Preface

The Writing Center’s Phyllis C. Whitesell Prizes honor excellent student writing in Franklin and Marshall’s General Education curriculum. Each year the Writing Center invites submissions and awards a prize for the best essay, one research and one non-research, written in a course that fulfills the First-Year Writing Requirement and for the best essay from a Foundations course. This booklet contains the prize-winning and honorable mention essays from this year’s competition.

Named for the emerita Director of F&M’s Writing Center, the Whitesell Prizes serve several goals. In addition to honoring both Phyllis’s dedication to teaching writing and the achievements of the College’s students writers themselves, the Whitesell Prizes seek to add to the vitality of the College’s General Education curriculum by getting students to think of their intellectual efforts as ongoing enterprises (revision, often after the essay has been graded and the class is completed, is a requirement of the competition). Also, by involving faculty and Writing Center tutors in the judging of the essays—and by making this booklet available to the College community, the Whitesell competition hopes to foster a fuller awareness of the interesting work being done in our Foundations and First-Year Writing requirement courses. In that spirit, we are also including a new feature this year: the text of the assignments to which these essays responded.

My great appreciation goes to this year’s Whitesell Prize judges. Prof. Giovanna Lerner, Prof. Sylvia Alajaji, and tutor Caitlin Black (’11) awarded the prize in Foundations. Prof. Alexis Castor, Prof. Kerry Sherin Wright, and Writing Center tutors Chad Wright (’11) and Abby Zoltick (’10) were the judges for the First-Year Writing Requirement competition.

Many thanks go to __________ for editing the essays and to Jennie Leary for compiling this booklet.

Daniel Frick
Director, Writing Center
September 2010
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First-Year Writing

Whitesell Prize Winner

Rosa Di Piazza

Valedictorians and Delinquents: The Promise and the Shortcomings of the Vietnamese Second Generation

Assignment:

Franklin and Marshall College
Fall 2009
SOC 171: Migration
Dr. Jerome Hodos

The assignment: Research about immigration by a specific national or ethnic group to the United States. You should base the paper on data about immigration from the US Census and on social-science research and articles. This assignment asks you to fulfill 3 goals:

1. Use academic, social science literature and data to learn about immigration.
2. Describe what has happened in the US to your group
3. Make an argument (analyze the trends and draw some conclusions) about how this group’s experience helps us evaluate one or more immigration theories.
Valedictorians and Delinquents: The Promise and the Shortcomings of the Vietnamese Second Generation

The United States’ involvement in the Vietnam conflict left the two countries politically and economically entangled. As 1975 came to a close, many supporters of the United States and South Vietnam fled because of the worry that the victorious communist government would threaten their lives and the lives of their families. This wave of refugees eventually settled in the United States. These people generally viewed their migration as a permanent move and worked very hard to adjust to life in the United States. This effort, in turn, put a great deal of pressure on their children to succeed. Children were schooled in the Vietnamese cultural expectations of filial piety and a strong work ethic. Some were able to harness this pressure to propel them towards academic success. These children excelled in school, often outranking the native youth population in high school, thus earning a “valedictorian” characterization. Children who struggled in school were viewed as a disappointment to the family and suffered from feelings of overwhelming guilt. This shame, combined with the dissonance created by the combination of traditional Vietnamese and modern American cultures, made these children susceptible to crime. A repeated pattern of crime allows a child to be labeled a “delinquent.” The bifurcated path of integration created a “valedictorian or delinquent” categorization concerning second generation Vietnamese Americans, which ultimately allows scholars to assess the relative ineffectiveness of migration integration theories.
The split pathway followed by second generation Vietnamese Americans makes their case unique among immigrant groups. Many theories have been proposed to explain what happens to immigrants after they arrive in a host country (in this case, the United States). The assimilation theory proposes that migrants will ultimately be economically and socially absorbed into the host culture. Segmented assimilation theory acknowledges three possible paths of assimilation: the first leading to the white middle class, the second to upward mobility within the immigrant community and the third, and arguably most important, to downward assimilation into the poorest sectors of the population (Portes 2001). Incorporation theories suggest that immigrants will become economically, but not socially, integrated into the host society. This manifests as ethnic niches, in which minorities are limited to a single occupation, or as ethnic enclaves in which the minority group clusters residually and limits interaction with the larger society.

Theories attempting to explain the outcomes of immigrant second generation tend to assume that there is one “umbrella outcome” for most members of the group. This is not the case for the Vietnamese. Generally society deems the Vietnamese to be a “model minority,” assuming that the group succeeds more than other racial groups because of the academic success of some of the second generation. However, the second generation follows a bifurcated (split) path, along which children are either tremendously successful or become immersed in serious criminal activity. Which path a child follows is influenced by personal attributes, cultural values, societal attitudes and financial stability. The available options are extreme, especially because there is no development of a working class of steady, blue-collar workers; this means there is little “middle ground” for the children who do not excel and do not want to become criminals. This “valedictorian or delinquent” categorization, although not evenly distributed (approximately 1 in
Arrival and Settlement

In the first few weeks following the fall of Saigon in 1975, approximately 132,000 people fled Vietnam as part of what is generally deemed the “first wave” of Vietnamese refugees. These people tended to be supporters of the United States and South Vietnam during the conflict. They were generally well educated, fairly wealthy and had important political and military ties. Many were highly skilled workers with some command of the English language (Rutledge 1992). Approximately 24% were lawyers, technicians or managers (Kelly 1986). These people were easier to accommodate once they arrived in the United States since they already had money and social ties in the United States. As a result, they tended to move into higher income areas, which afforded more opportunity for upward mobility.

The second wave of Vietnamese emigration occurred in 1977. Approximately 127,000 “boat people” left Vietnam due to a fear of political persecution. The departure was disorganized, panicky and exacerbated by horrific rumors (Rutledge 1992). These people were poorer and less skilled than the first wave. They left via boat or on foot and faced a variety of dangers including assault, rape and robbery. Because of these things, they viewed their departure as a permanent move and were often emotionally traumatized by the journey. Because these people had less capital and did not know English, they tended to cluster in poorer neighborhoods. This exposed their children to a variety of negative influences that would later affect the success of the second generation.

The U.S., on the whole, felt morally obligated to assist the Vietnamese refugees
(Rutledge 1992). At least initially, the general public supported the refugees as allies against Communism. The first wave of refugees was more self-sufficient and did not require a lot of government assistance upon arriving in the United States. Due to a lack of capital and knowledge of English, the second wave required more help navigating their new country. Upon arrival in the United States, these refugees were sent to camps in Pendleton, California, Fort Chaffe, Arkansas, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida and Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. They were then paired with a sponsor family to help aid in the transition to the United States (Kelly 1986). The Refugee Act of 1980 exempted them from immigration quotas and shortened the naturalization period to one year. The state and federal governments provided cash, medical services, social services, English courses and assistance securing a place to live.

The U.S. government’s original goal was to encourage rapid assimilation by scattering the refugees across the country (Aguilar-San Juan 2001). However, as the first wave of immigrants established relative social and economic security, they began to sponsor newer refugees (Kelly 1986). This led to a secondary migration within the United States, especially to California and Texas, eventually forming ethnic communities (Haines 2002). Today, many Vietnamese still reside in California (1.4% of the state’s population) and Texas (0.7% of the state’s population), with high concentrations in California’s Santa Clara (6.3% of the county’s population) and Orange (5% of the county’s population) Counties and Aransas County in Texas (2% of the county’s population) (U.S. Census 2000b). Many have also moved to Louisiana, Virginia, Washington and Massachusetts. According to the U.S. Census, over 1,223,000 people identify themselves as having Vietnamese heritage (2000a). This constitutes approximately 10.2% the nation’s Asian population, thereby making the Vietnamese a significant minority group.
These ethnic communities helped Vietnamese refugees make the transition to life in America. Community members formed mutual assistance associations (MAAs) to help newer Vietnamese. This “refugee helping refugee” system became the main form of assistance utilized by the Vietnamese (Hein 1995). The MAAs provided information and referral services, caseworkers and language classes; they also started youth services and senior programs. The MAAs helped new refugees negotiate the American judicial system. Because of this, many were able to take legal action to receive reparations for loss and anguish suffered from war and relocation (Begar and Hein 2001). The refugees also received assistance from the government via the Refugee Act of 1980. It is important to note, however, that although they accepted this aid, most did not permanently rely on it.

The first generation of immigrants generally took any work that was available, even if it meant settling for a position that was subpar to one held in Vietnam (Rutledge 1992). These entry-level positions were often frustrating for many of the first-wave immigrants because Vietnamese credentials were not accepted in America. For the subsequent immigrant waves, the shift to a post-industrialized society was traumatic. They could not grow their own food or build their own house; instead they had to work to buy these things (Gold 1992). The language barrier also retarded success in the workforce. Regardless, the Vietnamese generally found jobs quickly (Bach and Carroll-Seguin 1986). One study in Houston, conducted between 1975 and 1977, found that fewer than 5% of all Vietnamese heads of households were unemployed after being in the United States for 27 months (Rutledge 1992). Many people worked minimum wage jobs during the day and went to school at night. As the ethnic communities became more established, Vietnamese who were more acculturated to life in the U.S. helped their newer counterparts by employing them directly or using community networks to help them find jobs.
Universal Vietnamese Values and The Beginnings of the Split

The family is the cornerstone of Vietnamese society. The good of the group takes precedence over individual desires and filial piety is stressed. Vietnamese culture is harmony-oriented and respect for all is taught at a young age. Hard work, patience and tenacity are all prized virtues and education is secondary only to family needs (Rutledge 1992). Most first generation refugees realized, however, that at least some degree of assimilation was necessary for survival (Rutledge 1992). Many maintained these cultural values when making the shift to a more “Americanized” way of life. Second generation Vietnamese received Vietnamese cultural training from their parents. The close family structure emphasized the importance of “dinner table conversation” where children learn about Vietnam and their heritage.

Regardless of parental efforts to maintain cultural solidarity, second generation Vietnamese Americans felt stuck in the middle between their parents and their peers (Hein 1995). Many learned about American customs in public (especially at school) and felt that America was more their country than Vietnam. This worried and disappointed their parents, who wanted their children to maintain a more traditional sense of rigid honor and respect. In order to fit in, many second generation Vietnamese wanted to adopt American styles of behavior and thought that run contrary to traditional Vietnamese customs. For example, in Vietnamese culture it is customary for all working members of the family to pool their income so that it can be used in a manner best fitting to the group’s needs. When Vietnamese American children got jobs, they wanted to keep the money they earned to spend on clothes, food and other luxuries (Rutledge 1992). Such culture clashes are not uncommon in Vietnamese American households.

This clash between the first and second generations is known as “acculturative
dissonance,” and it revolves around a desire to choose which culture is “better.” Parents want to maintain traditional ideals and values, and the children believe them to be antiquated and irrelevant. This occurs as a result of the differential acculturation experiences of youth and their parents, can push the children to seek emotional support elsewhere. This in turn can lead to maladaptive behavior. It seems, however, that children with greater ties to their ethnic heritage are less at risk of falling into delinquency than their more “Americanized” counterparts (Le and Stockdale 2008).

In traditional Vietnamese culture, children are taught the importance of education and are instilled with a respect for knowledge. Parents expect their children to succeed in school. Educational excellence and college attendance were nonnegotiable expectations for second generation Vietnamese (Dang-Williams 2006). College was the ultimate goal, and the family provided key assistance in the student’s secondary schooling. Often, children had mandatory study time at home. They needed to discuss their studies with their parents and were not allowed to watch television or use the computer until all work was completed. Sometimes, if the parents felt that the teacher had not assigned enough homework they would ask the child to complete extra review questions or read ahead in the book (Rutledge 1992).

Filial piety was often coupled with the child’s knowledge of parental sacrifice to facilitate education. Many first generation Vietnamese worked long hours in menial jobs so their children would have the chance of a better life. Education was seen as the second generation’s only available path to a higher social and economic status. In a 1994 poll of Vietnamese parents conducted by the Los Angeles Times, 26.8% of respondents identified academic success as the most important problem for their children. This was closely followed by a concern that the children stay away from gangs (19.6%). No other possible difficulties approached these
Children who did not succeed academically were viewed as shameful and embarrassing (Dang-Williams 2006). These parental perspectives could often carry over into a child’s own view of him or herself. The pressure and guilt associated with the failure to succeed would eventually make children who were struggling in school resent the academic environment. These members of the second generation would later be more vulnerable to negative external influences leading to crime and delinquency.

The Good Outcomes: Valedictorians

The academic success of Vietnamese Americans, especially the second generation, has led the group to be deemed a “model minority” (Bankston and Zhou 1998). The constant family support and supervision has led to low high school dropout rates, despite the poverty and single-parent lifestyles experienced by many Vietnamese American children. In 1990, only 9.1% of Vietnamese adolescents aged 18 to 24 had dropped out of high school as compared with 15.0% of other Southeast Asians, 10.0% of whites and 19.3% of blacks. Even more impressive, the dropout rate among Vietnamese adolescents living below the poverty level was only 14.5%, versus 15.7% of other Southeast Asians, 26.6% of whites and 31.4% of blacks (U.S. Census 1990).

As Asian Americans, the Vietnamese tend to stand apart from other minorities in their educational achievements. Asian Americans tend to be represented more than other groups in higher education. When considering persons aged 25 years and older, 51.3% of Asian Americans have a bachelor’s degree, nearly double the rate of native-born whites (27.6 %). Hispanics (15.9%) and blacks (16.2%) trail significantly behind (Crissey 2001). Although Census data is not disaggregated based on individual ethnicity, the Vietnamese make up more than 10% of the
“Asian” category, leading one to draw the conclusion that Vietnamese, like other Asians, are more successful in higher education than other racial groups.

This outstanding success of some members of the second generation led to a “valedictorian myth” and the stereotype that all Vietnamese Americans were more intelligent than the general population. They were categorized as succeeding more than other Asians and other immigrant groups in general (Aguilar-San Juan 2001). As is true with all stereotypes, this myth made it especially difficult for Vietnamese American children who struggled in school and exacerbated the difficulties they faced as minority children (Rutledge 1992).

Conflicts Detrimental to Academic Success

Not all Vietnamese American children excelled in school. The structure of the American educational system differed greatly from that in Vietnam. In Vietnam, students were taught not to question or talk to the teacher; it was considered disrespectful. American schools, however, encouraged students to be creative and inquisitive. This confused the second generation Vietnamese; often their parents would reprimand them for being “disrespectful” without realizing the cultural discrepancies (Rutledge 1992). Many face language barriers that made it difficult to perform, especially in the humanities (Yang 2004). Parents also faced language barriers (31.9% of Vietnamese are considered to be linguistically isolated) and this made it difficult for them to collaborate with teachers to aid struggling students (Yang 2004).

Second generation Vietnamese, especially those with strong cultural ties to their homeland, felt alienated in American schools. The curriculum did not reflect their culture or heritage and there were few Vietnamese teachers. Other students teased Vietnamese Americans for excelling in school, and many were torn between “fitting in” by adopting the lackadaisical
attitude toward school exhibited by their American peers and succeeding academically (Feliciano 2001). As one Vietnamese youth noted, “…people were treating us so bad in school… they look at us as immigrants and they keep telling us to go back to our country and we shouldn’t belong here,” (quoted in Hunt, Joe and Waldorf 1997: 16). Academic failure often led to an overwhelming sense of guilt at having dishonored the family (Baba 2001). When students tried to discuss these problems with their parents, they were often met with disappointed lectures or open hostility (Baba 2001). Failure often led to resentment of the school environment and a desire to look outside the family unit for other means of support (Baba 2001).

Failure in school was often also directly related to problems at home. Since many children spoke English better than their parents, they were often employed as translators in everyday affairs. This undermined parental authority and created a role reversal in terms of power; children had leverage over their parents (Rutledge 1992). Because of this, children could get away with disrespect and disobedience. Many first generation immigrants suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. This could manifest as alcoholism or abusive tendencies (Hein 1995). Additionally, many parents were forced to work long hours in low-paying jobs to support the family, so it was not uncommon for children to be left unsupervised for significant periods of time (Baba 2001). Coupled with this was the fact that many Vietnamese American households only consisted of one parent, because oftentimes families were separated during the Vietnam conflict and the flight to the United States (Baba 2001). These factors would later make it easier for the children to associate with delinquent youths.

This lack of parental guidance and supervision left adolescents more susceptible to negative outside influences (Baba 2001). When many of the second wave refugees came to the United States, they did not have much money. Because of their refugee status, they also did not
have any credit history. This made it difficult to get housing loans. Many were forced to live in government “project” housing (Rutledge 1992). These poor, often minority-based neighborhoods were rife with crime and violence. The native youth culture in these places is prone to maladaptive behavior, which can consequently be viewed by impressionable immigrant children as normal American behavior (Bankston and Zhou 1997) The second-generation children had to attend subpar public schools, where they were faced with an environment that was not conducive to learning. They were introduced to drugs, thievery and the “easy life” (Bankston and Zhou 1998).

The Bad Outcomes: Delinquency

Some Vietnamese adolescents were attracted by the ease and allure of a life of crime. The most blatant example of this “delinquent” categorization is the Vietnamese gang phenomenon. Yoko Baba (2001) recognized that individuals with low levels of self-control and socialization are particularly susceptible to engaging in delinquent behavior. In 1990, approximately 210 out of every 100,000 Vietnamese minors were in correctional institutions (Bankston and Zhou 1998). Although deviant behavior occurs across all ethnic groups, Vietnamese adolescents with socialization problems were notably vulnerable to falling into gangs and gang-related behavior. Second generation Vietnamese had to cope with stereotyping, discrimination, harassment and violence. One Vietnamese delinquent remembered that while “some kids went to school and they got picked on and could live with that. Perhaps they are more mature. But that wasn’t something I could put up with,” (Hunt, Joe and Waldof 1997:16). Like this youth, some children found that the most effective method of dealing with these was by banding together into groups (Baba 2001). These groups (which had the potential to eventually become gangs) provided their
members with support and understanding. The group was a compromise state between traditional Vietnamese culture at home and the unfamiliar, critical American culture in public. The things offered by membership in a delinquent group proposed an alternative to the hardships of immigrant life. One second generation Vietnamese boy claimed, “I joined for protection… because the racism was getting out of hand. If one of us was walking at night and a black guy seen you, he would have jumped you right away,” (Hunt, Joe and Waldorf 1997: 15). These groups offered protection, excitement, financial rewards and power. Often, Vietnamese Americans who joined delinquent groups felt that they were lacking these things and crime seemed to be the easiest and most viable option (Baba 2001).

These groups eventually began to borrow norms of initiation and behavior from other minority delinquent groups (especially blacks and Hispanics), eventually coalescing as official gangs. Notorious Vietnamese gangs in southern California included the Santa Ana Boys, the Cheap Boys and Born to Kill. They were involved in a variety of criminal activity, including, but not limited to, theft, home invasion robbery, grand theft automobile, drug use, assault and murder. Girls who were involved with gangs ran a higher risk of becoming prostitutes (Bankston and Zhou 1998). The Vietnamese gangs were not as cohesive or hierarchical as their black and Hispanic counterparts, but nonetheless, members were isolated from the larger society. Because the adolescents in these gangs felt less connected to their neighborhood and families, these delinquents were more likely to exploit other Vietnamese Americans. This made the issue particularly problematic, as many first generation Vietnamese were afraid or unfamiliar with the American justice system. Therefore, they were less likely to contact the police for help (Rutledge 1992).
Conclusion

It is unclear what the future holds for Vietnamese Americans. Much of the second generation has successfully adapted to life in the United States. These people achieve high marks in school and earn college degrees and are then able to go on to become contributing members of society. Others have a more difficult time balancing school, family and ethnic identity. These people are more likely to fall into crime. This bifurcated path makes it difficult to use incorporation theories to make generalizations regarding the Vietnamese second generation.

Because the Vietnamese are a relatively new immigrant group, much more research is necessary before any substantial conclusions can be reached. Many current studies are not disaggregated; people are lumped together as “Asian” or “Southeast Asian.” This makes it more difficult to get significant research for a single ethnic group. However, it is safe to predict that Vietnamese Americans will continue to excel in school as long as they retain the cultural values (hard work, patience, tenacity) that lead to academic success. Therefore, it is important for Vietnamese parents and communities to reinforce culturally based “protective factors” as a preventative measure against violence (Le and Stockdale 2008).

The discrepancies between the Vietnamese experience and the proposed theories of incorporation, such as assimilation and segmented assimilation, remind scholars that these theories are not laws. They may be appropriate for some groups, but are not able to explain what happens for all groups. There is not enough quantitative data to back up any of these theories. Most of their supporting research comes from case studies. One must remember, however, that these theories are not, and will never be, relevant to all people in all places. Personal circumstances, such as individual skills and family composition, and social circumstances, such as the prejudices of the receiving society, both contribute to the ways immigrants are
incorporated into society (Portes 2001). Therefore, not all immigrants of a group are destined for the same fate. As in the Vietnamese case, some can be highly successful through the achievement of post-secondary education while others turn to the “ease” of criminal activity.
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First-Year Writing

Honorable Mention

Alex Hartline

The Creation of the “New Masculinity”: The Emasculation of British Men During and After WWI

Assignment:

Franklin and Marshall College
Fall 2009
Dr. Mitchell
HIS157: War and Gender in Modern Europe

The assignment: Your paper may address any issue related to war and gender in modern European history.
The Creation of the “New Masculinity”:
The Emasculation of British Men During and After World War I

Underneath debate over nationalist assassinations and dual alliances, a growing concern regarding gender norms smoldered within the subconscious of World War I British politicians. When aggressive talk turned into aggressive action and the call for enlistment began, common British men proved that they too were hopeful. Many believed the immersion of the nation into the military, “the site of masculinity,” would turn back the advances of the women’s movement, modernism, and radicalism. Others accepted Victorian ideals of military courtliness, while still more succumbed to emasculating guilt tactics. The realities of war destroyed their bodies and their assessment of masculinity, thereby destroying others’ perceptions of them. This paper will argue that the emasculation of British men during and after World War I redefined masculinity in Britain. Furthermore, class divisions within the military shaped this “new” masculinity, as class often affected the war experience.

The Hegelian Dialectic

The creation of the “new” masculinity can be thought of in terms of the Hegelian dialectic. A democratic nation is a complex layering of psychosocial sentiment and action. The exterior of this layering is the government. International relations, diplomacy, and war depend on this administrative action. This power is allotted through the electoral consent of the people. In Britain, before World War I, this meant males over thirty who owned or rented a house. The people projected their opinions on their representing officials. But where did these opinions develop? Social movements, altered cultural norms, and changing environment stirred the desires that drove public sentiment. These desires or subversive needs are the focus of my paper.

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However, in a society, such as early twentieth century Britain, in which only wealthy men could vote, the only sentiment that mattered was the male sentiment. Within the Hegelian dialectic and the context of the World War I era, the male sentiment became the negative portion of the model.

The German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel proposed a theory that directly relates to the male sentiment leading to World War I. He put forth an imperfect triad of social change. First, an Abstract, or idea, is presented. The progressive efforts of the women’s movement, modernism, and radicalism were the Abstract of the early twentieth century. Then a Negative, or an opposing force is introduced. The militarism of World War I served as the Negative. Finally, a Concrete, or product of compromise between the Abstract and Negative, emerges.\(^2\) The “new” masculinity of the post-war era was the Concrete. Using Hegel’s theory, the comprehensive spirit influencing the creation of the Abstract and the subsequent, British, male Negative can be understood.

**Social Context of the Model**

In the Victorian era (1837-1901), the maintenance of separate gender spheres was a goal of not only men, but women as well. Many women accepted their role as moral and religious leaders of the family, while their husband sustained the family economy.\(^3\) As John Horne elucidates, separate spheres “confirmed male paternal authority over the family while also recognizing, and to some extent protecting, the specific place of women within the domestic world…the state supported domestic masculinity as a foundation of social order.”\(^4\) Philip Gibbs’ book *The New Man*, written just before the First World War, outlined the masculine norms of the

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\(^3\) Peter N. Stearns, *Be A Man!: Males In Modern Society* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), 114.

\(^4\) Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann, and John Tosh et al., eds., *Masculinities In Politics And War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 34.
early twentieth century. Gibbs’ “New Man” focused on masculinity according to class. His norms were based on “notions of self-sacrifice, chivalry and obedience, all qualities associated with the middle class man, as opposed to the working-class man who represented greed, disobedience and ‘un-gentlemanly’ behavior.” As middle and upper class men moved into the professions towards the end of the century, war, even more so than sports or hunting, encouraged hegemonic masculinity. However, the policing and relatively light combat of the colonial world would not come close to the violence experienced in World War I. Beginning in the middle of the century and progressively gaining support, the women’s suffrage movement threatened to alter the dominion of men. An awareness of sexual politics was thrust onto Parliament and a light was cast on the obvious inequalities of female disenfranchisement through the efforts of John Stuart Mills and determined suffragist groups.

The Abstract

With the mores of the nineteenth century beginning to be questioned, the Abstract (modernism, socialism, women’s suffrage) began to take shape in the Edwardian (1901-1914) period. Modernism threatened the status quo. Supported by the works of Darwin and Marx, originating in France, and objectifying the alienation of the Industrial Age, modernism captured an audience in Britain. Modernism was a rejection of past traditions, especially in art, literature,

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6 J.A. Mangan and James Walvin et al., eds., Manliness and Morality (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 223.
and music. Despite its ties to purely cultural issues, modernism had the potential to cross over into the political realm, affecting public values and possibly gender roles.\(^8\)

Although the nineteenth century witnessed improvements in working conditions and standards of living, working-class and lower-middle class Britons became more aware that they were living in a society divided by distinct classes.\(^9\) Many turned to socialism, which regarded their personal economic circumstances as political. Because socialism was often seen as radical, socialists were labeled as the effeminate, dichotic “other” and slandered by capitalists. Another reason for leftist feminization was the left’s ultimate goal: labor equality. This meant, in theory, equality for women. Socialists considered sexism and racism a capitalist invention.\(^10\)

The final and most overt threat to patriarchy was the suffrage movement. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, the women's suffrage movement had risen to the forefront of British politics by mid-1914.\(^11\) As war loomed abroad, turmoil within the nation consumed much of Britain’s attention. The Woman Social and Political Union used confrontational and altogether “masculine” means to gain the vote. Many politicians ultimately used the suffragettes’ aggression against them, claiming that women were too irrational and emotional to vote. Still, suffragists sharpened their attack by broadening its scope, an action which pushed traditional male sentiment to its limits and forced it to create a Negative. Olive Banks stated that women’s suffrage, in the eyes of radical suffragettes, “passed from a concern with the social construction

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\(^8\) Steven Matthews et al., eds., *Modernism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 70.
\(^10\) Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann, and John Tosh et al., eds., *Masculinities In Politics And War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 179.
of the female based ultimately upon Enlightenment views on the effect of the environment upon human nature, to an acceptance of the…notion of female superiority.”

The Negative

It would be difficult to prove that British leaders chose to enter World War I purely, or even partially, to hinder women’s advancements. However, they knew that latching on to an already volatile connection of alliances would ultimately end in war. As explained previously, men controlled political and foreign action. Male sentiment may have been threatened by the emasculating Abstract of the twentieth century. This Abstract had developed in a time of relative peace and neutrality. To replace peace and neutrality with war and belligerency served as a Negative for the female Abstract. As an entirely male construct, military action was designed for this purpose. Fortunately for women’s rights and unfortunately for misogynistic detractors, the Negative did not truly fulfill its intended goals. Instead, thousands of men were sacrificed and a Concrete was founded in the fires of the Great War.

The British middle- and working-classes eagerly accepted participation in the war. War, until that point, had widely been considered “the highest form of all sport.” However, even more so than Victorian war ideals, which placed an emphasis on the gentleman-soldier, the desire to regain gender control drove many men to war. Military recognition of the “warrior” as the supreme figure of masculinity allowed men to regain their position as protectors of women. Through the nation’s feverous support of the military, men once again became the providers and women the provided for. Nonetheless, many British men still needed persuading. Traditionally,

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conscription had been rejected by British politicians out of fear that asking men of different economic backgrounds to fight as equals would cause a demand for extended male suffrage.\textsuperscript{15} Without conscription Britain had the smallest army of all the European powers. Until the 1916 Conscription Act, both problems were solved largely through wartime propaganda.\textsuperscript{16}

**Emasculation**

Although the propaganda medias varied, the method largely remained the same: emasculation. Ironically, men had to be recast as feminine to make them fight against the feminization of society. In other words, emasculation was indirectly used to counter emasculation.

Recruitment posters, produced by the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee from the outset of the war, could be placed into three categories: atrocity, adventure, and emasculation. The language and imagery used in these posters was paradoxically direct and misleading.

Atrocity posters, often referring to “The Rape of Belgium” or the raid on Scarborough (fig. 1.1), used guilt to coerce men to enlist. Adventure posters were used in the early stages of propaganda distribution and quickly became obsolete due to the immediate influx of causalities. These posters emphasized the cavalier aspects of war and promised to provide men with heroic stories to tell their grandchildren. They also used imagery that would never materialize in the war, such as battles on horseback (fig. 1.2). Emasculation posters tapped even further into the male psyche, implying it was womanly to avoid the conflict of war. Posters reading “Women of Britain Say GO!” (fig. 1.3) employed the traditional role of women to compel men to fulfill their “public” duty. The infamous “Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?” (fig. 1.4) mixed guilt and

\textsuperscript{15} Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann, and John Tosh et al., eds., *Masculinities In Politics And War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 14.

emasculating propaganda played a significant role in the larger attempt at reversing the tide of changing gender roles through its own contradictions: to make men fight for their masculinity, they must be persuaded into believing that war will provide them with masculinity (adventure), or they must be shamed into enlisting (atrocities and emasculation).

The participation of women in the emasculation campaign process was seemingly contrary to the will of the Negative. However, it was another concession which the Negative had to make to obtain the ultimate goal. The white feather campaign was initiated by Admiral Charles Fitzgerald without official consent from the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee. The basis of the campaign was a book entitled *The Four Feathers* (1902) in which a soldier refused to engage in the Boer War until his wife shamed him into battle by presenting him with a white feather. With the white feather campaign, women stepped out of print and challenged men in real life. If a woman of the campaign saw a man out of uniform, she presented him with a white feather. Receiving a white feather, a symbol of cowardice, was the highest form of emasculation. This campaign suggested that the male sentiment wanted women to obtain power.

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Of course, this was not true; it was merely another ploy in which one step had to be taken backward so that two could be taken forward.

The war itself was not what any British soldier or politician had expected it to be. It was not quick, easy, or anything near a cavalier adventure. The war’s length hurt the effectiveness of the Negative in multiple ways. Originally, the British government did not intend for a significant number of women to enter the workforce. Traditionalists wanted women to stay in the home and dwell permanently in motherhood or other subservient positions. However, the ongoing war effort required female labor and many women were more than willing to leave their homes to provide it. Separation allowances, or financial provisions for women whose husband or provider was at war, did not contradict the Negative because women were still relying on the male state.

**Class and Confliction**

The horrors and inequities of the front itself wounded the Negative as well. Class disparity ran rampant within the military, especially prior to the bureaucracy of conscription. Upper class officers received special privileges and were often shielded from the brunt of battle in behind-the-lines strategic positions. Middle- and lower-class soldiers remained at the front for months on end dying at higher rates and witnessing terrible violence. Constant contact with violence and the enemy produced a mindset in which the enemy was feminine. In “The German Prisoner” (1930), James Hanley’s short story about conditions in World War I, two extremely poor members of the British army rape and mutilate a young German soldier with feminine

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features. The men blame “women distributing white feathers” for their suffering within the networks of trench warfare. A general “sexual anger directed specifically against” the feminine controlled their actions throughout the war. This dangerous attitude carried over into domestic life upon the soldiers’ return home. However, this was only the case among lower class soldiers, as the upper class officers did not have to experience much of the revulsion of the trenches. This becomes significant when the men return home.

Over 1.6 million men returned home physically incapacitated. Roughly another eighty thousand suffered from some form of shell shock. These men had a difficult time re-assimilating into everyday life. Men without wives before the war had a difficult time finding mates. Men with mental conditions experienced especially problematical situations because of the public’s misunderstanding of their circumstance. Since many were sent back before the war was over they were seen as “cowards and as emasculated.” Furthering their emasculation, most of these men could not work. Work provides well-being for the family unit and was the cornerstone of masculinity. The inability to provide was the ultimate form of emasculation. Combined with 885,138 military deaths, this left a nearly ten percent gap in the pre-war male workforce. Although most women were promptly replaced by healthy returning men, the remaining gap would have to be filled by women. With debilitated men trapped in vagrancy and women working in their place, it would seem as if the male Negative had failed entirely.

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As shown in *The German Prisoner*, gendered violence often consumed the working-class soldier. Upon his return home, he often applied this violence to the domestic setting. This resulted in an increase in divorces based on abuse. Upper-class men, who retained political power, harbored less vengeance towards women because they were exposed to less violence. Since only wealthy men could vote, legislation passed in the years following World War I did not always reflect the lower-class male sentiment towards women.

In the immediate post-war period, women under thirty who had worked in war industries were granted the vote. The “motherhood franchise” rewarded women for their future roles as re-populators of the country (full franchise came in 1928). The 1919 Sex Discrimination (Removal) Act allowed women into the professions. However, demobilization replaced widows and women who needed work to survive and found it difficult to gain employment.25

**The Concrete**

Ultimately, the male sentiment towards women was conflicted and, subsequently, what it meant to be “manly” had been altered. Women’s employment rose, their legal rights were slightly expanded, and they won the vote; yet, men still wielded nearly all political power and the press used female workers as scapegoats. Nonetheless, the Concrete formed as the New Masculinity. The New Masculinity can be identified through its comparison with pre-war masculinities, Philip Gibbs’ “New Man,” and by considering masculine ideals during World War II. Contrasting the enthusiastic British “Tommy” of World War I, the British soldier of World War II was intentionally anti-heroic. While still encompassed in the male sphere, institutions of power shied away from gender-based authority and were administered through

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impersonal, bureaucratic means.\textsuperscript{26} A paradigm of this behavior was Prime Minister Chamberlain’s appeasement of Hitler in Munich. In addition, pacifists were not persecuted as fervently. Despite the immediate backlash against feminity after demobilization, the New Masculinity could be described as generally more tolerant of women’s interest in self-improvement. The concept of military service as a manly rite of passage, of domination over the weak, shattered. Service became a duty which marred and tainted civilian life.

The British World War I dialectic was by no means a quantifiable process. Like its beginnings, it is an intangible throughout. However, its physical manifestations shaped the lives of the men and women of the twentieth century. The Abstract, the women’s suffrage movement and its “feminine” counterparts, was confronted by the Negative, the implementation of militarism. The product of this confrontation was the Concrete, the New Masculinity. The emasculation of British men during and after World War I, along with the class inequities soldiers encountered at war, redefined masculinity in Britain.

To many this conflict could be identified as a “battle of the sexes.” However, this is incorrect; this is how history is shaped according to Hegel’s dialectic. When a concrete is formed it becomes the new abstract and a negative is fashioned to combat it. In this way, new concretes are created and the process continues until a concrete can not be refuted. This is called the Absolute Idea. In the model put forth within this paper, the Absolute Idea would be gender harmony. Through the continuation of this process a definition of masculinity and femininity will form that allows for absolute equality between the men and women.

\textsuperscript{26} Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann, and John Tosh et al., eds., \textit{Masculinities In Politics And War} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 30.
Appendix

Figure 1.1

Charles Sturt University. *Primary sources for the study of World War I: recruitment and propaganda posters*, 2009.
Figure 1.2

Figure 1.3


Figure 1.4

Bibliography


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First-Year Writing

Whitesell Prize Winner

Alexis D’Addio

Ghosts of the Hudson Valley

Assignment:

Franklin and Marshall College
Fall 2009
ANT150: Invisible Worlds
Dr. Misty Bastian

The assignment: Who constitutes “the Other” in the Hudson Valley, and how are discourses of alterity (“othering”) constructed in Richardson and Irving? Hints: Who might we say is indigenous to the Hudson Valley? This is so obviously a contentious claim, no matter for whom the claim is made, so be prepared to defend your answer with evidence. Who constructs “Others,” and how is alterity constructed through history, memory and storytelling in this region? Are ghosts the ultimate Other? Why or why not? Give concrete evidence for your argument from both Richardson and Irving.
Enmeshed among the changing and numerous ghosts of the Hudson Valley are the issues of belonging and possession “that perennially trouble American minds” (Richardson 2003:8). These two issues did not originate from the ghosts who haunt the valley, but are, rather, a result of the constant migration of the living inhabitants. The ghosts act as a vehicle through which a living person can illustrate how he or she belongs in and deserves to possess part of the valley. Either consciously or unconsciously, each narrator of a ghost story is attempting to prove that a person or a group of people do or do not belong. In a valley where everyone and no one has the right to claim the title of a native, the ghosts act as the ultimate “other.”

The question of who belongs, or who are the native people of the Hudson Valley, is obscured by the history of numerous claims of possession. Although some residents of the Hudson Valley can “trace their lineage back to early colonists,” the valley has remained “a place inhabited and crossed by strangers” (Richardson 2003:24). This microcosm of strangers was caused by what Richardson describes as a “history of unrest” that has been “colored by territorial conflicts, social diversity and disensus, and multiple, contending colonizations” (Richardson 2003:17).

Originally, the river valley was home to the Lenape, Wappinger, Manhican, and Mohawk tribes (Richardson 2003:18). However, in 1624, “Dutch exploration and settlement” began the “germinal moment of Hudson Valley history” (Richardson 2003:17). The radically different cultures and languages would have caused both the Native Americans and the Dutch settlers to
become uneasy as each group attempted to live near neighbors whose actions and words they did not understand. The uneasiness between two separate cultures that were unable to find common ground was intensified by the great cultural diversity within a settlement that was formerly mostly Dutch. Unable to attract enough settlers from the Netherlands, the colony “was forced to have an open-door policy, and almost half of the traceable immigrants” were not Dutch (Richardson 2003:18). Instead, New Netherland was composed of “Germans, French Huguenots, Danes, Swedes, Belgians, and Norwegians,” in addition to a large number of African slaves (Richardson 2003:18). Then New Englanders as well as people of Irish, Scottish, and English descent were added to “the already uneasy mix” when England gained control of the region (Richardson 2003:19). The valley was now composed of people who had left their own homes, did not view the valley as their home, and were forced to welcome strangers into their new living space, creating an agitated hodge-podge society lacking common cultural roots.

With each succeeding phase of settlement, feelings of alterity began to arise on both sides. For instance, when the Dutch initially began settling the valley, the Native Americans viewed the Dutch as “others” who were wrongly challenging the native’s natural, indigenous, right to the valley. On the other hand, the Dutch viewed the Native Americans as “others” who were threatening the security of the New Netherland. This trend would continue with each new wave of immigrants, even into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries during “a period of dramatic industrial development” (Richardson 2003:125). The corresponding new wave of immigrants were “tormented by a sense of history, of memory, and of cultural loss,” leaving them to feel like outcasts among the people who had lived in the valley for generations (Richardson 2003:126).

To combat this persistent feeling of alterity, a group of ultimate “others” was created in
the form of the ghosts who haunt the valley. This concept is illustrated in the popular and often retold story of the ghost from Leeds, Anna Dorothea Swarts. Richardson explains what makes Swarts “so difficult to exorcise,” by pointing out that “Anna Dorothea Swarts is not an ancestor;” instead, “she is irretrievably other” (Richardson 2003:121). Swarts’ story has constantly been adapted throughout history and she has been portrayed as a slave of mixed African and Native American descent, a Scottish indentured servant, and even the traditional pasty-white ghost. No matter how the description of Swarts changes, she is still always portrayed as an “other.” For instance, she is either a slave or indentured servant forced to the edges of society or is someone dead in the world of the living. This status as an “other” makes her simultaneously “too shifty and too well entrenched, too interesting and too useful” to forget (Richardson 2003:117).

Another illustration of a ghost who portrays the ultimate “other,” can be seen in Washington Irving’s “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.” As Richardson states, Ichabod Crane is “an outsider of the community” (2003:60). However, he is able to join a large group of people at the Van Tassel party by listening to their tales of “the favorite specter of Sleepy Hollow, the Headless Horseman” (Irving 2004:74). As Richardson later implies, once again, the favorite local ghost is a “mysterious Other” (2003:61). The Headless Horseman is a particular favorite because he is not only an ultimate other among the living, but also among his fellow ghosts. The frequent retelling and additions to the stories of the Headless Horseman isolate him from the numerous and less popular ghosts whose stories are often glossed over. Therefore, a ghost’s popularity relies on its ability to become a distinct other, separate from the living inhabitants and, possibly, the other ghosts of the valley.

Ironically, it is through the storytelling of these “others” that the inhabitants of the Hudson Valley assert their claims of possession and belonging. As it is aptly described by
Richardson, “the main work of haunting is done by the living” (2003:122). In other words, the tales of haunting are colored by the tellers and not the often colorless ghosts. It is, in fact, the “ghosts themselves” who “are functions of the clienteles they haunt, dependent on those who use them” (Richardson 2003:173). Through retelling and embellishing stories of hauntings based on personal and cultural experiences, the storyteller demonstrates that he or she belongs in the community. This is accomplished, consciously or unconsciously, by taking advantage of the malleability of ghosts.

Sir Walter Scott furthered this idea by indicating that “a race of strangers” living in a new area relished stories that would allow them to connect with local tradition, “as transplanted trees push forth every fibre that may connect them with the soil to which they are transferred” (quoted in Richardson 2003:49). A stranger could therefore prove that he belonged through his ability to tell a local ghost story. The narrator could assert a stronger claim on belonging by adding his own embellishments to the story. This would make the story seem new to his listening audience and create the illusion that the he was more familiar with the valley than other storytellers. An illustration of this concept can again be found in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” during the Van Tassel party. The character Brom Bones is able to add to the story of the Headless Horsemen, elaborating that he once challenged the Headless Horseman to a race and “should of won too” (Irving 2004:79). Whether or not Brom Bones’ story is believable, his ability to add to the tale implies that he is a local, and, therefore, authentically belongs in Sleepy Hollow. Ichabod Crane, however, furthers his own status as an outsider by only being able to share “marvelous events that had taken place in his native state of Connecticut” and excerpts from Cotton Mather (Irving 2004:79).
Within the broad category of local stories of haunting, tales about aboriginal ghosts most clearly demonstrate the ability to connect to a culture through ghost stories. One particular benefit of aboriginal haunting that Richardson touched upon is “that one did not need to be a lineal descendant to claim possession” (Richardson 2003:142). In the Hudson Valley, for instance, there are numerous ghost stories about the previous Native American inhabitants and the original Dutch settlers. By retelling and adding new twists to stories of aboriginal haunting, anyone could demonstrate that he or she belonged. However, instead of claiming a connection to the local culture by retelling a story of a haunting, an immigrant could also become integrated into the local folklore by being haunted by an aboriginal ghost. Any outsiders could “align themselves through a sort of imaginative osmosis with an ideal regional ancestry, which conveyed rootedness and legitimacy” simply by being or pretending to have been haunted by the right ghosts, at the right time (Richardson 2003:142).

Stories of haunting are not necessarily prevalent because the local inhabitants fully believe in ghosts, but, instead, are retold to fulfill two crucial functions. The stories create a group of ghosts that act as the ultimate “others,” thus cementing everyone else living in the Hudson Valley together. The living inhabitants can assume that they have more of a claim to the valley than the ghosts, since the living belong in this world while the dead do not. Although ghosts have an unworldly quality, the constant retelling of their tales and the local quality of their deaths embed them in the location of their haunting. By retelling a story or claiming to be a subject of a haunting, living people rely on ghosts to establish a connection to the valley. It is through ghosts that the living inhabitants of the Hudson Valley can demonstrate that they belong by both representing ghosts as the true outcasts, as well as the only natives.
Bibliographic Citation:

Irving, Washington

Richardson, Judith
Honorable Mention

Judith Stapleton

Beauty Queen

Assignment:
Franklin and Marshall College
Spring 2009
AMS110: America in the Age of Nixon
Dr. Daniel Frick

Assignment: Russell withdraws. Cantwell is defeated. And John Merwin is going to be president. What does Gore Vidal’s *The Best Man* seem to be saying about the state of American politics?
Politics. It is a harsh word. Pol-i-tiks. Amazingly easy to spit out, it’s a word spat out amazingly often. Many conceive politics in a negative light; they see the government as a cesspit of corruption and intrigue. Alternately, many admire American politics as just and beneficial. So, is politics good, bad, or just ugly? Gore Vidal explores this idea in his play *The Best Man*, which features two candidates battling for the presidential ticket. Both men approach politics in drastically different ways. “The angel of darkness” is Joe Cantwell: unscrupulous, ambitious, and antagonistic (Vidal 78). His foil is the conscientious, moral, and intelligent “angel of light,” William Russell (78). In this political battle, America is caught between two forces: the light and the dark, the good and the bad. The outcome should be obvious: the good guy always wins, right? But things are not this simple. Cantwell, admired for his strength, is only narrowly defeated. And, despite his merits, Russell does not actually win this political showdown: he withdraws from the race, feeling that morality is incompatible with politics. We must make do with the dregs of the election: John Merwin, an “angel of greyness” who we know almost nothing about (78). Though these characters are defined by their morality, questions of light and dark barley factor into this political face-off. From this, we must conclude that politics is not about good or bad, right or wrong. Rather, it is a beauty pageant: politics is all about image.
Though Cantwell’s unscrupulous nature should paint him wholly in black, this vice is at first mistaken for strength in a political race determined solely by image. Hockstader, the former president of the United States, whose endorsement the candidates are fighting over, admires Cantwell’s crookedness. As one of the few third-person characters in this play, Hockstader’s opinion is important—especially since, as former president, he represents the voice of the American people. Hockstader describes Cantwell’s rise to power: he framed “a bunch of poor Sicilian bandits” as the mobsters controlling American crime (Vidal 34). Though here we see Cantwell placing his own political advancement over such trivial concepts as truth and morality, Hockstader is far from disapproving. Instead, he admires this ability to use any means to rise to power, claiming, “[Cantwell’s] got a real sense of how to operate” (23). As Cantwell’s unscrupulous tactics get more and more out of hand, individuals start turning against him, but the public does not lose confidence in this candidate. Cantwell releases stolen medical files detailing a medical assessment of his opponent, William Russell. Spinning these files as the nervous breakdown of a mentally unstable man with suicidal tendencies, Cantwell abandons truth and decency. Though he, himself, acknowledges that the theft of confidential materials “might’ve been ruthless,” he still insists, “the end was worth it” (36). Such dirty tactics should have repelled a conscientious public from endorsing this ruthless candidate. However, this scheme does not allow Russell to pull ahead in the ballot polls. We learn, “It is still a deadlock. Cantwell’s leading but nobody’s got a majority” (72). This is not a battle where right and wrong make that much of a difference: the public is unmoved by Cantwell’s overtly dirty methods.

Unfettered ambition is yet another negative characteristic that is misconstrued as a strength in this political race. Cantwell is nothing if not ambitious: for him, the ends always justify the means. Cantwell, himself, tries to emphasize his own ambition. He boasts, “I know
how to manoeuvre. How to win. I knew from the time I won my first election I was going to be president and nobody was going to stop me” (Vidal 65). We have already seen that Cantwell is willing to destroy anyone, whether it is Italian mobsters or William Russell, in order to win the presidential ticket. “You are something of a Frankenstein monster, Joe,” accuses Russell, “made out of bits and pieces of Sicilian bandits . . . and your political opponents” (65). Cantwell builds himself up by destroying those around him. In the process, he loses his morality and, therefore, like a “Frankenstein monster,” loses himself. And yet, apart from Russell, no one else seems to recognize the danger of such limitless ambition. Indeed, Hosckstader approves this characteristic. His tone seems admiring, rather than disparaging, when he remarks, “[Cantwell’s] sharp. He’s tough” (24). Certainly, Hockstader never criticizes Cantwell’s ambition. The public, too, is silent. We do not care if Cantwell is good or bad—if his ambition destroys a thousand people—he looks strong, he looks like a winner, and that is all that matters.

A third characteristic defining our “angel of darkness” is aggression, which goes unchecked by a public uninterested in questions of morality. Cantwell is the sort of man who “fires off a cannon to kill a bug” (Vidal 45). This hyperbole vividly illustrates Cantwell’s constant aggression, while the combative terminology implies that his antagonism is dangerous. And yet, aggression does not strike anyone else as strange or threatening. For Hockstader at least, Cantwell’s belligerence is a strength. In fact, speaking of Cantwell’s determination to end Russell’s political carer by suggesting his mental instability, Hockstader remarks: “I kind of admire what he’s doing. It’s clever as hell.” (45) For Hockstader, aggression is such an important quality in a president that he becomes furious when Russell refuses to strike back at Cantwell with every dirty tactic he can muster. He claims, “if you don’t go down there and beat Cantwell to the floor with this very dirty stick, then you got no business in the big league, and bastard or
not I’ll help Joe Cantwell take the whole damned world if he wants it” (59). Hockstader considers aggression vital to those playing “in the big league”—without aggression, a president cannot hope to survive. It almost seems feasible that Cantwell could “take the whole damned world.” And, for Hockstader at least, that is a better alternative than having a weak president. Aggression equals strength, and this perception is all that factors into this political equation.

Cantwell is, through and through, an immoral character and a bad choice for president. And yet, his ruthlessness, ambition, and aggressiveness are seen as assets to a public which values image, not morality. In the same manner, a public that cares solely for image misconstrues conscientiousness, morality, and intelligence for weakness in who is actually the “best man”: William Russell. America sees Russell as weak, in part because of his conscientiousness.

Hockstader is appalled by Russell’s “deliberation.” He proclaims, “My God, what would happen if… all our lives depended on whether you could act fast… and you just sat there… with your divided conscience” (58). In a country where image is of utmost importance, an American leader must look strong: he must act, and make quick and decisive decisions. It does not seem to matter if these are the right decisions. “I want a strong president to keep us alive a while longer,” insists Hockstader (59). Looking at all sides of a situation is an asset in a president whose decisions will have far-reaching consequences. We see this clearly in Russell’s reaction to Cantwell’s dirty tactics. When the two men, both enraged, come face to face with each other, Russell claims that he will do whatever it takes, however immoral, to stop Cantwell from winning the ticket (71). It is only when Russell removes himself from this situation, and thinks over the situation, that he realizes to do so would mean stooping to Cantwell’s level and compromising his own upstanding morality, for “one by one, these compromises, these small corruptions destroy character” (59). His conscientiousness allows Russell to make the right choice, the moral choice, and not use
“gossip instead of issues, personalities instead of politics” (47). But, in a political atmosphere that relies solely on image to choose its leaders, Russell’s conscientiousness goes completely unnoticed.

A second personality trait, essential to Russell’s virtuous character but detrimental to his image, is his high sense of morality. Far from being a good thing, this virtue is a strike against him in a society that admires strong men. Russell’s reluctance to “play dirty,” or do anything that is not one-hundred-percent ethical, makes him seem a weak leader incapable of action. When Russell does not attack Cantwell by releasing damaging information regarding Cantwell’s personal life, he loses the support of Hockstader. The former president is furious, yelling, “Be a saint on your own time. Because you aren’t fit to lead anybody” (Vidal 58). One cannot be a saint and a politician at the same time. Hockstader embellishes on this point, declaring, “Power is not a toy we give to good children; it is a weapon and the strong man takes it and he uses it” (59). Russell’s strengths, his virtue and morality, are not seen as strengths at all. The ability to wield power as a weapon: that is strength. Cantwell’s parting attack on Russell sums up the impression shared by Hockstader; “You don’t understand politics” (78). The state of the government is such that Russell’s virtues are not recognized. As a result, the best man is barred from the presidency.

A good leader must be smart. However, intelligence will not win Russell the crown. His clever jokes and references only serve to alienate him and brand him as an “intellectual.” Our first glimpse of Russell shows the candidate bantering with journalists. One reporter asks, “Do you think the people mistrust intellectuals in politics?” (Vidal 10) Russell’s response is clever, and roundabout: “Bertand Russell seems to think so. He once wrote that people in a democracy tend to think they have less to fear from a stupid man than from an intelligent one” (10). Russell
manages to say yes, and speak his own opinion, without getting himself into trouble. His mention of a third person, a “Bertrand Russell,” derails the bumbling reporter, who no longer has the upper hand. This irony of this scene emphasizes the point The Best Man is making: intelligence is vital in a politician, and yet is not valued in a political setting. Even other politicians feel alienated when Russell’s intelligence peeks through. Cantwell remarks, “You really do think you’re better than all of us, with your… would-be intellectuals who don’t mean a thing in this country” (63). Cantwell feels threatened and unsettled by his opponent’s intelligence. This trait alienates Russell from both the public and other politicians. His image is damaged by one of the most essential traits a president should possess: intelligence.

Feeling that he cannot maintain his morality in politics, but unwilling to let Cantwell be president, Russell withdraws from the race and instructs his delegates to support a third candidate, John Merwin. Cantwell is defeated, and Merwin, the “angel of greyness,” has been nominated for the ticket. Though Russell attributes this end result to a cancelling out of the light and the dark, there is more to this victory—its signifies the dominance of image in political races. We first hear about Merwin from Russell, who acknowledges that he knows nothing about Merwin, but describes him as a “very talented young man” (9). This description is very neutral. As a background character, Merwin is not as polarized as Cantwell or Russell—and, therefore, he doesn’t offend anybody. Later on in the play, when Merwin refuses to jump on either Cantwell’s or Russell’s ticket and give them his votes, Russell smiles and exclaims, “He’s showing unexpected character, isn’t he?” (Vidal 73). These are the only times Russell talks about Merwin—and yet, these passing impressions are enough for Russell to justify making Merwin president. He seems decent, he seems strong, and though the key word here is “seems,” Russell only latches on to the “strong” and “decent.” Merwin is a “man without a face,” and yet, “men
without faces tend to get elected president, and power or responsibility or honor fill in the
features, usually pretty well” (79). If politics is all about image, than a man without a face is a
man whose image we, ourselves, can fill in. He is the perfect candidate: as strong as we need him
to be, as ambitious, as moral, as intelligent, and as conscientious. Merwin is an “angel of
greyness.” He is no colour, cannot be described as anything but a void. We have no idea if he
will be good for the country or bad for it, because, again, this political race is not about right or
wrong, good or bad. It is about image. And John Merwin can be whoever we need him to be.

As much as we would like the light to triumph, as much as we long to imagine that
government, and indeed life, is a place of morality and virtue, we are left disappointed. The
“angel of darkness” is defeated; Cantwell’s dirty tactics, ambition, and aggressiveness prove to
be his own demise, as they make him a powerful enemy in William Russell. But can we really be
happy that the “angel of light” was not given the chance to lead our country? That
conscientiousness, intelligence and morality are not valued in the current political atmosphere?
Instead of a virtuous leader, we must do with the leftovers: John Merwin. Though we can fill in
the face of our “angel of greyness” however we please, there is no guarantee that Merwin will be
good for our country. A political system based on image is no better than a beauty pageant based
on looks. Running on surface impressions, we lose sense of the inner virtue of the candidates.
Though, internally, we may long for the light, in politics we shall never reach it, for we are not
looking to find morality or goodness in a presidential candidate. Though we may fear the
darkness, we only narrowly escape it, so focused are we on appearances. In life, as in politics, a
murky grey is all we can hope to achieve. We get exactly what we look for and rejoice in
mediocrity.
Foundations

Whitesell Prize Winner

Anna Stewart

Self-Discipline and Happiness: A Necessary Pair

Assignment:

Franklin and Marshall College
Fall 2009
FND109: Living Well
Dr. David Merli

The assignment: To what extent is happiness under our control, and how? In answering this, pay attention to the connections between different conceptions of happiness and different views of the “control” issue.
The pursuit of happiness is a central concern of human life. Engaging in this pursuit requires individuals to explore the nature of happiness and which factors influence its rise and fall. Human beings themselves may try to affect their own levels of happiness by altering their external circumstances, or by controlling their internal states. Some, like Callicles in Plato’s *Gorgias*, advocate the external adjustment of one’s circumstances in order to achieve greater happiness, rejecting internal disciplines such as self-control. Bad psychological habits such as the tendency to compare oneself with others, however, often thwart the aspiration for a change in external circumstances. Such failures support the conclusion that happiness is principally a matter of discipline over internal states and expectations, an approach that is shared by scholars like Aristotle and Epictetus, as well as the adherents of major religions like Christianity and Buddhism. For while externals are a component of human happiness, we often cannot dictate their measure. Happiness is therefore primarily a matter of internal disciplines, rather than an effort to achieve satisfaction through external means.

Aristotle embraces the notion of happiness as a state produced through internal order while also acknowledging external goods as necessary conditions for human happiness. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle associates happiness with the performance of the “human function”—an “activity of the soul in accord with reason” (bk. I, ch. 7, §14). Happiness is constituted by well-reasoned actions that express the virtues, or states of character defined “by reference to reason” and cultivated via the repetition of virtuous activities (bk. II, ch. 6, §15).
Aristotle also suggests that while a virtuous disposition is necessary for happiness, well-being also requires a certain amount of external goods. One cannot flourish, for example, if one lacks such things as friends and wealth, or the personal advantages of good birth and beauty. The absence of such external goods makes attaining happiness more difficult, “since we cannot, or cannot easily, do fine actions if we lack the resources” (bk. I, ch. 8, §15). This implies that some degree of good fortune is required in the equation for producing individual well-being, leaving Aristotle’s view of human happiness vulnerable to a lack of control over external variables.

The Stoics maintain that human inability to alter external circumstances is absolute. They suggest that the way to exert comprehensive management over individual satisfaction is to focus upon what is truly ours, namely, internal desires, attitudes and reactions of the soul. In contrast to Aristotle’s assertion that an ability to affect external circumstances is a necessary element of happiness, a Stoical approach enables each individual to achieve happiness despite an inability to control external conditions. The Stoic sage, Epictetus, articulates this view by recommending one to adjust internal expectations to meet reality rather than altering reality to fit individual aspirations. In *The Encheiridion*, also known as *The Handbook* of Epictetus, one of the philosopher’s pupils sums up his approach with the dictum: “Do not seek to have events happen as you want them to, but instead want them to happen as they do happen, and your life will go well” (no. 8, p13). Life is like a game of chance played with the dice of external events, over which we hold no sway. Any form of happiness that is based upon an individual’s effort to influence her external circumstances is therefore left unexplored, as happiness becomes entirely dependent upon internal responses to an uncontrollable reality.

The detachment of early Christians from external events and material goods in favor of internal psychological control involving trust in God furnishes another view of how our
happiness can best be effected through internal disciplines. Importantly, a Christian perspective relies upon more than an individual’s internal discipline, since faith is understood by most Christians to be a result of God’s grace, rather than simply the autonomous decision of an individual to trust in God. Jesus declares during his Sermon on the Mount that individuals should not worry about how their earthly needs will be met, but rather “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (New International Version, Matt. 6.31-3). In his letters, the apostle Paul also describes how his faith helped him endure and even find “delight” in the midst of the loss of every external good through the realization that the power of God is “made perfect” in human limitations (II Cor. 12.9-10). Happiness is thus achieved in the context of a trusting relationship with a benevolent God, producing contentment in every circumstance, “whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want,” external goods eclipsed by the hope for ultimate success and fulfillment after death (Phil. 4.11-12).

In an alternative religious approach to the question of how to attain happiness through internal discipline, the Buddhists advocate a kind of Stoical detachment from externals by the eradication of desire. The central Buddhist doctrine of the Four Noble Truths recognizes that anxiety and sorrow exist as intrinsic elements of life since human longings can never be fully satisfied. Indeed, even pleasurable things are troubling because we are afraid of losing them (Ebrey, Walthall, and Palais 66). A disciple of the Buddha, in contrast to Stoics like Epictetus, desires this detachment from external things not simply to content himself with his earthly lot, but as a means of utterly transcending the earthly cycle of life. Unlike Christianity, however, in which the grace of God is the key to living the good life, for Buddhists the individual is responsible for his own destiny, the mechanisms of the mind playing lead roles in the effort to
achieve happiness through the removal of desire. Indeed, *The Dhammapada*, a collection of the Buddha’s sayings, proclaims that “Mind is the forerunner of (all good) states. Mind is chief; mind-made are they,” referring to the positive states on the path to Truth (“Yammakavagga - The Pairs” verse 2). For Buddhists, disciplining one’s mind is thus the secret to a life well lived, increasingly unaware of the external things that surround one and ever more aware of the eternal goal of enlightenment.

In response to our inability to control external goods and fulfill our temporal aspirations, the approach of Epictetus, as well as the philosophies of Christianity and Buddhism, assume that some sort of internal control is required to attain human happiness. The principal alternative to this view seems to be to seek happiness through the manipulation of external circumstances, such as the fulfillment of desire and the acquisition of external goods. This approach is defended by Callicles, a character in Plato’s *Gorgias*. For Callicles, “what is admirable and just by nature” is to allow one’s appetites to get “as large as possible and not restrain them” (492a). Internal controls, such as Aristotle’s emphasis upon reason and virtue, or the Christians’ trust in God, are discouraged since they will only block the fulfillment of pleasurable desires. Happiness, then, is the result of a lack of internal restraint rather than the self-discipline emphasized by Aristotle, Epictetus, and Christian and Buddhist teachings.

The Calliclean approach faces some hurdles, however, due to psychological tendencies such as the habit of comparing oneself to others. Such problematic inclinations underscore the importance of proper internal controls in order to achieve happiness. At first, a given person experiences an increase in happiness as the result of a rise in income or the acquisition of some new toy. With the passage of time, however, individuals begin to judge their own happiness by evaluating their external achievements according to the relative accomplishments of others.
Richard Easterlin, an economist, describes how such comparison results in happiness varying “directly with one’s own income and inversely with the incomes of others” (140). In other words, an individual’s happiness may increase after a new promotion when considered in comparison with her own prior level of achievement, but when compared with the situations of others it is always possible for her to find someone else who has a better position. Acquiring new and improved external things in a Calliclean manner is thus an ineffective means of controlling one’s own happiness in the long run, since the problematic internal habit of comparison with others removes any fleeting up-tick in happiness that has been gained through a new purchase or promotion. Given our lack of control over the external achievements of those with whom we compare ourselves, a Calliclean approach still requires internal disciplines in order to maintain happiness.

Another problem that arises when well-being is based on external circumstances is the reality of shifting aspirations. It is tempting to suppose that an increase in income will likewise escalate happiness. This belief impacts spending patterns and goals, encouraging a continual Calliclean pursuit of more as individuals assume that controlling their external goods will be an easy way of adjusting their happiness. The supposed positive correlation between happiness and income turns out to be mistaken, however, because any upward change in income and happiness is offset by an equal adjustment of material aspirations (Easterlin 142). This upward shift in aspirations results in renewed dissatisfaction with one’s circumstances, despite a larger paycheck. In light of such shifting aspirations, it is personal expectations rather than external circumstances that must be modulated in order to remain happy. Once again, therefore, a Calliclean approach to happiness must be supplemented by the internal disciplines of the Christians, who seek God’s kingdom rather than earthly goods, or the Stoics, who emphasize the
control of internal responses in the face of an ungovernable external reality, or the Buddhists, who endeavor to suppress desire altogether. Such approaches render material aspirations of little relative importance, since they focus upon other aims like eternal life or contentment, providing ways to escape the unhappiness otherwise caused by the unpredictability of life.

Our inability to control the outside world points to the necessity of internal disciplines to counteract the tendencies of interpersonal comparison and shifting material aspirations in the pursuit of happiness. Aristotelians encourage virtuous behavior whatever the circumstances, while others, like the Buddhists, speak of the complete eradication of desires for external things through mental discipline and enlightenment. Many contemporary scholars, like psychologist Barry Schwartz, continue to advocate the attainment of contentment by the adjustment of internal states. Schwartz describes how we tend to evaluate our present circumstances by the degree to which they match our aspirations, expectations, past experiences, and others’ experiences. The relative gap between these variables and our current reality constitutes the dent in individual happiness created by this process of comparison (182). Part of Schwartz’s solution to this problem is that we must control our internal assessment of each situation, engaging in fewer comparisons and forming more modest expectations. As in a Stoic approach, once these internal adjustments have been effected, there is no remaining difference between what one wants and what one has. Such internal control over individual expectations thus increases happiness despite the external factors that one faces.

Philosophers, economists, theologians, and psychologists from Aristotle to Schwartz stress the role of internal order and discipline as a means of compensating for the absence of control over externals. For even as we aspire to something and achieve it in a Calliclean effort to adjust our external circumstances and thereby increase our happiness, our expectations move
upward to outstrip our newly achieved level of advancement. This vicious cycle is compounded by our tendency to compare ourselves with others. In view of our natural psychological propensities towards comparison and shifting aspirations, as well as our limited control over the external conditions of life, human happiness is in large measure a function of the degree to which we can control our aspirations, internal responses, and states of mind. For while, as Aristotle propounds, external circumstances do influence our level of happiness, the reality is that they often lie outside of our control. This makes the Stoics’ emphasis upon restraint of internal responses, the trust in divine control emphasized by Christians, and the Buddhists’ escape from the sorrows of desire attractive alternatives to the Calliclean definition of well-being. Self-discipline and internal control must guide the pursuit of happiness, for without them, it will ever remain just beyond our reach.


Plato. *Gorgias*.

Assignment: Part I, Take a side in the consciousness debate. Make a case for the most appropriate way to understand consciousness—either through materialistic approach or a dualistic approach. In your essay, I would like you to state why you think your chosen approach is superior to the alternative. Part II asks you to speculate on how your chosen approach from Part I relates to your understanding of the altered state. If you think of the altered state as a purely physical condition, what does that say about ideas or creative work born of them? Similarly, what would it mean if you believe the altered state is more than the fire (or misfiring) of neurons?
Few issues incite so much debate as the fundamental nature of consciousness. Some insist that the mind is nothing more than a physical phenomenon rooted in the brain, while others hold that we cannot reduce the mind to the something physical because it exists on some higher, intangible plane, separate from the physical brain. Whether they use the term or not, those that believe the mind is physical fit into the materialist camp, and those that believe in a nonphysical mind into the dualist camp. Although dualists insist that no proof exists for materialism, neuroscience is beginning to find answers to many essential questions about how components of consciousness work. Even though there is no definitive “consciousness” area of the brain as of yet, neuroscience has concretely mapped out most of the brain’s important functions, and discoveries about the brain’s flexibility give materialism enough wiggle-room to come closer to explaining consciousness than dualism ever will. Materialism also provides a more practical background, that, unlike Dualism, allows for progress in scientific endeavor.

To a dualist, “Consciousness does not seem to fit naturally into the scientific framework that explains the physical universe” (Dietrich 13). There exists an “explanatory gap” that seems to make the subjective, phenomenal experience of consciousness irreconcilable with science. As Daniel Dennett characterizes the debate, dualists think that we cannot distill the indescribable experience that is consciousness into a “3-pound pile of electrified biochemistry” (13). Dualists can keenly stump many materialists by asking them to show them where the part of the brain is that lends people the experience of consciousness. But before they tackle this question,
materialists begin their argument by answering simpler questions about components of consciousness. For starters, how do we see?

Science has given materialists a nearly complete understanding of vision. Dietrich explains that the visual system processes and analyzes images, making them far different from what a camera sees (131). To do this, the eyes send signals into the brain via the optic nerve. Except for the small amount of signaling sent to the superior colliculus for quick, reflexive, and subconscious processing, the signal goes to the lateral geniculate nucleus. From there, it travels to the primary visual cortex, where 375 million neurons (divided into 2,500 columns) separate the signal into its component parts (132). To put the sample back together, over thirty visual association cortices pick out individual characteristics of the image and meld them together into a coherent mental picture full of recognizable objects and people (133). Despite dualists’ claims that vision consists of nonphysical, subjective qualia, materialists can break vision, a major facet of consciousness, into its component parts. Thus, they begin their scientific proof of materialism.

As with most things in the brain, vision is not so simple, however. The phenomenon of blindsight demands an explanation. In blindsight, people with damage to their primary visual cortices (who, as a result, have blank spots in the image their brain presents to their consciousness) manage to walk without bumping into walls. Miraculously, they can even dodge bullets that they are not aware they are seeing (Dietrich 135). When this issue comes up in debates, dualists have nothing to say. Dualism simply cannot offer a reasonable explanation for this phenomenon without waxing absurd and making up some theory about the mind perceiving the bullets’ “aura” or something of the sort. Materialists look to—what else?—the brain, and there they find a concrete explanation. The signals sent to the superior colliculus end up bringing about the phenomenon of blindsight. The superior colliculus, presumably the processor for an ancient, simpler visual system, picks up on dangerously close walls and bullets and passes
on the information to subconscious regions of the brain that can act on this information and keep
the body out of harm’s way. But since this pathway in the visual system is separate from the
primary visual cortex, someone with blindsight is not aware of walls and bullets in the same way
that someone who can actually see them is.

The workings of vision and blindsight may only explain a minute part of consciousness,
but any textbook on neuroanatomy shows proven materialist models of hearing, touch, emotion,
pain, and nearly every other component of consciousness. Despite all of these smaller
discoveries, however, materialism has yet to come up with a definitive answer to dualists’
command to show that part of the brain gives rise to consciousness. But on the whole, the
various materialist theories of the neural correlate of consciousness—the part of the brain that
“does” consciousness”—are much more realistic than the dualist theories.

Gamma waveforms (high-frequency, rapid-firing nerve impulses) play a major role in
many possible theories of consciousness. The intensive firing of neurons in information-
processing centers of the brain, along with the prevalence of gamma waves in REM sleep and
their paucity in deep sleep, has led many neuroscientists to believe that gamma waves unify the
brain into a state of consciousness (Dietrich 69). But materialism relies on good science, and
must always look for further evidence and alternate explanations. The plethora of gamma waves
found in the brains of anesthetized patients when presented with visual or auditory stimuli
indicates that gamma waves on their own do not give rise to consciousness (70). The current
view holds that “40-Hz [gamma] activity is regarded as a necessary but not sufficient condition
for consciousness” (70). But gamma waves’ importance goes further. Gamma waves fit into
other plausible materialist theories, most notably in that they have the potential to unify groups
of neurons in the neural Darwinism model. In this model, coalitions of neurons must form, and
subsequently must gather enough allies to earn a place in consciousness (72). As we will see later,
brain scans of meditating monks further reveal the importance of gamma waveforms, and these scans examine one of the dualists’ favorite phenomena: spiritual experiences. Yet dualists have no solid ground to dismiss scientific underpinnings of these experiences, and, in doing so, they rely on woefully obsolete thinking.

Dualists tend to believe in Plato’s idea that “one is misled by looking at the universe; so studying it, to put it bluntly, is a waste of time” (Dietrich 23). Plato posited that true knowledge comes from abstract forms that only the soul can access through deductive reasoning (23). Not only does such thinking have no ground, it also holds back Platonists from improving our world. Instead of acting to advance human affairs, modern Platonists dwell in the abstract and dismiss the ideas of science that have cured disease, linked the world together, and generally improved lives. Thus, even though materialism may not have definitive proof, it is surely the more practical belief to hold, and the world is better for those that uphold it.

Materialism is coming closer and closer to finding a correct model for the neural correlate of consciousness. Some of materialism’s most exciting advances posit that the brain is innately plastic. Michael V. Johnston asserts that plasticity, the brain’s “capacity to adapt its behavior and circuitry to stimulation from the external environment,” sculpts the brain into its mature form (1). His study cites numerous examples of the brain helping the disabled to cope with neurological losses. Changes in neural activity, he believes, constantly change the way that the brain maps itself, resulting in day-to-day, week-to-week changes that optimize the structure of the brain for whatever the owner needs the brain to do. Johnston, in conversation, explains that plasticity is so powerful that in the blind, the brain areas that detect touch on the fingertips expand into the areas meant to process visual images. Because of this, when the blind read Braille, their brains practically “see” what they are feeling. This gives them extremely powerful sensitivity and discrimination when they use their fingertips to read. This theory imbues the
brain with enough flexibility to accomplish nearly any feat, even one as seemingly miraculous as consciousness itself.

II

Altered states of consciousness stem from specific physical changes in the brain. No matter if the state comes from meditation, trance dance, drugs, sensory deprivation, or any other method of inducing such a state, the state always traces back to specific biochemical changes in the brain. If we define creativity as a novel production of the mind arising from a never-before-made network of neural connections, the altered state can foster creativity by helping to make a never-before-made network of neural connections.

Material phenomena give rise to even spiritual experiences. According to Kaufman, Buddhist practitioners of Tibetan meditative traditions show vastly altered brain activity while they meditate. The most experienced monks show “fast-moving and unusually powerful gamma waves.” According to gamma-wave based theories of the neural correlate of consciousness, these waves unify many neurons in the brain, and, according to Kaufman, these waves activate areas related to happiness and compassion. These monks do not experience some nonsensical transcendent consciousness, as dualists would have you believe. They simply have become adept at focusing brain activity toward an altered state of consciousness.

The Johnston model of the brain considers the infant brain to be a large block of marble. The chisel of activity-dependent neural plasticity prunes networks and strengthens often-activated pathways to chisel this block of marble into the fantastic sculpture that is the adult brain. Each brain, as he has explained to me in conversation, is different, and changes significantly from second-to-second. I propose that creativity arises from the unique connections between neurons that artists form. This theory may sound deterministic and, therefore,
uncreative; if the specific network of connections in the brain determines how a creative work will unfold, is there anything creative about it? To answer this, the enormous complexity of the brain affords humans so much possibility in their creative endeavors, that the products of their creativity must be unique. Add to it that we have free will in being able to choose what we focus our minds on, and that no one else shares the same creative instinct. Because of these characteristics of the brain, original ideas can arise. But how does the altered state fit in? Altered states create variety in brain conditions, fostering creativity. But since creative work borne of altered states comes out of the same brain mechanism with a neural network only slightly different from normal, nothing inherently distinguishes work created with altered states of consciousness to art created without them. Every drug-addled musician or LSD-addled artist, every drunken karaoke star or trance-dancing cave painter, has a brand-new, never-before-seen network of neurons—some promoted, some suppressed—that lends them their ability to craft never-before-seen work. This ability results from states with slightly more neural variety than normal.
Works Cited

