



THE
BERKSHIRE
SCHOLAR

2011 - 2012

THE BERKSHIRE SCHOLAR

A COLLECTION OF ACADEMIC ESSAYS
2011-2012

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LIFE ON THE ROAD

“Home, what does it mean any more?”

-RYAN MONTBLEAU

The house lights have dimmed, and the crowd cheers as the six shadows walk onto the stage. The lights rise in a dazzling array of colors and reveal six musicians ready to put on the best show of their life. These aren't newcomers; it is their two hundredth show, this year. Leading this gathering of musicians called the Ryan Montbleau Band is Ryan Montbleau himself. He counts backwards from 3, the band starts to play, and a wave of incredible song bursts forth. For the next two and a half hours thoughtful lyrics and lovely melodies intertwine as these musicians pour out their emotions through their instruments. When the show is over, they personally greet any fans that want to talk to them and then pack up and head to a cheap motel to stay for the night, only to travel another eight hours to their next gig the following day. They aren't hounded by paparazzi, flashed across the screens in Times Square, or put on the cover of *Rolling Stone*, but they are making a living doing what they love.

Ryan Montbleau never planned on becoming a touring musician for a living; in his view, the job picked him. He had owned a guitar since he was little, and played it on and off, but it wasn't until college that he really started to play guitar. Originally having enrolled at Villanova University, he started off studying to gain a major in Chemical Engineering. When he figured out that working with chemicals was not the right job for him, he switched his major to English. At about that time he started writing and studying a large amount of poetry, and in his senior year he started singing. All of these changes worked together to form the idea in his mind that he wanted to create music for a living.

About ten years ago, after college Ryan returned to Massachusetts and played solo for a few years, while also doing a couple stints as a substitute teacher. In 2003, a drummer named James Cohen asked Ryan if he wanted

to be part of the house band at an open jam James was hosting at a bar in Gloucester, MA. Ryan agreed, and he played that night with a band consisting of James, his brother Jason on keys, a saxophonist named Aaron, and their friend Jeff on the bass. That night, the roots of what is now the Ryan Montbleau band began to take hold.

A year later Matt Giannaros replaced Jeff on bass, and from there the band started to evolve. For seven years they toured with an amazing violist named Laurence Scudder, but he left the band almost two years ago. A jazz guitarist by the name of Lyle Brewer took Laurence's place in the band, and shifted things in a new direction for the group, building on the foundations that had already been laid in the band. Yahuba Torres, a percussionist from around the area, had played with the band on and off over the years until finally joining the band full time about two years ago. After all the changes made to the amazing lineup of musicians, the current one is filled with Yahuba, James, Matty, Lyle, Jason, and Ryan. This rather large lineup of musicians makes for an extremely varied sound for Ryan's band: sometimes a Moog synthesizer can break through the sound, only to be followed by a smooth guitar lick, and finished off with a double bass solo. Ryan surrounded himself with great musicians that help his lyrics and music morph into something truly amazing.

The variety of genres that Ryan writes songs in is pretty astounding. This makes his music hard to place. It is somewhere in between jazz, Americana, folk, rock, and funk. Being on the road affects his songs to a degree, but he tries to write about a variety of topics, so that his lyrics are always fresh. One of the things that he often mentions in his songs is drinking. Being on the road all the time, alcohol is the biggest struggle he faces, although he has tried to remain sober for the last couple of years. When you are playing at various venues every night that are most likely stocked with booze, it is a pitfall that has sent some other musicians to their demise, but luckily he has resisted the temptation. Many of his songs deal with drinking, especially on the album "Patience on Friday." When they play a gig, songs like "75 and Sunny" almost cheer Ryan on as he tries to remain sober, and remind him what could happen if he starts drinking.

Being on the road all the time has also affected his relationships with friends

and family, but he has managed to keep in a steady relationship for the past couple of years. Being away all the time obviously puts a strain on any relationship, but they have found ways to make it work. Ryan's home is located outside of Boston, a sizable house painted a sea green with white trimmings, and a homey front porch. He shares the house with most of his other band members, so there isn't someone there all the time to keep it in order. His room is a mess—unwashed clothing strewn about, crumpled papers, empty food containers, and an unmade bed—constantly in a state of chaos from whenever the last time he left to tour was. With more time spent on the road than at home, this is understandable. There is not much time for housework when he gets home because he spends that time trying to craft a new song or hanging out with old friends before departing on yet another tour.

No strangers to touring, Ryan and his band have been known to play up to 250 shows in a year. Last year they “slowed down,” to about 160 shows. In his words, touring all the time is “intense work.” After college Ryan traveled with his now ex-girlfriend all over the United States, wherever they wanted to go. “It was amazing,” he says: they went to places all over, from Disney World to the Grand Canyon, they had the freedom of the road, and it was one of the most fun times in his life. He says that parts of life on the road are amazing, but in the end it is still work. Being on the road they have to make it fun and make the most out of it, but touring is not a walk in the park. The pros and cons of the road are constant, and life on the road is best described, somewhat paradoxically, as “not a road trip.”

In his travels, Ryan has gotten the chance to play with a pretty wide array of people. He has a lot of great memories from the road, almost too many to list. One of his most memorable experiences with another musician was being able to tour with Martin Sexton. He had been strongly influenced by Martin; on the inside cover of the Ryan Montbleau Band's first album he thanked Martin twice, without having ever met him. About two years ago Martin asked Ryan and his band to be his backing band, after Martin had gotten to know him and let him open a few of his shows. Ryan gladly accepted, and the tour was an incredible experience for him. The band got to ride in Martin's tour bus on the tour, which may not seem like a big deal, but to a band that has been rid-

ing around in a tiny Sprinter van with blue paint that is beginning to fade, it is most certainly a pretty big deal. Things like that lead him to see what could be if they keep at touring, someday.

On the tour, Martin and his new backing band got the chance to open up for the Dave Matthews Band for four nights. Being able to hang out with those people and experience the hugeness of the whole operation was a bit unreal for Ryan, which is understandable considering the size of his own shows rarely surpasses 1,000 people. Pulling into the parking filled with tour buses and tens of people all helping to set up the show must have been an unreal sight. That tour opened Ryan's eyes. His band is slowly getting bigger and bigger, and now he can almost see the light at the end of the very long tunnel. Even though it is a distant reality, it is a little bit easier to see that he has made it in one sense or another, and in a couple years he may just be the one that thousands of people are coming out to see on a nightly basis. It is like he is in a constant thought process of "almost there," which may be necessary if you ever want to have a career in music. After the tour, Martin produced the Ryan Montbleau Band's album "Heavy on the Vine," and Martin and Ryan remain close.

A love of music is why Ryan started touring. Sometimes it is easy to get caught up in the business end of things: how many shows, loading in and loading out, getting the sound just right, fighting just to stay awake, figuring out where the next destination is, and playing the music to the best of his ability. Sometimes, though, music comes back into the picture, and it is clear again why he chose this career. Jam Cruise is one of those experiences. Jam Cruise is an annual event where a huge number of bands play over the course of a week on a cruise. On the ship, musicians and fans mix together, and the event becomes all about the music. At one point Ryan bumped into a member of a band he was into called "Toubab Krewe" on the elevator of the 14-story cruise ship and was able to start talking with him and form another friendship. The cruise is just as much for the musicians as for anyone else, because it turns the ship into a creative breeding ground. Musicians constantly sit in with one another, there is a jam room always set up for anybody who wants to play some tunes, and there's constant live music being made for the entire week of the cruise. The Ryan Montbleau Band was invited to play there in 2010, and again in 2011, and as he says "if Jam Cruise

doesn't have us back, I'll buy a ticket."

"It's a hard lifestyle being on the road all the time, and it has to be something that you love to do," says Ryan. Some days it can be the most amazing job in the world, while others you may just want to give up and quit. Once you have been making a living as a touring musician, it's hard to do anything else as a job. Ryan wants to slow down a bit from the pace him and his band have been playing shows at, and putting more time in on albums than before. It's hard physically and mentally being on the road all the time, but in the career he chose, touring will always be a part of it. More time at home would lead to better songs, in his opinion, so more time at home is what he hopes will be in his future. For Ryan, as the road stretches into the horizon in the rearview mirror, it seems that there will always be another stretch of road on the horizon ahead.

CHOOSE YOUR ‘TUDE

Throughout the first six chapters in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie demonstrates great optimism in many tough situations. In chapters one and two, Janie’s grandmother forces her granddaughter to marry a man that she does not love: Logan Killicks. Janie first responded to her grandmother’s proposal on page thirteen: “*Naw, Nanny, no ma’am! Is dat whut he been hangin’ round here for? He look like some ole skullhead in de grave yard.*” Nanny made it very clear that this didn’t matter: Janie did not have a choice whom she could marry. This was not an argument that Janie was going to expound. She didn’t have the temerity to fight her grandmother on the subject. Nanny believed that Logan Killicks was a solid husband, simply because he had some money and some land, providing some stability for her granddaughter. As the wedding date approached, Janie began to take on a different attitude—a more positive one. Janie started to be more pugnacious regarding the situation, and her new attitude is well captured on page twenty-one: “*Finally out of Nanny’s talk and her own conjectures she made a sort of comfort for herself. Yes, she would love Logan after they were married. She could see no way for it to come about, but Nanny and the old folks had said it...*”

While reading the first few chapters of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, I can make several connections from her positive attitude to difficulties that I have faced in recent years. Most notable was at my old school. By the spring trimester of last year, at my old school, I knew that I would be attending Berkshire the following fall. It was then that I began to become negative about my school I had attended for my entire schooling. I felt like a dying jail prisoner, approaching the end of my life sentence. I was jaded by the tedious rules, the ostentatious people, and the inane homework. It took every brain cell in my head for me to not desecrate the faculty I had spent my entire life with. I felt as if all teachers had malice for me. It wasn’t until October of this year, four months after my graduation, that I began to change my attitude about my old

school. When the workload at Berkshire began to ramp up, I felt prepared and remained unruffled. Looking back on my final year at my old school, I wish that I had stayed positive about my situation, and looked at it from a bigger perspective. I could have made an unhappy situation a tolerant one, had I adopted Janie's optimism into my own life.

Work Cited

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2006. Print.

CAN LOVE CONQUER DECLINE?

Throughout the novel *Wuthering Heights*, various characters undergo social and physical degradation. This fact is related to Emily Bronte's theme that the power to improve or worsen oneself lies primarily within. All of the characters that fall in status have a chance to improve themselves through love, but they can only better themselves if their degradation is not completely their choice. Hope and degradation hang in a balance throughout the novel, allowing the reader to predict what changes in character we will see next and how the characters interact. The motif of degradation in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* defines the characterization of Hareton Earnshaw, Catherine Earnshaw Linton, and Heathcliff.

Hareton Earnshaw starts out the story as a sweet little boy whom Nelly Dean, the maid at Wuthering Heights, cares for. However, as soon as Nelly leaves him to work at Thrushcross Grange, his father, Hindley Earnshaw, and his "devil daddy" Heathcliff begin to destroy the qualities that Nelly instills in him. Thus, Hareton's manners leave just as fast as Nelly does. He no longer is the little gentleman Nelly raises him to be, but rather is as rough as a farmhand. He learns to swear and doesn't hesitate to curse at anyone. His brain is also degraded, as Hindley and Heathcliff stop allowing the curate to come to Wuthering Heights to educate Hareton. When Nelly goes to visit the Heights one day, she is met by Hareton near the gate. When she tries to greet him, "He raised his missile [a rock] to hurl it...the stone struck my bonnet...from the lips of the little fellow, [came] a string of curses," (86). This is not the boy that Nelly remembers, and Hareton does not remember Nelly at all. It is not Hareton's choice to be degraded but rather an unfortunate fate thrust upon him by his guardians. One of Bronte's themes in the book is that unless the degradation of oneself is completely one's choice, then one can always improve. Hareton eventually improves himself when he is a young man, through his love for Cathy Linton. He wants to impress Cathy so badly that he teaches himself how to read, and tries to improve

himself in other areas, too. Cathy takes notice of his efforts, and eventually the two fall in love. Through love, Hareton rises above the degradation imposed on him by Hindley and Heathcliff. However, Cathy's mother, Catherine Earnshaw Linton, is degraded by her love life.

Although Catherine Earnshaw is in love with Heathcliff, she feels that she has to marry Edgar Linton. Edgar is higher in social stature and has more money than Heathcliff does. If Catherine marries Edgar, she will be a lady. But based on Catherine's values, she says, "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff" (63). Catherine eventually marries Edgar but never stops loving Heathcliff. She never truly loves Edgar as she loves Heathcliff, and falsehood degrades her marriage. She further degrades her relationship with Edgar, and her own health, by retaliating against Edgar and fasting for days. This fast is her revenge for Edgar's no longer allowing Heathcliff to visit her at Thrushcross Grange. Catherine pretends to go insane and eventually goes senseless in actuality. Eventually, she dies as a result of this ruse to get back at Edgar. Her love for Heathcliff degrades her health, corrupts her relationship with Edgar, and eventually kills her. Heathcliff's worst traits bring out the worst in Catherine, but Catherine at her worst is still not as degraded as Heathcliff is at his best.

When Mr. Earnshaw brings Heathcliff to Wuthering Heights as a young child, Hindley and Mr. Earnshaw allow and even assist in corrupting Heathcliff; Hindley by allowing Heathcliff to order him around, and Mr. Earnshaw by allowing Heathcliff to possess this power. This abuse of power also degrades Heathcliff's mind, because he understands the horrible things Hindley says and does to him. After Heathcliff leaves Wuthering Heights for three years, the result of Catherine's comment about the potential degradation of marrying him, he comes back improved on the outside and even more corrupt on the inside. Heathcliff's mind becomes even more degraded after Catherine dies. He tricks Cathy Linton into marrying Linton Heathcliff, just for his personal gain. By manipulating Cathy's kind heart, he gains Thrushcross Grange, in addition to Wuthering Heights. He also takes control of Cathy, forcing her to live at Wuthering Heights, away from Nelly and everything that she knows and loves. Heathcliff also wallows away in his last few weeks. He degrades his health by not eating, denying to Nelly that anything is wrong. He stays out late at night and tells no one where he has been.

Nelly says that, “Mr. Heathcliff was going to bed and he wanted nothing to eat till morning” (252). But in the morning, he still doesn’t eat. Heathcliff eventually gets so sick and thin that he dies.

Although Heathcliff is very good at degrading himself, none of his self-harming acts is as bad as the degradation of his own and Catherine’s graves. Even though he is just trying to get closer to Catherine, digging up the grave is by far the most degrading thing one can do to a body. Heathcliff cuts out the side of Catherine’s coffin and gives instructions that he is to be buried next to her, so that their bones can mix. Catherine does not ask to be buried with Heathcliff, so we have no sense that she approved of this permanent situation. Heathcliff’s degradation is entirely his choice, and he continues to degrade even after he dies. Although love can reverse degradation, it can also be the cause of corruption.

Emily Bronte uses the motif of degradation to prove one of her resounding themes, that love can either rescue a person or be the cause of intense degradation. This is an important message to the reader because it shows that a person holds the power to love, and if a person has the will, he can improve themselves through love. Heathcliff does not have the will to improve himself, and as a result, he further degrades both himself and his love, Catherine. But Bronte wants the reader to realize that even in the most barren, depressing places, like the moor, there is always light. The novel ends focused on the love between Cathy and Hareton, and Hareton’s improved habits due to this love. This is the good that Bronte wants the reader to focus on, and the hope that all of us have, if only we have the will to change.

Work Cited

Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. 4th edition, ed. Richard J. Dunn. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003. Print.

LOSS AS A MARK OF MATURATION

Throughout her memoir *Just Kids*, Patti Smith uses the recurring motifs of loss and death to illustrate the changes in her life and herself over the course of her first thirty years. The memoir begins as early as she can remember and continues up through her thirties. It then skips ahead to Robert Mapplethorpe's death. As the memoir develops, Smith makes reference to losses in her life more and more frequently. Perhaps Smith wishes to make the point that, as we age, we see death more frequently. Perhaps she wishes to make the point that we notice deaths more as we age. Whatever her intention, changes in Smith's life become marked by loss; and loss becomes clearly associated with her maturation.

In the beginning of the memoir, Smith experiences small losses as a result of her family's moves to different areas. Her first important loss occurs when she gives her child up for adoption when she is nineteen. "The boy . . . was so inexperienced that he could hardly be held accountable," Smith says of the father at the time, (Smith 17). This is an immediate sign of how the experience forces Smith take responsibility herself. An easier route would have been for her to blame the father, but instead she takes care of her unwanted pregnancy on her own. Smith finds a family to adopt her baby and moves out of her house until the baby is born to save her family the embarrassment of her having a child out of wedlock. She does all of this without ever indicating to the reader whether she has even informed the father of his child's existence, which shows her independent nature. Smith's pregnancy is a major event that coincides with her withdrawal from a teacher's college. Without a college degree, she has few real options for her future, and lives in her family's laundry room while holding a temporary minimum wage job at a textbook factory. The bleak reality of this situation prompts Smith to move to New York City and attempt life there as an artist. The reader is left wondering if it is the birth and adoption of her child that premeditates this huge change in her life.

As Smith becomes older in New York City, more losses take place. In the city, Smith meets Mapplethorpe and they begin living together. As their relationship progresses and time goes on, the number of deaths in her life grows. Many of the deaths that take place during this period in Smith's life are those of public figures rather than personal acquaintances, but her descriptions of their deaths make the time seem turbulent. Just before Smith's visit to meet Mapplethorpe's parents, Martin Luther King Jr. is shot. Smith compares watching Coretta Scott King's, on television, comforting her daughter to herself, as a teenager, watching Jackie after John F. Kennedy's death. Then Andy Warhol is shot, and Mapplethorpe's style of art continues to develop. Changes occur quickly in this ever-evolving lifestyle of Smith and Mapplethorpe's, and there are deaths to accompany them. During Smith's first trip to Paris, Brian Jones, a founding member of the Rolling Stones, dies. She writes poems in his memory, "for the first time expressing my love for rock and roll" (Smith 83). Up until that point in the book, Smith has never mentioned music. This is the first time she shows how much it means to her, foreshadowing the very different future in music any reader familiar with the Patti Smith Band knows is coming.

Smith both begins and ends this memoir with Mapplethorpe's death, most likely with the purpose of highlighting her growth from her childhood to adulthood. The foreword takes place the night of her best friend's death. It portrays Smith's life in a very conventional context. She lives in a house with her husband and children. She has a television, and she has art books. During her childhood and her time with and without Mapplethorpe in New York City, Smith's life is seldom ordinary, though. In New York, she lives day to day, barely scraping by with enough money to eat. At one point Smith and Mapplethorpe live in an apartment without running water. Every day they meet people who later become hugely famous. By using Mapplethorpe's death to contrast these periods in her life, Smith highlights the startling difference.

Smith's choice in pairing the changes in her life with deaths or losses forces the reader to clearly notice her changes. It also makes moments of change more significant. The many deaths in Smith's life, from those of politicians to musicians to friends, do not desensitize the reader. Instead, they do the opposite and show just how turbulent that period of her life was. The writ-

ing in the middle of the book feels chaotic and disorganized at times, but only because that is the reality of Smith's life. Smith's writing does not always seem organized and clear, but by the end of the book it is proved to effectively demonstrate to the reader the turmoil of her life.

Work Cited

Smith, Patti. *Just Kids*. New York: Harper Collins, 2010. Print.

ALTERNATE REALITIES

In *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles, Gene, Finny and Leper are three young boys that attend Devon School, an all-boys boarding school in New England at the time that the United States faces World War II. Boys go to summer school in order to graduate as early as possible and go to war to support their country. Gene and Finny become best friends as a result of being roommates. Finny is very popular, and he moves “in groups the size of a hockey team” (15). Not only does he have many friends, but he is also the best athlete at Devon School. In contrast to other boys, Finny does not play sports to compete, but rather to appreciate the beauty of sports. On the other hand, Gene is a brilliant student and a good friend. He does anything Finny tells him to do. Gene thinks that Finny is jealous of him and tries to distract Gene from his studies. Leper, a friend of both, is interested in nature and animals rather than sports. All three create an alternate world to protect themselves from reality.

Gene and Finny are roommates and best friends. They go everywhere together. After a while, Gene becomes jealous of Finny because Finny is popular, an amazing athlete, and someone who breaks school records. In addition, Finny only competes against himself to overcome his greatest challenges. Among all these things, Gene feels inferior and does not like the fact that Finny is better than him. Gene becomes jealous. At the same time, Gene thinks that Finny is also jealous of him because Finny is always distracting Gene from his studies. Gene creates a dream world in which he can live in peace because he and Finny are “even” (53) and they envy each other.

One night Gene realizes that Finny is not jealous of him, and Gene cannot handle the fact that Finny is better than he is. Therefore, when Finny and Gene decide to jump out of the tree, Gene jounces the limb and causes Finny to fall out of the tree and break his leg. Consequently, Finny is unable to play sports. Gene claims that a “blind impulse” (191) makes him jounce the limb because he feels

inferior. The accident takes away one of Finny's reasons for living, sports. As a result of his broken leg, Finny is out of school for a while. When he recovers, he goes back to Devon. Brinker and Gene talk about enlisting in the army, but Finny does not understand. In Finny's head "there isn't any war" (90). The war is invented by the "fat old men who don't want [them] crowding them out of their jobs. They've made it all up" (115). Finny creates a world where there isn't any war. Finny creates this alternate reality because he tries to enlist in the army and they "can't use [him]" (90), for he has a broken leg. Finny "will hate it everywhere if [he] is not in this war" (190). Finny does not accept the fact that he cannot enlist in the military and creates a world where there is no war.

Leper, unlike most of the boys at Devon, is interested in nature and outdoor activities. In the winter Leper likes "touring skiing" (94). He does not understand why people ski fast because "skiing is not supposed to be fast. . . You never get to see the trees or anything" (95). Instead of contributing to the war effort, like most of the boys at Devon, he lives in a world where he is alone with nature. One day, the ski troops show the boys at Devon a film and Leper recognizes "a friendly face to the war" (124) because he sees "skiers in white, silent as angels" (124) and for Leper war seems clean. As a result, he is the first in the class to enlist because he believes that by joining the military, he will be part of nature. Nevertheless, he does not allow himself to see the reality of war. When he joins the army he can neither eat nor sleep for he realizes that war is not as clean as he thinks. Leper turns into a "psycho" (150) and gets a Section Eight discharge. Leper cannot accept the war, so he goes crazy, is discharged by the army, and is sent back home.

All three boys have created a separate reality in which they live because they, for some reason, cannot face reality. Even though they create a world of an alternate reality to protect themselves, they get destroyed when they face reality. Gene cannot accept the fact that Finny is better than him, and creates a world in which Finny and Gene are jealous of each other. When he faces reality and realizes that Finny is no longer jealous of him, Gene makes Finny fall out of a tree because he cannot help his anger. This accident harms Finny, and he breaks his leg. Finny can neither play sports nor enlist in the army. Therefore; Finny creates an alternate reality where there isn't any war. On the other hand, Leper changes his mind about war completely when the ski troops show the video at Devon. As he knows

that he has to enlist in the army at some point, he creates a world where war is a privilege and one should be proud of taking part in it. He sees war very positively. Obviously, he fails when he faces the reality of war and has a mental breakdown. All three of them create an alternate reality in order to protect themselves from the real world, which they cannot face.

Some people are like Leper, Finny and Gene nowadays. They believe what they want to believe, so that they do not face reality. At some point in their lives people need to face reality because their dream worlds do not last forever, and at this point is when people fail and not succeed. Instead of fighting for what they want or accepting things as they are from the beginning, they protect themselves by believing what they want. When they have to face reality, they fail because they do not recognize it.

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Knowles, John. *A Separate Peace*. New York: Scribner, 1987. Print.

NIGERIA AND GENERAL ELECTRIC: FRIENDS OR FOES?

The United States of America, along with a majority of nations, depends on oil to fuel almost all of our transportation, and with it, the economy as a whole. Without oil, the US would be at a standstill. We are desperate as a nation to find a viable source of petroleum, demonstrated in part by the fact that we have more active wells than the rest of the world combined. (NRDC, Gas Prices) Unfortunately, the US will never control the world's oil supplies or the price of gas; we simply don't have the oil resources. But this just shows how much money there is to be made in oil. Chevron, ConocoPhillips, BP, ExxonMobil and Shell are the world's five largest privately owned oil companies and their profits from 2001 to 2010 totaled almost one trillion dollars. General Electric is looking to get into the oil business and the huge financial gains it promises by striking a ten billion dollar deal with the country of Nigeria, which allows GE to take a 10-15 % cut of the profits of oil extraction in exchange for building and operating the oil wells and other power plants in Nigeria. (NYTimes) Although this deal has the potential to give Nigeria a chance to reach its goal of becoming one of the world's 20 largest economies by the year 2020, this deal could also be harmful, allowing companies to essentially "own" a country, similar to the East India Trading Company in India and Aramco, the national oil company of Saudi Arabia, resulting only in General Electric's gaining more profit as a global company rather than in building the autonomous economy of Nigeria.

The era of state-driven capitalism has dawned, shown through nations like China and Russia's massive and growing economies. These are countries that have struggled in recent decades to overcome revolutions and communism, and they are now using state-owned oil corporations to earn billions of dollars for their people. (WSJ, State-Owned Oil) The ease with which these nations transitioned from underdogs to two of the world's largest and fastest growing

economies gives hope to developing nations like Nigeria, where they have the resources but not the financial backing to pay for the start-up costs of harvesting and selling their resources, especially oil and gas. A similar situation to the one GE and Nigeria are proposing has occurred before, between China and Sudan. Although they are technically strong import and export partners, China imports more than 60% of Sudan's oil and has a 40% stake in a majority of Sudanese oil projects, with signs that an even stronger political alliance is to come. In order for Nigeria to use its oil resources to promote its economy, the nation will need outside help from either a corporation or another nation to create the necessary infrastructure to build the power plants. The involvement of a foreign organization has been proven to work; Sudan's economy grew 5.1% in 2011 and is projected to grow 5.3% in 2012, and this rise has proven linked directly to the growth of the oil sector. Judging by the situation in Aramco, estimated to be worth \$781 billion, and the massive growth of Sudan's economy, the deal between the Nigerian government and General Electric could be the best thing to happen to Nigeria in a century, from a purely economical standpoint. It would improve the economy quickly and effectively, almost guaranteeing Nigeria's president, Goodluck Jonathan's goal of becoming one of the world's largest economies by 2020. General Electric has promised to employ a majority of Nigerian workers, and their leadership and female empowerment programs would make it easier for individuals to access higher education. Isaac Enomhose, a GE site manager in Nigeria states, "If we go at this rate, by 2020 we will be able to have a sustainable, reliable power supply in the country. GE has established a strong base in Nigeria and [Nigerians] have proven their worth." If this deal between Nigeria and General Electric works out, it could revolutionize free trade and the oil market, not to mention Nigeria and GE's own economic goals.

This deal would be instrumental in changing General Electric's future. It allows for GE to abolish, permanently, their image of being an American-only company. The partnership would allow for other developing states in Africa and the Middle East to see how well the program works, and allows GE to lower their expenses by doing a majority of their business outside of America, in which there is a higher standard of living and therefore higher wages. GE will earn billions of dollars in a relatively short period of time; they wouldn't be investing ten billion

dollars in a country that was recently on the Failed State Index. This is an opportunity to reverse their economic stance and reputation after the US recession, where the American government bailed them out in an attempt to ensure that the company wouldn't fail.

Despite the huge amount of gains for GE that could possibly create a new way of doing business, their role in Nigeria poses a threat to GE's foreign workers. Over the last three years, numerous kidnappings related to oil in the Niger Delta have been occurring regularly, forcing the massive privately-owned oil companies like Shell and ExxonMobil to lower their oil production rates. By creating this partnership with the Nigerian government, GE must ensure that they placate the massive lower class in Nigeria by giving them jobs that are sustainable, in order to ensure that they will not be wasting their billions when they have to lower production rates two years from now. But most importantly, the partnership between General Electric and Nigeria would give GE a huge amount of global power. If it works, other countries will be competing for GE to partner with their governments in an attempt to change the economic situation. This partnership would revolutionize the role of a company, allowing it to become a major player in politics and world development.

Although there are massive positive outcomes for both the nation of Nigeria and General Electric, Nigeria stands to suffer at the hands of greed and capitalism. Allowing GE to have such a pivotal role in Nigeria could lead to a complete cultural reversal, turning the entire nation of Nigeria into a country run by a corporation, similar to India and the East India Company. With a dependence on GE to create power plants and guidance, the huge influx of money could create an opportunity for executives of GE to become players in the Nigerian government, possibly leading to a situation like the one in Zimbabwe and South Africa in terms of an apartheid-esque environment. This deal could also be completely ineffective and result in a huge economic crash in Nigeria, which could impact the delicate economy of the rest of Africa. Former Nigerian President Obasanjo received fifteen billion dollars from a United Nations-affiliated organization to provide his country with power, and he failed. So why should GE's plan work where others have failed?

Aminu Abaubakar, a Nigerian GE Sales Manager, states that "Nigeria has the

need and the potential; GE has the technology and the solutions. Our partnership is a win-win relationship, resulting in development for the nation and the growth of the company.” His statement epitomizes the situation between Nigeria and GE; it could revolutionize the role of companies in global politics and government, but he fails to remark that this plan could ruin both GE and Nigeria. In order to implement this agreement peacefully, GE and Nigeria must balance the people’s needs with the profit motives of the Nigerian and American businessmen looking to make huge returns fast. If this deal goes through effectively and with strong financial and political results, this could completely transform the way corporations and countries interact; if it fails, it will force the global population to ask itself just how far we are willing to go to create a strong economy.

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CASH: THE IDEAL MODERNIST

Cash, a character in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, is the eldest son of the Bundrens' children. Unlike his siblings and others in the story, Cash is a consistent character who makes decisions based on what he believes is right. Cash Bundren's preference to act over communicating resembles Nietzsche's idea that metaphors are often used instead of words in order for one's thoughts or feelings to be fully expressed. In this way, Cash represents the ideal Modernist in the story, one with whom other characters can be compared or contrasted.

Throughout *As I Lay Dying*, it is apparent that Cash, although a member of the Bundren family, has very few chapters of his own. In fact, the reader's first encounter of Cash's narration is a list of explanations for adding bevels to his mother's coffin. The reasons are numbered and simple, with his concluding "it makes a neater job" (83). The simplicity and the list itself demonstrate Cash as a systematic thinker, one who believes in logic but does not become too dependent on words for the justification. Additionally, Cash has trouble expressing himself with words. When he tries to explain himself to Darl, Cash's "eyes [fumble], the words [fumble]" (133). The fact that Cash finds such difficulty in carrying out a simple conversation and constantly pauses to find the right words shows a crucial difference between him and the rest: while others take advantages of words to narrate their dilemmas and feelings, Cash often remains quiet, only speaking when he has to. Like other Modernists of which he is an unwitting member, words are simply not enough for Cash.

Cash's lack of narration in the story forces him to seek a different way to express himself: the will to act. Unlike most of the others in the story, Cash thinks independently and makes decisions based on what he believes is right. During the period when his mother is dying and at the moment of her actual death, Cash almost only appears working on the coffin. He does not do this elsewhere but right outside the window where his mother lies so that she can "[watch] Cash whittle on" (18) the coffin. This is very peculiar of Cash, something no one

else is expected to do. However, Cash does not have any unkind intentions for his mother; his expression of grief and sorrow is simply projected into working. As a result, after her death, Cash becomes even more involved in finishing and perfecting the coffin, refusing to come in from the rain despite being “wet to the skin” (77). Cash continues to attend the coffin as the family sets out for Jefferson, an act equivalent to that of a son protecting his mother.

Like many Modernists, Cash Bundren does not believe in using words to express one’s emotions. Cash has difficulties carrying on a conversation and uses a list with little words for reasoning. He chooses instead to take actions, expressing himself through work. Cash says little throughout the book, even when his mother dies before his eyes. He neither weeps nor cries but continues to perfect the coffin. Cash’s differences go beyond other’s indulgence. His extremities prove that he is more than just the eldest-son figure in Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*.

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THE THOUSAND-YARD STARE: THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN AND POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Killing a person, or many people, or even witnessing death, or any other type of traumatic experience can cause a psychological disorder known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD symptoms have been noticeable in soldiers since the Civil War in 1861 . However, PTSD was neglected due to military culture and societal stereotypes causing veterans to struggle internally and externally without any distinguished help. PTSD was not diagnosed and accepted as a legitimate psychological wound until 1980 . What helped get PTSD acknowledged as a real problem was the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III (DSM-III), published in 1980 . However, even with PTSD being recognized as a legitimate war wound that deserves the same treatment as a physical wound, the military has neglected to fully support these veterans and even soldiers still in combat. The military and the government of the United States must take a stronger initiative to support these troops when they are in the combat field and when they return home, as well as providing adequate benefits for the soldiers' families.

Ever since September 11th and the invasion of Afghanistan, around 120,000 men and women in the military or serving as civilian contractors have arrived home diagnosed with PTSD . In the latest description of PTSD, the DSM-IV classifies PTSD with three essential symptoms: re-experiencing the traumatic event, avoidance and numbing, increasing anxiety and emotional arousal. Under these categories soldiers could endure flashbacks or nightmares; intense distress; avoidance of activities, places or thoughts; loss of interest; feeling detached from others; difficulty falling or staying asleep; outbursts of anger; jumpiness; and much more.

These symptoms can be felt by soldiers while they are still overseas, but more often when they must transition from military into civilian life. Many veterans struggle to let go of their military training and skills, like keeping their heads on a

swivel, scanning surroundings for impending threats, and keeping their body alert at all times. Many veterans will resort to alcohol or other drugs to act as depressants to numb their pain . These actions could explain why, of all the veterans incarcerated after their return to civilian life, 39% have officially screened positive for PTSD . So many veterans have trouble transitioning back into the real world that they would rather deal with the “haunting, often inexplicable sense of guilt and regret...” by deploying again . Even more alarming than soldiers’ wanting to go back on deployment is the increasing suicide rate among their numbers. In 2008, there were 143 army suicides confirmed . This puts the army suicide rate at 20.2 per 100,000 soldiers, surpassing the national suicide rate of 19.5 per 100,000.

How did this happen?

After PTSD was “accepted” as a real problem, the U.S. Congress enabled the Veterans Administration (VA) to treat PTSD sufferers in the military . However, the VA has failed to be a viable institution to take care of veterans. On February 18, 2007, the Washington Post exposed these failings at the VA-controlled Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. The article stated that, “servicemen and women were being denied both psychological treatment and help in maneuvering through the labyrinthine bureaucracy of the military disability and healthcare systems” .

Veterans and their families complained about the “dizzying paperwork and the long delays associated with filling compensation claims” . Due to these frustrating circumstances, service members did not know exactly where to go for help. Moreover, prevailing stereotypes prevented servicemen and women from seeking care in the first place: 59 percent of service men believed they would be seen as weak if they sought help, 49 percent thought they would no longer be incorporated in their unit in the same way, and 46 percent thought their commanders would not believe them and portray them as unreliable .

Due to the exposure created by the Washington Post article, in the spring of 2007 the VA added 200 mental health care providers, which increased even more the next year . Also, it developed the Center for Deployment Psychology (CDP) for the purpose in training these mental health care providers specifically for treating PTSD-related symptoms; in turn, the CDP staff would then help service

the military personnel and their families . The Post-Deployment Health Assessment (PDHA) was set up to help soldiers returning from war. It required that within thirty days of coming home that soldiers be interviewed with questions that related to PTSD symptoms, medications, and combat exposure. Another program to help soldiers returning home was the Post-Deployment Health Re-assessment (PDHRA), which was a form that had to be completed 90-180 days after returning home. Other programs included “Battlemind”, which helped soldiers with what was to be expected in war, information for families, and Military One Source, an anonymous support service online or over the phone .

All of these programs were laudable ideas, but unfortunately the government failed to implement them well. The PDHA failed because soldiers did not want to report symptoms, thinking they would be held back from returning home or that they would be seen differently in their unit. The PDHRA was more effective, but was not documented or followed up on well. “Battlemind” was a disaster, because the good intention of making a soldier ready for combat caused battlefield behavior to manifest in the social environment at home. Another major problem with these programs was that there were a great many requirements to qualify, such as income level, extent of injuries, period of service, length of service, and military discharge status.

The first and most important aspect of the system that must change is the culture. The stigma against PTSD only encourages shame, guilt, and destruction for service members. This could be accomplished by making sure that every soldier is prepared for a mission instead of taking a blind eye towards a soldier’s mental status. The military’s emphasis on toughness and stamina will not need to change; instead, it will just need to raise awareness that non-stable soldiers endanger the whole group by continuing with a mission. An attitude that it is the unit’s duty to report a soldier’s struggle must be instilled. Once the military attitude towards PTSD is completely resolved into a positive one, it will be a lot easier for other actions to be effective.

Once the culture has been changed to make it acceptable for soldiers to seek and receive help, the government and military together must improve service and access. It is very difficult right now for soldiers that live in rural or other areas where VA clinics are not feasible to get the necessary services, since a di-

agnosis takes more than one visit. Also, access to mental health services needs to be available on bases where soldiers might develop symptoms early and are still forced into combat. The mental caretakers should have no affiliations with the military, other than diagnosing them in a VA building, so that soldiers will be more likely to tell the truth if they do not feel the danger of being discharged.

The aspect of family involvement must change as well. There needs to be a support system for families that are under a great deal of stress while their family member is away on a long deployment. This will help down the line, when the family member returns home, because it will result in fewer fights and conflicts due to stress and misunderstandings. Also, it should be mandatory for family members to take a least one class on post-deployment readjustment to explain positive coping and communication strategies. A soldier's family should have to go through some sessions while the soldier is going through a diagnosis for PTSD, due to the fact that all PTSD cases are different. This will allow the family members to know exactly what is going on and the best methods to deal with it.

These actions need to be taken by the military to ensure the safety of the veterans and their families when the service men return back from war. In just the five years between 2004 - 2009, the compensation awarded for disabilities rose 79.5 percent . This will be even higher in years to come if the government and the military do not take a proactive, preventative stance in aiding these soldiers with the psychological problems from the beginning of enlisting to months after returning. It will cost a lot more, especially in a down economy, for the military to be paying compensation for these veterans whose situations would have been better off if they just had received the right treatment in the first place. These men and women fought for the United States, and they ought to be taken care of, respectfully, for risking their lives instead of being thrown to the curb.

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HIDDEN COMMONALITIES WITHIN THE HUMAN RACE

I believe that humans have more ideological similarities than they initially think they have. Last summer I went on a community-service trip to a Muslim country, Morocco, and discovered this firsthand. Ever since 9/11, Muslims in the United States have been treated in increasingly racist and stereotypical manners. In politics, some accused President Barack Obama of being “Muslim,” as if to say that if he were Muslim, he would have been guilty of committing some terrible crime. While I had never accepted these derogatory accusations and thinking, they certainly suggested to me that there were strong cultural differences between Muslims and myself.

July 7th: As I drove with my summer group from the Marrakesh airport to the Moroccan coast the first thing that struck me were the stark differences of the landscape and communities relative to my own. Women were dressed head to toe in black hijabs and walked doing errands through the intense, dry, inescapable heat. Men in thick head-dresses took afternoon strolls through the neighborhood. As we continued to drive, I wondered whether there could possibly be any similarities between those outside the windows of the bus, and those inside.

July 16th: Our trip had arrived at a segment in which we would live with a local Moroccan family for several days. Although a little apprehensive, I was excited to engage with the local population on a deeper level. The first thing that struck me upon meeting our family was how genuine they were. The majority of Moroccans had always treated me as a tourist. However, the children of this Moroccan family greeted us excitedly. In subsequent days, I would become close to one of the Moroccan kids: Simon.

July 17th: During a lazy afternoon, one of the people in our group brought out a soccer ball. The Moroccan kids went nuts, chasing after the ball and kicking it everywhere. I was surprised that they enjoyed the soccer ball so much, so I joined

in. Running with the kids, we kicked it around their huts and driveway. One of the men in the family strictly told us not to play with the soccer ball. It didn't matter. We were enjoying ourselves too much. "Simon!" I hollered, and gestured for him to pass me the ball. I booted the ball into the air. Crash. It nearly thudded into the fire on which the older women were cooking dinner. Simon laughed and shared a contagious smile, which filled me with joy because it demonstrated that we could thoroughly enjoy each other's company, regardless of our many differences.

July 20th: Departure Day. As I walked out of my family's house carrying a suitcase towards our bus, I was sad but also proud. I was proud of the fact that I built friendships with people who were of a far different culture than my own. Though initially I had been skeptical that I had anything in common with the Moroccans, it turned out we shared a universal desire to have fun and enjoy life. As that soccer ball had crashed onto the ground with Simon, so did the imaginary social barrier I had enclosed myself, in which I had thought I had few, if any, similarities with Muslims. Their language, socioeconomic class, religion—all of this was irrelevant to our capability to bond and connect with one another—ultimately we're all humans, a fact that brings us together far more closely than any of our differences can possibly drive us apart. I realized that underneath tawdry labeling, humans have many non-ideological similarities; this I believe.

WHEN OIL AND GASOLINE COMBINE: THE INTEGRATION OF THE NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION

In our current society, it is unfathomable to conjure up the idea of a solely white-American NBA. Founded in 1946, the NBA remained a “paper-white” association for nearly four years before allowing African-Americans to enter the league. Now more than sixty years later, approximately 78% of the NBA is black and only a mere 7% is white-American. Long since Earl Lloyd, the first black man to play for the NBA, stepped on the court, it is now nearly impossible to deny the fact that African-Americans have utterly reshaped the game of basketball. Introducing beloved moves like the alley-oop, African-Americans have had a profound influence on the evolution of the NBA. More significantly, many prominent African-Americans used the NBA as an outlet for social change and reform, taking part in a social revolution. Beginning with Earl Lloyd in 1950, blacks have undoubtedly remolded the game of basketball while concurrently transforming the social rights of African-Americans.

Although the NBA was established as a solely white association in 1946, blacks had been participating in professional teams since 1923 with the creation of the New York Renaissance (Gaines). Serving as the first eminent opportunity for African American basketball players, the Rens demonstrated the astounding capabilities of black players without catching the eye of the American public. Quickly followed by the famous Harlem Globetrotters, the Rens were soon overshadowed as the American public became entranced by the swift moves of the Trotters (Gaines). A national phenomenon, the Harlem Globetrotters gained the prestige and esteem that the Rens had so blatantly lacked. Although the public obdurately threw the majority of their support towards the NBA, the Harlem

Globetrotters brought stature to the idea of African-American basketball players. The Globetrotters gained extreme fame and respect when they were invited to play against the all-white Minneapolis Lakers on February 19th, 1948. Stacked with giant George Mikan and swift Jim Pollard, the Lakers were deemed unstoppable. Immediately proving their capability, the Lakers jumped to a 9-2 lead and held a 32-23 edge at halftime, leaving the Globetrotters miles behind. Just as the Globetrotters seemed too far behind to recover, they managed to return to the game with a sense of spark and strength, tying the score at 42 by the end of the third quarter. The Trotters held on to their strength, maintaining a 59-59 tie with a minute and a half left. Globetrotter Marques Haynes, deemed the world's greatest ball handler, delayed time through his imposing dribbling skills. With only seconds remaining, he passed the ball to Ermer Robinson, who flung it towards the basket, and the ball swooshed (Fleming). The all-black Harlem Globetrotters had managed to defeat the undefeatable. The Harlem Globetrotters did not only win fame through their win, but they provided a shield of prestige and respect for African-American basketball players across the country.

After the momentous Globetrotters win, the NBA was split between those who were willing to open the gates of the NBA to African-Americans and those who would fight to keep them locked. The MLB had been integrated nearly four years ago with the renowned Jackie Robinson; it seemed like a matter of when, not if, the NBA would be integrated. So when the integrationists outbalanced the segregationists in 1950, the introduction of the first African-Americans to play in the NBA seemed to be relatively well accepted. America had already been torn apart by the acceptance of Jackie Robinson; it wasn't ready to split again. The menacing 6 foot 5 inches Earl Lloyd would be the first African American to play in an NBA game (Spear). Drafted by the Washington Capitals, Lloyd proved his strength through training camp and was lucky enough to leave with a sparkling Capitals jersey (Spear).

It would be naive to believe that the only contribution Lloyd bestowed upon the NBA was breaking the color barrier. Lloyd not only created history, but also took part in molding the future style of basketball. By being the first black player in a predominately white league, Lloyd would not only be integrating his skin color, but also his skills. Since the African-American athletes had been long

secluded from the game, they had evolved their own style. Emphasizing speed, jumping, and ball handling, they seemed to play an entirely different game. Free from the traditional white approaches, black players focused on showcasing flamboyant skills as a method of self-expression and entertainment. When Lloyd put on his Capitals jersey, the black style of basketball flowed through his fingertips and left its mark on the ball as it swooshed through the hoop. The style contagiously crawled through everyone else's play, reshaping and immutably marking the game of basketball forever. Lloyd's emergence in the NBA marked the baptism of the game of basketball.

Although Lloyd kicked the first dent in the desegregation of the NBA, Bill Russell extended Lloyd's attempts and fully integrated the game. As Lloyd introduced the fast paced style of basketball, Russell forced it upon the NBA, completely converting the game. Playing alongside Wilt Chamberlain, Russell would intertwine competitiveness with integrity, playing the game while retaining a selfless attitude (Plimpton). Russell sprinkled off the dusty cobwebs that surrounded the simple idea of defense. Introducing a new intensity, Russell proved how intimidating defense skills could win a game. Instead of acting spontaneously, Russell brought with him a new outlook on the game of basketball. Interweaving physical and mental skills, Russell determined that with the correct amalgam of anticipation, analysis, and agility the game of defense could be forever revolutionized. Recognized with an assortment of acknowledgements, Russell went on to be the first African-American to win the annual MVP award. As importantly, Russell's reshaping of the game inadvertently soothed the harsh times of segregation. Although he may not have been aware of it, Russell's alterations of the game of basketball were paralleled by alterations in the real world. As he managed twenty rebounds a game, Russell entranced the American public as they tuned in to watch this revolutionary African-American basketball player.

Russell became a symbol of national African-American pride as he began a basketball revolution. Proudly accepting his responsibility to represent his race, Russell refused to serve the traditional role of the early 1900s Negro. In 1958, Russell showcased his audacious and fearless attitude. After finding out he would be forced to sleep separately from his white teammates during an exhibition tour, Russell abandoned the tour and spat in the guide's face. Russell

refused to be what the media portrayed as a typical African-American (Goudsouzian). As blacks were constantly degraded as vapid fools, Russell consciously insisted that his basketball skills were dependent on his intellect as much as his athleticism. Through those types of declaration, Russell began to break down the demeaning Negro stereotype, remolding it into something to be proud of. In an interview with *Sports Illustrated*, Russell overtly expressed his purpose in behaving divergently as he said, "I don't want people to stereotype me ever" (Tax). Russell explained that each disparate action he took was entirely deliberate as he acted and dressed the opposite of how society expected him to. Driving a Chrysler instead of a Cadillac and wearing large clothing instead of tight, Russell devoted his time and energy towards reversing the ignominious stereotypes of his people (Goudsouzian). Constantly in the public eye, Russell took advantage of his publicity by causing a social revolution alongside his basketball revolution. Although he is often allocated for revolutionizing basketball, Russell's primary purpose was not to reform the game, but to ameliorate American society, and he largely accomplished that goal.

Lloyd and Russell were the first African Americans to change the temperature of the game, but they were by no means the last. Although many influential players were to follow them such as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Larry Bird, and Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan took the game of basketball to the 21st century while still playing in the 20th. Without Michael Jordan, the league would be stuck in a 1970's rut. As Russell had introduced the method of interweaving a player's personality within his basketball skills, Jordan followed in his legacy embodying determination, forcefulness, and perfectionism. Without the legacy of Michael Jordan, players like Dwyane Wade and LeBron James would not exist; they would be wandering around the NBA with no path to follow. Considered the greatest basketball player of all time, Jordan earned a reputation that is in no way deniable or retractable; his influence on the NBA is staggering and sensational. However, he by no means became a star on his own. Jordan would have never reached the fame and recognition he did without the help of Bill Russell and Earl Lloyd. Without Russell and Lloyd, Jordan may very well have been riding the bench, labeled as the stereotypical ignorant Negro. Jordan painted and polished the game of basketball, but Lloyd and Russell formed it.

The integration of the NBA symbolized much more than blacks and whites playing together. Unlike the desegregation of the MLB, the integration of the NBA epitomized the amalgamation of black and white playing styles. As the slower, white game fused with the fast, flamboyant black form, the game of basketball began its evolution. As influential basketball players like Bill Russell tweaked the wires of the game, they also altered the social status of African-Americans. While Bill Russell introduced a new form of defense, he reincarnated the stereotype of the Negro. Proving that African Americans were capable of being intelligent, Russell reformed America's views on blacks. Although players like Kareem Abdul-Jabar and Michael Jordan would later again influence the game of basketball, they would have never been capable of their actions had it not been for Bill Russell and Earl Lloyd. As athletically talented as Michael Jordan is, he would have never been capable of transforming the African-American identity like Bill Russell did. The integration of the NBA not only served as a symbol of black and white equality, but also introduced the new portrayal of the African American. As the NBA experienced its own revolution, the outside world responded with a social rebellion.

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AN INGLORIOUS PARADISE: THE DUALISM OF BRAZILIAN SOCIETY ACCORDING TO RUBEM FONSECA

Brazil's great regional, ethnic, and economic diversities have made it a fascinating example in the numerous developing economies of the twenty-first century. Since its return to democracy in 1985, Brazil has experienced quick and dramatic changes to its economy. Brazil's recent quarrying of its numerous natural resources, combined with its rapidly developing market economy, give the country the potential to become a major world power in the near future. However, along with Brazilian success has come the emergence of social inequality and government corruption. Brazil is one of the most urbanized countries in the world with over eighty percent of citizens residing in metropolitan areas ("Redemocratization Viewed From Below" 259), and urban violence, fraud, and poverty are now commonplace in Brazilian society, with little anticipation of reprieve. The work of contemporary Brazilian activists and artists has attempted to capture this dualist nature of Brazilian society. Specifically, the short stories of Brazilian author Rubem Fonseca provide a prime example. Fonseca's writing, filled with violence, cannibalism, and other disturbing motifs, illustrates this dualism in Brazilian society in three main areas: poverty and prosperity, success and corruption, and violence and peace.

I. Poverty and Prosperity

Since industrialization in the twentieth century, Brazil has enjoyed growing economic prosperity. Although not as developed as countries like Great Britain or the United States, Brazil is among the up-and-coming countries of the world, as exemplified by its inclusion in BRIC, an acronym coined by Jim O'Neill to describe newly developing countries with great potential. The BRIC countries,

Brazil, Russia, India and China, are expected to overtake the traditionally powerful G7 countries by 2027 (Foroohar). Brazil also has a relatively low unemployment rate, at only 6.4% (“Too Hot”) relative to 8.1 percent in the already developed United States. An article in *The Economist* predicted a GDP growth of 3.9 percent in 2011 as compared to only a 1.8 percent increase in the United States and only 1.3 percent growth in the United Kingdom (“A Game of Catch Up”). In the past decade, Brazil’s increased mining of natural resources, most notably petroleum, has also led to economic success. Brazil’s president Dilma Rousseff recently launched a campaign to increase Brazilian oil production to 5 million barrels a day, in an effort to land Brazil a spot in the top three oil-producing countries by 2020 (“The Devil in Deep Sea Oil”). For these reasons, Brazil’s is currently on trajectory to become a definitive world power by the end of the twenty-first century.

However, a dramatic increase in poverty has also accompanied the country’s economic success. The most prominent and visible example of this poverty was the development of favelas—or squatter slums—outside major Brazilian cities, such as Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, in the early twentieth century. According to a study conducted in 2005 by Janet Perlman, over twenty percent of Rio de Janeiro’s residents reside in favelas, a major increase from a previous survey in the 1960s (Perlman). Many hypotheses exist as to why favelas have developed so rapidly. While some blame urbanization and industrialization (Skidmore), others cite de-urbanization due to rent raises and pay freezes in cities (Lloyd-Sherlock). Despite Brazil’s economic growth, the number of favelas in Rio de Janeiro, one of Brazil’s largest cities, has more than doubled since 1969 (“Metamorphosis of Marginality” 155). Today, thirty-four percent of all Brazilians live below the poverty line, while fifty percent of the wealth is controlled by the top ten percent of society (“Metamorphosis of Marginality” 155).

Brazil’s economic success has been more beneficial to those few wealthy, while the poor have continued to suffer. This dualist nature of urban Brazilian society is a common theme within the writing of Rubem Fonseca. Throughout his writing, Fonseca attempts to depict the struggles of Brazilian society by ironically juxtaposing poverty and prosperity. For example,

in his short story “The Other,” Fonseca contrasts a wealthy business man with a poor street urchin. While the man originally provides the urchin with money, even going so far as to write him a five-hundred dollar check to support his sick mother, in the end the protagonist shoots the boy to end the boy’s persistent begging. However, the pivotal moment of the story occurs when, hauntingly, in response to the man’s statement: “I don’t have to help you,” the poor boy tells the protagonist “Yes you do. Otherwise you don’t know what will happen” (*The Taker and Other Stories* 140). In this quote, Fonseca implies that a strong connection exists between the rich and the poor within urban Brazil. If the wealth is not spread, the future economic prosperity of Brazil is uncertain. In another story, Fonseca builds upon this implication indicating that money is not enough. In this story, “Angels of the Marquis,” a lonely, retired man yearns to be a part of something greater than himself. However, instead of supplying money as he wishes, he ends up unwillingly donating his organs (*The Taker and Other Stories* 35). Through “Angels of the Marquis,” Fonseca implies that simple donations will not be sufficient to end the economic divide in Brazil.

II. Violence and Peace

Along with economic success have come international peace and governmental stability. Brazil is known for its bloodless revolutions, such as the peaceful removal of Dictator Getúlio Vargas from office in 1930 (Skidmore), and Brazil switched from authoritarian to democratic government in the 1980s. Since the restoration of democracy, Brazil has experienced relatively little conflict abroad. Brazil does maintain a standing arm; however, their military expenditures make up only 1.8% of the GDP, ranking it 88th compared to countries like China (21st), the United States (23rd), and India (61st) (CIA World Factbook). While the United States has been involved in foreign wars over the past century, Brazil’s only significant international conflicts have been over border disputes with Uruguay and Venezuela (CIA World Factbook).

However, this growing international peace has not been mirrored domestically. After re-democratization, the rise of favelas also contributed to the grow-

ing crime rate. For example, in the 1990s, kidnapping of the wealthy became extremely frequent in Rio de Janeiro, as did non-violent theft. The wealthy responded to these acts with violence, often hiring hit men to scare common criminals (Skidmore 199). In the 2000s, the homicide rate declined, but Brazil remains one of the most violent countries in the world, when ranked according to homicide and other violent crime rates. In 2007, Brazil's homicide rate was still a high 23.8 per every 100,000 citizens, largely due to an inefficient law enforcement system ("No End of Violence").

However, according to Sérgio Adorno, a professor at the University of Sao Paulo, "crime follows the path of wealth, not poverty" ("No End of Violence"). The themes of Fonseca's writing certainly seem to support Adorno's theory. In Fonseca's very violent prose, the main characters are most often middle to upper-class citizens whose violent natures become exposed throughout the course of the story. For example, in "Olivia and Xania", the main character, Zé is both an assassin and a target. The paradox exists in that in order to escape his life of crime and illegality, he must kill his anonymous boss, the Dispatcher. In another story, entitled "The Night Drive," the connection between wealth and violence is immediately evident when the protagonist reveals his euphoria for running over innocents on his habitual night drives. In the story, Fonseca implies that the protagonist is less and less satisfied with his privileged life, his only joy coming from the violence and destruction of anonymous murder. In both "The Night Drive" and "Olivia and Xania," Fonseca displays the contradictory facets of Brazilian society, suggesting a strong connection between privilege and violence.

III. Success and Corruption

A third aspect of the dualist nature of Brazilian society is the double nature of the government. While the Brazilian government has experienced numerous successes since re-democratization in 1985, it has also been subject to corruption and scandal.

Since re-democratization, the Brazilian government has succeeded in ending the dictatorial form of government in Brazil. It has also facilitated a restoration of the economy and Brazil's status as a world power. Under the leadership of

finance minister Fernando Henrique, Brazil was able to repair its relationship with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as dramatically decrease inflation through the introduction of the Plano Real. From 1994 to 1995, Brazil's inflation rate dropped from 913 to 19 percent (Skidmore 224). The restoration of democracy in the previously autocratic state was the real catalyst for this change. The new government has gained success through its publication of the oil industry and installation of high protective tariffs which have stimulated native industrialization ("A Self-Made Siege").

However, despite the great leaps and bounds made by the new government, corruption and scandal have also leaked in. The most common examples of corruption within the government are vote-buying and bribery. A notable scandal occurred in the late 1990s when Jader Barbalho resigned his senate seat before he could be impeached ("Inglorious Returns"). During the Lula de Silva administration, the *ficha limpa* or clean slate law was passed to fight corruption of this sort in the government ("Inglorious Returns"). Although steps are being taken to manage fraud at the national level, many of the worst offenses occur at the local level. Local police officers and law enforcers are often those who most abuse their positions and powers.

Fonseca reflects these discrepancies in his short story "The Ship *Catrineta*," which depicts a notable long-standing Brazilian family with rather strange rituals that determine their leadership. If the family of the story is taken to represent Brazil's upper-class, then Fonseca is making a commentary on the misguided actions of the government. For example, murder, incest, and cannibalism are regarded as taboo by most "civilized" cultures, but the members of Fonseca's fictitious family are practitioners of all three. By juxtaposing their extravagant birthday celebration and country home with the murder and consumption of a beautiful young woman, Fonseca displays the corruption and twisted nature of the ruling class.

In conclusion, the changes undergone by Brazilian society in the past thirty years have had both positive and negative effects. Economic changes have made the rich more wealthy and the poor more desolate; globalization has resulted in largely positive relationships with other nations, but affairs within Brazil itself have grown tenser; the principles of democracy have

been restored, but corruption continues to threaten its integrity. As a widely read author in both Brazil and other parts of the world, Fonseca continues to bring exposure, in an exaggerated manner, to the violent and destructive nature of contemporary Brazilian society. In addition to publicizing the nasty side of Brazilian urban life, he also offers a warning as to the fate of society in the situation is not remedied.

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PERCEPTIONS OF RACISM IN CONRAD'S *HEART OF DARKNESS*

Known as the greatest work in Joseph Conrad's impressive oeuvre, *Heart of Darkness* demonstrates a capacity to be interpreted in many different ways. This novella offers multiple views that are ambivalent, ambiguous, conflicting, and even incoherent, sparking prolonged critical debates, especially in the question of racism. Despite heated modern debates about Joseph Conrad's true standpoint regarding racism, *Heart of Darkness* is neither racist nor progressively humanistic; it represents the conceptual grey area that lures readers to arrive at one of the two sides of the argument.

Conrad successfully uses conflicting viewpoints as a tool to portray both his own skepticism of imperialism and the duality of human nature. These intertwining pictures constantly manipulate the audiences' perceptions about the racist nature of the text, force them to search under the surface of words and expressions, and ultimately find the answer in themselves. In other words, long before a hypothetical critic starting to collect evidence for his or her argument, a set of personal factors, including ethnic origin, social influence, and education, has already stepped in, determining the critic's point of reference and level of sensitivity to innuendoes of racism, shaping his or her decision on whether or not Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is a racist text. The process described above has prevented many critics from looking at the third angle: Joseph Conrad, the artist of ambivalence, had already prepared the battlefield for arguments on both sides in order to harvest diverse contributions towards the meaning of his original text.

First of all, a critic's sensitivity to innuendoes of racism determines which side of the argument he or she will arrive at. For example, Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian novelist, professor, and critic, has breathed the air of traditional African cultures and world religions from a very young age and therefore developed a strong personal belief that Africans have always possessed rich culture, tradition, and

history. Moreover, Achebe is more heavily influenced by his personal belief than by his own considerations about the pervasive social Darwinism during the time in which Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness*. As a result, Achebe became highly sensitive to any innuendo of racism, as conveyed in his lecture “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*”. Denouncing Conrad as a “thoroughgoing racist,” (Achebe 343) Achebe supports his point by listing many dehumanizing details that the protagonist and primary narrator Marlow uses to describe the natives whom he sees in the Belgian Congo. For example, Achebe criticizes Conrad’s eliminating dialogue from the Congolese natives and granting sophisticated human expressions to only European characters, withholding such expressions from African characters (Achebe 341). Achebe also draws a possible link that equates Conrad’s moral and psychological view regarding the indigenous people of Congo with the shadowy narrator-behind-the-narrator’s instead of Marlow’s (Achebe 342). Last but not least, Achebe convincingly points out Conrad’s exploitations of racial pejorative terms such as “nigger”, “savages”, and “rudimentary soul”, as well as dehumanizing details when describing Africans and exploits the concept of racial blackness (Achebe 345). Therefore, it is valid for Achebe to conclude that although Conrad “saw and condemned the evil of imperial exploitation,” he was “strangely unaware of the racism on which it sharpens its front tooth.” (Achebe 369)

However, during the course of his argument, Achebe (intentionally, it seems) left out many notions of Conrad’s criticisms of imperialism on many grounds, as well as the likelihood that Conrad imbued in his novella the hypocrisy of “the civilizing mission” while withholding his true stance. In other words, Conrad might only write about what he knows, not what he thinks. Moreover, the psychological realism throughout the novella places a lot of emphasis on the duality of human nature. Therefore, one can infer that *The Heart of Darkness* portrays an ambiguity of perception, where two conflicting viewpoints coexist inside a person and constantly fight with one another in order to be expressed at one specific moment. As a result, besides racially pejorative notions, there are numerous moments where one of the two narrators shows empathy towards the natives. For example, Marlow mocks the ideal of imperialism, indicating that “the conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from

those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing ... What redeems it is the idea only” (Conrad 7). Next, in “*Heart of Darkness* and Racism,” Hunt Hawkins, an American poet who looks at innuendos of racism with less sensitivity and focuses more on the big picture, points out that Conrad “goes even further in a number of passages where he has Marlow recognize, or almost recognize, or struggle to recognize the humanity of the Africans” (Hawkins 372). There is a constant battle inside Marlow, which is expressed in a pair of sentences standing next to each other, the first revolving around the idea of “their humanity—like yours” while the second, portraying the effort to refuse that idea and replace it by the disgusted feeling, consisting of a single word: “Ugly” (Conrad 36). Hawkins suggests Conrad’s usage of the “trope of evolution.” In his view, Conrad attacked imperialism by implying that Europeans could “slide backwards on the evolutionary scale” (Hawkins 370). With the example of Kurtz, to whom the African wilderness whispers “things about himself that he did not know” (Conrad 57–58), and awakens “his forgotten and brutal instinct” (Conrad 65), Hawkins argues that Conrad’s viewpoint is similar to that of a thoroughgoing liberal humanist, not a “thoroughgoing racist” like Achebe suggested because he was one of very few writers in his time who “far from condoning genocide, ... saw humanity’s horrific capacity and gave it a name” (Hawkins 375).

However, it would not be very appropriate to categorize *Heart of Darkness* as either racist or humanist, and either pro- or anti-colonialist. Conrad’s attitudes toward colonialism were shaped in complex ways. On the one hand, his background as a Polish expatriate who was turned into “an employee of the imperial system” and his self-consciousness about what he did made him particularly sensitive to colonialism (Said 424). On the other, he kept an “ironic distance in each of his works,” most specifically in *Heart of Darkness*, allowing him to qualify Marlow’s compassionate narrative with a detached view that came from “standing at the juncture of this world with another, unspecified but different” (Said 425–6). Moreover, Conrad faced a certain dread of intimacy that made him build “a smoke screen of reticence” (Forster 315), withdrawing obvious traces of personal opinion in his novella; at the same time, as a gifted writer, Conrad was able to weave two possible arguments, two visions about the colonial world that

he lived in without making his work distastefully ambiguous. His personal experiences and astounding writing skills allow him to recreate numerous conceptual grey areas—ongoing battlefields of conflicting standpoints that coexist not only inside each character in *The Heart of Darkness* but also among the diverse body of reader and critics. Two conflicting standpoints about racism belong to one of those battlefields of perception.

Heart of Darkness is neither a racist nor humanist text. In this novella, Conrad set up the situation where the narrator-behind-the-narrator blatantly dehumanizes Africans, whereas the primary narrator Marlow experiences a conflict of viewpoints regarding racism within himself during his exploration along the Congo River. The pervasive notion of such a voyage in *The Heart of Darkness* is a metaphor for self-discovery, with trajectory to the heart of the self and mystery of existence. Conrad, whom Achebe recognized as “undoubtedly one of the great stylists of modern fiction and a good story teller into the bargain” (Achebe 337), deliberately made his text curiously controversial, unclassifiable as either racist or humanistic.

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HAMLET'S CONSTRICTING CONSCIENCE

Despite the praise they receive, not one of William Shakespeare's countless -dramatic masterpieces can boast of possessing a truly original plot. The wordsmith borrowed extensively from all corners of literary history. His highly regarded tragedy *Hamlet*, believed to be derived from "a Senecan tragedy, now lost, by Thomas Kyd," was no exception (Craig 230). Countless interpretations of this legend, as well as of the character Hamlet himself, have emerged since Shakespeare's reign, but none influences Western society as much as Shakespeare's Elizabethan elucidation. Thus the vacillating nature of the historical Prince of Denmark should be analyzed via the one rendition which truly lives up to his passionate story.

As such, the fact that Hardin Craig's thesis on Hamlet's tendency towards uninhibited action finds its roots in lesser-known, nearly obscure interpretations of this drama renders it both frail and unreliable. Yes, Hamlet's decisively merciless actions leave a cast of other characters to die in the "flames of the hot and burning fire" in Pavier's translation (Craig 230). Unfortunately for Craig's argument, the influence of this work will never rival or overpower that of Shakespeare's Hamlet. On the other hand, a portion of Craig's supporting evidence for his claim does come from Hamlet and therefore must be addressed. While Craig's perception of Shakespeare's Hamlet portrays a "man of action," a more definitive and strongly supported case can be made for the opposite interpretation.

First off, Hamlet's sly arrangement with the players in Act III is glorified by Craig as a shining example of his audacious action. This "practical plan" does succeed in catching "the conscience of the king," but it truly represents Hamlet's constitutionally cautious nature (Craig 234). Whereas the brave and assertive man would have confronted Claudius with sword in hand about his suspected guilt, and the timidly apprehensive man would have avoided such confrontation, Hamlet's indecisive nature lands him somewhere in the middle and forces compromise. As Hamlet develops his discreet plan, he reveals his internal conflict by

asking “am I a coward?” (2.2.530). Furthermore, the elaborate entirety of Hamlet’s “practical plan” is endured to eliminate the inkling of doubt he holds for the legitimacy of his father’s ghost. And Hamlet undeniably procrastinates with the excuse of seeking “grounds more relative than this.” (2.2.565) The mere fact that Hamlet hesitates to trust the words of his own deceased father does not prove his ability to construct a plan of action, but rather shows his tendency to remain diffident when presented with a pronounced obligation.

The course of events catalyzed by this requested performance eventually leads to Hamlet’s accidental murder of Polonius. Craig strategically uses this seemingly rash action to bolster his argument. After understandably hesitating to kill Claudius during prayer, Hamlet “takes action,” opening the way for “action so clever, prompt, and violent” (Craig 235). There exists, however, one significant flaw in Craig’s inclusion of this event. If Hamlet did possess any desire to impetuously murder Claudius, he would not have waited for these convenient circumstances. Instead, Hamlet sees Polonius’ deceitful behavior (thinking him to be Claudius) as a potential excuse for a brutal murder and seizes the opportunity to achieve his protracted goal while avoiding the harsh consequences of unjustified homicide. In fact, immediately after stabbing Polonius, Hamlet attempts to relinquish his guilt by telling his victim to “take thy fortune,” thus implying that the murder served only to bring about justice (3.4.39). Yes, Hamlet acts impulsively, but on an impulse derived directly from cowardice.

In addition to his self-protective and cautious actions, Hamlet’s numerous soliloquys also serve to portray and promote his timid indecisiveness. The self-directed monologue at the conclusion of the second act proves that Hamlet acknowledges his unfortunate inability to escape the constraints of his own thoughts. The Danish Prince’s only course of action is to “unpack my heart with words” (2.2.614). A man of intelligence? Maybe. A man of action? No. The next soliloquy, and possibly the most forward of all, involves Hamlet’s further realization of his intellectual constraints. His explicit statement that “conscience does make cowards of us all” is in fact based on his own imprisonment in the cell of thought that deprives him of the freedom to act (3.1.91). Craig implements these soliloquys into his own argument by relating them to Hamlet’s self-denunciation. By expressing Hamlet’s new outlook as the belief that “nothing matters but the

achievement of an end,” Craig unintentionally recognizes the fact that Hamlet had to lose himself before finding the courage to take action (Craig 236). In the end, he finds this courage, but there is very little of the real Hamlet left.

Perhaps the most obvious confirmation of Hamlet’s extensive procrastination comes during the final act of Shakespeare’s play. After being infected with the poisoned sword of Laertes, Hamlet is told that “in thee there is not half an hour’s life” (5.2.346). So how does Hamlet use his dwindling minutes on Earth? He finally musters up the courage to finish the deed which he has put off for months on end. Only an hourglass tipped on his life is capable of providing enough motivation for Hamlet to command Claudius to “follow my mother” (5.2.358). Clearly, Hamlet spends the entirety of this tragedy intending to eventually take the life of his uncle, but he procrastinates severely and comes extremely close to missing his chance.

Widespread controversy over the true nature of Hamlet’s character exists mainly because Shakespeare’s version of the story can be interpreted from a gratuitous number of different angles. Hardin Craig draws out Hamlet’s bolder traits, but in reality these seek only to belittle his abounding intelligence. In reality, Hamlet’s indecisive nature sprouts from his own considerable analytical prowess and therefore should not degrade his reputation. His subtlety and creativeness in devising a clever plan of action, his justified doubt for the legitimacy of a spiritual apparition, and his deeply philosophical consideration of his complex situation all unfairly paint him as a hesitant coward. Keen analysis of Hamlet’s deeper conflicts, however, uncovers respectable and rational reasons for his irresolute characteristics. In summary, Shakespeare’s Hamlet is far too intelligent to be simply classified as a “man of action.” He instead represents a method of thorough consideration and meticulous planning. Other accounts of the story of this legendary Prince of Denmark undoubtedly form a wide range of possible interpretations, but Hamlet’s reputation will forever rest in the hands of his true master, William Shakespeare.

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