan")

Dessislava Yankova, writer for *The Tennessean*, cited Margaret Ecker, outreach coordinator of the Tennessee Justice Center, who stated that 280,000 people in Tennessee would be covered under the Insure Tennessee expansion plan. Citing a White House Council of Economic Advisors report, Yankova noted there would be $1.77 billion of federal money poured into Tennessee (Yankova). This money would help the economy and definitely help struggling hospitals.

Insure Tennessee is a good solution to the insurance gap, but the plan is having difficulty getting approved by the Senate Health and Welfare Committee. The Koch brothers are one of the biggest problems for implementing this expansion plan. The Koch brothers and their Americans for Prosperity

group have had great success in killing several states' Medicaid expansions. Their opposing arguments are mainly based on mistrust of the federal government to pay the match; however, other states that have already expanded coverage aren't having any of the problems the Koch brothers bring up. Also, the Koch brothers use their ads to target senators in support of the expansions, which is why Insure Tennessee has had so much trouble getting passed. The only way to get Insure Tennessee passed is if a lot more people in Tennessee support the plan. It will be difficult, but not impossible.

Another issue raised against Medicaid expansion is that the states' 10% match will cost too much on the states' budgets. The Tennessee Hospital Association, supporting Governor Bill Haslam's Insure Tennessee plan, agreed to pay Tennessee's 10% cost ("Haslam Announces Insure Tennessee Plan"), so that argument isn't valid for Tennessee like it is for other states.

Insure Tennessee is very important for families and single adults in the insurance gap, hospitals, and the economy. It is going to be an uphill battle to get Insure Tennessee passed as a law, but if citizens of Tennessee will show support for it and "spread the word," Insure Tennessee will help many people keep healthy and will help make sure hospitals survive for when help is needed.

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