

INKWELL



STUDENT ESSAYS FROM
THE COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

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2007-08



MARY REDA AND MATTHEW BRIM: CONTEST COORDINATORS

SARA GAITHER: MANAGING EDITOR

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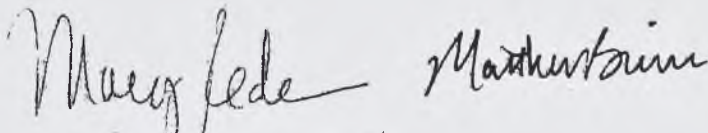
Dear Readers,

Welcome to the second issue of *Inkwell*, a collection of prize-winning essays from the academic year 2007-08 at the College of Staten Island.

Inkwell showcases academic writing of all kinds at CSI, from essays written for freshman composition courses to writing across the curriculum in upper-division classes. The work chosen here therefore collectively mirrors the diverse kinds of thinking and learning fostered at the College. More importantly, it reflects how individual students find unique ways of reshaping knowledge through their own intellects and testing ideas against their own experiences. The authors published here have, in other words, found a way to take writing personally even as they have mastered the technical requirements of the academy. We think you will agree as you sit down with *Inkwell* that this combination makes for compelling reading.

In addition to honoring student writers here at CSI, one of our goals in publishing *Inkwell* is to connect the CSI community through a shared reading experience. Ideally, the essays here will spark discussion across campus, point students to new courses, professors, and disciplines, and reaffirm the value of careful, creative, and rigorous academic writing.

Special thanks to Dean Soto for his support of this contest, to the students who shared their work with us, and to the faculty who worked with them. Thanks to Sara Gaither for her work on creating this publication and to the guest artists who contributed to *Inkwell*.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in cursive. The first signature is 'Mary Redd' and the second is 'Matthew Brim'. The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid.

Mary Redd and Matthew Brim
Department of English

Free Music at Colleges: Not so Fast!

By Vincent Marino

Music piracy is a relatively new form of copyright infringement in today's world, and continues to grow as a threat to the recording industry. In Robert LaRose et al.'s "Sharing or Piracy? An Exploration of Downloading Behavior" music downloading is identified as an issue since the "Napster phenomenon in 1999," peaking in 2003, which was about the "time that the record industry in the United States first made good on threats to prosecute downloaders". Although music piracy is illegal and should be curbed, the industry is pursuing the wrong group of people by seeking out college students to pay for this act of theft.

The internet is a vast place, where information flows through wire cables as blood flows through our veins. This continuous flow of data includes information stretching far and wide, as well as other types of media. With this global source of information comes a new medium to police. One of these types of media that has been traveling through the internet is music. Robert Easley, author of "The MP3 Open Standard and the Music Industry's Response to Internet Piracy", notes that MP3's have become the prominent audio-video format for file compression. This format enables simplistic digital transfers throughout the internet and poses a threat to all who profit from music illegally. With this avenue of file travel easily available to all with computers, copyright breaches result from this new form of piracy (Easley 92). These MP3 files have been making their way from computer to computer at an alarming rate, and a little less than 10 years ago, the situation became a prime issue for the music industry to confront.

In 1999, Shawn Fanning, then a student of Northeastern University, created the notorious peer to peer (P2P) program Napster. This program enabled all people who used it to share and download music, mainly in the MP3 format. In December of 1999, Napster was sued by the RIAA, claiming Napster was stealing copyrighted files without paying the respective artists their due. According to Robert LaRose, et al., the music industry had begun eliminating Napster as a threat of illegal downloading. The decisions from the judiciary, whom based the ruling from the “Copy Term Extension Act of 1998” (2), successfully halted the downloads of over “50 million people” (2). However, by the time the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) noticed Napster as a serious threat, P2P programs began to sprout uncontrollably. Thus, the halt of illegal music downloads was only temporary, as after Napster came such programs as KaZaA, Grokster, Gnutella, Ares, Blubster, and the list continues. With the growth of such P2P programs offering free music to all who downloaded without a fear of legal troubles to the individual, the amount of users was growing exponentially. This was the case because it was obvious the RIAA was not attacking individual users of the programs, rather the makers of the program themselves. This all changed in 2003, when the RIAA had finally turned its attention to the culprits downloading the music from these P2P programs.

Even though the RIAA was taking legal actions on the corporate level, individuals were still fleeing to whichever program offered free music. These actions occurred worldwide from college campuses to your standard home computer. A study by “the International Intellectual Property Alliance (“IIPA”) estimated that global piracy cost U.S. copyright industries over \$13 billion in 2004 alone” as mentioned in “The Register of Copyrights Before the Subcommittee on Intellectual Property, Committee on the Judiciary”(Senate). With such actions taking place, the RIAA had to add another

dimension to their attack on illegal music downloading. Within David McGuire's article "Colleges Rally Against Music Piracy," he cites that in September 2003 "the RIAA filed its first round of lawsuits against people suspected of illegally swapping songs online" (McGuire). These legal actions taken by the RIAA focused on college students using their high-speed internet in conjunction with the current P2P programs to obtain pirated music. The target, college students, was one based off of common sense. Most of these students did not have high-speed internet at home, thus making downloading music a hassle on standard 56k dial-up. Once these students entered college, they were offered high-speed connections, enabling quick downloads of music and other copyrighted files. With this new found freedom to download music, these students would download as many files as they could freely. Thus being the rationale of the music industry.

Today, obtaining music is just as simple as it were nine years ago with Napster. Such P2P programs still thrive including Bearshare, Limewire, and various other file sharing programs including Bit torrents, which allow users to share all file types. Although these P2P sharing programs are now a dime a dozen, the industry has decided to base its legal actions on setting examples of people, hoping the threat of being caught will convince others to avoid pirating their music. Since the inception of the RIAA's plan to attack individuals pirating music, they have "reached settlements with more than 800 suspected pirates, with the average settlement coming out to approximately \$3,000"(McGuire). Anna Bratton, author of "Music Piracy Crackdown Nets College Kids," indicates if the party is found guilty of pirating music, they must pay out a minimum of "\$750 for each recording" if they lose in court, the RIAA offers settlements. This is usually the route taken by most who are accused of pirating music, as it offers a

cheaper result. For someone who has 3,000 songs on their hard drive, paying \$750 per song is extreme for a college student, let alone any individual.

However, it seems that college students are targeted more heavily than the standard individual. Although it may be true that college students are the people downloading pirated music in highest frequency, there are others committing the same crime and yet are able to remain unidentified by the legal system that has claimed so many of those living at universities. It makes more sense to seek those who are downloading the music and attempting to profit from work that is not theirs. There are many bootleggers out there who would not like to hear that the RIAA is seeking them, as not only would they need to pay a hefty fine, but they wouldn't be able to support themselves without their source of income. These are the so called middle men between the students who are downloading the music at colleges and the RIAA. In my opinion, these are the people who should be sought after before the college student.

As it may be the case that bootleggers are profiting off of pirated music, there are no where near as many of these people as college students. Also, who is to say that college students themselves are not doing something relative to selling pirated music? One can view online sharing of music as selling the music illegally. This may not technically be selling it for a profit, but it is still taking away money that would go to the record industry and the artist if it had been purchased legally. It is also much easier to monitor university networks as opposed to individual networks. A university network can support thousands of different computers, as the networks that standard civilians use would be much harder to trace.

In order to protect their students from civil actions, many universities are cooperating with the RIAA to avoid being targeted themselves. These college campuses

that are cooperating with the RIAA are “implementing new restrictions—and issuing severe warnings—to discourage the swapping of pirated music and movies over high-speed campus Internet connections”(189) as expressed in “Recording Industry Begins Suing P2P File Sharers Who Illegally Offer Copyrighted Music Online”. These restrictions include limiting bandwidth by monitoring peak bandwidth uses, and if the specific use comes into questioning, the amount allowed becomes more limited; creating software that can locate these individuals on the network who are participating in music piracy; and allowing the RIAA to view the name of the perpetrators. Part of the last lenience by the universities involves a system that alerts the perpetrator via mail message, or e-mail that they are being monitored and to cease downloading of music immediately or be pursued by the RIAA and the law. This is a cost effective means of pursuing those breaking the law as it is similar to killing an insect at its nest rather than one by one. The premise that the RIAA uses to go after music pirates is the “Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998” which “added section 512 to the Copyright Act to recognize the threat of copyright infringement flowing throughout the internet”(“Digital”).

In order to halt such vast amount of music piracy on college campuses, the music industry has been forced towards “development of e-commerce” (Easley 95). Schools such as

Pennsylvania State University and George Washington University struck deals with the now-legal online music service Napster to provide their students with licensed music downloads. Students pay for the service as part of their university technology fee. Penn State students have swarmed to the service, downloading as many as 100,000 songs a day in the pilot program, which was launched last spring, said university President Graham Spanier. He said that illegal file-sharing activity diminished over the same time period (McGuire).

Successful programs, such as those operated in Penn State and George Washington University are a sign of changes to occur for college campuses and music downloading. The results prove to be impressive as music downloading is done legally through Napster's new service, and since the inception of this program, illegal downloading decreased. This method stems from the now common practice of music services that require a fee in order to download music. Programs such as Napster offer users unlimited downloads for a reasonable monthly fee usually the price of one CD. Another program, iTunes, offers users of the program to download any song of their choosing for 99 cents. These programs offer consumers a legal alternative, aside from purchasing a CD at a store, to downloading music without having to leave the computer.

The methods the RIAA has taken thus far seem to be proving somewhat effective. With new programs being implemented throughout the nation as part of the solution plan to curb pirating, it is evident the RIAA is taking the money back that is rightfully theirs and the artists signed under them. Although music pirating is still a concern, it does seem that the amount of illegal downloaders is decreasing with legal availability of new options. These methods don't only hold true to music sharing, as movies are also the new target of music pirates. Now that computers can handle many codecs, music and movies alike are being distributed on the internet for free illegally. Although this is not of the RIAA's concern, the movie industry has become aware of the growing issue and has followed in the footsteps taken by the RIAA, learning from their mistakes and attacking the situation early. There are now web sites that allow all consumers to purchase the movie online and download them to your hard drive instantaneously, the same method music programs are using. However, as long as there is a free alternative, music and file pirates alike will continue to avoid paying legitimate fees and risk fines and legal action.

This is important for the RIAA to understand, as it forces them to remain one step ahead of pirates.

In an effort to reduce piracy of music from the internet, the RIAA has chosen its targets wisely. By focusing initially on college students, and setting the example of them, it was logical to attack a cluster before going after individuals. This method saved money, and time. Now that consumers are aware of what can happen to them if caught downloading movies or music illegally, it will cause them to think twice before committing the crime. The ideas and actions carried out by the RIAA and others have dictated the way music is being shared, and bought. These students, who settled with the RIAA, in turn are receiving a “deal”. It is impossible for these young people to combat such a lengthy trial for the guilty actions they have committed. It is also likely that these individuals would end up losing their case and paying the maximum fine per song, which would total much more than the \$3,000 required to settle. Since these cases get media spotlight, people become aware of the risk, and ultimately change their behavior to avoid such a situation of their own. This is the most effective way to combat music piracy on the internet. The RIAA had to start somewhere in pursuit of music pirates, and the most logical location to begin was with the colleges with high-speed internet and students living on campus. As the market evolves, so will the people, and unfortunately for the RIAA and other industries alike, there will be new methods of pirating these files.

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Vietnam Era Protest Music & Punk Rock: How They Changed the Nation

By Elizabeth Zerilli

“All art worth its salt starts out wanting to change the world” (Lindsay Anderson, filmmaker, 1979). This is especially true when speaking of music because music has been able to influence youth even more so than art, literature or even drama. During the American Revolution music played a major role in the lives of people living in the United States. Michael Contardo, a professor at the College of Staten Island, says that as one of the first protest songs penned in the United States, “The World Turned Upside Down,” voiced how the entire revolution seemed when colonial upstarts toppled the then greatest military power in the world. Undoubtedly though, it would not be the last. The United States has often been called a “melting pot” because people from around the world flock here to take part in this country’s social and political tolerances, and the music of each subsequent generation reflected this. Both Vietnam era protest music and punk rock had profound effects on youth because they reflected social consciousness.

The period from about 1963-1973, collectively called the “Vietnam era,” is probably the most well known and influential times in American musical history. It encompasses a wide variety of music based on social issues such as civil rights, women’s rights and anti-war. Ron Richards, Ray Barrera and Kevin Hayes’s in “Protest Music of the 1960’s- ‘The Vietnam War’”, claim that “less than 2% of rock songs on the Billboard top 100 singles sales charts during the Vietnam war made any comment about the war at all.” This was because radio stations were afraid of losing listeners that disagreed with messages in songs. Nevertheless, “protest singers continued to record [their music] on albums,” states Jerome Rodnitzky in The Sixties Between Microgrooves: Using Folk and Protest Music to Understand American History, 1963-1973. As per JW Anderson’s

website Vietnam Era Anti War Music, this “took the guitar strumming troubadour from the coffee houses, plugged them in and sent the music and messages into college dorm rooms and homes of the youth of America.” Had it not been for this, perhaps youth would not have embraced it so readily. Such folk artists as Bob Dylan and Pete Seeger led the way in inspiring American youth from high school through college to realize the social-political injustices in this country and to act for change (Rodnitzky 111).

The precursor to the familiar 1960’s rock music was folk music. This cause oriented music began in approximately the 1950’s as a method of drawing attention to national issues (Rodnitzky 105). Woody Guthrie’s 1930’s song “This Land is Your Land,” for example, captured the beauty of America in its verses but also pointed out that “America belonged to the little people and not just to corporations and politicians” (Rodnitzky 115). On the other hand, Pete Seeger’s 1967 anti-war song “Waste Deep in the Big Muddy” directly compared Lyndon Johnson to an army officer relentlessly pushing his troops in a doomed effort toward certain death and defeat (Rodnitzky, 110). Both of these songs illustrate how the respective musicians worked with social issues like environmental beauty and the war in Vietnam to draw upon society’s consciousness.

The beliefs and attitudes of the nation were altered by the civil rights movement, one of the most important events of the 1960’s. BBC News reporter Steve Schifferes in Vietnam: The Music of Protest, writes that “many folk singers were closely connected with the civil rights movement which was reaching its climax with mass demonstrations against segregation in southern cities like Selma and Birmingham.” Although it was rare for any singer to physically participate in rallies or protests, Staten Islander Joan Baez was one of the few exceptions. Not only did she involve herself in the Student Free Speech Movement, but in early anti-Vietnam protests as well. She even went as far as to

help “escort a little black girl to her new integrated school through a hostile crowd in Birmingham, Alabama” (Richards, Barrera and Hayes). This was extremely significant because she risked harm to stand up for her beliefs. Both Joan Baez and Bob Dylan are noted for performing at a civil rights march led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on August 28, 1963. The folk group Peter, Paul, and Mary who were also present sang “If I Had A Hammer” and Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind” (Richards, Barrera and Hayes). The last verse of “Blowin’ in the Wind” was very significant during the civil rights movement. The lyrics “how many years can a people exist before they’re allowed to be free” can be interpreted to define the civil rights movement for African Americans in how they have been a part of America for well over 100 years but they still didn’t have the same right as the white people living around them because of racism and continuing segregation (Schifferes). The song asks the rhetorical question of how long one must be a part of a nation before they can be recognized as equal members in an attempt to point out the injustices of this nation.

At the same time, women across the country began rallying for economic and social equality. Because more women than ever were graduating college as professionals in the 1960’s and they were generally discriminated against by men in their fields, women felt they need an organized way of achieving equality (Richards, Barrera and Hayes). Like others before them, they would find music to be the key. Many “feminists quickly concluded that the real power of music was its ability to communicate rather than its ability to shock or cross male boundaries” (Rodnitzky 118). Women took advantage of this to unite and reach out to other women in similar situations. Some of the first female singers were quite amateur, but what they lacked in musical skills, they made up for with “spirit and sisterly solidarity” (Rodnitzky 115).

One of the more well known songs of the feminist music scene was Carol King's "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman," which she wrote for Aretha Franklin. It was not so much that this song was aimed at supporting feminism as "it expressed the sexual desires of women in a blatant yet honest fashion" (Richards, Barrera and Hayes). It was revolutionary in that for the first time women were able to break free of the mold society had created for them. Another fairly well known rock band of the time, The Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band, formed "in response to the male dominated music scene" (Richards, Barrera and Hayes). This all female band would ridicule their male counterparts on stage by changing the words of their songs and by grabbing their private parts in front of the audience like male rockers of the time often did (Richards, Barrera and Hayes). This gave many young women someone to look up to because they were able to spread feminism in an extremely humorous way on stage.

Obviously, the most significant protests of this era were in response to the Vietnam War. The History Channel article [Vietnam War: Vietnam War Protests](#), states that Vietnam protests were "becoming the largest and most powerful anti war movement in American history." Not only would this have a major affect on the music of this generation, but it would also impact public opinion on future wars. "By the end of 1967, the Vietnam War was costing the U.S. \$25 billion per year, and more casualties were reported everyday" (History Channel). At this point, people began to question the U.S. government's handling of the war. Across college campuses, students attended "teach-ins" to voice there opposition to the war. Slogans such as "Make Love, Not War" and "Don't Trust Anyone Over 30" were aimed toward youth to influence them on the evils of the Vietnam War and those who were running it (Rodnitzky 110). By now, folk music had really hit its stride on college campuses across the nation and it was about to gain the

support of another genre of music that hit a few of the same chords. Rock music was gaining speed and popularity because of the new “electrically enhanced sounds,” asserts Dorlea Rikard, author of Patriotism, Propaganda, Parody and Protest: The Music of Three American Wars. When combined, rock’s sound plus folk’s influence would lead to some truly affecting music.

Shortly thereafter, the implementation of the draft would “fuel the fire” of the anti war movement because “as many as 40,000 young men were being called into service each month” (Vietnam). This caused the draft to become one of the more popular themes of anti Vietnam songs. Country Joe and the Fish recorded a song called the “I-Feel Like-I’m-Fixin-To-Die-Rag” which reflected the attitudes of draft opposers (Rikard 141). The lyrics “Well, come on mothers throughout the land, / Pack your boys off to Vietnam. / Come on fathers, don’t hesitate, / Send’em off before its too late. / Be the first one on your block/ to have you boy come home in a box” bluntly illustrated that the war was resulting in the deaths of young men from the entire country (Anderson). The war was destroying families on such a large scale that the lyrics “Be the first one on your block” indicate that it was not uncommon for almost every home in a neighborhood to have a son fighting and dying in Vietnam. For effect, this song was also played repeatedly at anti war rallies and demonstrations (Schiffers).

Students at colleges around the country rebelled against the government by holding mass demonstrations (Vietnam). Probably, the most famous one was held at Kent State in Ohio. Students were exercising their right to protest when four of them were shot dead by National Guardsmen that open fired on the crowd of students (Vietnam). The group Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young wrote and released a single called “Ohio” within days of the event to condemn President Nixon’s handling of college

protests (Vietnam). The lyrics “Tin Soldiers and Nixon’s Bombing.../Four Dead in Ohio” directly blamed Nixon for mishandling the situation and causing the deaths of the students (Anderson). The lyrics “Soldiers are gunning us down” enraged America because not only was the government sending its young citizens to die in a foreign country, but it was also murdering them here on its own soil (Anderson).

By the end of the war, folk music began to fade. Rock emerged as the dominant music genre, but it continued to carry with it a rebellious attitude. Increasingly, rock music started taking on a “vague, anti establishment mood, as opposed to focusing on specific evils or issues” (Rodnitzky 109). It was not so much that there was nothing for the musicians to complain about as it was that the style in general was changing. The importance of the lyrics decreased as the tempo increased, and a new subculture was spawned that started rebelling against society as a whole (Rodnitzky 109). For the part of youth that was too young to take part in anti Vietnam, punk became the bridge that would carry the ideals of rebellion from the sixties and take them to a whole new level in the seventies. By changing the styles of fashion and music, punk would shock its way to the top in the eyes of the new generation, while being viewed as a dangerous nuisance by those who could not find meaning in its outrageousness. The punk movement was started in the 1970’s in Britain in response to the economic turmoil the country was in. David Simonelli, author of Anarchy, Pop and Violence: Punk Rock Subculture and the Rhetoric of Class, 1976-78, observed that “Punk rock articulated the frustrations of working class British youth in an era of unemployment and inflation, through the development of a new subculture.” In other words, punk became about trying to make the best of a negative situation by creating a new way of living.

By 1976, England was going through a depression. Unemployment was skyrocketing and college students were forced to drop out in order to search for whatever work they could find, but very few succeeded. Many were unable to find jobs and subsequently, unable to find a place to live (Simonelli 123-124). This painted an extremely gloomy picture of the future for these teens. A young art school drop out named Malcolm McLaren saw an opportunity to turn the situation around by turning to music (Simonelli 124). At that time, rock music was not reflecting the plight of youth in England (Simonelli 123). Youth felt separated from rock and the rest of the world because of their situation. They needed an outlet for their frustrations, and thus they began the punk movement as “a rebellion against rock music and establishment at large” (Simonelli 127). The goal behind punk rock was never to change society, just to rebel against what society had created by separating themselves from mass culture.

One of the first changes that teens felt they needed to make for themselves was to create a new kind of fashion according to Phil Strongman, author of Pretty Vacant: A History of UK Punk. They felt they needed something “cutting-edge,” unlike the “muted pastels” which were about “as mundane and matter of routine ... as the music played on the radio” (Strongman 16). Youth felt the need to stand out in a way that would draw maximum attention to themselves. A shop called Sex, run by a friend of McLaren, would become the ultimate inspiration for the shift in clothing style of this generation. Author Paul Gorman, of the chapter “Dressed to Kill” in Punk: The Whole Story, describes the contents of the shop as “like jumping into the musical end of a painting.” Sex sold outrageous clothing meant for everyday use such as sweaters covered with studs and zippers, shoes called “Brothel Creepers” and fetish wear (Gorman 86). Band Siouxsie and the Banshees became “walking advertisements for the shop (Simonelli 129). These

garments were revolutionary for the time and offered exactly the shock factor that youth was trying to achieve. Teens who could not afford to purchase punk clothing managed to dress the part by adopting a do-it-yourself attitude. They wore torn clothing, black leather jackets, safety pins, clips and chains as a symbol of “the damage that a culturally barren... society had foisted upon their bodies and their lives” (Simonelli 127). This made them feel that they were not just following society’s example, but rather that they were breaking free of societies bonds. Punks also enjoyed sporting spiked, dyed hair in every color of the rainbow (Gorman 86). Sometimes they may have taken their style too far. Many punks wore swastikas on armbands simply to cause alarm, not because they were racist, but that idea was often lost in translation (Simonelli 135).

Equally important to punk fashion was the music that the subculture was based around. Many groups started out playing in clubs, such as the 100 Club in England and CBGB’s in New York, and at universities before they signed with labels (Simonelli 128). The Sex Pistols tried to make themselves the “voice of working class youth” via their music (Simonelli 135). They denounced society because they felt it was holding youth down and they even went as far as denouncing the Queen herself in their song “God Save the Queen” by singing that “She ain’t no human being” and likening her rule to “The fascist regime,” acknowledges Phil Singleton of the website [God Save the Sex Pistols](#). This opposition to authority would become the basis of the anarchistic, or anti establishment mood that this generation is most noted for. Just because punk is labeled as a music movement does not mean that all the musicians took the music very seriously. In punk, “amateurism was considered to be a virtue” (Simonelli 127). When Siouxsie and the Banshees played their first ever show at the 100 Club, it was immediately obvious that they had only started learning to play their instruments very recently. Their

music was described as “long and cacophonous...interspersed with any lyrics Siouxsie Sioux could remember” (Simonelli 129). Sid Vicious, base player for the Sex Pistols was famous for barely being able to stand up during shows, let alone play a note, points out Johnny Rotten, lead singer of the Sex Pistols in Punk: The Whole Story. This was unfortunate for the bands, even though it did not seem to negatively impact their fan base.

The “British Invasion” that punk was a part of reflected the turmoil of England and American teens had trouble relating (Strongman 56). Therefore, the American punk scene differed from the British punk scene. At the time, “New York was crime ridden, bankrupt and experiencing the bitter aftermath of the Vietnam War, while Watergate had exposed a president prepared to lie to his country to save his skin” writes Sue Hubbard in The New Statesman article “Pretty Vacant.” To youth, this only reconfirmed the ineffectiveness of the government and reiterated that it was not to be trusted. Despite this, American teens never really joined the punk movement except in big cities like New York, and even then, punk never gained the widespread popularity that it did in England. The punk that did catch on here was more in response to boredom with other music genres of the 1970’s. Even though punk was less popular here than in England, a few bands such as the Ramones, the Stooges and Television would become popular in certain circles (Hubbard).

In truth, there are three main reasons that the music of these generations affected so many young people. First, the music was readily available to both groups. Anti-Vietnam music started out in coffee houses and on college campuses. Punk took wing in clubs and later moved to colleges as well. These places were all easily accessed by youth and musicians were able to influence them in places they already frequented. Second, the musicians and fans of most of the bands of these two generations were roughly the

same age and were viewed as having the same goals and ideas. Therefore, they became role models. Finally, as every young person does at some point, these young people found themselves disagreeing with authority. Here they discovered that they could cause a cultural revolution by uniting and standing up for what they believe. So in conclusion, the availability of music, the ability to relate to others on a large scale and the power of unity all had a hand in creating two of the greatest youth revolutions this world has ever seen.

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Jewett's Portrayal of Nature and its Faults

By Vadim Savenkov

Sarah Orne Jewett was a New England female author who wrote stories to challenge the patriarchal status-quo during the later 1800's. Her chosen style was that of magical realism, wherein her characters would live in a realistic setting that is beset by magical happenings usually related to nature. Jewett's love of nature within her own life translated into her literary work, where the concept of nature itself would be used to convey a message through subtle symbolism. In her stories *The Foreigner* and *The White Heron*, Jewett conveys the idea that women are attuned with the natural world, and that for them to be one with nature is the ultimate escape from what was, during her life, a male dominated world. However, aside from being nonsensical in the literal sense, this theory of female liberation through nature is a distraction from actual solutions to gender equality, and if followed, would never bring equal rights to women.

Jewett's use of nature is different in the two aforementioned stories when taken on its own, but as a collection, it spells out a singular message. In *The White Heron*, a little girl named Sylvia faces a choice between revealing the location of a bird to a traveling ornithologist, thereby gaining his admiration and a monetary reward, or keeping the bird's location secret and allowing nature to preside unharmed. On the surface, this story appears to be about the conservation of nature, however, a second meaning can be found within the symbolism of the story. The relationship between Sylvia and the ornithologist can be seen as Jewett's portrayal of the relationship between society and women during her life time. When the little girl is asked for her name, she replies that it is "Sylvy," with the degradation of her name implying the way women were set aside to

secondary roles in society, yet accepted their fate subconsciously. This inner acceptance of societal inferiority is shown throughout the story, with Sylvia seeming to fawn over the man subconsciously, the lines “he is so well worth making happy” and “[Sylvia could have willingly] served and followed and loved him as a dog loves!” illustrating this best.

With the ornithologist being symbolic of men, and in a greater sense - paternal society in the 1800's, within *The White Heron*, Jewett uses his character to explain the relationship between men and nature. In the story, he is “making a collection of birds... [and has] been at it ever since [he] was a boy,” and later states that he has “stuffed and preserved... dozens and dozens of them.” This illustrates Jewett's belief that men, and in turn, male dominated society are parasitic in their relationship with nature, destroying it so that it suits their own purpose. However, Sylvia, Jewett's representative of women, is symbiotic with nature: “there ain't a foot o' ground she don't know her way over, and the wild creatures counts her one o' themselves... she'll tame [animals] to come an' feed right out o' her hands, and all sorts o' birds.” She and her female caretaker live off the land, yet they only take what is needed, and even give back as mentioned by Sylvia's feeding of wild animals. Therefore, Jewett suggests that women are closer to nature than men.

The White Heron ends with Sylvia choosing to keep the bird's location unknown to the ornithologist. Sylvia chooses to continue her close relationship with nature, being unable to risk hurting it. Therefore, Jewett has presented a dichotomy between nature and the ornithologist, representative of male dominated society. This suggests that she believes the only way that women can escape the clutches of a paternal world is to live in harmony with the natural world instead. As such, nature is a force for the liberation of women within the story of the *White Heron*.

However, the symbolism of nature is different within *The Foreigner*. Here, Jewett's concept of nature is that of a unifying female entity, connected to all women. The story centers around what is supposedly a ghost tale by a Mrs. Todd. She tells of a woman named Miss Tolland, a French-speaking Catholic outsider, who had married a seafaring Captain Tolland. Miss Tolland's husband later dies at sea, and she slowly withers away and dies, herself.

There is symbolism throughout the otherwise dull story that hints at Jewett's message within *The Foreigner*. The first hint, the foreshadowing as to the concept within the story, is when the character of Mrs. Todd speaks the following: "folks used to say these gales only blew when somebody's a-dyin', or the devil was a-comin' for his own, but the worst man I knew died a real pretty mornin' in June." As the story progresses, one learns a few quirks about the character of Miss Tolland. Aside from the abovementioned details, Jewett elaborates that Miss Tolland had a guitar that she played often, and that she was especially "well acquainted with the virtues o' plants."

Upon Miss Tolland's death, there had been "such a gale [of significant strength]" that Mrs. Todd, reminiscing of the event, claimed that "I don' know's I observed any other sound than what the weather made." As well, "[every] now an' then a gust would strike that guitar that... soundin' as if somebody had begun to play it." At the very moment before Miss Tolland's death, Mrs. Todd, who was there at the time, claimed to have seen what was the focus of the story - a ghost. "An' I see someone was standin' there against the dark. No, 'twan't Mis' Begg; 'twas somebody [else]... 'twas a women's dark face lookin' right at us." Miss Tolland then remarks that the ghost had been "[her] mother."

The symbolism is that nature, and the wind especially, represents a world, that as Mrs. Todd states near the end of the story, is “somethin’ beyond this [world].” The strings of Miss Tolland’s guitar “[would jar] yet” whenever the wind blew after her death. And “Years an’ years after she died, there was some o’ her flowers used to come up an’ bloom in the door garden.” This suggests that Miss Tolland was still active within the human world to an extent, tending her garden, and playing her guitar as she loved to do. Upon her coming death, she had been visited by the winds of a harsh storm, and a ghost of her mother. Following the example of nature being representative of the dead, it can be assumed that Miss Tolland’s mother had been a manifestation of nature itself, accompanied by the wind, to help her daughter cross into the next world. This is further reinforced when Mrs. Todd says to Miss Tolland “you ain’t never goin’ to feel strange an’ lonesome no more” after having seen the ghost.

Throughout the story, Miss Todd is either waits for the weather to finish or is interrupted by it. “And then she stopped to listen to the wind, and sat for a moment in deferential silence, as if she waited for the wind to speak first.” Having established that the wind is representative of Miss Tolland, her long lost friend, it can be assumed that Mrs. Todd is somewhat attuned with the otherworldly aspect of nature used in *The Foreigner*. Her cat then “lifted her head with quick excitement and gleaming eyes” suggesting that the cat, being part of nature, was perhaps signaling for Mrs. Todd to continue. This exchange between nature and Mrs. Todd further reinforces the idea that she is attuned to the natural entity. If Mrs. Todd and Miss Tolland are to be taken as representative of women in general, then it can be surmised that Jewett means to say that women are both attuned to the natural world, and very much a part of it; going back to their origins upon death. The manifestation of nature as a motherly figure guiding her

children through death seems to reinforce both this point, and the idea of nature being a womanly force. Another aspect within the story that strengthens this idea is when Mrs. Todd states “You know plain enough there’s somethin’ beyond this world... there’s somethin’ of us that must still live on; we’ve got to join both worlds together an’ live in one but for the other.” The theme of women having to become one with nature to escape the real world seems to be in line with that of *The White Heron*.

While the concepts of nature in *The White Heron* and *The Foreigner* are different from each other at face value, when taken as a whole, they form a singular message. Jewett lived in a time when women were considered secondary to men; they were generally relegated to household work, were not educated towards the same goals as men were, and couldn’t even vote. She wished to escape this world, and the natural world drew her in. Therefore, she believed the solution to escaping persecution institutionalized by society was to escape society. She saw that society, ruled by men, would abuse and destroy nature -writing about it as well, such as the ornithologist’s collection, or the fishermen in *The Foreigner* “farm[ing] the sea.” As such, Jewett came to believe that women, unlike men, could live in harmony with nature, and even went as far as giving nature female characteristics in her writings. The sum total of the messages in both stories is that nature is a womanly force, to which women can attune to and live within; thereby escaping male-insinuated persecution.

This idea, however, is incredibly silly in concept, and there isn’t any evidence towards women being better naturalists or vice-versa. However, Jewett’s style being magical realism, it is possible that she did not mean this message so literally. Therefore, she might only have been suggesting isolation from society as a means of overcoming prejudice. Still, the origin for prejudice is sometimes drawn from ignorance - for

example, the common held belief of some scientists during the late 1800's and early 1900's that different races of humans were in actuality different species. Such ideas stem from the isolation of peoples, and perhaps an inherent distrust of outsiders that had been driven by evolution. As such, would women follow Jewett's idea of escaping persecution via isolation, they would most likely only bring about further ignorance of themselves within the general population.

Jewett's theme of one-ness with nature, had it been followed, would have set back the women's rights movement by many years. It would have removed the emphasis of bringing about change by spreading a message for equal rights, and instead would have distanced women from society even further. To use a literary example, and one from the *White Heron*, no less: after Sylvia chose nature over society, her life did not improve. She did not gain the wealth promised by the man, and she did not gain anything from the heron. Her life remained stagnant, and as a representation of the oppression of women by society; it can therefore be said that one-ness with nature did absolutely nothing for women's rights.

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Why Seinfeld Makes Us Laugh

By Alexandra Porto

Seinfeld is “the most successful comedy in television history” (Hult 214); it is constantly being referred to, quoted from, and its daily reruns still attract a significant amount of viewers. The popularity of this show is clearly due to the fact that it is so hysterical. But what exactly makes this show so funny? If you ask viewers, they will often mention the show’s main characters: Jerry, Elaine, George and Kramer. But what is it about these characters that make an audience roll with laughter? Although the creators of Seinfeld have promoted the phrase that it is “a show about nothing” and have lead us to believe that this premise alone makes the show funny; I believe there is more to it and that they have used a distinct formula in their approach to comedy. Seinfeld’s comic approach stems from classical comedic theory as established by Aristotle in *Poetics*; it is this modernized formula which explains why we laugh.

In *Poetics*, Aristotle classifies comedy as an “imitation of inferior persons” (7); he goes on to suggest that Homer was the first writer of comedy since his imitative characters in *Margites* were so dramatic to the point where his work became laughable (Aristotle 7). Thus, comedy’s definition is mainly character-based, as opposed to tragedy, which upholds plot as primarily essential (Aristotle 11; Pritchard 359). The characters in a comedy are described as being an exaggerated form of the worst man that we have encountered in our daily lives (Aristotle 7-9; Heath 345). Aristotle states that “the laughable is a species of what is disrespectful” (9). This is the case because we are dealing with morally inferior characters that logically must be doing or saying morally

inferior things (Heath 345); thus, much of what we laugh at is considered to be disrespectful.

Seinfeld clearly adheres to Aristotle's main points on comedy. As mentioned the show's premise is that it is "a show about nothing"; thus, the sitcom is set up to make viewers believe that the plot isn't very important; this immediately shifts the viewer's attention to the characters: Jerry, Elaine, George, and Kramer. After all, it is the characters within Seinfeld that are the basis of what makes the show funny. When thinking about the four main characters it becomes clear that they are Aristotle's "inferior persons"; they are narcissistic, shallow and lazy, yet they engage in behavior that is not entirely abnormal but simply an exaggeration of actions we may partake in occasionally. Their disgraceful behavior is best seen in the finale of Seinfeld, in which Jerry, Elaine and George crack jokes about a man's weight while Kramer tapes the overweight man as he is being mugged (Seinfeld, May 14 1998). All four of them continue to ridicule the man and none ever consider helping him. In reality, if this happened one is likely to feel bad for the man who has just been mugged and laughed at, but because this is a comedy the man's pain is not portrayed to the audience and they remain unsympathetic, laughing.

Jerry's character often has a monologue at the start of episodes from earlier seasons. In the episode "The Phone Message," Jerry hints at the very success of Seinfeld being due to its usage of inferior characters. He says, "The bad thing about television is that everybody you see on television is doing something better than what you're doing" (Seinfeld, February 13 1991). Clearly, this does not apply to Seinfeld, as the characters are often getting themselves into disgraceful situations; thus, using the standard of Aristotle's Poetics, Seinfeld is able to offer its viewer the chance at being superior to those they are watching at television; they are able to look at Jerry, Elaine, George or

Kramer—ridicule them for their actions and laugh at the characters and situations in the show.

Aristotle describes the laughter as being produced by “an error or disgrace that does not involve pain” (9). According to Golden, such an error or disgrace is often regarded to as “the ridiculous” component (287). If a situation that would often resort to pain in reality arises in comedy, then that pain is immediately explicated and replaced with laughter. This is achieved through the dramatization of the disgraceful or wrongful action, and not its harmful result, which in turn produces humor based on the action alone. Such is the case of the aforementioned scene from *Seinfeld*; the focus is not on the overweight man, but on the characters’ disgraceful action of laughing at a man while he is being mugged. The only shift in focus to the overweight man is when he is seen flailing his arms in the air in an exaggerated fashion; the camera then shifts back to the characters who claim he looks like a “pig in distress” (*Seinfeld*, May 14 1998). Thus, the focus ultimately remains on the characters and their actions or dialogue; even a scene that could suggest pain results in ridicule and laughter because it is so overly dramatized. Heath observes this phenomenon in comedy and suggests that the “laughable excludes what is painful or destructive” (Heath 352). While the actions seen in a comedy may be based in reality (that of someone being mugged), the reactions seen from the characters are incongruous with the reactions seen in reality (others ridiculing the victim); once again, this creates a situation that is comical.

According to Schopenhauer, it is “the incongruity between the concept and the real objects” which creates laughter (qtd. in Golden 284). Heath mentions this as well in his interpretation of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, saying that “the characters themselves may be identified as real individuals” (349). I believe this is the premise of Aristotle’s argument,

as it is important to note that Aristotle uses the word “imitation” in his definition to suggest that much of comedy’s success is due to the fact that the situations and people these characters encounter are recognizable to the viewer, but intentionally over dramatized. Based on Aristotle’s definition it appears that the world of comedy is simply a distorted version of reality. “What makes an action funny may be...the fact that [such an action] makes a respected individual look foolish” (Heath 349). The “respected individual” Heath refers to is someone who in our everyday lives is respected; however, in the distorted world of comedy this man takes on the role of “the ridiculous” and becomes a lower character, someone who is now made foolish. Thus, comedy presents the audience with a “mask” of reality (Aristotle 9).

This “masking” of reality is a key feature of *Seinfeld*; publicly known figures are often referred to on the show and belittled in a manner in which they become inferior to these already inferior characters. George Steinbrenner, manager of the Yankees, is a character seen frequently on *Seinfeld* during the seasons in which George worked for the team. In reality, George Steinbrenner is a wealthy man who demands respect from his employees. In *Seinfeld*, he is masked as a character that does not stop his incessant chatter and often continues talking minutes after George has already closed the door on him; thus, this presentation of him is incongruous with the view we are presented of him in reality. He is seen as being overly obsessive, particularly when dealing with food; in one episode, George becomes very nervous because he is banned from the only restaurant that Mr. Steinbrenner will eat his calzones from. George ridicules him saying, “no one knows what this guy's capable of; he fires people like it's a bodily function!” (*Seinfeld*, April 25, 1996). This is part of *Seinfeld*’s formula, as based on Poetics, to create inferior characters out of respected individuals in reality. This creates a situation in which not

only do the show's main characters believe they are now superior to this imitation character, but this even allows the audience to feel superior to men they normally would consider to be more respected than themselves.

In Hult's work he mentions an episode in which Jerry and George are taken to be a gay couple by a reporter; they are seen listening to Bette Midler and arguing whether a piece of fruit has been washed; Hult refers to this as the theme of mistaken identity and suggests that it exposes the audience to "innocent events...that are obvious indices of gayness" (214). This would adhere to Aristotle's notion of error and dramatic irony (Hult 215); we laugh because what we originally perceived to be two friends are now acting in an overly exaggerated "homosexual" manner. Once again, this hints at the incongruity, dramatization, and unexpected occurrences that Aristotle points out as traditional elements of comedy. The entire series of *Seinfeld* is based in such elements, particularly that of exaggeration.

There is one episode in which George continually rants to his girlfriend about how much he hates doing laundry (certainly something most people can relate to); this normal dislike is then exaggerated beyond reality when George says his goal is to purchase "365 pairs of underwear" so that he never has to do laundry again (*Seinfeld* April 25, 1991). This also suggests incongruity as it is not what we would expect one's reaction to be. In studying neurological signs of comedy, William Kelley, used *Seinfeld* to observe the brain's response to humor (Travis 308); he describes the "inferior frontal cortex" as displaying the most activity when participants laughed. This part of the brain is often used in "resolving ambiguities," or in other words attempting to decipher incongruity (Travis 309). It seems even science supports Aristotle's formula for comedy;

it is no wonder the creators of Seinfeld modernized his thoughts when producing their sitcom.

Aristotle's definition of comedy places comedy in direct opposition to tragedy (Heath 352). Thus, comedy must have its own catharsis parallel to the tragic catharsis of pity and fear (Golden 283). Leon Golden questions what the comic catharsis is, and suggests that in Rhetoric, Aristotle parallels tragedy's pity with "nemesan," or indignation (287). He concludes that it is "the clarification of the 'indignation'...we feel in regard to those incidents of unjustified good fortune and those examples of inappropriate and incongruous behavior in human existence which do not cause pain" (Golden 288). In other words, our reaction (laughter) is an expression of indignation felt to unexpected situations, in which the result of a disgraceful action does not result in pain. Perhaps this would suggest that our laughter is not simply a pleasant expression, but truly a sign of hidden aggression toward those who experience "unjustified good fortune" in reality, namely those who are seen as respected, wealthy individuals. Those individuals, who in comedy, are often ridiculed and viewed as foolish. Based on this understanding, I would further Golden's point to say that we laugh because comedy flips our reality and creates a situation in which we are the superior ones ridiculing these lowly characters. My own beliefs seem to be aligned with Freud's, which established a connection "between comedy and human aggressive tendencies" (Golden 284). Clearly, the act of laughing at another's misfortune hints at an underlying aggression.

The season finale hints at this phenomenon as well, and may even be condemning us, as viewers, along with Jerry, Elaine, George and Kramer. Throughout the entire nine seasons never once do we experience pain or hear how it affects others; it is not until the season finale that the persons that were ridiculed by these inferior characters have any say

(Seinfeld, May 14, 1998). In the season finale all those who have been hurt by these characters throughout the nine seasons come back to give testimony that these inferior characters have never cared about another human being (Seinfeld, May 14 1998). Although the testimony itself has some funny moments, it is at this point when Seinfeld begins to break down its Poetic-type formula. We no longer feel superior to others, because for once our favorite characters are not the ones ridiculing others; instead they are being ridiculed and we are beside them to feel the shame and the inferiority as they are sentenced to share one jail cell and contemplate their actions. Suddenly this Aristotelian comedy is dismantled as the last lines, about the correct placement of a button, no longer evoke laughter (Seinfeld, May 14 1998).

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Unhappily Ever After;

Marital Trouble In Shakespeare's All's Well That Ends Well

By Alina Dorfman

A "Romantic Comedy" typically involves a couple falling in love and overcoming certain obstacles in order to marry in the end. These obstacles frequently include class difference, parental disapproval, and mistaken identity. A wedding at the end of the play serves as the usually joyous resolution to the woes of the couple. However, in Shakespeare's All's Well That Ends Well, Helena and Bertram, who are the couple in question, marry early in the play. The marriage thus becomes the problem rather than the solution. The rest of the play explores the encumbrances that the two must overcome because Helena and Bertram are at odds when they marry. Helena must get Bertram to love her after their marriage as Bertram yearns to escape his bride and the marriage altogether. According to Claire McEachern, Shakespearean scholars consider Shakespeare's play a "problem" comedy because of the way in which the playwright alters the traditional elements and expectations of the genre of romantic comedy (xxx).

All's Well That Ends Well raises several problems with which the reader must grapple. There is the problem of class, the need of each lover to form his or her personal identity, gender, and virtue. The reader enters the play and the problems it has to offer for contemplation by meeting Helena, the court physician's daughter, who is in love with the Count of Rossillion, Bertram. She offers to cure the King of France's fistula because she can ask for a reward for doing so. Helena knows that Bertram is serving the King and that she could ask for him as a reward. She pines after him when he leaves his court, and her, for France, "I am undone; there is no living, none, / If Bertram be away"

(Shakespeare I.i.86-87). Within the same act she settles on her plan to use the King's disease to her advantage. She states, "The king's disease.../my intents are fixed, and will not leave me" (I.i.226-227). The king honors Helena's request after she indeed is able to cure him when many are not. When Helena chooses Bertram for her husband, Bertram refuses and the king must force him to marry Helena. The king is able to force Bertram despite his wishes because he is his servant and because he must keep up the honor of his word in the face of his court. He says, "My honor's at the stake, which to defeat, / I must produce my power. Here, take her hand/ Proud scornful boy, unworthy this good gift" (II.iii.148-150). Bertram, a young man who is forced into an arranged marriage cries out, "O my Parolles, they have married me! / I'll to the Tuscan wars and never bed her" (II.iii.270-271). He runs off after giving Helena a three-part challenge, one that if she overcomes it, he will return to her. After Helena cleverly succeeds, Bertram must resign to "love her dearly-ever, ever dearly" (V.iii.313).

One of the issues of this "problem" comedy is that of social status, which is the main reason for Bertram's refusal of his marriage to Helena. To begin with, Bertram does not want an arranged marriage when he says, "[i]n such a business give me leave to use / The help of mine own eyes", (II.iii.105-106). He also refuses to marry her because she is of a lower class than he is within the court's ranking system. He protests to the king saying, "bring me down/ Must answer for your raising? I know her well...A poor physician's daughter my wife? D disdain / Rather corrupt me ever!" (II.iii.111-115). He believes that by marrying her he will be "brought down" in class and knows his social position well enough to see that this marriage is undesirable according to the social laws he abides by. Bertram's disobedience angers the king. But Bertram responds in this way because he does not wish to be disobedient to his class values, the ideals with which he

has been raised. Today, the reader might view him as a snob because of the way he looks down upon Helena. This is not a fair view of the groom because it is important to both understand Bertram's perspective and the ideology of Renaissance society, which was hierarchical. Bertram's outrage in regard to his marriage to a woman from a lower class can be explained by examining the views of the historical period in which the play takes place. In their article, Berkeley and Keese argue that

Bertram judges Helena by the stereotype of 'a poor physician's daughter,' and he is right to do so: lineally she is near baseness. Near-baseness of social status intimated that Helena's blood was of tainted or very near tainted condition. The conception of stained or tainted blood inhered in Aristotelian and Galenic conceptions...By possessing darker blood, Helena, if married to Bertram, has the potentiality of 'attainting' his children physically and mentally (250-252).

Thus Bertram, from this point of view, has a right to be upset by the marriage. If he has been taught that to marry someone below him would contaminate him and his goal is to remain within the boundaries of his class, he must prevent this marriage.

Berkeley and Keese further explain the importance of nobility by stating that

Bertram... has much (though not all) conventional wisdom for his rejection of Helena. In this Bertram is realistic; the King, the Countess, and Lord Lafew are romantic: blood-consciousness was (and still is in some quarters) a realistic approach to fruitful marriage; marrying upwards under virtually impossible conditions was (and still is) 'romance,' an eloquent but improbable lie. Bertram upholds the honor of Rossillion (248).

Though the modern reader might side with Helena in this play, and call Bertram a snob, considering the play in it's own time changes the perspective. Berkeley and Keese are

attempting to show this. It is because of the modern approval of independent and willful characters that we may choose to support Helena and her attempts to marry someone above her. In the times of the Renaissance, women did not behave in this way and if they did they might be considered delusional. In her book, Karen Newman further informs us that "[i]n early modern England, women were represented within the family and the roles it allowed...as the basic unit of production...of fit subjects for the commonwealth" (16). If the goal of marriage were to produce appropriate offspring, those that could continue the noble bloodline, then Helena would not be considered a worthy match with which to make this continuation possible.

It is possible to argue against Bertram by saying that he knows Helena, has shared a court with her, and should thus be able to see her supposed worthiness despite her class. However, Berkeley and Keesee argue that

Bertram...knows her to be near-base. The Countess observes, 'she derives her honesty'; and Helena declares of her kinfolk, 'My friends were poor but honest.' Honest, to be sure, as applied to a female meant 'chaste'...But a subaudition of honest in the Shakespearean plays and elsewhere...imports the peasantlike quality of artlessness...Honest, then, is an indicator of Helena's base origins (249).

Though Helena is the daughter of a court physician, a seemingly reputable occupation, the frequent use of the word "honest" shows that her origins do indeed lie with an occupation of a much lower class, that of a peasant. As Berkeley and Keesee show, what we consider honesty to mean today is not what honesty meant in Shakespeare's time. Thus, as Clair McEachern points out "Bertram's snobbery is...a form of social obedience...Bertram's snobbish behavior is a direct result of his high birth" (xxxv).

The fact that Bertram is the only son of Count Rossillion and thus is the only possible heir to the estate and all that accompanies it is also significant when considering the issue of class hierarchy. He is in between the past of his forefathers and the future of his own children. He has a duty to fulfill which is to continue the bloodline and keep up the honor of the family. It is for this reason that "[i]t is quite wrong, albeit the error is endemic amongst critics, following the bias of our times, to judge Bertram simply as an individual. His family ring is a visual symbol of his ancestral honor from 'the first father.' Bertram's duty of begetting a noble heir makes his choice of a wife a delicate matter" (Berkeley and Keese 248). The daughter of Lord Lafew is considered as a possible match for him. Whether she is of his choosing is not clear in the language but in any case she would be the appropriate candidate for such a union.

Though it is true that Helena is of a lower class than Bertram, the king of France himself ennoble her because of her virtues. In fact, Bertram's mother, the Countess Rossillion also believes that Helena is virtuous. We meet Helena in the Court of the Rossillion family. We learn that she is the orphan daughter of the court physician, Gerard de Narbon. Countess Rossillion is in charge of taking care of Helena and speaks well of her when she says, "[h]er dispositions she inherits, / which makes fair gifts fairer.../ In her they are the better for their simpleness. She derives / her honesty and achieves her goodness" (Shakespeare I.i.39-44). Before Helena speaks at all, we see a mental picture of her as a virtuous maid to be pitied for her orphan hood. The Countess' use of the word "simpleness" allows us to understand from the beginning that Helena is socially beneath other members of the court. In turn, Helena acknowledges her own status when she speaks of her love for Bertram, '[t]were all one / That I should love a

bright particular star / And think to wed it, he is so above me" (I.i.87-89). Several members of authority vouch for her virtues despite her lowly status.

Technically, this should solve all of Bertram's problems, but it does not. If he is worried about her class and the depreciation of his own class through a marriage with Helena, he should be happy when the king ennobles her. However, the problem goes further than this. Bertram is not only concerned with her class but also with the fact that he does not love her and does not want to be a part of an arranged marriage. This brings us to the next issue involved in the play, that of virtue. After Bertram complains about Helena's baseness, the king responds with: " '[t]is only title thou disdain'st in her, the which / I can build up...If she be / All that is virtuous-save what thou dislik'st / A poor physician's daughter- thou dislik'st / Of virtue for the name. But do not so. / From lowest place when virtuous things proceed, / The place is dignified by th' doer's deed" (II.iii.116-125). The king believes that Helena's virtuous qualities make her noble and that Bertram should not hesitate to marry her. However, from Bertram's point of view, nobility is a thing that runs through blood, as was already shown, and it is not easy to disregard this fact just because someone from the lower class may be good.

The editor of the play, Claire McEachern, states in her introduction to the text that, "[t]here is...something disingenuous about the position that holds that virtue is independent of social identity" (xxxv). She believes that virtue and social position are inherently linked and that it is impossible to separate the two. Helena's position as the court physician's daughter grants her certain advantages. She has access to the court and the king and she is able to heal him because of the knowledge her father lent her. She is not like some peasant who would not have these advantages. She is able to be virtuous because of her position at the court. However, it is easy for the king to see the good in

Helena from his high position, McEachern argues. She believes that "to ignore rank is easier the more powerful one is" (xxxiv). In this way, by seeing virtue in someone beneath him, he is displaying his own nobility. Though the king may be able to ignore class lines, Bertram cannot because he subscribes to the notion that virtue is not independent of class status. He cannot reconcile the fact that Helena is made to be noble and was not from the beginning.

But is it correct to call Helena's actions virtuous or her character noble? As she carries out her plans to win Bertram, she does not consider anyone's feelings but her own. She certainly does not take Bertram's wants into consideration. For instance, she seals the deal with the king for his cure with this question: "if I help, what do you promise me" (Shakespeare II.ii.191). After the king agrees allow her to "make [her] demand" she says, "then shalt thou give me with thy kingly hand / What husband in thy power I will command. / ...thy vassal, whom I know / Is free for me to ask, thee to bestow" (II.ii.195-201). Helena knows that the king has the power to order his subjects into action and she knows that Bertram cannot disobey his king. On the one hand, she might be seen as determined, willing to do whatever it takes to win the one she loves. On the other hand, she could be considered calculating, as when she plans the bed-trick. After being forced to marry Helena but before leaving for the war Bertram leaves Helena with a challenge. He says, "[w]hen thou canst get the ring upon my finger, /which never shall come off, and show me a child begot- / ten of thy body that I am father to, then call me hus- / band; but in such a 'then' I write a 'never' " (III.ii.56-59). Thus, Helena needs to overcome this challenge and she therefore comes up with a scheme. In Italy Bertram falls in love with Diana, the same person that Helena lodges with when she goes to Italy herself. After learning Bertram and Diana's situation, Helena comes up with the bed-trick. We know

that she planned this because the widow, Diana's mother, says, "[n]ow I see / The bottom of your purpose" (III.vii.29-30).

Though Helena may appear to be noble, she "wins his [Bertram's] acquiescence to their marriage-though not, necessarily, his love-only by fulfilling a series of humiliating tests that would tax the emotional and practical resources of the most able chivalric questant" (McEachern xxxiii-xxxiv), thereby fulfilling Bertram's challenge to her. Also, Helena does not realize that her love for Bertram cannot change Bertram's position in regard to his necessity to preserve his class standing. Just because she loves him, it does not mean he has to love her. McEachern argues that "while the social barriers to the union of Helena and Bertram can be removed by the powers-ruler and family-that sustain them, what these powers cannot do is change the way in which Bertram's character has been shaped by them. Bertram actively disdains her, not for who she is, but for what she is: beneath him" (xxxii). Another factor is that he simply does not love her.

The Social history of the play can ground Helena's virtue. In regard to this it is of interest to consider what Perry states in his article. He says that "[t]he courtly elite in Tudor and Early Stuart England consisted of important office-holders in the royal households together with those men and women fortunate enough to be granted access to the monarch by virtue of family prestige, connections or personal charm. Royal favour brought enormous rewards, so access to the monarch was a prize highly sought after" (106). Helena's actions echo this statement. Her family prestige is that she is the daughter of the court's physician and her personal charm allows her a meeting with the king, a time during which she is able to name her price for her cure and thereby put her foot in the door for eventual social mobility. Social mobility may not be her only goal, as we know she loves Bertram when she says, "My imagination / Carries no favor in't but

Bertram's" (Shakespeare I.i.84-85). Nonetheless, the fact that this would be social mobility if she were to succeed cannot be ignored).

In his book, Louis B. Wright quotes the words of Heywood's text, A Curtaine Lecture (1637). Heywood upholds the profitableness of virtue. He suggests the following:

To encourage all maides how to behave themselves, that they may be better married...I hold it not impertinent to the present tractate in hand, to shew you an history or two...how some Virgins, but of meane condition and quality, have, by their vertues merely, and generous behaviour, attained a great preferment and honour (48-49).

Wright says that "[s]tories follow of how poor girls made wealthy matches by a parade of their virtue" (213). The author's research can show us another problem with Helena's virtue. Is not a parade of virtue immodest and the statement a paradox? Could this statement support the fact that Helena was only parading her good traits with an underlying motive of achieving something and not with being virtuous as a goal in itself? Though the people around her attest to her virtue, they do not know how much they are a part of her schemes for marrying Bertram. At this point it is possible to see Helena as going beyond her social boundaries by proving her nobility, even though her nobility of character is a sugar coating for her true artful nature. It will be later possible to forgive Bertram for his treatment of Helena because of his wish to remain within the ramifications of his own social class and because of the not so wholesome motivations of her actions.

The notion of obtaining courtly favors and the aspirations of the middle class can be juxtaposed. Physicians were a part of the middle class, and being the daughter of a physician, Helena herself belongs to it. In his book Wright writes that "[t]he middle

class...merchants and tradesman learned that honesty and industry were the most certain ways to success" (3). Though Wright is referring to honesty and industry with respect to business, we can say that Helena practiced honesty, cleverness and resourcefulness with respect to her interactions with the other characters.

Gender becomes an issue in All's Well That Ends Well. McEachern states that had the "genders [been] reversed in this play—were a young woman coerced by her king to marry against her will—modern sympathies would be far more likely to ally themselves with her than they do with Bertram" (xxxiii). In this play, Bertram is put into the female role because Helena is the one who pursues him. Usually, this would be the male's job. She is the one who follows him to France and Italy and she is the one who stands in front of the selection of men at the court when she must choose her prize and is told by the king, "Thy frank election make. / Thou hast power to choose, and they none to forsake" (Shakespeare II.iii.54-55). Shakespeare gives Helena the power that males are typically endowed with, thus reversing the gender roles. Helena is also the one who makes the sexual advances toward Bertram by thinking of the bed trick, "your daughter.../appoints him an encounter; / In fine, delivers me to fill the time, / Herself most chastely absent" (III.vii.31-34). However, had Helena been in Bertram's place, had she been the one forced to marry against her will, our sympathies would lie with her. They do not when it is Bertram who is in that position. Why is it perfectly all right for a woman to reject a suitor but not all right, as evidenced by the possible condemnation of Bertram, for a man to do the same?

Curtis Perry adds yet another intriguing element—he wonders why Shakespeare would give a social climber so much credibility and respect in his play. Perry tells us that "[a]s the government of England became increasingly centralized in the Tudor period and

beyond, success at court came to rival family pedigree as a vehicle for prestige" (107). It seems that this interesting predicament would indicate some sort of change in rationale in Shakespeare's thinking. Berkeley and Keesee astutely perceive this seeming glitch in the regular patterns of Shakespeare's writing, which usually frowns upon cross-class marriages, and expound upon it. They believe that Bertram is meant to be seen as wrong and unjust. However, because the marriage is upheld at the end of the play, they believe there is a special reason for why Shakespeare left things as he did. The critics believe that the play echoes Shakespeare's sonnets. They go on to say that

Shakespeare's position in the sonnets with respect to the nameless nobleman he is addressing is exactly the same, that is, the son of a father born base but made a gentleman as Helena's (daughter of a man presumably born base but made a gentle) or, assuming sonnets 1-126 to have been written before John Shakespeare's gentling, almost the same (a base addressing a nobleman). Shakespeare appears to desire to involve himself in the current cult of male friendship with a nobleman who is conscious of and rather rejects the poet's social inferiority, primarily meaning his blood (his essential nature), and secondarily his position as actor or mercenary playwright.

It is for this reason that they believe that Shakespeare would not condemn Helena.

Because he gives Helena and not Bertram all of the soliloquies, he places her in a position of more importance, even though she is of a lower class, and a woman. Because she is able to directly address the audience, she gains more sympathy with the reader and viewer than does Bertram, who cannot make his case clear. He is not given an equal opportunity to express himself because Helena has more stage power. She is given an opportunity to be more intimate with the audience and because of this she has a chance to win their empathy—we see that she is in love with Bertram and isn't simply after him just to win status. He does not explain that the reason he does not wish to marry Helena is because he is trying to uphold the values of his social class, but instead he just comes off

as a snob. Shakespeare has a reason for making the audience sympathize with Helena and this is why the scholars believe that

Shakespeare, despite his class-bias, was not about to condemn Helena's attempt to rise from mean gentry to high nobility by marrying Bertram...Both *All's Well* and sonnets 1-126 are appeals of inferior blood to be accepted on the basis of supplicating merit by superior blood (256).

Through the pointed positioning and development of Helena, Shakespeare is voicing his own desires. Perry explains that "[m]ost writers sought some form of support or preferment from the wealthy and well connected" (107). Because most of Shakespeare's plays were written for the aristocratic audience, the presentation of this theme could have been an attempt to justify and defend his own situation within the noble class. In his book, Halpern states that "Shakespeare himself...was a 'counterfeit' gentleman, as his heraldic motto-'Non sans droit'- anxiously attests." It is quite likely that perhaps this play "expresses...Shakespeare's own class wish" (244). Though Shakespeare literally bought his title with the money he earned as a playwright, Helena figuratively bought her way into the nobility by curing the king's fistula.

On the one hand it is possible to understand Bertram in the context of his time and his refusal to marry beneath him. On the other hand he can be seen as a snob. McEachern states that, "[w]hile there can be a certain amount of sympathy for Bertram's initial predicament, being forced as he is to marry against his will, his subsequent conduct magnifies the unpleasantness of his initial snobbery" (xxxii). McEachern points to his snobbery when Bertram leaves Helena a "riddling challenge" and when "painful of all, he even makes her beg for a farewell kiss" (xxxiii).

By the same token it is possible, despite her initial selfishness, to see some of Helena's positive points. There are several instances in which she proves to genuinely

care about people. After Bertram refuses to marry her and the king argues with him, she quietly says, "[t]hat you are well restored, my lord, I'm glad. / Let the rest go" (Shakespeare II.iii.146-147). She is willing to forego her reward just to end the dispute, but it is the king who further pushes and forces Bertram into matrimony. When she realizes that Bertram might be hurt in the war to which he flees in order to escape her, she is truly remorseful. She says, "[p]oor lord, is't I / That chase thee from thy country, and expose / Those tender limbs of thine to the event / Of the none-sparing war" (III.ii.100-103)? She further feels further anguish and decides to leave the court so that he may want to return to it when she says, "I will be gone. / My being here it is that holds thee hence" (III.ii.120-121). And later, when she is about to set the bed-trick plan in action, her final words in the scene are those of remorse and guilt. She says, "Why then tonight / Let us assay our plot, which if it speed, / Is wicked meaning in a lawful deed, / And lawful meaning in a lawful act, / Where both not sin, and yet a sinful fact. / But let's about it" (IV.i.43-48). Thus this "problem" comedy presents several issues with which the reader must wrestle.

In this play, Shakespeare creates tensions between characters and between characters and their ideals. One of the tensions that the play explores is that between individual desire and that of obedience to authority. Bertram's rejection of Helena is shaped by the tradition to which he is loyal. He desires to uphold his class values and not marry Helena. However, this makes him disobedient to the king. Though the king should abide by the same standards as Bertram, he forces Bertram to marry Helena. Though Bertram may not want to marry Helena, he is forced to because he is a servant to the king of France and thus must obey his commands. Today this issue is still relevant. Though love is considered to be the only basis upon which individuals marry, other elements,

such as financial, religious and educational concerns, certainly come into play. For instance, just as Bertram cannot accept Helena, who is of a lower social class, many people cannot disregard the importance of their potential partner's income or the level of education they received. Others cannot accept someone of another faith into their own religion, despite the person's merit. Though individuals today may have more right to choose their paths because class status does not guide our actions as strongly as it did for Bertram, there still exists, in many cases, an underlying notion of status in various forms. As for Helena, many women and men still desire to marry up, as it were, though today trying to improve one's situation is seen in a more positive light, if financial gain is not a part of the equation. If one is marrying a better person with respect to ethics and morality, then "marrying up" is not problematic.

The tension caused by Helena's alleged social climbing and Bertram's suspected snobbery poses an interesting dilemma. Though it is certainly possible to support these accusations, the dilemma lies in that Shakespeare also gives us the tools to debunk these accusations. The playwright shows us that these labels are misleading. We see that Bertram acts the way he does because of the ideals of the tradition in which he was raised. We also see that Helena cannot be simply labeled as a social climber because she has virtues worthy of noble status. Shakespeare makes us question our own ideals and traditions at every step. Though this play details the events of a time long ago, many of the principles still apply to today's society, even if they manifest themselves in a different form, particularly, Renaissance ideals of marriage still resonate with the ideals of the modern world.

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Bridging the Valley: The effects of fantasy in the real world

By Christine Luisi

How many times have you wished you could right the “wrongs” in your life or prevent the injustice that you see around you? Have you found yourself wishing you could change a decision you made, or perhaps you wished that you had special powers that would cause you to be exempt from life’s difficulties? These frustrations are not limited to the adult world; instead, children and adolescents face some of the same problems, and that is why fantasy literature is used as a metaphor for human experience. Fantasy literature illustrates to children that having magical powers doesn’t solve all their problems instead it enables children to make the connections to their own “world” and their own moral/ethical decisions. According to Melissa Thomas, author of “Teaching Fantasy: Overcoming the Stigma of Fluff,” she writes, “authors [of children’s fantasy literature] are taking on global issues on a more human scale: hunger, pain, loss, confusion, simple human fallibility, and triumph” (62). Fantasy literature isn’t a solution for these issues but many fantasy stories can parallel the real lives of children and adolescents enabling them to gain insight. Although these fantasy worlds have magical elements, they are very much like the real world. Anand, a “tween” boy in the novel, The Conch Bearer, by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni faces many of the same issues as teenagers today. The setting takes places in a distant country, yet his problems such as poverty and hunger are universal. This novel is an example or at the very least, extremely similar to quest fantasy story; “a story in which a hero, on an adventure to find some prize or attain some worthy goal, must find a way to rule---or navigate through---a

“high” or mythic kingdom or place that the author has invented as a secondary world” (Mikkelsen 114). Anand is navigating through the coming of age process in which his ethical and moral choices help him to obtain his “prize”.

In the beginning of the novel, what moves Anand and his quest into action is his belief in the power of magic and his desire to help his family. Anand answers with great anticipation, the call from the healer Abhaydatta, to go with him and bring the conch to Silver Valley. “This was the opportunity he had been longing for all this time.... of putting up with Haru’s taunts; of seeing his mother grow sadder and sadder...of being unable to help his sister...here it was, his own, special magic to do something amazing and brave, to break through the despair and ugliness that surrounds him” (Divakaruni 33). His faith in magic is child-like and this is why young readers can connect with him.

The issues of “hunger, pain, loss, and confusion” are illustrated in Anand’s and his family’s life. The magical world doesn’t eliminate his trial but it gives him the strength to face them. It’s easy to wish for a magic wand or in Anand’s case a “magic apple” and vanish every problem away, but in real life that is not the case. Actually that’s not always the case in Anand’s world too. When Anand expresses his faith in magic and his hope that their circumstances will change he faces resistance from his mother. In this fantasy literature, the possession of having special powers doesn’t eliminate every problem but it does give the character the opportunity to gain skills in dealing with obstacles. Anand’s mother tries to keep him grounded in reality. She says, “those things happen only in storybooks, son. Don’t you know that by now?” (Divakaruni 5) Her words are directed towards Anand but she is also speaking indirectly to the young reader who is holding the “storybook.” “In fantastic literature the

supernatural invades a world ruled by reason” (Zambora 123). As in real life, it has its limitations.

Abhaydatta’s description of the events that occurred in Silver Valley and the Brotherhood have many fantastic elements yet much of the fantasy world is limited as well as the individuals who deal with the same issues of power and failing. As it is in real life, the struggle between bad and good exist in this supernatural world. The old man, Abhaydatta, describes to Anand the tale of how the conch was stolen by Surabhanu. He says, “There came a Healer who grew to covet the conch’s power and wanted it for himself, to bring himself glory” (Divakaruni 27). The capitalization of the word “Healer” suggests that the word is being used as a proper noun and gives the connotation that the healer is a type of god but with limited power. It is unclear on what type of power Surabhanu has since each healer has a different specialty. For example, Abhaydatta has the power of remembrance and forgetting; he is able to cause Meera to forget the trauma of her past. There is the underlining lesson that one individual can’t fix everything. The Healers’ limited possession of power correlates with their personality. “Each of the Healers of the Silver Valley is trained in many arts. But according to each one’s temperament, he develops one special power” (Divakaruni 38). This teaches Anand as well as the young reader that everyone is not the same and each person brings with them their own uniqueness and gifting. In the same way, individuals have a struggle within themselves, which can hinder them from reaching their full potential. For example, Anand explains to the conch that he wants to make people happy. The conch informs Anand that making everyone happy is unattainable. The conch expresses to Anand, “You can help all the people you want, but you can’t make them happy. Only they

themselves can do that.” (Divakaruni 246) This concept is also carried out in the relationship between Abhaydatta and Anand.

Abhaydatta functions in the role of a mentor as well as a healer. The healers including Abhaydatta have magical powers within themselves to help humans. However, they will only intervene when the circumstances are beyond the character’s abilities. Abhaydatta’s relationship to the children is similar to the guidance of a parent. His paternal traits are seen in his relationship with Anand and Nisha. He specifically tells the children to call him Dadaji, which means grandfather and similar to a grandfather he indulges them with a few luxuries like sweets and warm clothing. However, at the same time he is always warning them and preparing them for the time when they will need to continue their journey without him. The children are told by Abhadatta that they can’t prevent misfortune from happening but he will be there with them to help as much as he can. Abhaydatta tells Nisha, “Don’t be afraid. Danger will come upon us when it will. We can’t stop it. We can only try to be prepared. There’s no point looking ahead to that danger and suffering its effects even before it comes to us. Besides, as long as I am with you, I’ll protect you” (Divakaruni 96). Abhaydatta acknowledges the fact that some things are beyond our control and that worrying in itself will not help. The conch later on in this story reinforces this idea when he explains to Anand the negative effects of allowing your emotions to control your thoughts. “You humans fret so much over little things. Always swinging between elation and despair. I thank the Great Power that I don’t have to contend with emotion! (Divakaruni 138) The conch’s commentary on human emotions is a didactic observation. His comparison between humans and his own mystical presence is used to demonstrate the futility of being led by emotional

feelings. The conch is serving as a guide and is warning Anand of the snares of emotionalism.

Many things can lead children astray, which is why children look to adults for instruction. In fantasy, “[there is] always a hero. He or she is an orphan, disposing of inconvenient parental monitoring...he or she meets up with a wise person, reflecting the desire of students for guidance” (Thomas 60). Thomas refers to the role of parents as “inconvenient”; this idea is reinforced in Divakaruni story by the disappearance of Anand’s parents. By eliminating the parental role and replacing it with a dynamic authority figure such as a mystical one, it illustrates to the child, that you cannot eliminate authority. Removing the “inconvenient parents” or “resistant” mother, as in Anand’s case, is not a solution because in the end, the child still needs guidance. This illustrates to children what they view as an obstacle may be necessary for their well being and success in life. Abhaydatta’s “physical guidance” was as short lived, as is the guidance of all parents. Abhaydatta, knowing that the time was short, taught Anand and Nisha as much as he could. He gave them the instruction to get to Silver Valley by drawing them a map but he wasn’t able to tell them how to cross the river. “I cannot guide you on this,” Abhaydatta said sadly. “The stream is not an ordinary one...it appears differently to each person, based on his inner qualities” (Divakaruni 102). This is a metaphor for life; everyone has a journey to take and at some point they need to travel alone. Each journey is different and their responses to it will be based on their perspective and values. The deposits that have been placed inside children will eventually help them make the right choices at the crossroads of their life.

Anand came to a crossroad when he was faced with the choice on whether he should disclose to Nisha the truth about the Conch. Anand was the protector and keeper

of the conch and he was instructed to not tell anyone including Nisha that he had it. Anand was faced with the moral dilemma of lying but it was mixed with his own selfish reasons. When he thinks about telling Nisha about the conch he says, “I never lied—but then he stopped. Keeping a secret from a friend was a kind of betrayal, a kind of lie. And to make it worse, he’d reveled in his knowledge, proud of being the one Abhaydatta chose and swore to secrecy” (Divakaruni 137). If protecting the conch was Anand’s only reason for lying it would have been simpler; however, it’s Anand’s prideful emotions that make his decision complex. Christopher Ringrose, author of “Lying in Children’s fiction: Morality and the Imagination” writes, “Children’s fiction, then, has often taken on the complex issue of truth and lies. Often it has acknowledged something which children themselves encounter every day: that telling lies is usually immoral but often alluring and potent” (235). Children can empathize with Anand’s feelings putting themselves in “his place” yet at the same time learn how to make decisions based on moral values. These lessons coincide with the struggles in life journey, which ultimately leads to our own mortality.

This novel also helps children deal with painful subjects like mortality and betrayal. Life lessons are also illustrated throughout this fantasy. Fantasy literature places a distance between the reader and serious issues enabling them to better cope with these matters. Apparently there are no healers of sickness and disease and again demonstrating the absence of unlimited power. Despite the fact that the Brotherhood is full of healers, the old conch keeper became ill and eventually died. By encountering death in this fashion, the reader is able to process the concept of death and loss from a safe and remote place. The negative effects of hastiness are highlighted in the narrative. The Brotherhoods’ eagerness to find a replacement for the old conch bearer makes them

“blind” to the moral weakness of their new apprentice. The old man says, “At what stage the dark changes began, I don’t know” (Divakaruni 29). The world that the Brotherhood lives in is a magical world but “darkness” still exists in it. This world is not absolved of evil, evil desires or trials and hardships. Nor are the healers able to prevent or eliminate temptations. The same lesson of not removing authority is seen here with the non-elimination of temptations.

Anand’s moral growth was dependent on his wise use of the magical powers of the conch and through his responsible and unselfish actions and choices. “Fantasy helps children explore new worlds far from home through adventures that involve risk taking and danger, and it allows them to explore disturbing questions from a distance, such as, What is important---safety or freedom, what is a hero---a heroine...and what does it mean to have power, especially magical power?” (Mikkelsen 178) One of the ways Anand had to be responsible was in with his possession of having the conch. He is tempted to reveal and use the conch for his advantage whenever he is faced with uncertainties like when he and Nisha thought they were lost. Anand soon discovers that the conch will only help him when Anand has done everything that is humanly possible. The conch speaks to Anand and says, “Some things belong to the realm of humans. There, you must ask other humans for help—or, better still, help yourself” (Divakaruni 150) The idea of using his own intellect is something that Abhaydatta tried to teach Anand as well. He told Anand, “you must rely more on your intelligence---as all of us in the Brotherhood have been taught to do—and less on the magical. Magic is to be used for higher purposes, for things that impact the world. Or when there is no other recourse for survival” (Divakaruni 119). Having special powers or having possession of the conch didn’t make things easier. Anand couldn’t rely on the conch to answer the Healer’s question that

would enable him to enter Silver Valley. Instead, he needed to reflect on his journey and think about everything he went through in order to answer correctly.

In order to bridge the valley of childhood and adulthood, fantasy and reality, we need to master the ability to make the wise choices and decisions. Anand needed to search within himself to find the answers. Questions and choices is what life is all about; we can't eliminate them. Instead, we need to deal with them. Anand reflects on his actions:

“Doubting things---that had always been his weakness. All through this journey he'd doubted the words of the Master Healer and trusted his own intelligence, the little, tinny voice of logic that said this isn't real. And each time it had led him into one trouble after another, had caused him to almost ruin everything. He would not doubt any longer. The animal in his arms was real; the girl with the broken leg, lying on the path behind him, waiting for him to succeed, was real...” (Divakaruni 194)

Anand recognized that although he originally was chosen for his childlike faith somewhere along his “journey” he lost it and began to “doubt”. He acknowledges that he trusted on “his own intelligence” and his inner “voice of logic.” Logic wasn't wrong in itself but it was the imbalance that almost made him “ruin everything.” It was only through the combination of the strength of Anand, Abhaydatta and Nisha who were the personification of the three virtues of honesty, loyalty, and compassion that enabled Anand to successfully complete his journey. Anand's insight and recognition is affirmed by the Healers who say, ““Truly, without its companions to balance it, a powerful virtue can become a weakness” (Divakaruni 204). This is also true with magical powers; alone

they can be a weakness as in waving the magic wand to eradicate obstacles. The complexity of balancing issues is in the fantasy world as much as the fantasy world.

Fantasy literature deals with the same complex concerns that are in reality. The fantasy world is a complex system that incorporates all the elements that are found in the "real world." In creating a fantasy world that take place in a distant and far away land, as the one Anand exist in, The Conch Bearer, succeeds in illustrating, without intimidating the reader, that the solutions to life's dilemmas are applicable in both worlds. Fantasy worlds are "entire worlds with complete histories, languages, laws of science and magic. On another level one finds social commentary, fine symbolism, thematic content, and psychology" (Parish 92). Encountering elements in the fantasy world before actually experiencing it in the "real world" such as pain and loss can only help prepare children for the harsh realities of this life. Through the wonder and awe of magic, the characters are put in unusual circumstances to reveal their "true character." The truths they reveal are as powerful as the magic itself.

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