Faculty Excellence Awards in Writing

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Sincerely,

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Table of Contents

English 101 - Principles of Writing

“A Tribute to My Little Brother” by Kyle Austin........................................4
“We Need to Represent Freedom Again” by Erika Gokcen...............................7
“Living in a Wilderness” by David Jung..........................................................11

Writing 211 - Advanced Comp.: Narrative & Personal Essay

“To Everything There Is a Season” by Holly Hrywnak...................................15
“The Mark” by Arkor Kolubah........................................................................21
“Manila: ‘All That Is Gold Does Not Glitter’ (Tolkien) and Not All That Glitters Is Gold” by Kristen Zingg.................................................................29

Writing 212 - Advanced Comp.: Formal Essay

“Corporal Punishment” by Laura Jackson......................................................35
“Religion for Couch Potatoes” by Spencer Kyle Johnson.................................40
“Grandma” by Megan Toombs.........................................................................45

Writing 213 - Advanced Comp.: Writing about Literature

“Between the Lines of Reality: Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe” by Lauren Kososki..............................................................................................................48
“Austen's Mr. Knightley: A Gentleman of Epic Proportions” by Erika Bremer......54
“The Dead” by Carolynn Tomlinson....................................................................61
English 101
Principles of Writing
“Okay, head down this road for a couple more miles,” my brother instructed me as we drove down the main road in Camp Lejeune.

“Is this your barracks?” I asked.

“Yeah, you two stay here. I’ll go see what’s going on.” And with that, he got out of the car and walked through the sticky, hot, semi-dark of a North Carolina morning. In silence we waited as the windows fogged over.

“I’ll run the car for the air conditioning a while,” I said to fill the silence between me and my brother’s girlfriend, Lyndsey. She was sitting in the back, quiet. We were both hurting inside and neither of us had slept in a long time. I reclined my seat, knowing I should sleep as I was going to be driving until midnight or later. I couldn’t sleep, though, because my head was full of a buzzing that spoke of the sweet, sticky energy drinks pumping through my veins. My blood was thick with the stuff.

Why was my brother taking so long? I might have dozed…

Then he was back. “You guys can come behind the barracks; I’ve got my stuff with the rest of the guys’.” We got out of the car and made our way to a small parade ground behind his quarters. There was a pile of sea bags. Marines in camo were talking loudly, cradling guns and laughing at dirty, inside jokes. Others stood somberly with their arms around their girls.

We sat in silence listening to shouts and muttered curses that seemed both amplified and enclosed by the pre-dawn hour. Finally, Caleb, my brother, was called over to a huddle. “Okay, I got to get these bags over to the busses then pick up some guns. Kyle, can you carry one of these for me?”

“Sure.” I shouldered the heavy bag and followed my little brother through the gloom, happy to bend my back alongside “the few and the proud.” All my life I had dreamed of going to war. Now I had a sea bag on my back and I was among Marines, the very corps I’d planned on joining. But I was not really going. Instead, these men, and boys, were the ones who would go. I, with my long hair, was simply a civilian heading off to college like most of my generation. Sure, I had served, but not like this, not like our fathers who bought American, European and Asian freedom with their blood and limbs, lives and innocence. My little brother and these guys were off to add their stories to that anthology of heroes, while I would be doing something far more safe and comfortable: namely, going to college.

It would be several long, uncomfortable hours before Caleb’s bus would leave. At first we were anxious about whether Mom, Dad, our brothers and sister would make it on time. The sun was up and all the gear was where it needed to be when my parents
finally arrived. By now there was a crowd. We didn’t do a lot of talking; among my family it felt more like a game of I Spy than a conversation. The few comments we made were punctuated by long, lonely silences.

“That’s a lot of bags.” “Did you see the older guy wearing an Army dress uniform?” “I wonder what his rank is.” “Are the Marines loading the trucks volunteers, who are free this morning, or is that their job?”

It’s strange, because although my family is used to saying goodbye, as we were missionaries for 14 years, this goodbye seemed new and hard. Like a first goodbye somehow. My brother’s girlfriend, on the other hand, had never been more than a couple of hours away from home, except to go down to see Caleb’s graduation from boot camp. Now she had come to see him leave for Iraq. She was very quiet, quieter than usual.

Later my mom took pictures of all of us, together, then each of us individually next to Caleb. When it was my turn I posed with my hand gripping the barrel of his gun. While holding his rifle, I commented, “This is the closest I’ve ever been to a capitalist gun.” No one smiled; it was a wild shot at humor on my part. (Or was I trying to remind myself and others of all the time I had spent around riot police and communist rebels?) The big struggle for me was seeing my kid brother doing what I had planned to do since I was tiny. I had and at times still did really want to go, to defend the land I love and face this danger. It had been great when it was me heading off to a war-torn country on the other side of the world. Now, however, that seemed pretty tame compared to what these guys were doing.

After a lot of hurrying up and waiting, Caleb hugged everyone again and got on his bus. I think he might have looked relieved. We waved until they were out of sight and then we got in our cars.

“Caleb is going to be just fine, right?” I’m sure we were all thinking this. No one dared to utter this position, however, perhaps for fear that someone would voice a disagreement.

My family, my brother’s girlfriend, and I caravanned until we got to DC. Then my mom drove my dad to a hotel he would be staying at for a couple of days of work. The rest of us stretched our legs near the highway while we waited for my mom to find her way back to us. Eventually my mom made it back and we continued on to the border of New York State. I’d been riding with my brother Ben up until this point, talking of music and video games, actively forgetting what had taken place that morning. At the New York border my family all got in to one car while my brother’s girlfriend got into my car for the remaining ten hours until we reached her hometown. I doubt that she and I spoke more than a hundred words during that trip. I finally said that I felt a little relieved now that my brother had gone because now, rather than dreading his imminent departure, I could look forward to his return. In response, she said that she couldn’t yet look forward; at the moment she was only missing him and worrying.

What could I say? A few months before, my girlfriend had broken up with me because we had been separated by an ocean. The pain was still very real and now the
prospect of my brother’s girlfriend waiting at least seven months for him seemed equally daunting. I could not think of anything encouraging to say as my intercontinental relationship had not succeeded. I’m afraid I was not able to be very optimistic.

In the months since my little brother left, I have become used to the reality that he is in Iraq. We have heard from him that he is bored. He does, however, get to drive some of the vehicles he trained for, so he gets to leave the base more than most of his unit. My family is pretty pleased with the fact that he is bored. In fact, the less he has to do, they say, the better. Four months down, three to go. Caleb and his girlfriend Lyndsey have been able to communicate quite a bit with each other through cyberspace.

I’m not sure what I feel now and only rarely do I let myself think about where Caleb is. But at the moment I do not regret my decision not to enlist. Neither do I envy him the months he spent training nor the company he keeps.

Through this experience I have learned firsthand that it can be harder to let someone else do something great than to do it myself. If it remains hard to accept that so many thousands are serving me at their own risk, then let me practice being thankful with my actions. Let me say with my mouth that I am being served by our military. And let me put in print that I am being served by Lance Corporal Caleb Austin, my little brother.
We Need to Represent Freedom Again

Growing up in America, we study the days when our country fought for freedom and independence. The basis of America was founded on the idea that people should be free. The founding fathers believed and fought for justice and the rights of people. Many across the world have been influenced by the ideals of justice and democracy that this country promotes. Other countries have acknowledged America’s stance for freedom. France gave the statue of Liberty, which now stands as a symbol to the world. Does this symbol still represent all this country stands for?

I sat on a small hospital bed in Kenya while my good friend, suffering from tuberculosis, lay there silently. His name is Michael Panther and he is a refugee from Sudan. He gradually began to tell me of his distant life in Sudan during the war. Memories of running from the enemy into the woods, and the constant fear of being shot flooded over him. He explained how kids stopped walking to school fearing the enemy attacks. I could not imagine a life such as this. Having spent most of my years in America, the crisis in Sudan felt distant, and irrelevant to my life. I listened to Michael’s story, attentive and awestruck. Why have western powers done nothing to stop these atrocities?

No one knows who is to blame for the crisis in Darfur, Sudan. Yes, the Sudanese government is responsible for the beginning the war, but what have other countries done to hinder or help the grim situation? Some people blame America, while others praise it. America has a history of promoting freedom and justice, but has this carried over into oversees affairs? Unfortunately, America’s reputation in much of the world has changed. America was originally seen as a country standing for freedom and justice, and now, many see it as more engrossed with political motives. Although many people within this country do not realize that America is sometimes more concerned with politics than freedom around the world, evidence shows otherwise. What is evident through the crisis in Sudan is that America is more concerned, in certain situations, with politics and economic resources than freedom and justice.

America is supposed to represent freedom and promote world peace. The Bill of Rights speaks not only of the rights of Americans, but of all of humanity. As world powers, the United States and the United Nations have the ability to promote peace in other nations. For years, the U.S. has been involved in Darfur. During the Bush Administration, attempts to promote peace were made, but this does not justify all the economic interests in Southern Sudan’s oil. Jemera Rone wrote of America’s long-term attempts to control oil in the article “Sudan: Oil and War.” In fact, “the first company to attempt to develop the southern oil fields was Chevron, a US oil giant, which
discovered oil in southern Sudan in 1978” (504). The effort did not succeed because rebels killed three of Chevron’s workers, and they ceased further efforts to control the oil. This was only the beginning of America’s involvement in Sudan’s oil.

One of the greatest reasons for the war in Sudan is the fight for resources, especially oil. Southern Sudan wants to be its own country, but it holds all the oil. As a result, the northern powers are not willing to give up the power and wealth that oil brings. Rone writes of the UN Special Reporter in 2001, who stated, “oil exploitation is closely linked to the conflict which...is mainly a war for the control of resources and, thus, power.” The rest of the world has acknowledged this to be the main issue of the war, but hardly any of them has suggested that foreign interests and want of power has also fueled the crisis. There is no doubt that the crisis would still exist without foreign powers getting involved, but have other countries added to the problem instead of alleviating it?

In America itself, the media plays a significant role in what people think, and how they view America’s involvement in the rest of the world. Articles within America have praised efforts to bring peace to Sudan, and placed blame on other countries for having economic interests. For example, a New York Times article argues that, “The Bush Administration has its heart in the right place on Darfur” (The Genocide Continues 2). The author explains how Richard Williamson, on behalf of the US, has tried to advocate for peace. The article then begins to explain how, as much as America tries to help Sudan, other members of the United Nations Security Council thwart all the plans. China especially is blamed for being cautious about new policies concerning Darfur because it has a large economic interest in Sudan’s oil and resources. In addition, the author accuses the UN of not getting involved as much as they should have in the crisis. Being part of the Security Council, America is also partly to blame for the lack of involvement from the UN.

One of the most talked about contributions of America is the Sudan Peace Act from 2002. In it the US condemns Sudan for violating human rights, which sounds just like what America should do in such a situation. Looking further into the Act, one does not find it to be too harsh on the Sudanese government or force them to implement much change at all. The threat, if the Sudanese government does not pursue peace, is that the US will deny them certain loans, think about ending diplomatic relations, and, “take all necessary and appropriate steps to deny Sudan Government access to oil revenues” (Sudan Peace Act 1). Strangely enough, this treaty doesn’t make any true changes to the situation. The US threatens to do certain things, but in the end, they only keep the government from getting profits off the oil. The Peace Act sounds influential, but does not truly change the situation in Darfur.

In Rone’s article, another international issue is raised in relation to the Sudanese crisis, which also suggests that foreigners have hindered the situation. She explains that Sudan owes the International Monetary Fund a large sum of money. This fueled the fight for oil even more because the Sudanese government wanted the money to pay off this debt. When looking at Sudan’s past, it is evident that the involvement of other nations has exasperated the oil production process, and put an emphasis on the power
of oil in Sudan. If it were not for the US starting oil projects in Sudan, and the IMF for demanding money, Sudan may not have run into such a huge controversy over resources.

Professionals have realized the underlying intentions of America when it comes to Sudan. In Dan Connell’s article “Peace in Sudan: Prospect or Pipe Dream?” he reveals even more of the facts and writes of America’s economic interest in Sudan, as well as the influence of the war on terror. After the attacks on the World Trade Towers on September 11, America has focused its attention on fighting terrorism. Some al-Qaeda, including Bin Laden, were known to have hidden in Sudan. The ties of Sudan with terrorists caught America’s keen attention. Connell argues that, “today, the dominant concerns are the ‘war on terrorism’ – and oil” (4). For these two reason, America has kept an eye on Sudan, and shown vast interest in the actions of the Sudanese Government, but have not made any significant actions to expedite peace and justice.

America has played an unsteady role in Sudan. At some points, the US supported the rebels, and then switched. Connell points out “U.S. policy toward the Sudanese regime veers back and forth between close support and active antagonism” (4). This shows how America’s interest has changed through time. When terrorism became part of the situation, America chose one side. The situation became more complicated when America’s ally, Egypt, revealed their economic interests in Sudan. Egypt wants Sudan to stay one country because of its control of part of the Nile River. This greatly encouraged America to support the rebels. This decision had nothing to do with social justice, or a concern for the millions of people being killed, but was purely political.

Beyond Egypt’s pressure on America to choose a side, the US had its own political gain in mind during the crisis. Connell also argues that, “US oil interests, worried they were being left out of a petroleum bonanza in the new and expanding oilfields in southern Sudan, favored increased dialogue with Khartoum and a loosening of sanctions that blocked them from doing business there” (5). Unfortunately, America did not follow its support of freedom and world peace when dealing with the issue in Sudan. The Peace Act of 2002 may have seemed like a contributor to peace, but economic and political gains drove America to act.

Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke vivaciously against oppression and injustice in America. This country is proud and known for a history of freedom and fighting for justice. King’s “I Have a Dream Speech” is one of the most famous speeches in this country. His dream is of freedom, and no more division between people. He ends with a reference to Amos, writing about justice rolling down the hills. Interestingly enough, this vision seems to only influence the way Americans look at their own society. If people truly believed that everyone deserves freedom and justice, then action to change the lives of the oppressed throughout the world would take a larger role in American life. What is most disturbing is that, in cases such as in Sudan, America has actually helped to keep injustices reigning.

The U.N., America, and China influence much of the thought process of the West. People believe they are helping countries such as Sudan, when the real reason
they are involved is political. Economic resources, such as oil, keep other countries involved in the Sudanese crisis, but also keep them from helping to resolve the issues. If western powers and the U.N. Security Council truly cared about the crisis in Sudan, then more of an effort to resolve the issue would have taken place and less people would have died. It is crucial as American people to not be deceived by the government, but ensure peace and justice are promoted throughout the world. Everyone in America holds power and influence. Through a greater use of the democratic government and freedom of this country, those stripped of human rights can be free.

Works Cited

In the cold January of 2005, I decided to leave my loving family and country and begin an adventurous and uncertain journey with only the aspiration and passion to learn English and the American culture. My parents and grandparents had been praying for me to be a global leader even before I was born, and I started to attend the English Language Institute when I was just six years old. Growing up in this environment, I was determined to jump into the wilderness, where there is no certain destination or assistance, with overwhelming fear and danger. Anyway, from the beginning of a foreign exchange student program, all I could do was simply trust the Lord because I knew that there was no way I could finish this unfamiliar journey on my own. I also believed that He directed me to this adventure because having this opportunity itself was a miracle.

After saying goodbye to my family, whom I would not be able to see again for an entire year, I got on the airplane, extremely excited. During the fourteen hours of flight, I just read my Bible and prayed for protection and consolation as I was greatly nervous and intimidated by what was to come. When I arrived in the Oklahoma City Airport, I was at the peak of nervousness. I thought my heart was going to stop at any second. It was an awful feeling. Everyone in the airport had different colors of skin and hair, and was holding up a plethora of English signs that I could not even read. Everything was so dreadfully intimidating that it felt like somebody was about to push me off a cliff. Fortunately, my American family found me before I had totally panicked. They were an elderly couple, and they greeted me with such a welcoming attitude that I soon felt relieved.

After some short conversations and a long drive, my new family and I arrived at my new home around midnight. I quickly unpacked my belongings and attempted to sleep. I was wrapped up in a blanket when suddenly a horrible message of fear got stuck in my head, and I wanted to see my parents desperately. I realized that there was going to be no one on whom I could fully depend like I had before. I felt like I was a young boy who just lost his mother in a crowded place. For the next few days, I was engulfed in a depression that I’d never experienced before. People with multifarious colors of hair and eyes; Mexican food made of slimy beans; and unfamiliar vehicles of many different companies like Ford, Chevy, Toyota, etc— they all overwhelmed me.

Also, the environmental factors such as an endless horizon, and even the buttery smell of the air, which I could clearly tell from sniffing the clothes that I just brought with me, were foreign to me. I frantically longed for my family and friends.
As I adjusted to a new environment with a myriad of prayers and devotions, I began recovering from that exotically emotional period and soothed myself to a peaceful state. However, the time of tranquility did not last too long. Soon, I was told that I had to go to school, and fear of peer pressure was aggressively coming towards me like a starving lion chasing an injured rabbit. When I arrived at school, I was at the pinnacle of my uneasiness. Some kids were pointing at me and were saying, “Look, there is an Asian!” I pretended I did not hear them, but their looks and words were nailed on my heart. When I was walking towards the classroom with a school secretary, my steps were getting heavier and heavier.

“Knock, knock, knock,” my agriculture teacher knocked the board to draw the attention of the uncontrollable and wild students.

“Hey guys, this is a new student from South Korea. His name is David. Since it is his first time in U.S., please help him out,” he said, introducing me to my new classmates.

“Hi,” I said with a quiet voice while looking at the wall. I could not make eye contact with anyone. I simply said to myself, Oh, God, please help me… I am going to die.

After this awkward introduction the teacher left, and everyone looked at me like a monkey in the zoo.

“Do….you…speak…English?,” one girl asked with curiosity.

“Yes, I speak English,” I answered.

“Did you have breakfast? What did you have?,” a guy asked.

“Cereal.” I tried my best to say it correctly.

“What? Cigarette?,” this guy laughed.

“Yes,” I answered because I did not know what a cigarette was and I thought it was another name for cereal.

In response, everyone giggled and laughed. I got really nervous and so sweaty that I almost cried. I did not know what to do or why they were laughing at me. Later, someone told me the meaning of it and I was very embarrassed.

Having such a tough first day of school, I was completely intimidated and frustrated. Actually, the first few months of school were pretty much a repetition of my first day. Some immature kids picked on me because of the disability of defending myself since I didn’t even fully understand what they were saying, and I didn’t know what to say.

School was really difficult. Though school work was fairly easy, it was really hard to break the language barrier and a stereotype about Asians. I was even more miserable and depressed than I was before. I rarely smiled, and I felt such heavy pressure and depression that I didn’t even attempt to look up to the sky. During the daily, no, hourly devotion, the only time when I could express myself without any language restriction, I reproached God by asking, “Why did you send me here? I came here to learn to serve you more effectively, not to suffer! I want to go back home. I miss my family and friends!”

During the time of my depression, I finally comprehended a glimpse of God’s plan for me through the sermon series on Jacob’s life (Gen. 28:10-22) given by my
Korean pastor. I paralleled my time of tribulation to Jacob’s journey in the wilderness by himself. As Jacob was in great jeopardy posed by wild animals and insufficient food, I was in mental and emotional depression because of my incapability of utilizing English and socializing with my peers. Being in such a desperate situation, Jacob completely depended on God and showed his faith by pouring the oil on top of a pillar. Eventually, he arrived at his uncle’s house, under God’s protection. Through the story of Jacob, I found hope: the hope that the God of Jacob would also save me from this horrible situation if I fully trust in Him as Jacob did. From that point on, I was able to live in a joy and be confident that I was under God’s supervision. Nothing seemed formidable or frustrating. Having a changed mind and commitment, I made a lot of true friends, and the school became a place of excitement instead of a place of agony and anguish as I kept putting my trust in Him. My English became much better as I hung out with friends, and American culture was no longer so unfamiliar.

As a part of a quote attributed to Mother Teresa goes, “I know God will not give me anything I can’t handle.” God did not allow me to experience adversity that I could not tolerate and even overcome in the end. Yet, as the rest of her quote says, “I just wish that He didn’t trust me so much.” Before this journey began, I expected God to let me live easily, without any tough adjustments or suffering. Fortunately, however, God has led me according to His will, not my will, in order to make me stronger and more capable to be used by Him. Consequently, whenever I experience hardships like this one, I am determined to focus on God, not on the immediate issues, and remember that my awesome God has always been and will always be with me, even in the wilderness.

Work Cited

Writing 211
Advanced Composition: Narrative & Personal Essay
To Everything There Is a Season

It’s been a year and a half since my friend Josh went “home.” Each day holds a different pain and a different joy to experience when dealing with the grief of losing him. Sometimes it’s during worship at church while they sing “I Can Only Imagine” or when my eyes graze a picture hanging on my wall of Josh and me on his 26th birthday, that a memory is sparked and, depending on the moment, I cry or I laugh. Sometimes both.

There is no magic formula to help me walk through these different seasons. It is not a question of whether I miss him, because I do. Every day. For me, it’s just knowing every memory has a feeling I need to record, an emotion I need to remember and savor on the long, lonely road ahead.

* * *

“A time to be silent…” (Ecc. 3:7b, NIV)

I lean my head against the window, staring blankly at the tarmac while attempting to divert my gaze from meeting anyone else’s. I always pick the window seat, and today like every other day I pray the person assigned to sit next to me will not show up. It is a short prayer, because before I can complete my thoughts a woman sits next to me with a smile. Today more than any other day I do not want to talk. “Business or pleasure?” she asks. Just tell her something, anything. And whatever you do, don’t cry, I thought.

“Neither,” I reply hoping there are no more questions, but then I continue. “I’m going to a funeral.”

It would have been better if she had said nothing at all, but this is just the fuel the woman needs in order to continue her extended narrative about her life and every loss she has walked through. As she talks, I lean my head back, resting it on the cool wall of the airplane. The sterile atmosphere of the plane transports me to the I.C.U of Shadyside Hospital.

“Aren’t I going to get a hug?” he asked sheepishly.

He tried to sit up, but I quickly arrived at the side of the bed resting my hand on his shoulder.
“Please don’t move. I don’t want any of these wires coming out,” I playfully remarked. His big blue eyes sparkled with delight as he looked up at me. Instead, I placed my hand in his and squeezed gently.

As I walked out, I smiled and said, “Don’t worry. This won’t be the last time, and next time I will make sure to get a hug.”

* * *

“…and a time to build up.” (v. 3b, NASB)

The plane ride from Wichita, KS to Rochester, NY is only about a four-hour trip, but somehow minutes creep by as I sit in silent grief. It has only been three short days since I had been at this very same airport just returning from New York. During my vacation, I had managed to visit everyone I had wanted. Especially Josh. It was my responsibility to be able to encourage him, pray for him and make him smile when I visited. It wasn’t all for his benefit, because I was able to steal a brief glance from him which let me know he was more than pleased with me being there. Those glances had the ability to make me feel like the most beautiful girl in the world.

My original plans had been to visit him at his house, but the night before my friend, Monica, and I were to leave his mother called.

Monica handed me her cell phone. On the caller ID it read Nancy Pieper. “Hi, Mrs. Pieper. This is Holly. Monica is in the middle of pumping gas. How are you?” I nervously asked. Up to this point Josh’s mom and I had not talked much or at all—not because there was any hostility between us, but because we hadn’t been given the chance.

“Well, Josh is back in the hospital. He was looking forward to your visit, but I guess it will just have to wait until next time.”

My heart sank. The one person I needed to see was him.

“Would it be alright if we just came to the hospital?”

For a moment, I thought she was angry that I had asked such a forward question, because there was complete silence on the other end. Then I heard her asking Josh if he would mind if we came to the hospital. I couldn’t hear exactly what he said, but I could tell by the tone of his voice that he wanted us to come. Mrs. Pieper confirmed my suspicions.

* * *

“And a time to laugh…” (v. 4a, NASB)

I must have fallen asleep, because the muffled sound of the captain’s voice softly nudges me awake. The only thing I can decipher is that we will be landing in about 20 minutes. Ah! I breathe a sigh of relief. I make sure to avoid eye contact with the woman
sitting next to me while we gather up our carry-on bags. The walk to baggage claim seems long. As people speed by unaware of me, I keep a consistent, slow pace. Memories continue to flood my mind.

I had just gotten out of the shower when I heard the phone ring. There was no way I would make it to my dorm room in just a towel. I told myself whoever was calling must wait. Unable to withstand the curiosity I rushed to pull my jeans on over my damp body. I got to the phone and was pleasantly surprised to hear Josh’s voice on the other end. He invited me to go grocery shopping with him. In fear that he would leave without me, I quickly called him back letting him know there was a possibility of me fitting it into my busy schedule. Fewer than ten minutes later, I was downstairs in the courtyard anxiously awaiting my prince. I could see him smiling as I got in the front seat. I’m sure I blushed, thrown off by his smile, which left me aimlessly searching for words. Instead of finding them, I innocently look down attempting to hide my true feelings.

In the grocery store, Josh assigned me the job of “cart pusher.” I liked this job. It gave me some control and something to do, besides think of how good he looked in those jeans. We went from aisle to aisle discussing his favorite foods and the dishes that his mom loved to prepare for him. As we decided what chips he should get, he stopped at the Troyer Farms display and told me there was a factory near the town he lived in. This brought up the subject of why I never went to his house during a break from school. My mind raced with thoughts of how much I would have loved such an opportunity.

“You never asked!” I teased.

We both laughed, knowing at what he had been getting.

*  *  *

“…and a time to die.” (v. 2a, NASB)

Monica is waiting for me at baggage claim. She hugs me, knowing that’s what I need right now. We don’t say much as we wait for my luggage to appear on the carousel. Mostly, I just like having Monica near. I had wanted her to be there with me the moment I found out.

“Just call,” my mom told me.

It was early Sunday morning and I had managed to sleep some. The day before I had received a phone call from Monica telling me that Josh wasn’t expected to make it through the night. They had said it numerous times before. I began to question whether his heart could make it. His lungs? His liver? I locked myself in my room all day praying and pleading with God. I claimed Scripture over his life. I made promises in an attempt to barter for his healing.
As I filled up the very last page of my journal, I wrote, “I wish I could understand all of this, but I will take comfort in You” and closed it.

I knew I needed to call Josh’s mom. It would relieve my stress and I would be able to go to church knowing everything would be ok. I hung up with my mom and with trembling fingers dialed the numbers. It didn’t ring long before the familiar voice of Mrs. Pieper answered. I apologized again and again for calling knowing the day before had been so draining for the entire family, while I tried to explain how worried I had been.

Before I could finish she injected, “He’s gone. He didn’t make it. I was meaning to call you sooner…”

* * *

“And a time to lose…” (v. 6a, The Amplified Bible)

As we drive to Monica’s apartment, we pass a Starbucks. The same one Josh and I spent so much time chatting in. Inside I can see other couples soaking in the relaxing atmosphere and in one another.

“It’s on me,” he demanded as we stood at the register.

Who was I to fight? I knew I wasn’t going to win the argument so instead I thanked him and told him he didn’t have to. For me it was a blessing of not only a free coffee, but also the time alone with him. Josh always paid for me wherever we went. His mother taught him right.

Our usual spot was open, the comfortable chairs in the corner, and I waited for him to return with our drinks. This is the perfect way to spend my evening savoring not only my mocha, but also the man next to me. Outside the world was in a steady ebb and flow, but at that instant time had stood still. Here moments evaporated like the steam coming from our coffee.

* * *

“and another to make peace…” (v. 3:8b, The Message)

When we arrive at Monica’s apartment it is not long before my close friend Earon arrives. I am exhausted — physically, mentally and emotionally— so she just holds on tight. They lead me to the couch and we sit there for a long time not saying a word. The silence is broken with a story.

It was the week of finals and Monica, Earon and I had decided to play a prank on Josh. I tend to steer clear of pranks since I don’t like them done to me, but I thought with graduation just a few short days away he would never be able to retaliate. Our plan of action was to crepe paper and shaving cream his entire jeep. We had not
anticipated that in the morning the shaving cream would have slid down from the windows and rested on the exterior paint.

It was Administrative Assistant’s Day and my employer had taken me out to lunch to celebrate. During the meal, Josh left me a voicemail asking me to call him back as soon as I could. I called him back and said everything would be explained as soon as I returned to campus. We made peace that day and never discussed it again.

* * *

“a time to weep…” (v. 4a, NIV)

Monica and I wake up early in order to drive down to Pennsylvania to attend the viewing and funeral. This is a familiar journey, but now it seems longer and lonelier than before. I notice Peach Street exit is only two miles away and I recall making this very same trip together in happier times. Once was to surprise Josh for his 26th birthday. I could no longer contain my tears.

He was supposed to be ushering this morning, but when he left his house he yelled to his mom, telling her he would be late. Of course, I thought. The day I came to surprise him. Instead, Monica and I greeted people as they walked through the door of the small, but fruitful church. Everyone smiled and shook our hands—we appeared to be a part of the family. Then, as if on cue, he walked through the oversized double doors. I had prayed specifically about the look I craved to see on his face and it was just as I had hoped. Josh was pleased to see me. Church was going to begin in a few minutes so we hugged and found our seats. I admit I had a hard time concentrating during the sermon. Especially after Josh leaned over and whispered in my ear.

“I can’t wait to take you to Grandma’s.”

Josh’s grandma had died a few years before, but the estate still belonged to the family. The house held dear memories for him and he wanted to share them with me. I knew this was important for him, to bring me there. It was important for me too—to be a part of his life and hear the dreams he had for the house, which he planned to own one day. Each room held a story of Josh’s childhood. As I looked out the window, I could almost imagine Josh as a young boy running in between the grape vines and apple trees nestled in the backyard while he helped his grandfather with the evening chores.

* * *

“A time to speak, a time to love…” (v. 7b-8a, NIV)

Monica and I arrive at the church where the unspeakable events will take place. I look at Monica with begging eyes. Please don’t make me go in. She knows this is painful
for me, but tells me I made the right choice. I needed to come. I needed to live through this or I would have regretted it.

Inside I see the open casket and we decide to sit a few rows away. My eyes are fixed on him. In my head, I recite John 11:4. “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” Monica must have gotten up to get something because when I look next to me I see a man I had met at the church the day I visited Josh for his birthday.

“Josh loved you.”

The man continues, but my brain is stuck on those three short words. While the man continues to talk to me, I wonder if I heard him right or if I am losing my mind. Josh and I kept our feelings for one another from most people.

It was a Friday afternoon in the office. In a few short hours, there was going to be a meeting and the place was a mess. I volunteered to vacuum and clean the bathroom while everyone else continued with their business. As I turned off the vacuum, I heard the sound of a received text message coming from my phone. I walked into my office and saw it was from Josh. I grinned.

“I love you, Holly.”

Those were the words I waited a lifetime to hear.

* * *

“… a time to mourn…” (v. 4b, NIV)

After the funeral, I decide to spend a few days in recovery with my family before I fly back to Kansas. Most of my time, I write and read in an attempt to forget or remember, both painful. A book sitting on the lamp stand in the living room grabs my attention. It looks innocent enough. I scan the introduction, and my eyes meet a hymn by Charles Wesley. I read the first stanza in amazement. It begins:

If death my friend and me divide,
thou dost not, Lord, my sorrow chide,
or frown my tears to see…

I take comfort in these words knowing they hold healing for me. As I meditate on Ecclesiastes 3 and drink in its wisdom, my eyes are opened to the fact that there is a time for weeping and for laughing. There are times for mourning and times for dancing. There is no fix for my heart or for this paradigm of grief and joy. There does not need to be.
The Mark

Then I saw another beast that rose out from earth; it had horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon...it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell who does not have the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six. (Rev. 13:11-18)

What If

I wake up one morning, look at myself in the mirror, and notice that horns have begun to grow from the root of my skull. On my forehead, I see the three dreadful numbers—666—inscribed on my forehead in blood red. I knew this day of my transformation would come, although I didn’t always want to believe it. Even as my eyes turn redder and my voice gets raspier, I fight the evil that is trying to have full control of my soul. I will not easily accept the fact that I have become damnation itself, Satan, the antichrist. And on my forehead, I bear the mark of the beast. Soon the transformation would be complete, and I would have no hope of eternal life. I would be doomed to hell for all eternity.

Childish Superstitions

The other children are calling me the antichrist again. They do not know how much their words hurt me, how evil they make me seem. In Liberia, the other kids said the same thing. I didn’t think that they would be saying this in the Ivory Coast also. The big people are telling me that the other children are just teasing me. But what if the children are right and the big people are wrong? What if the marks on my arms are really the mark of the beast, and I would one day turn into Satan? If it wasn’t for those evil relatives back in the bush who scarred me, none of these scary things will happen to me.

Origins of the Mark

Before I was old enough to remember things, my family took me to my ancestral village because of a civil war that erupted in the city of Monrovia, Liberia, a tropical country in West Africa. I was there for about a year of my life as an infant. The village is called Lofa County, and it is located deep within the interior of Liberia. The bush. I was too young to remember the sight of this place, or even the people I encountered there.
But there is something about what happened there that keeps me connected to the place, making it difficult for me to ever forget it.

And so, every time I hear my parents mention it in a story, it becomes alive to me, and I see paradoxical images of it. Grown up now, I have learned to romanticize it as a favorable place, where life is simple, full of family, ancestry, and tradition. But when I was younger, my impression of my ancestral village was quite different. It was then to me, only a dark place deep in the shrubs, a primitive kingdom still ruled by dark magic, sorcery, superstitions, witchcrafts and witch doctors.

It was in such a place that the marks on my forearms that filled me with so much dread as a child were branded into my flesh. As a seven-year-old, gullible and superstitious child, I saw the marks on my arms as something a cruel relative had done to possess me with an evil spirit, as a warning, that one day, I would be transformed into the antichrist.

**Childish Superstition**

I ask Mama and Papa if the marks are the mark of the beast because the children were telling me that I have 666 on my hands. But they just tell me to wipe the tears off my face and that the other kids do not know what they are talking about. But they do not tell me what the marks are. Maybe the marks are really from Satan, and my parents do not want to tell me because they don’t want me to be angry. The marks scare me. I do not want to turn into a devil.

I do not like the bush. I do not ever want to go back there. All of my relatives there want to turn me into the devil. They do not care about me. They hate me. I don’t trust them. Why do they want to do such wicked things to me? I do not ever want to meet them. I am glad I live far away from them. They want to take my soul and sell it to the devil.

My birthday is in the sixth month, June. Is this a sign? Will I turn into the antichrist when I get older, and turn sixteen? Will it happen on 6/6/06? Oh God, I want to go to heaven, and the kids say that people who have the mark of the beast would be locked up in hell forever, even if they were too young to know that it was the devil that was stamping them. I don’t want this to happen to me. So Lord, please. Please don’t let the devil get me. The demons want to come for me in my dreams and take me away. They will brainwash me, and turn me into someone completely evil. Lord, please, please. Please…don’t let this happen.

**What If**

It is happening. My greatest fear is coming true. The transformation is closer now. Blood gushes through my face as my veins enlarge and my rapid-thumping heart is turning pure black in all metaphorical and literal respects. My family is awakened from their morning sleeps by the thumping, and growling, as I try to get used to the horns and the extremely heavy tail that has now become attached to my rear end. They are petrified, as I am reckless. I run out of the house because I cannot let them see me like this. They do not even recognize that I am theirs. I am a monster who has taken away their son, brother, and cousin. I must leave quickly before I cause them harm.
Childish Superstitions

My friends are telling me that I have the marks of Satan. When I come crying to my big cousin who is responsible for taking care of us since my parents are in the States, she tells me to wipe the tears off my face and not to worry about what the kids are saying to me. When I tell one of my friend’s aunt, she yells at the other kids, “Leave the little boy alone. You children should be ashamed of yourselves. Don’t tell him that he will be the antichrist. You children don’t even know what the marks mean.”

The Meaning of the Mark

Different people have different reactions and interpretations of the marks on my arms. When people who are unfamiliar with African traditions see the scars, they may either assume that it is some kind of decoration that I have paid a diligent tattoo artist to decorate into my flesh. These people look at the mark and their usual response is a simple, “Dude that is so cool.”

When others see the mark, they assume that I am one of those “emo” young men who have self-inflicted their skin by their own will—at a time when life was not going there way. Then there are still the ones who see it and ask curiously, “What are those marks on your arms?” I know I will have to answer them, but then I think about how perplexed they may be when I tell them that there are too many versions to the story of the mark—that I don’t even know what the marks mean and that I didn’t even see them being branded into my flesh.

Among the many explanations that race through my head, I usually decide to go for the most simple one—that is, the marks on my arms are a tribal marking, a symbol of belonging to a group. I came up with this conclusion in middle school. Fortuitously enough, one day, in my seventh grade English class, I had the opportunity of having a Liberian man as a substitute teacher. A student from my class noticed the visible scars on his face. Sounding quite disturbed, the girl asked him about his scars. He told the entire class about the various secret societies in Liberia for men and women. When individuals reach a certain age, they may choose to be initiated into a secret society of their respective tribe based on their gender. These secret societies are meant to be kept a mystery from people who do not participate in them. But it is generally understood that these societies function to teach people about the history and culture of their respective tribes, as well as to educate a community about some household responsibilities of women and men. As I remember him saying, “The societies teach women to be better women, and men to be better men.”

After his story, I showed him and the class the marks on my arms. One student, like the children who taunted me when I was seven, grimaced with fright as if she had actually seen the mark of the beast branded into my skin.

The substitute teacher talked about the tribal scars on his face with so much pride, making me feel so guilty at that moment, that I wanted to denounce my heritage—to tell the girl who was staring at me that I was of a culture of my own. In all my inward grumblings, the man guessed that I was a descendant of Lofa County. Since different tribes have different ways of branding, having a good understanding of the
various branding techniques used would allow someone to identify what tribe the branded individual belongs to. Therefore the marks can be described as tribal marks.

But there are deeper meanings behind the marks on my forearms than a symbol of tribal belonging, and an initiation into a secret society. After all, I was too young to be inducted into such a society. As I have heard my parents explain it to me, when we went to live in the village, my father’s sister demanded that I undergo a ritual of protection from sickness and danger. According to my father, his family believes strongly in the potency of tribal medicines. The ritual consisted of my aunt taking a blazing hot blade and branding it into each of my forearms. The scabs are still on my hands—four groups of seven thin strips inscribed into my flesh for possibly all of my mortal life. Sometimes it is as if the marks are not there, but then at other times, they catch me off guard, as I notice them and stare at them. They bring me back to memories I have experienced, but never known—memories of kinship and of a village that I have heard about and lived within but have yet to see.

Sometimes when I am staring at the marks for too long, I may become lost in the absence of reality. Far removed from my present state of thought in the daydream, I may count each group of the seven thin scabs to make sure that they aren’t fading into groups of sixes. They are as much a mystery to me as they are to people who have stared at them curiously to ask me of their origins. Sometimes I want to keep their meaning a mystery to myself. At other times, I want to run to my parents and question, “What do these marks mean? What possessed my aunt to scar me?”

Why the Scar?

One day, while driving back home from my cousin’s house in Pennsylvania, she looked at the marks on my arms, and said, “That thing is still on your arm? It was there since you was a baby. You probably don’t remember.” This was my chance to get an explanation from a source other than my parents whose responses are usually evasive to the inquisition, although I don’t do a good job at asking them. The question burst out of my mouth quite rashly. “Why did they do this?”

My cousin, the upbeat driver trying to explain the story to me the best way she knew how, with her hands on the wheel, looked at me, and then at the road, and said, “Your father’s family said that an evil spirit was inside of you, so they took a hot razor blade and made a medicine to take the spirit out of you.” An answer like this was one that I had always feared as a child. Had I been younger, such a response would validate my suspicions about my presumptive transformation into the devil himself.

Being older now, I responded to it quite differently. “I don’t believe in that stuff,” I said passionately. Then I said quietly, “It’s all superstition. I am a Christian. Only God has the power to rid me of an evil spirit and he already has.”

For years, I have battled with the conflict brought upon by the Christian faith and the traditions of my descendants. How can I be appreciative of and display pride in my heritage while still being true to my faith as a Christian? Although there are people from Lofa County who are Christians, their traditional beliefs seem always to stray away from the teachings of the Bible. They believe in dark magic, witchcraft, sorcery,
spells, and supernatural remedies of their many gods. Consequently, I often wonder: by accepting the mark as a symbol of protection by my descendants, am I dishonoring God? Am I trusting in a power other than God?

Childish Superstitions

The people in Lofa County do not love God. They are wicked people. They do not care about me. When I get older, they will try to come for me. They will send an evil spirit to come for me and send me to the bush. I do not like the bush because scary things happen to the people who go there. The people turn evil and never come back. They are brainwashed into something they never were, or never wanted to be. When they find me and take me away, I will be evil forever and ever. I will be a demon. Oh, Lord, I hope my parents don’t let me go there like all those people who go there to get all types of marks on them. I do not want to be like one of those people. I want to be a Christian. But they do not want me to be a Christian. They want to possess me with evil spirits. Maybe that is why the kids say I have the mark of the beast. They see a devil in me. Soon I will see it, too.

My Resolve

My memories of my youth seem cloudy. They aren’t distinct anymore. As I assay to bring them back, they lose the order of days, months, years, and it is as if all the incidents and events happened in the same space of time. It is as if all of the emotions I felt, all of my fears, the thoughts I had—it is as if all of these things occurred on the same day, in the same place, although they happened in many places and did not happen every single day.

I have grown a lot since my gullible days of thinking that I would become the antichrist. In all of my naïve and unproductive fears, I have learned several important things.

When I became a Christian as a fifteen-year-old—probably just as petrified as I was when I was seven—I prayed that God would protect me from the evils of myself: that my mind, body, and soul, would not be taken over by an unwanted host. And through the scriptures, he talked to me. He told me that nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate me from him\(^1\)—not any sin, not any mark, not any ritual.

I have also been reconciled with my family in Lofa County. Whatever their motives were for branding me, I can live content with the fact that someone, some group, cared about me enough to have my protection in mind. And they showed that they cared in the best way they knew how. And this is what I want to believe. This is what I want to remember every time the marks meet my eyes, in a way that never ceases to mesmerize me. It is as if they are separate from me, yet they have been so much a part of my development—both the marks and Lofa County. I would like to meet up with the aunt who branded me. Sometimes, I tell myself that when I go back to Liberia, I will visit the village, and ask the chief and any relative that I may find. Sometimes, I think that I need to further question my cousin and my parents.

\(^1\) Romans 8:38-39
Sometimes I think that there are still pieces missing to the story, that further questioning is needed to bring the different pieces of the stories to completion.

At other times, I want to keep some details of the ritual a mystery from, and to myself. I have always been apprehensive about unraveling the full scope of the story. But the simple act of writing urges me to dig deeper into the story and to search for answers to learn more about the marks on my arms.

Not too long ago, during my time back at home in New Jersey on break from school, I mustered up the courage to ask my father to tell me the significance of the marks on my forearms. He and an uncle that was visiting were eager, to talk to me not only about the marks, but also about the culture of the people of Lofa County. I sat in the dining room writing on the table still full of leftovers from our thanksgiving meal, a juvenile reporter, jotting down segments of the memories and conversations of my father and uncle. I asked few, if any questions, still hoping that parts of the mystery be kept in the silent secrecy of my still childish superstitious fears. I listened as they conversed with each other even as they were telling me of the Poro and Sandy secret societies of Lofa County.

“When anyone asks you about your culture,” my uncle lectured, “tell them you are first and foremost from Liberia, which is a country in Africa. There are many cultures in Africa, as there are many in Liberia.” Then my father took on, “In Liberia, there are 13 counties—each with a distinct culture. There are over 16 tribes.”

All I needed was to ask a few questions, as my father and uncle were more than willing to talk about how important tradition was and possibly still is to the people of Liberia. The Poro Society, they told me, is a secret society for men, while the Sandy is a secret society for women. Some people may go into these societies in the bush for a month, two months—sometimes as long as a year or two years. These societies are like village school; they function to prepare boys and girls to be responsible individuals of the society in which they live. While in these societies, men and women are taught household responsibilities. The men may learn how to hunt, farm, make wine, set up traps, make palm oil, etc. The women may learn how to make fishing nets, cook, farm, etc.

Like my substitute teacher in middle school, they confirmed that these secret societies prepare men and women for being good husbands and wives. In fact, it is not until one has graduated and been fully initiated into such societies that a male or female may earn the respect of his or her parents to marry. After completing initiation, an individual may be scarred as a symbol of their belonging to the culture. After completing the ritual, such an individual is trusted with all secrets pertaining to the culture and are recognized to be responsible, dependable men and women. Although, today, the secret societies are less prevalent, there are still segments of the population of Liberians who practice some of the rituals. It has been said that during the heat of the recent civil war, a council was established in the city of Monrovia so that initiations in the Poro and Sandy societies could be held. My father and uncle were quick to tell me that the mark on my arms had nothing to do with such an initiation.
Even though they are both from Lofa County, it was only my father who could tell me the significance of the marks on my forearms. This puzzled me a bit as I think back to the English classroom in middle school. How did the substitute teacher know where I was from? Maybe it was a lucky guess. Maybe I told him, and my memory is suffering from the jumbled-up effects of time. In any case, as I listened to my father tell the story, I grew fond of my aunt and her desires to protect me.

According to my father, Aunt Geydou lived with her five sons and her husband. Her husband died from a venomous snake bite, and one of her sons died of mysterious causes at a young age. Some time after his death, it was determined that his uncle had “threw medicine on him”—either food poisoning him, or making medicine from a witch doctor. Upon discovering this, Aunt Geydou was upset, and was determined to not lose another child.

Angry, and afraid, she rushed to a medicine man, told him the situation, and asked him to make a medicine to help protect all of the little children in her house. He gave her a remedy and instructed her how to make the medicine that would protect her children from poison, snake bite, evil spirits, and any wicked thing that may try to cause them harm. She went home, gathered each child in the house, took the razor, the remedy, and made the incisions.

A part of me is extremely appreciative of my aunt and reverent of her passion in protecting the ones she loved. On the other hand, I find it difficult when it comes to how much of this protection I should accept. Just how much of it should I believe in, especially as my Christian faith urges me to trust in God alone? The psalmist writes, “For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation, my fortress; I shall never be shaken” (Psalm 62:1-2). Throughout out the scriptures it is written that those who put their trust in idols and icons will be destroyed—that we should trust in God alone for the source of all protection and blessings. I have always feared that one day instead of putting my trust in God, I would begin to put my trust in the rituals and traditions of my ancestors.

As I write, distant memories come closer into my mind. I remember one day while playing in a big field of my neighborhood in Liberia. I was close to the bushes, playing, talking to myself like little kids do, when I saw a snake slivering towards me. As I was petrified of snakes, I screamed loudly. My older brother and my cousins heard my screams and yelled from the porch of our concrete house decorated with my mother’s flower collections, to ask me what was wrong with me. When I screamed, “SNAKE,” the creepy creature had already begun to move away from me. My cousin Zubah, who was also marked, a son of Aunt Geydou, who would later die from “mysterious causes,” came to my rescue helping me get away and then throwing rocks in the bushes to scare off the serpent. So, then, was the medicine at work? Was it responsible for saving my life? Should I believe in its powers?

I do not think I have to. Throughout African culture, there have been tales of people praying to mountains, catfish, and other icons to ask for prosperity and personal blessings. My father and my uncle told me stories of barren women who prayed to mountains to give them a child. Some women’s requests would be granted after two or
three years and the mountains would no longer be stones, but actual gods that could answer prayers. For other women, no miracle happened. For these women, were the mountains still gods? Or were they just pieces of stones gathered together by a mysterious being?

The beliefs of my ancestors came from the necessity of human beings longing to trust in things greater than themselves. I have since learned to not dismiss these beliefs as mere superstitions, but as an intricate part of a culture. It is human nature to hope, and believe. As a Christian, I believe in Jesus Christ, the son of God, the risen Savior. Aunt Geydou was not a Christian. I am unsure whether she has even heard about the story of the Redeemer in its entirety. She may have not known the God of Abraham, but she did know of other gods. She trusted in rituals and ethnic remedies. As I said before, it is human nature to hope and believe.

After Aunt Geydou followed the instructions of the witchdoctor, two of her sons still managed to die before they were middle-aged. So then were her actions futile? I don’t think they were. In order to keep her family protected, she did the only thing she knew how. Therefore, I am content with the marks being a symbol of my aunt’s concern for my protection. But deeper still, I have discovered what purpose the marks serve for my own personal growth.

They will always help me to remember where I have come from, and the marks will summon me to return. Although I was too young to have any recollections of my time in Lofa County, wherever I go, I will never forget that village. And when I look at the marks, I will no longer think of demons, 666, or the antichrist. Instead, I will think of family, culture, heritage, tradition, ancestry, and inheritance.

Work Cited

I recently returned from a wonderful semester spent in London, a place that for me will always be linked with its exceptionally beautiful architecture. The sparkling milky marble and granite buildings and the unusually clean streets combine with its ancient magnificence to create an air of adventure. I love the city of London, the rich culture of the Tate Britain, the breathtaking splendor of Saint Paul’s Cathedral, and the never-ending wonder that is the British Museum, but most of the people in this bustling metropolis do not match the air that the architecture embodies. Everyone moves quickly, heads down and hard looks frozen in place; no one makes eye contact. Everyone is locked in his or her own world. The contrast between this, my most recent international place of residence, and my first are remarkably stark. For while I just returned from exploring the old-world splendor of a European city and from interacting with the coldness of its people, my first global trip brought me right into the chaotic cacophony of Asia, and to my surprise, into the warmth of its people.

The reason for this trip was a brand new nine pound baby boy—Zebulan David Barlow. He is the oldest great-grandchild in my family, born to my Aunt Ruthie’s oldest son, Jon, and his wife, Mel, who both work at Faith Academy in Manila, Philippines, as missionaries with Navigators. When they had Zeb, nothing short of the apocalypse could have kept Aunt Ruthie away. She has a mutual love affair with kids and has spent the last twenty years of her life working with children as a pre-school teacher. She is also naturally gifted with them. She’s the one, when I was three, who taught me the cool way to put my jacket on by myself by putting my arms in the sleeves and flipping it over my head. If ever there was a woman who should be a grandmother, she’s it! But the more than twenty-hour trip meant she was not keen on making the journey by herself. That fall Sunday afternoon three years ago, when I first heard that she wanted me to come with her, I really had no idea what to expect. I had never been out of the country before, never really left the safety of my rural, artsy, and middle class hamlet. I was a bit sheltered and my naturally soft heart had for years led me to shun books about orphans, the Holocaust and the end times because they all reduced me to a puddle of tears. I knew that poverty existed, had seen the pictures and read the newspaper accounts, had even cried over them, but this trip forced me to confront the reality of poverty and pain in a much more concrete way.

A flurry of activities surrounded the weeks before we left and after issues with my passport, a stiff battle with my too small suitcase, a delay that meant we landed in Manila three hours late, and horrid turbulence over the Sea of Japan, we finally arrived,
battered but alive. At this point my recollections become rather fuzzy; I was basically sleepwalking. I do recall the dingy, noisy interior of the airport; its faults were especially apparent after the lush refinement of our refueling stop in Narita, Japan. Ah well, I thought groggily, the rest of the city will be better. But it only became worse as we found my cousin Jon and trudged to his car. The smell, smog and heat hit us in waves of unpleasantness as we made our way out. The city was a bit overwhelming, even at night—the mess of neon signs, the congested streets, and the general, haphazard appearance of everything all clogged my brain with input and made me dizzy. One thing that stands out from that first car ride was my initial view of the river-front. A mass of multi-colored, hodge-podge structures assaulted my vision and stretched all along this rushing body of water. Cardboard, metal, and pieces of wood along with everything and anything made up the never-ending line of houses.

The center of the city was unlike any other I have traveled to. There were buildings of all shapes and sizes plastered with multi-colored advertisements and covered with graffiti; and there were masses of people everywhere. Because of the almost year-round rainfall, nothing stayed clean for long. Making matters worse, mounds of garbage lay neglected in many a dark corner. After that first ride, we made the dangerous trek again several times to shop and eat; and on every trip, I sat on the edge of my seat and watched with something akin to horror the total chaos that reigned in the streets. Bright school bus-like vehicles known as jeepneys went where they pleased, when they pleased; and since they were the biggest cars on the road, they managed to get away with it. They are the most prevalent form of public transportation and people hung off the open porch-like ends as the buses plowed their way through traffic. But more unnerving by far were the motorcycles, street bikes that puffed out pollution into the already smoggy air. Whole families piled onto these tiny machines, some on the back and others perched on a board lying across the handle bars. These little bikes quickly wove in and out of traffic, ignoring the rules of the road. Three-lane highways regularly carried four or five vehicles abreast; stop signs were viewed as suggestions. This disorder on the roads mirrored the chaos of Manila itself.

Jon and Mel thankfully lived a good distance from the heart of the city in a relatively respectable area although even it was bordered by squatter villages. Like most foreigners and the wealthier residents of Manila, they lived in a gated community and had their own wall and locked entrance along with a tiny square of land they jokingly called the front yard. The development was quite nice, the house large and well-kept, but my favorite part was the flowers. The moist climate can be uncomfortable at times but I have never seen so many huge, vibrant flowers in my life. One tree outside Jon’s house sported hand-sized fuchsia blossoms. The whole world was in constant bloom. Amid the squalor and the dirt these patches of color helped to transform my original impression of Manila.

The school also helped to change my mind. Faith Academy is located up on a hill above the city and seems like a magical island far removed from the filth of the metropolis. Reinforcing this image is the fact that the academy sits amidst woodsy jungle and is surrounded by ten-foot-tall wire and concrete walls. One weekend Jon and
Mel had to dorm sit for friends at the academy in a boys’ dorm. This was the weekend I first started to love the Filipino people, especially the ‘atays.’ These native women worked as cooks, housekeepers, and nannies to the foreign population. I am so glad that I had a chance to get to know some of them. The atays who worked at the dorm were typical of the others I met; they were utterly wonderful. Mostly Christians, they sang while they worked, teased each other and me, and radiated God’s love by their kind gentleness.

I think it was during the first meal I had in the dorm that I was overcome by the desire to help clean up; it just felt wrong to be waited on. As I made my way into the large, open kitchen off the dining room, arms laden with dishes, one of the atays caught sight of me and let out an exclamation; I do not remember the exact words but they were something to the effect of “What are you doing helping?!” It was clear that they were slightly scandalized that I, a guest, was in the kitchen handing dirty plates to the boys who were on kitchen duty. I stayed in the room until the work was done, and they happily included me in their conversation. They also proceeded to try and set me up with all of eligible men that they knew, insisting that I was too pretty to be single. I blushed and was not entirely sure what to do. This simple night of interaction was one that I was greatly blessed by; the way they graciously included me in their banter and camaraderie is a memory that I shall not soon forget.

That weekend it rained—a common event. As I looked up from the couch where I had been playing with Zeb, I noticed a herd of scrawny long-horned cows just on the other side of the dividing fence. In the midst of the cows was a man holding aloft an old black umbrella. It must have been the combination of the soft misty rain, the comical cows, and the lush tropical backdrop juxtaposed with this wonderful looking little man, complete with an umbrella that gave the whole thing the air of a children’s book, perhaps one of The Chronicles of Narnia. The atays and the cow herder were simple poor people with nothing special about them, but the kindness of the women and the whimsicalness of the man went towards shaping my view of and challenging my opinions about the Filipino people. Instead of pitying them and being scared of them, I was coming to love them.

During the weekdays Auntie Ru and I went with Mel and Zeb to visit an orphanage just outside the city that was affiliated with Faith. The stately white building was also fenced in and surrounded by a squatter village. Buildings like the ones that I had seen around the waterfront dotted the land right up to the gate. The village was complete with muddy streets, shops, and tiny dirty ditches that valiantly tried to capture and control the floodwaters. When we ventured out of the safety of the SUV, the smell was overwhelming and the poverty extremely evident. And this was one of the more well-established groups of squatter houses, not like the stray structures that pop up on any unused plots of land. For me, somehow that made it worse. How many of these people would live their whole lives in places like this? I thought, How can anyone live like this? The details made me want to cry: only cardboard, old sign posts, scrap metal, hole-ridden tarps and blankets to keep out the bugs and rain. The buildings were all short,
squat affairs that mimicked the appearance of a large porous growth latched onto the healthier parts of the city.

My senses and heart were overwhelmed. We quickly made our way to the gate and then I was in the orphanage compound meeting the tiny, dark-haired, smiling proprietress and her husband. This couple took care of about twenty children, with volunteer help from Faith. They worked among children, some severely behaviorally challenged, all hepatitis A and B positive, and most rejected by their parents, yet both the workers and the children were joyful even while living next to extreme poverty. In contrast, I couldn’t help but think of the United States, one of the most opulent, wealthy countries in the world, and its enormous suicide rates and soaring depression.

After the visit, as we drove away through the village, I noticed little children running barefooted, yet with clean shirts and radiant laughing faces. As we traversed the makeshift road that led to civilization I saw a teddy bear with a red bow tie hanging up by his ears on a makeshift clothes line. This familiar object, which conjures up happy memories from my own sheltered childhood, stopped me short, made me giggle and reminded me that happiness is not always linked to circumstance.

One day I had another encounter that helped me to see these people for who they were and not just as victims bound to the poverty that defines such a large part of their lives. We were making our way into the city and the roads were packed. As we waited at a stop sign, our car was suddenly surrounded by a group of children carrying rags in their hands. They began to clean the parts of the windshields that they could reach. My first reaction was confusion. I had never seen this before. Aunt Ruthie, who had, seemed completely at ease; her reaction or lack thereof helped me to see that they were working. As I realized that these children were helping to support their families, I wanted nothing more than to cry—*How old can they be? Ten? No, some look closer to six...How poor, how desperate must their families be to let them go out, alone, into the city to work?* They called out in loud piping voices asking for money after they finished cleaning the windows. The one who acted as spokesperson for them all was an adorable younger child with enormous eyes and a quick demeanor. As Jon handed the money to him, the children crowded around laughing, like it was a game. I again had no idea what to think. Aunt Ruthie smiled at me reassuringly. “I like that ring leader,” Jon announced as we pulled away into traffic. “He has great spunk.” To my surprise, I felt the formerly irresistible pity abate. *I like him, too,* I mentally added.

As so often seems to happen, this trip to the other side of the world did not just open up to me how other people live; it also showed me something about myself. When I was first told that we were going to an orphanage, I was frightened, sure that I would not be able to handle the hurt and pain in their world. I could not help thinking that my heart would not be able to take it. But confronted with these abandoned children, some sick, most of them abused, I found I was not as breakable as I had feared. I did cry but not debilitating tears. I learned to view these children as I would any others. I dried my eyes, got down on the floor, and played with them. One little girl was especially enchanting; her eyes were huge and her smile shy. It took many tries before I was able to coax her smile out of hiding. As Aunt Ruthie played in the yard with some of the
other orphans, we played out on the front porch with her dolls; I gave them funny voices and it did not matter that her native tongue was different from mine. As I brought the doll’s mouth to her cheek and made outrageous kissing noises she giggled, and I realized that this was a universal language. Later that night, when I talked to my mommy, I asked if I could bring the orphans home, thinking that the little doll I played with and her friends would be wonderful additions to our home. My mother informed me that we did not have room for them all. Something changed in me that day and with the children’s smiles filling my mind, I forgot my initial fears and let their soft sweetness woo me into changing my view of their land.

When I came home, I found that the questions raised by my time in Manila had curled up into a corner of my mind and taken up permanent residence. I scoop them out every now and then to reflect on the paradoxes they embody. My vastly different experience in London has brought these to the forefront again. Manila for me will forever be linked to the warm and loving people, just as London will always conjure up pictures of elegant buildings, ancient edifices and disconnected people. I shall never forget the faces of the people of Manila. In comparison to the Europeans’ faces, the Filipinos’ seem ever more joyful, wreathed in smiles and warmth even in the midst of their hardship. I came away from this trip with no answers and I still have none; I only have images of rain-soaked hillsides dotted with dark-skinned people balancing water jugs on their heads; muddy streets and peculiarly clean, happy children; wealth existing beside extreme poverty; and palatable joy.

Work Cited

Writing 212
Advanced Composition: Formal Essay
Every parent faces the question of how to grow obedience, responsibility, and maturity in his or her children. Parents approach the issue with various degrees of wisdom and experience; some are dangerously permissive while others err on the side of authoritarianism. Those who are planning to become parents themselves, whether in the next year or the next decade, need to familiarize themselves with the benefits and pitfalls of various disciplinary techniques. What is the correct response when a child snatches an extra sweet from the cookie jar? How should your son be reprimanded when he makes a rude face at his grandmother? When your two daughters fight, is time-out a sufficient consequence? At what point must positive reinforcement (encouraging good behavior) yield to punishment (discouraging bad behavior)? Of particular importance is the question of corporal punishment. Does disciplinary spanking ultimately harm children on a psychological level or help them understand the importance of following rules? Dr. James Dobson argues that some situations call for disciplinary spanking in the context of a loving parent/child relationship, but Dr. Michael Marshall believes any form of physical discipline constitutes child abuse.

Psychologists Fritz Redl and David Wineman handle this difficult issue by outlining four conditions that must be present in order for disciplinary spanking to be effective, beneficial, and humane.

Spanking in the home generally occurs in one of two contexts: either a parent spanks in anger, releasing pent-up frustration by turning it back on the child, or a parent spanks infrequently but purposefully, intent on discouraging a particular type of behavior. The first scenario, a clear case of abuse, is obviously wrong. The tragic truth is that 60 percent of abuse cases begin in a disciplinary context (Zigler and Hall). Hitting children with a closed fist, smacking their faces and heads, or even throwing them against walls are considered “punishment” by some parents. Four American children die every day as a result of similar abuse, three-fourths of them under the age of four (“National Child Abuse Statistics”). Such disturbing statistics make the arguments of well-intentioned “antispancers” more understandable. Antispanker Dr. Michael Marshall considers any form of corporal punishment morally wrong and psychologically destructive; however, it would be unwise to blindly accept his conclusion without considering that disciplinary spanking may benefit a child in the right time and place. In his famous book The New Dare to Discipline, Dobson asserts that “just because a technique is used wrongly...is no reason to reject it altogether” (60). Likewise, essayist Okey Chigbo says that while she fully supports the eradication of abuse, she views spanking as being “useful in some situations, with many kids” (193).
Although disciplinary spanking can—and has—become abusive, in the right hands it is an effective tool for discouraging bad behavior.

Parents must take responsibility for using spanking sparingly and succinctly, being careful to chastise children without making them feel threatened. In their book Controls from Within, Redl and Wineman identify four conditions which must be met for corporal punishment to 1) discourage unacceptable behavior and 2) avoid damaging a child physically or emotionally.

First of all, a child must dislike punishment if it has any hope of dissuading him or her from a certain pattern of behavior (231). In order for any reprimand to be effective it must cause some degree of discomfort, but not lasting or severe pain. Disciplinary spanking “should be confined to the buttocks area, where permanent damage is very unlikely” (Dobson 63); it shouldn’t be forceful or prolonged enough to cause swelling, welting, or bruising.

Secondly, children must connect the pain to their misbehavior (Redl, Wineman 231). They must be old enough to know spanking can be prevented by good behavior. Dobson joins Redl and Wineman in encouraging families to spend time together “before disciplinary problems occur” (75) so that when physical chastisement is necessary, children experience it in the context of a strong parent/child relationship. Only when children understand their parents’ love isn’t conditional can they associate a painful spanking with a specific, deliberate misbehavior rather than the whim of a parent.

Thirdly (and this is trickier), a child must learn to channel the aggression generated by corporal punishment “toward that part of the personality which produced the problem to begin with” (Redl and Wineman 231). Corporal punishment does result in additional aggressive energy and parents are responsible for making sure that the aggression is channeled in a very specific way. A child should associate a given behavior with a suitably strong memory of his or her own anger at the result of a behavior, and this anger must work against the child’s desire to behave the same way again. Marshall’s number one reason for discouraging spanking is the fact that it generates aggression; however, the hope is that children can be taught to direct bitterness toward the impulse which led them astray, thereby making them less likely to indulge in that behavior. For example, parents who spank a child for throwing a fit should explain that s/he is not being reprimanded for having a disgusting personality, but rather for stomping, complaining, and crying. Parents who do not help children make these distinctions risk leaving them with lingering guilt rather equipping them with the knowledge that they can do better and the aggression to follow through.

Last of all, aggression must be internalized in such a way that it will enable the child to better “control the impulses in question rather than producing defense, anxiety, aggressive stages, or self-recrimination and withdrawal” (Redl and Wineman 232). Every time parents undertake corporal punishment they must watch for indicators of the child’s response. Is their son suddenly more prone to hit his siblings? Does their daughter flinch when they pat her on the head or move to hug her? These situations must be discussed with the child and two parents may decide to suspend such
chastisement if their child’s reaction is too severe. Corporal punishment should always be used sparingly and in the context of a loving parent/child relationship.

Are Redl and Wineman’s four conditions (using unpleasant but nonabusive punishment, maintaining a child’s dignity, teaching a child to connect pain to behavior rather than person, and using aggression to discourage future misbehavior) achievable? Are they effective enough to outweigh the danger of using corporal punishment? Clearly there are many who would answer “no.” Nadine Block takes a hard line against corporal punishment in her essay “Disciplinary Spanking Should Be Banned,” wherein she adopts the oft-argued position that spanking of any sort results in increased aggressiveness. Citing Murray Straus’s book *Beating the Devil Out of Them: Corporal Punishment in American Families*, Block writes, “Children who are frequently spanked for lying, cheating, hitting siblings, and being disobedient are more likely to display…antisocial behaviors” such as assaulting family members (186). A key word here is “frequently.” Although Straus’s studies demonstrate the link between repeated and uncompromising physical pain and subsequent antagonism, his conclusions are limited; he overlooks the possibility of reserving corporal punishment for circumstances in which one-trial learning is necessary. One-trial learning may be needed when a child runs out into a road after being told repeatedly to stay on the front lawn. Should the child decide to ignore the parent’s warning to “stay in the yard” at the wrong moment, he or she could be hit by a car and suffer serious injury or death. A rational explanation (“I don’t want you to go into the road because a car could hit you”) would not work quickly with a two- or three-year-old, but this simple explanation accompanied by a few firm smacks on the buttocks might deter a horrible accident.

Parents must remember that spanking is only appropriate for certain ages of children. Studies done by psychologists like Robert Larzelere indicate that it should be confined to children between two and six. When Larzelere compiled results from six different corporal punishment studies, he found age had a lot to do with spanking’s effectiveness: “Of twelve studies involving children with mean ages under six, eleven reported beneficial outcomes” such as “subsequent compliance with parental orders” (“Causes and Effects of Child Abuse”). These encouraging results occurred in situations where children misbehaved during time-out and parents resorted to spanking. Only in this age range, however, did spanking result in better behavior without negative side effects. “Among children ages seven-and-a-half to ten years, just one study reported beneficial outcomes while six studies found detrimental outcomes” such as low self-esteem or dangerously aggressive behavior (“Causes and Effects of Child Abuse”). There comes a point where corporal punishment is unnecessarily insulting to children; seven- to ten-year-olds may be so offended by the form of punishment that they are unable to remember the misbehavior that brought it about. Parents should always consider a child’s age when deciding to use nonabusive spanking in their home.

Even those who use corporal punishment sparingly with children of appropriate ages must maintain vigilance in their disciplinary habits. Dobson admits that it is possible—even easy—to “create a violent and aggressive child…if he is routinely beaten by hostile, volatile parents” (60). A parent who lacks emotional control or whose family
history includes abuse should never respond to disobedience in a physical manner. A child’s past must also be taken into consideration; a young person with a history of abuse would find it extremely difficult to differentiate between the punishment and the person carrying it out. In cases like this, bad behavior should be discouraged in other ways.

Corporal punishment can take two very different forms. In some cases it is clearly abusive; however, lumping all physical discipline into this category obscures the constructive potential of spanking. Few spanking activists embrace it as a cure-all or even a continuously reliable fallback plan, and most emphasize the importance of assessing a situation carefully and responding to each type of misbehavior with a suitable reprimand. Also, corporal punishment should be a relatively infrequent occurrence. Parents must vary punishments according to the severity of the misbehavior. “There is no substitute,” Dobson says, “for wisdom and tact in the parenting role” (62). While corporal punishment can be harmful if it is used on formerly abused children, enacted too frequently, or carried out too harshly, it can also be beneficial if used within the parameters of a loving home.

Works Cited


Religion for Couch Potatoes

Over the past forty years, the Christian church has had to deal with a lot of dramatic, drastic, and rapid changes in western culture; and the results have often seemed chaotic, especially in the realm of music. As music and its role in society has evolved and changed, the church has struggled with how to deal with these shifts. The resulting ‘worship wars,’ have been very obvious. In much of mainstream Christianity, however, we have smiled triumphantly as we reached compromises in the midst of this war, and as we peacefully introduced “Christianized” versions of newer styles of music into our church services. Yet, as Christians have become distracted with these issues, we have ignored a more important conversation about the very purpose and even the theology of music. As a result of our distraction, a dangerous change in the way we approach worship has occurred. This change reflects the church conforming itself to a culture immersed in the epistemology of television; a technological device in front of which both Christians and non-Christians spend hours of their time. While we have tried to deal with cultural changes in styles of music, we have failed to notice that television has actually changed the way we worship.

In Neil Postman’s landmark work, Amusing Ourselves to Death, Postman presents the argument that every form of human communication affects the way we think. Writing, for example, facilitates logical thought and was essential to the development of philosophy in ancient Greece. He further argues that the medium of television is biased towards a dangerous way of thinking. Unlike when reading, television does not require someone to follow logical strings of thought to understand an abstract concept. Instead, it asks that you leave your brain behind and receive a pre-prepared experience of a concept. For example, reading requires you to logically connect words, grammatical patterns, and thoughts, to understand the concept being presented. Television lets you see and hear concepts without having to think. Reading communicates with thoughts, and our emotions respond accordingly. Television communicates with our emotions, and our thoughts respond accordingly; and when our emotions lead our thoughts our view of truth becomes subjective to our emotions. Television also removes all prior knowledge from our mind so that we focus just on what’s in front of us (Mander 197-98). With each new commercial, show, or news story, the last segment is forgotten and has almost nothing to do with the present.

This entire epistemology is the way the church is quickly beginning to approach worship, making worship entirely subjective and so that it facilitates illogical, incoherent, and downright false thinking about truth and its Source.
Before this shift, worship music harkened back to a tradition set by the great protestant hymn writers of the past several centuries and their founding father, Isaac Watts, a famous English hymn writer from the 18th century. Watts was a well-educated individual. From an early age, he exhibited a sharp mind, beginning his study of languages at the age of 4, and quickly mastering Latin, Hebrew, and Greek (Southey). Watts was trained in theology, and was interested in the philosophy and religious thought of his day, and his intellect showed in his work.

One distinguishing factor of his style was that Watts’ hymns required the worshiper to know something of God before worshiping. For example, his hymns expressed somewhat complex theological concepts, such as his expressions of God’s eternality, and man’s frailty, in “Man Frail, and God Eternal.” Furthermore, because of Watts’ devotion to understanding God as revealed through natural revelation, a basic, scientific knowledge of the nature of creation helped the worshiper better appreciate the majesty of God. Watts facilitates this method in hymns such as, “Praise from all Creatures”:

Nature with all her powers shall sing
God the Creator and the King;
Nor air, nor earth, nor skies, nor seas
Deny the tribute of their praise.

Watts’ hymns also often required the worshiper to possess prior knowledge of God as revealed in Scripture. For example, in “The Presence of God Worth Dying For,” Watts writes about the wonder of living in the presence of God as exemplified by the story of Moses’ ascent into the mountains to die in God’s presence (Watson). The story, as presented, would be unclear without knowing something of the Biblical account. In Watts’ hymns, knowing about God was necessary to understand the concepts being expressed, and thus to be able to sincerely express them in worship.

Watts’ hymn writing was also influenced by his renowned abilities with language. Watts’ writings exemplified poetic excellence, and he was considered “a writer who is skilled in the management of Latin and English verse,” and had the “characteristic qualities as a hymnographer at their best.” Dr. Samuel Johnson’s Dictionary even used some of Watts’ writings as examples of good word usage (Watson). Good poetry, while it is sometimes more vague than simpler language, is intended to express more than simple language can express. Watts’ abilities with poetry and rhetoric assisted the worshiper in gaining a deeper knowledge of who God is than could be gained through simpler language.

Watts believed that logic was key to discovering truth, and should be used along with good rhetoric to express truth. According to Watson, “Watts’ hymns express this vision, because they often show this process of clarification, of the removal of obscure and confused ideas.” Watts hymns work with the mind of the worshiper, inviting them to intellectually participate in the discovery and communication of truth. He “condemned obscurity,” wanting to make concepts and truths clear. By employing logic in his works, he could let the worshiper enter into a line of thought that transports them into a deeper understanding of God.
Watts’ methods of writing hymns influenced scores of hymn writers after him, including some of the most beloved hymn writers of subsequent centuries, like John Newton and John Wesley (Marini). His method has a specific goal in mind; acknowledging who God is with clarity and depth, and developing understanding of these divine truths in the soul so that it raises up in worship. Declaring that “God is great” is only worship, if we truly know why we are saying it. This method of worship, as a sequence of understanding and then response, thought and then emotion is all throughout Scripture. Ezra led Israel in worship by first telling the history of Israel up to that point, and then the Hebrews worshiped God for what He had done. Or, as it says in Romans 12, “in view of God’s mercies...worship” (NIV, emphasis added).

This worship philosophy did not drastically change until the “Jesus Movement” of the 1970s. The Jesus Movement was a countercultural, charismatic revival that occurred among large groups of individuals in the ‘hippie’ culture who came to Christ in large numbers the 1970s. The movement was experiential and emotional in its philosophy of Christian practice, coinciding with revivals in the Charismatic tradition at the time. The subculture that resulted led to a decentralization of the Word of God, and all means of understanding God at an intellectual level, in Christian practice. Emotion, subjectivity, and an experiential relationship with God was placed at a level of higher importance. This approach to Christianity is identical to the epistemology that results from an increasingly television-based culture. In this mentality, reflection, logic, intellect, or the need for building intellectual understanding before responding to a concept, are downplayed. Emotional responses to God are placed above the objective understanding that comes through scripture, theology, natural revelation, logic, etc. (Peacock).

Musicians from the Jesus Movement began forming networks and relationships that soon became an entire industry of Christians making music with Christian record companies, for the Christian population. This phenomenon is now known as Contemporary Christian Music (CCM). The music created by the CCM industry reflects the subjective and charismatic tendencies of the Jesus Movement (Peacock).

The songs that have resulted from the CCM industry use very simple language, are often repetitive, and are aesthetically emotional. These songs rely on eliciting emotional responses in order to give the facade of understanding an abstract concept. A worshiper may declare something ambiguous about God such as, “You are worthy,” without having their mind brought to a point of understanding what that means. Just as when watching television, a concept is given to your emotions, instead of your emotions responding naturally when your mind comprehends a concept.

Consider, for example, Tim Hughes’ “Here I Am to Worship.” The verses of this song give a very basic rendition of the narrative of the gospel from a personal perspective:

Light of the world
You stepped down into darkness.
Opened my eyes, let me see.
Beauty that made this heart adore You
Hope of a life spent with You
The concepts have some scriptural basis, but are simple and ambiguous and don’t necessarily require any knowledge of the passages it refers to. The lyrics can be comprehended without much prior thought, without much thought during the song, and the words do not reflect complex poetry. The chorus continues:

Here I am to worship,
Here I am to bow down,
Here I am to say that You’re my God
You’re altogether lovely
Altogether worthy,
Altogether wonderful to me

The chorus does not connect logical trains of thought, does not harken back to Biblical stories or theological concepts, and actually spends more time talking about the worships (I, me, etc.) than God Himself. The adjectives that are used in reference to God are not explained by the song, and are left as ambiguous terms that really only have emotional connotations. Without any prior context, the inquisitive mind is left asking, “why” or “how is God lovely, worthy, wonderful?”

As Neil Postman has remarked, “A good television program always aims to achieve...applause, not reflection.” This song and others like it constitute the same principle. It aims to achieve some emotional response, but does not challenge the mind to reflect on the nature of God in any context. This song is a paradigm for many others like it. The repetition and ambiguity of Michael W. Smith’s “Breathe,” or the popular song, “The Heart of Worship,” which makes nearly no declarations about God’s nature at all, are all examples of this style. According to Parrett, speaking about modern worship songs springing from the CCM tradition, “[these songs] do not speak clearly of God’s character, deeds, or will. Nor do they speak substantively of the response God requires of us.” As with other elements of our culture, this subjective method has caught on. These songs are being sung in church settings more and more (Breimeier).

All of our culture has been affected by our television mentality. Politics has become about which candidate makes the best television personality, education has become “fun” and “entertaining,” advertising has become about eliciting visceral responses and making use of psychological manipulation instead of arguing for the superiority of a product. Everything must be presented as entertainment (Postman).

Though there are certainly exceptions, these songs generally take all the intellectual work out of worship, and rely on our emotional responses to concepts; just like television.

To quote Postman once again, “The God of the Jews was to exist in the Word and through the Word, an unprecedented conception requiring the highest order of abstract thinking” (9). Modern worship songs do not require us to deepen our understanding of God through abstract thinking, encouraging the modern church’s Biblical and intellectual illiteracy. If the only necessary requirements to worship are the abilities to understand basic ambiguous terms and feel emotions, we soon will rely on our emotions to apply our preconceived meanings for these words to the song, which may
or may not accurately reflect God’s nature. For example, we may sing “I love you Lord,” but if our only knowledge of love is predominately influenced by our increasingly post-Christian culture, we may be thinking of God in terms that are watered down versions of, or very different than, what God means by love. In other words, we’re worshiping the God that we hold in our own minds, instead of letting our minds explore who God is. When worship is subjective to our own ideas, instead of clearly presenting truth, it can become the worship of something totally different than God. Worship very quickly becomes idolatry. Maybe it’s time to change the channel.

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Ring ring, the telephones all over the house chime in unison.

“Yellow,” an older woman answers the phone. She is about 5 feet 4 inches tall, with rounding shoulders, and short brown-grey hair. She has twinkling brown eyes, a caring face with happy lines, and a mouth ready to pop into a smile in an instant.

“Hey Grandma,” any one of her fifteen grandchildren responds.

“Hi honey,” Grandma replies, “How are you doing?” This conversation will usually continue for thirty minutes to an hour depending on which grandchild she is speaking with. As Grandma speaks into the phone she is bustling around the kitchen making a cup of tea.

“Dern it,” exclaims Grandma.

“What’s the matter?” the grandchild inquires.

“I set my cup of tea down when I went to let the dogs out, and now I can’t find it.” The conversation continues about how Grandpa is feeling. Grandpa is completely dependent on Grandma to take care of him. Grandma has taken care of Grandpa as his health failed for many years, and has never once complained.

“There it is!” Grandma shrieks with laughter.

“There what is?” asks the grandchild.

“My tea! I left it in the cupboard with the dog food.” Grandma’s tea is a continuing joke in the family. She is always losing it. At any time during a visit to her house, a cup of tea will be left in the microwave, on top of the refrigerator, in the bedroom, in the living room, or in the linen closet.

“Guess what, Grandma!!” screeches the grandchild, all of a sudden remembering why Grandma was called in the first place.

“What?” Grandma always replies.

“We’re coming for Christmas!” replies the grandchild.

“Oh! I can’t wait,” Grandma exclaims, hardly able to contain her excitement to see the family she loves so dearly.

At Christmas time, Grandma is found in her kitchen baking goodies for when the kids and grandkids come on Christmas Eve. Grandma will cook for days before the family arrives at her house. Her hands are covered in flour as she makes her youngest son’s favorite dish of noodles and mashed potatoes. When she is finished with the noodles, it is time to make cranberries and whipped cream, then the pumpkin pie, the sweet potato casserole, and the ham. The grandchildren love to help Grandma in the kitchen.
“Who wants to lick the spoon?” Grandma asks even the grown-up grandchildren.
“I do!” they all respond.
“Here you go.” Grandma hands the spoon to whoever is closest to her.
After a huge meal it is time to open presents. Grandma is known for shopping year round to make sure everyone has enough presents under the tree. There are stockings hung on the mantel piece for every child, grandchild, step-grandchild, and great-grandchild in her family. After everyone leaves, there is only Grandma, Grandpa, and a few of the family from out of town left in the house.
Grandma loves to read. Evenings at her house usually consist of Grandpa lying in bed watching the television, while Grandma sits on the couch reading a book and making comments on the television show. With Grandma’s right hand she balances a book on her lap. In her left hand alternates a cookie or some other type of sweet, and her perpetual cup of tea.
“Do you need anything, Kenny?” Grandma asks Grandpa at intervals throughout the night.
“Coffee would be nice,” is a typical answer from Grandpa. Grandma finishes the page that she is reading in her book, and goes to make the coffee. After she gives Grandpa his coffee, she exchanges the cup of tea in her hand for a fresh cup of coffee, and returns to her book. Anytime between ten o’clock and midnight, Grandpa falls asleep. Grandma lets the dogs out one last time.
Grandma has been the same woman for as long as I can remember her. She takes care of her family before herself every time. She will help anyone in need with all the power that is in her, and she so selflessly takes care of Grandpa that she rarely ever leaves the house because he cannot be left alone. But at any given point a family member will answer the phone and hear “Yellow” on the other end, and know that someone is calling who truly cares.
Writing 213
Advanced Composition: Writing about Literature
A brief summary of the classic English novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, by Daniel Defoe, would most likely captivate the potential reader just enough for him or her to commit to a complete reading of the book. The pages are, after all, laced with ignorant rebellion, misguided adventure, raw cannibalism, and hovering death, which is more than enough to snatch the interest of the common reader. However, he or she will soon encounter the unembellished, matter-of-fact style of narration and doubt whether the promised action and adventure will ever actually materialize. The intrigue of the novel does not come from the objective, rational manner in which it is told, but rather from the frantic occasions when the character of Robinson Crusoe deviates from the cold reign of realism. He frequently indulges in exaggerated fits of fear and fanciful departures from the reality of his present situation, which ironically serves to make Crusoe abundantly more believable and authentic. The reader soon finds that the guaranteed adventure comes not from a series of ruthless heroically occurrences, but instead from that which does not occur and the senseless fear and fantasies that thrive despite the absence of ensnaring action.

The chosen style of narration is so dryly realistic that it overwhelmingly conflicts with any hope of emotional experience that struggles to break through the descriptive words. Any hint of a potentially candid, subjective event suffocates and withers beneath the lines of cool, rational detail. As Hans W. Hausermann notes, provocative incidents certainly happen, but the reader cannot easily perceive anything beyond the factual account of the narration (310). When Robinson Crusoe fatefully discovers the footprint on the shore, for example, the author chooses to make this fearful event known to the reader by using the matter-of-fact preface: “It happened one day about noon” (Defoe 112). The inexplicable introduction of apprehension plagues Robinson Crusoe with debilitating anxiety, yet its significance is downplayed by the impartial manner in which the author presents it. What more can one expect from a novel that embarks with a bland regurgitation of the details of the protagonist’s birth? (1). Through this judicious style, Robinson Crusoe seems, at first, to stand as the resilient hero, one who will not dabble with silly notions of subjective thoughts and dreams. However, this technique necessarily leaves a lot to be desired, for “Defoe’s epic of the stiff upper lip does not propose a wholly satisfactory ideal” (Watt 305). The reader yearns for substance beneath the already overbearing substantial reality that drains so much promised life from the novel.

Armed with a staunch contention against Defoe’s chosen means of narration, Virginia Woolf expounds upon his obsession with reality. She, too, speaks of the
reader’s disappointment page after page when events that could potentially have been enthralling dissolve into mere unimpassioned description. Woolf bitterly concedes that the reader must alter his or her expectations of what is to come and begrudgingly accept that “reality, fact, substance is going to dominate all that follows,” for God, Nature, and people are as good as dead because of Defoe’s writing (22). Once, when reflecting upon God, Crusoe muses that “sometimes [he] would expostulate with [him]self, Why Providence should thus compleatly ruine its Creatures,” but the premise is quickly truncated by reason, for “something always return’d swift upon [him] to check these Thoughts” (Defoe 47). He further admires the beautiful and plentiful resources of the island only in the context of what he may extract and conquer from them (74), and he desires to bury the bodies of the murdered savages simply because they would exude an unpleasant odor (175). There exists not a single tantalizing bit of an invitation to imagine something sensational beyond the written words on the page. Woolf goes on to lament that from the time Robinson Crusoe washes up on the island, “there are no sunsets and no sunrises; there is no solitude and no soul” (22). For her, Defoe’s fixation upon portraying the untainted facts makes it impossible for any hope of imaginative touches to be the redemption of the book.

Although it is undeniable that Defoe champions a rational narrative voice throughout his novel, Woolf’s criticism fails to account for the numerous occasions when Robinson Crusoe is governed by an irrational and obsessive fear that is clearly felt despite the writing style. The specific causes of Crusoe’s fear are what force the often overlooked emotional undertones to diverge even further from the detached manner in which they are presented by Defoe. Real, tangible objects incite the initial terror, but it is the exaggerated thoughts and torments of the unknown and indescribable which captivate Robinson Crusoe’s mind for the majority of the text. For example, when the skittish hero endures an earthquake, it is not the episode itself which haunts him, but rather the reliving of it afterward, for he “thought of nothing then but the Hill falling upon [his] Tent and all [his] household Goods, and burying all at once; and this sunk [his] very Soul within [him] a second Time” (Defoe 59-60). This theme of terror within the voids of actual occurrences stalks Robinson Crusoe’s state of mind throughout the novel. He cannot sleep “for fear of being devour’d” by savages (51), he spends two days in one location because he is afraid to venture from known safety (60), and he does not sleep for several nights after the discovery of a single footprint on the shore (112). When it is revealed that the origin of this footprint is groups of cannibals, it is interesting to note that “their invasions come and depart, but the effect cannot equal that of the previous invasion of fear” (Boyce 47). The gravity of the initial event can never equal the terror that clings to Robinson Crusoe and revives itself daily in his mind. The overarching cause of this persistent anxiety, argues Maximilian Novak, may be attributed to a human being’s natural reaction to prolonged solitude (23). “Although most modern critics have regarded Robinson Crusoe as an embodiment of the enterprising, fearless economic man,” he is more accurately a manifestation of festering fear, for “he survives his solitude, but he is always afraid, always cautious” (23). This incessant fear breaks through even the most rigid tangle of objective narration.
Within these rational boundaries of speech and thought, Robinson Crusoe himself contradicts the ruling impartial tone by confessing that he is so often terrified by that which he cannot even explain or see. He adeptly observes that the “Fear of Danger is ten thousand Times more terrifying than Danger it self, when apparent to the Eyes; and we find the Burthen of Anxiety greater by much, then the Evil which we are anxious about” (Defoe 116). Robinson Crusoe is steeping in irrationality, and he is fully aware of it. After the discovery of the footprint, he cannot help but remark that the further away he is from that which caused his fear in the first place, the more apprehensive he actually is (112). Robinson Crusoe cannot fully explain the cause of this in the stiff boundaries of the narrative voice, yet in this candid instance, he becomes more relatable, more personal, and more admirable to the reader. After reliving the incident that first caused his fear, as human beings so often do, Robinson Crusoe again confesses that “my Satisfaction was perfect, though my Danger was the same; and I was happy in not knowing my Danger, as if I had never really been expos’d to it” (Defoe 142). He, at this moment, touches on a universally held truth among all people: human beings are often much happier to stroll through life in a state of ignorance rather than to be aware of the impending danger, for people “cannot escape taking notice of the common dictum that what you don’t know doesn’t hurt you” (Gombay 240). With this statement, Robinson Crusoe officially becomes adopted into humanity by the reader because he or she has also undoubtedly felt this same desire to carry on in cheerful unawareness in order to escape harm.

By this rush of confusing fear that trembles beneath the hard objectivity of Defoe’s writing, Robinson Crusoe secures a second chance from the reader, whose dismissive judgments now melt into a hint of softened pity. Although his flaws are undoubtedly numerous, those who perceive Robinson Crusoe’s pervading terror cannot help but desire to forgive him for the confines of his rational expression and rescue him from his misfortune. His past transgressions of disobeying his parents (7), dealing decently yet not affectionately with the slave boy Xury (19), and his overall selfish conquest to provide only for his own benefit are somehow forgotten when Crusoe vulnerably confides in the reader and appeals to his or her compassion and understanding. He appears frankly pathetic when he admits his controlling fear which the footprint incited, allowing that he is

\begin{quote}
Terrify’d to the last Degree, looking behind me at every two or three Steps, mistaking every Bush and Tree, and fancying every Stump at a Distance to be a Man; nor is it possible to describe how many various Shapes affrighted my Imagination represented Things to me in, how may wild Ideas were found every Moment in my Fancy, and what strange unaccountable Whimsies came into my Thoughts by the Way. (112)
\end{quote}

Since the surge of relatable emotion seeps through the gaps of the realistic writing style, Robinson Crusoe now has the benefit of using each of these—exhaustive realism and irrational emotion—to improve his image in the reader’s eyes. Because Defoe provides “detailed description of the hero’s actions and thoughts [. . .] he has made a character
sketch which, though not perfect, possesses a remarkable vividness” (Roorda 52). The reader may extract from the extensive descriptions a visual link to Robinson Crusoe and he or she may also take his perceivable fear and bond with him based on an unspoken acknowledgment of his or her mutual and often ridiculous humanity. What remains is the unexpected wish to save the stranded hero from the confines of his anxiety.

This honorable desire which the reader feels to rescue the now-accepted Robinson Crusoe from his fearful state is shared by the protagonist himself. Conscious of his miserable and lingering fear of events that the narrator would happily demystify with paragraphs of cool reasoning, Crusoe seeks to escape from the preoccupying terror which masters him. However, he does not break from the realism so much as to desire a physical rescue from his self-sufficient island. Instead, Robinson Crusoe retreats within himself and indulges in the creations of his mind (Defoe 95), for when “given unendurable reality, a man will live in dreams” (Spacks 420). With this final dramatic rebellion from all things real, the objectively crafted protagonist severes himself from the narrator’s rationalism. The refreshing episodes of fancy “may help to alert the reader to some psychological surprises of a story that follows a straight-forward narrative scheme in many ways highly predictable” (420). Crusoe wistfully ponders the what-ifs of his situation, confessing that “[he] spent whole hours, [he] may say, whole days, in representing to [himself] in the most lively Colours, how [he] must have acted if [he] got nothing out of the ship” (Defoe 95). Robinson Crusoe frequently acquiesces to his imagination when reliving the past, and often sets himself up for forlorn disappointment in his present situation, sharing that

There are some secret moving Springs in the Affections, which
when they are set a going by some Object in view, or be it some Object, though not in view, yet rendered present to the Mind by the Power of Imagination, that Motion carries out the Soul by its Impetuosity to such violent eager embracings of the Object, that the Absence of it is insupportable. (136)

In this instance of unhindered personal thought, Crusoe not only exercises subjective musings in spite of the objective narration, but he goes so far as to admit that he often replaces reality with that which his own mind fashions. Rigid realism no longer holds Robinson Crusoe as its isolated prisoner. He has found fellowship and solace in being accepted by the reader into the rest of humanity, and he has, therefore, been figuratively rescued from the island by escaping from the reality of it.

With this liberating break from any objective restraints, Robinson Crusoe may now develop and progress as the hero of the novel with the aid of his retrospective imagination and ironically master the style of narration and use it to his advantage. He has been aware of his tendencies toward fanciful fear through the entire novel, yet through the paradoxical cooperation of imagination and realism, Crusoe can at last conquer his anxiety of the unknown. In a wildly fantastic dream, he envisions himself rescuing and befriending a savage from the other cannibals (Defoe 144). This incident seems far too speculative to have any merit in the realistic novel, yet this very same vision becomes absolute reality a year and a half later when Crusoe discovers Friday.

51
Through the marriage of fancy and fact, Robinson Crusoe gains a companion, thus ending his fearful solitude on the island and the inevitable anxiety which isolation causes. Similarly, the discovery of the footprint on the shore paralyzes Crusoe with fear of what it may foretell to the point of putting “an End to all Invention” (128). Like an irrational child, his haunting imagination leads him to scamper into a cave for safety, but at first, security can’t even be found there, for his mind still concocts fanciful tales. The Devil himself may be in the cave, Crusoe speculates, and it nearly prevents him from entering (129). However, he employs the narrative voice of reason, counteracts his imagination, and soon after, enters the cave. As Spacks observes, “In entering the cave despite his intense fear […] he reminds himself of reality. He has always been better at confronting immediate causes of fear than at dealing with his own fancies” (423). By combining the seemingly opposing forces of imagination and reality, Robinson Crusoe proves that he is not mastered by either quality in itself, but can instead use each to help overcome unfounded fear.

Through the progression of the novel, Robinson Crusoe can perhaps best be labeled enigmatic. Although his observable characteristics are elaborated upon in excessive and often dry detail, the style of narration easily distracts from the uninhibited happenings of the inward man. The reader hopes that, surely, a real human being cannot be as robotically rational and objective as the story implies. Therefore, when the narrator hints at emotions or candidly shares outrageous dreams, sufficient notice must be given to these details. While descriptive events of the story march onward, wholly human and subjective implications flow beneath the happenings of the plot. It is during these intervals between action that the true adventure takes place. Linear events can only incite so much interest, for it is individual reaction to these events that is truly unknowable, and therefore, fascinating. In a novel drenched with a realistic style of narration, the reader is acutely intrigued by the idea of an isolated hero who is controlled by irrational fear, which keeps itself alive for a while by feeding off Crusoe’s own sleepless imagination. The further he wanders from the narrative voice, the greater the reader begins to observe and identify with his tormented humanity. One of the greatest and most pitiful comforts, after all, is to know that one human being is just as conflicted as any other.

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Unlike in a fairytale, Jane Austen does not weave into her novels male protagonists of two-dimensional character and simplistic detail. A typical reader might believe to have George Knightley all figured out when reading Austen’s *Emma*; he is apparently the heroic man who can’t only provide for all of Emma’s physical needs in a very comfortable way, but has also an upstanding character that very comfortably offsets Emma’s disagreeable qualities. Without Mr. Knightley, Emma’s maturation and coming of age are simply impossible. Yet Jane Austen provides us with clues and subtle suggestions that Mr. Knightley is not all that he appears to be. If one is to read *Emma*, and read it with a thorough understanding, one must leave room for the notion that Mr. Knightley is not only a significant character, but one of complexity that is not always as blameless as he may at first seem.

So how, exactly, does a typical reader view Mr. Knightley? We trust him, we believe what he says, and conclude that he is in the right, and that Emma is in the wrong, the majority of the time. We feel, as Mary Waldron points out in her article “Men of Sense and Silly Wives: the Confusions of Mr. Knightley,” that we are very comfortable with him. “We feel safe with Mr. Knightley.” It takes a great deal of vigilance to come to a conclusion other than Mr. Knightley’s own, “that Emma is rather a silly girl” (Waldron 144). He is generally very well-liked, and even this in itself seems to be something of a phenomenon. As Rosalind S. Meyer says in her critical essay “Mr. Knightley’s Education: Parallel’s in Emma,” it is “extraordinary” that someone who is “perpetually and irritatingly in the right” can be so well-loved by novel-enthusiasts (Meyers 215).

However thoroughly the novel is read, there is no question that Mr. Knightley is of a superior nature to all the citizens of Highbury and abroad. His character, as well as his status, exceeds everyone else’s. We hear a great deal concerning Donwell Abbey before we are personally introduced to it in chapter six of volume three. Until then, however, we are well-aware of the vastness of the Abbey: Mr. Knightley is the owner of a very large farm estate, of which the Martins are tenants (Pool 163). As Daniel Pool says in his book *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew*, “Land was perhaps more the key than anything else to real social distinction” (48). Such a large estate was the ticket to other possible social risings. The land, however, needed to be old, attached to an old family. Donwell Abbey was not only huge, but old: being an abbey, it surely dated back several centuries, with the Knightleys as the long-residing feudal family (49).
Also included in the benefits of being an old estate-family, the Knightley’s enjoyed some political power and sway in social circles. It is implied that while Mr. Knightley is not part of the aristocracy, he is not much below them. Though he is without a title, Austen never mentions what his exact ranking is. We can assume, however, that he belongs to the upper gentility because of his property holding, and the respect with which the characters regard him. Mr. Knightley’s wealth is also an inherent part of his property. Along with rent from the tenants, his income includes the profits from the farm (85). Under the right of primogeniture, George, as the eldest son, inherits the estate in one piece (90).

Yet, it is not only his social status that is very agreeable to readers and fellow characters alike. There is an astuteness Mr. Knightley exudes that makes him so admired by readers. While Emma is going about scheming and match-making, we can see what sort of troubles she is liable to cause. Mr. Knightley also sees the harm in her method and confronts her about this. We therefore feel a sort of camaraderie with him; we can clearly see where he is coming from, and we agree with him. When Emma encourages Harriet to reject Robert Martin’s marriage proposal on the grounds that he is socially inferior, we as readers object because we can see Harriet’s own inferiorities set against Mr. Martin’s likeable qualities. The way in which Mr. Knightley rebukes Emma’s meddling quenches within readers a very strong annoyance toward her. He admonishes Emma, saying:

[Mr. Martin] is not [Harriet’s] equal indeed, for he is as much her superior in sense as in situation. Emma, your infatuation about the girl blinds you. What are Harriet Smith’s claims, either of birth, nature or education, to any connection higher than Robert Martin?

(Austen, Emma 38)

Readers agree absolutely with his words, and so Austen’s audience is automatically thrust into a pattern of always reading Emma’s actions as wrong and Mr. Knightley’s as right.

This amity toward the hero of Emma only increases as he is continuously portrayed in an agreeable light. He is proven correct (and Emma therefore proved wrong, which is satisfying indeed) in his judgments more than once. Mr. Elton turns out to be just as Knightley describes him as “not at all likely to make an imprudent match” (Austen, Emma 42). Likewise, though Emma insists Harriet is of decent birth (Austen, Emma 39), in the end Mr. Knightley is proven right in his assumptions that she is no better than the Martins (Austen, Emma 317). Along with being right, he is also kind and has an air of humility about him. He is good to the Bates’ (Austen, Emma 154) and friendly with his tenants (Austen, Emma 13). We are even more taken with him when he rescues Harriet, of whom he does not initially think highly, from Mr. Elton’s snub at the Crown Inn ball (Austen, Emma 214).

Yet, simply because Mr. Knightley has a knack for disagreeing with and disliking the same characters and situations as we do as readers, does not exempt him from making mistakes of his own. There are plenty of examples in the text that show that Mr. Knightley is “involved in the same kind of social/moral confusion as Emma and all the
other characters” (Waldron 142). From his romantic perplexity to his most obvious character flaw, there is a side of Mr. Knightley that, when explored, enriches our understanding of his role in Austen’s novel.

Perhaps it is strange that one such as he, who has and is the best of Highbury society, would make such an effort to socialize with the Woodhouses. Granted, Mr. Woodhouse ranks fairly highly, and is perhaps second in the novel’s society only to the Knightleys; but for Mr. Knightley to condescend to spend so much time at their house, as a frequent and familiar visitor seems slightly odd. As Paul Langford mentions in his book *Englishness Identified*, “Familiarity presupposed a right to intrusive conduct” (Langford 238). If one could be sociable without unnecessary interference in another’s life, it was expected of him (239). Apparently, Mr. Knightley had a relationship of great familiarity with the Woodhouses—as familiar as their own family. It is possible this was partly because, he is family to them—Emma’s brother-in-law; but this is not the case until Isabella has come of age and married John Knightley.

At one point in the novel, Austen writes of the familiar relationship between Mr. Knightley and Emma from their own viewpoints. At this time in the novel, Knightley and Emma have already confessed their love for one another. He tells Emma:

> How often when you were a girl, have you said to me, with one of your saucy looks—‘Mr. Knightley, I am going to do so and so; papa says I may, or I have Miss Taylor’s leave’—something which, you knew, I did not approve. (Austen, *Emma* 304)

Here is a picture of Mr. Knightley trying to ramify the leniencies of an indulgent father and governess, while Emma, a sassy little girl, pays him a disrespect that cannot dissuade his love. Emma herself becomes so comfortable and familiar around Mr. Knightley that she ought to have few qualms at the occasional disagreement.

However, she is clearly uncomfortable at several moments throughout the novel when Mr. Knightley rebukes her actions and they find themselves arguing: “Emma made no answer, and tried to look cheerfully unconcerned, but was really feeling uncomfortable and wanting him very much to be gone” (Austen, *Emma* 42). His influence over Emma is clear, and whether or not he is aware of it, Mr. Knightley uses his sway to shape Emma into a woman agreeable to him.

This shows Mr. Knightley as being a sort of moral enforcer in Emma’s life. He can see how clever Miss Woodhouse is, from an early age. When in an argument with Mrs. Weston concerning Emma’s relationship with Harriet, he mentions, “At ten years old, she had the misfortune of being able to answer questions which puzzled her sister at seventeen” (Austen, *Emma* 23); but he also sees how her wit could do harm.

Because Mr. Woodhouse does little to provide Emma with a means of self-control in areas such as humility and self-indulgence, and her governess, Miss Taylor, educates her only in principles (Austen, *Emma* 303), it is inevitable that the young girl will grow up, well aware of her intellectual and social superiority with no intentions of checking her attempts at self-satisfaction. Although by the end of the novel, Knightley confesses he believes Emma would have managed just as well for herself, the readers and the heroine both find it hard to imagine she would have turned out quite the same
without the guidance of Mr. Knightley (Austen, _Emma_ 303). His constant impressions on her have unavoidably formed her into the exact woman he wishes to marry.

But is it only Emma who is doing the changing? I would argue that Mr. Knightley undergoes his own transformation. Granted it is not nearly as drastic as Emma’s but it still occurs; while she is maturing and conforming to the desirable wife-figure, Knightley remains not unchanged. This is apparent in his gradual change of opinion about Harriet, and in his experimentation with Jane Fairfax as a potential pursuit (Waldron 151). Waldron says of this that “both Emma and Mr. Knightley have to change in order to be fit for each other” (141). This seems to be the case, and not only in _Emma_ but in other of Austen’s novels as well. This theme of the two prominent characters undergoing transformation in order to properly fall in love is reminiscent of Austen’s other novels, such as _Pride and Prejudice_’s Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy.

It is interesting here to compare Mr. Knightley to Mr. Darcy in other ways as well. Darcy is regarded by many—both characters in the novel as well as readers—especially toward the beginning, as arrogant and snobbish. This is exactly the opposite of the way Mr. Knightley is perceived by characters and readers: he is altogether a “good” character. Yet it is toward the end of the novel that Mr. Darcy is able to prove that appearances have deceived, and he is a very respectable character indeed, as is revealed by Mrs. Gardener’s letter in chapter ten of volume three (Austen, _Pride_ 220). A similar revelation comes in _Emma_ when Mr. Knightley is suddenly seen to be a jealous lover (Austen, _Emma_ 284)—not quite what anyone would have expected from such an honorable man.

There is another contrast between these two heroes in that, as Mr. Darcy is extremely wealthy, Mr. Knightley is less well-endowed. Perhaps this seems surprising at first, for readers of _Emma_ automatically assume Mr. Knightley is wealthy and without much financial need. Yet there is a comment Austen makes, only in passing, and only noticed by those reading diligently, which opens our eyes to the truth of his financial condition. In volume two, chapter eight, Austen writes, “Mr. Knightley keeping no horses, having little spare money and a great deal of health, activity, and independence, was too apt... [to] not use his carriage so often as became the owner of Donwell Abbey” ( _Emma_ 138). Clearly, he does not have at his disposal large monetary sums. Certainly it is a fascinating comparison; Darcy and Knightley have little more in common than being the man who wins the heroine in the end, and being at the sort of pinnacle of society (but even that is debatable; while Mr. Knightley is at the top of Highbury society, there is little to indicate he is quite so well established in larger society as Mr. Darcy is). However, Austen seems to be making the same point with each of them, that appearances are deceiving.

Pursuing this thought further, Meyer explores a similar theme in her essay as she notes “As our first impressions are thus undercut, we begin to perceive that this novel has an interest...in revealing the deception of appearances—particularly when individuals distort what they observe according to their own preferences” (Meyer 214). Readers inevitably accuse Emma of doing such a thing, but there is some evidence that Mr. Knightley is not entirely guiltless of the crime (Waldron 141). When he accuses
Frank of skirting his duty, it is obvious that he imagines Frank to be a less than honorable gentlemen before Frank has a chance to prove himself otherwise (Austen, *Emma* 95). While readers usually come to the conclusion that Frank is in some way to blame, Knightley accuses without demonstration. It is as John Hagan points out in his essay “The Closure in *Emma*,” that “it is no merit in Mr. Knightley that if he happens to reach a right conclusion, it is for quite the wrong reason” (Hagan 547). If Mr. Knightley reaches this correct conclusion for the wrong reasons, it must then cast doubt over our trusting all his other correct conclusions.

There also appears to be other secret (though perhaps subconscious) motives for some of Mr. Knightley’s generally approved-of actions. For instance, when he discovers that Jane Fairfax is very fond of apples, he ups his regular annual gift of a sack, and gives the Bates’ his entire apple supply for the year (Austen, *Emma* 155). It might appear that he is simply following a usual pattern of kindness, but as Waldron suggests:

> If we accept that Mr. Knightley is in a state of confusion about the kind of wife a man of sense might choose, and half conscious of an attraction to Emma that he does not want to admit, then his behavior toward Jane is open to another interpretation than the kindly paternalism it is usually thought to be. (Waldron 151)

It would make sense, then, that Mr. Knightley at last must come to grips with his feelings for Emma by first considering another woman of more conventional character. He rejects Jane ultimately for her reserve, and consequently decides that “a stormy relationship with someone he can trust is better than one with someone whose thoughts may be hidden from him” (153). He cannot but believe that Emma is his match.

Yet, if he is to pursue her as a lover, Mr. Knightley must overcome his typical attitude toward Emma. The manner by which Mr. Knightley confronts Emma throughout the novel reveals to us that he is equally perturbed by her behavior and attitude as we are. By the end of the novel, however, he confesses to us that he has loved Emma since she was thirteen (Austen, *Emma* 304)! This seems to show that Mr. Knightley falls in love with Emma in spite of what we might call his “better judgment.” He is very well aware of all her faults, but is unable to help himself. He hesitates at first to act on his new-found sentiments because of Frank Churchill’s obvious attentions to Emma. This rivalry can only inflame his love (Hinnant 297), but he can only indulge it in his typical role as Emma’s “brother.”

It is important, therefore, to explore this pre-romantic mind-set. For what is the motivating factor behind Knightley’s interference in Emma’s life to begin with? What does he, the master of Donwell Abbey, care for a young, feisty girl a station below him? As Waldron points out, he has a very ambiguous relationship with Emma. “As her brother/father/teacher he feels she ought to be a greater credit to him, and his disappointment, combined as it is with latent sexual attraction, expresses itself in anger” (Waldron 145). He is clearly sincerely upset by the damage Emma is in danger of causing. When he exclaims to Mrs. Weston, “I wonder what will become of her!” (Austen, *Emma* 25), we are shown a glimpse of his underlying emotion.
That there is something more in the way of Mr. Knightley’s affection for the Woodhouses, and especially Emma, is first revealed to us at the ball at the Crown Inn. After Mr. Knightley has “saved the day” by dancing with the slighted Harriet Smith (Austen, Emma 213), Emma invites him to dance with her. She mentions that they are not so much brother and sister as to make it awkward to be dancing partners and his reply, though subtle, is extremely significant: “Brother and sister!” he exclaims, “no, indeed” (Austen, Emma 216). This is the moment at which we see Mr. Knightley no longer perceiving himself as a paternal, or even brotherly figure in Emma’s life, but as a potential lover.

But how does a well-established gentleman go about romantically pursuing a young woman who has always been to him a sort of daughter or younger sister? This is the problem Mr. Knightley must now resolve for himself. While Emma is really in no danger of being claimed by Frank, Knightley has no way of knowing this and so must struggle with his negative emotions about the friendship of the two young people. He grasps onto what fading influence he has on Emma, and when she hurts Miss Bates at Box Hill in volume three chapter seven, he takes advantage of what he thinks is one of his last opportunities to soften her tactlessness. The way in which he addresses the issue, though, is less like a father and more like a friend—his method has changed. “This is not pleasant to me,” he assures her, “but…I will tell you truths while I can, satisfied with proving myself your friend by very faithful counsel, and trusting that you will some time or other do me greater justice than you can do now” (Austen, Emma 246). Knightley has such desperateness and earnestness in his speech that his sincere desire is unmistakable.

When at last he learns of the engagement between Frank and Jane, such hope is kindled in his heart as to give him courage to disclose his heart to Emma. For the typical reader, this would be the moment of true emotion demonstrated by Mr. Knightley—and more credit to him because it is such a desirable emotion. However, though Mr. Knightley has a logical air about him, he displays a considerable amount of emotion, both positive and negative, prior to his confession. I have already discussed his envy of Frank Churchill, and I would bring to light another occasion in which his conduct is ruled by emotion rather than logic. In chapter eight of volume one, Emma informs Mr. Knightley that Harriet has refused Mr. Martin’s marriage proposal. While readers side almost unanimously with Mr. Knightley’s side of the argument, there is nothing very rational in the way he goes about arguing with Emma. “Emma is cool, Mr. Knightley emotional; Emma consistent, while Mr. Knightley shifts his ground several times” (Waldron 147). In proof of Waldron’s claim, there is a point when Mr. Knightley is actually colored with his emotion (Austen, Emma 38). At another time, he actually contradicts himself when he first says that Mr. Martin is a perfect match for Harriet, and then expounds on why Harriet is so much Mr. Martin’s inferior (Austen, Emma 39).

Though it takes a transformation before Mr. Knightley can suppress his impulses to father, correct, and attempt to control Emma, by the end of the novel, he has to some degree become the very character most readers believe him to be from the beginning. His envy and prejudice against Frank Churchill culminate in a very sincere attempt to
console Emma, when he believes her attached (Austen, <i>Emma</i> 279). All his attempts to correct and teach her as he thinks she should be taught fall to a level of unimportance when he assures her she could have done just as well without him (Austen, <i>Emma</i> 303). In a grand climax of affection and humility, Mr. Knightly abdicates himself to Emma; he wishes to have her just as she is, and gives up his own home by way of securing that (Austen, <i>Emma</i> 295). This is a Mr. Knightley of deep emotions and controversies, a complex character craftily woven by Jane Austen. As Waldron says, “if [Jane] knew anything, she knew that human beings are intractable, unpredictable, extremely various, and not amenable to rules when it comes to the immediate decisions of everyday life and the minutiae of relationships” (142). There is no better way to sum up the profundity of George Knightley’s nature. In taking him at face value only, it is impossible to fully comprehend and benefit from Austen’s <i>Emma</i>. Only with a careful consideration of his person can one experience the richness and depth of the novel that is indispensable for any who would read it with a desire for true understanding.

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James Joyce end his short story anthology, *Dubliners*, with a tale called “The Dead.” This story depicts the events of a single night and the change they wrought upon Gabriel Conroy, the protagonist in the narrative. He attends an annual Christmas party at his aunts’ house and is subsequently plunged into a number of revealing moments where his true characteristics are displayed. Gabriel is an insensitive and selfish man who cannot fathom the love the Irish people have for being Irish. He displays this antipathy through his words, actions, and demeanor. At times it seems as though he is almost unaware of the implications of his actions, for example in his conversation with Miss. Ivors she accuses him of being a “west Briton” (421-22) and he is perplexed by her indictment. Throughout “The Dead” Gabriel interacts with each character in such a way as to give clues about his real identity. Joyce does not state outright Gabriel’s character and purpose, but allows the audience to draw conclusions about him based on his interactions with the other characters in the story. Throughout the tale Gabriel is represented as an unsympathetic figure, yet his epiphany at the end of the story portrays a changed man who has discovered equality. How Gabriel changes throughout the story is not readily apparent but does show in some subtle ways through his interactions with the many fascinating characters.

There are a plethora of interesting characters involved with the protagonist. His two aunts, Kate and Julia, represent the old Irish tradition of hospitality. He states in his dinner speech, “the tradition of genuine warmhearted courteous Irish hospitality” (926-27) is exemplified in his aunts. Vincent J. Cheng in his critical article on “The Dead” relates this same traditional reading of the text as “a display of seasonal warmth and goodwill, Irish hospitality, high spirits, and the Irish gift of gab” (Cheng 342). Gabriel later displays his hypocrisy and insensitivity by saying, regarding his aunts, “What did he care that his aunts were only two ignorant old women?” (576-77). Here is depicted not only his coldness and lack of respect for his aunts, but also his superiority. He knows that he is better educated than they are and he puts everyone on a lower plane than him because he believes that he is superior. However, though Gabriel speaks of his aunts in a negative manner he subsequently acknowledges his Aunt Julia’s talent for singing, “To follow the voice, without looking at the singer’s face, was to feel and share the excitement of swift and secure flight. Gabriel applauded loudly…” (589-91). He recognizes her talent and consequently gives her credit for it by applauding; the praising of others talents is not typical for Gabriel. He generally only thought of his own dominating role and how to maintain his façade of sophistication.
Another case in which Gabriel’s façade is revealed is in his interaction with the maid Lily. His attempt to have a trivial conversation with Lily results in offending her pride and creating an awkward situation in which he gives her money. In the course of the short conversation Lily reveals her bitterness about “men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you” (93-94). This could possibly correlate with the occasion in the story “Two Gallants” also by Joyce, in which a young maid gave the gallant a significant sum of money after being with him. This action of a gentlemen and maid exchanging monies reflects the stations of life that they are in. The reminder to Lily, by Gabriel, of her status as a servant is insulting to her. Gabriel does not know how to deal with Lily’s emotions and consequently he employs an old tactic of adjusting his clothing, “kicked off his galoshes and flicked actively with his muffler at his patent leather shoes” (96-97), as a farce to hide his discomfiture behind. Gabriel’s inability to face up to and understand other people’s emotions and reactions to events typifies him. This event has been interpreted by Cheng as an act of dominance by Gabriel. Cheng states, “he buys her off by imposing his dominance in a different field of mastery in which he can hold sovereignty, that of relative wealth and power” (Cheng 352). However, Gabriel’s act could also be interpreted in a more positive manner. His attempt to rectify the awkward situation into which he has blundered is admirable. He gives her money because he does not know what else to offer her, his attempt at conversation shows a hint of his caring nature. Gabriel does not exactly equate himself with her but he does attempt to bring their social levels closer through a casual conversation. This illustrates a positive characteristic of Gabriel’s, that of a caring and congenial man trying to brighten Lily’s day.

A further aspect of Gabriel’s character is revealed by his inappreciative ear for Mary Jane’s piano piece: “Gabriel could not listen while Mary Jane was playing her academy piece, full of runs and difficult passages” (351-52). Gabriel does not enjoy the classy piece that his aunt is playing. Though Gabriel presents the persona of a highly sophisticated and edgy gentleman he cannot appreciate the aesthetic beauty of a complex piano piece. Gabriel has several other moments in which he illustrates his intention to be a sophisticated gentleman. For instance his insistence upon his family using all of the latest inventions from the continent, “what with green shades for Tom’s eyes at night and making him do the dumbbells and forcing Lottie to eat the stirabout,” is amusing to his wife but entirely serious to him (166-68). Gabriel also enforces his wishes upon his wife, as indicated by the story she tells about him: “O, but you’ll never guess what he makes me wear now! [Mrs. Conroy laughs] Galoshes! said Mrs. Conroy” (169, 175). Gabriel seems preoccupied with making his family non-provincial. At the same time he is uncomfortable with the attention being drawn to his attempts when, “[he] laughed nervously and patted his tie reassuringly” (179). His preoccupation with sophistication sets him apart from his Irish peers and elevates his status in his own eyes. Gabriel could also be seen merely as a socially awkward man who needs constant reassurance of his own worth. He finds this worth in his things, his self image and pride are based not in his Irish identity but in his accomplishments, education, and sophisticated tastes.
This insecurity is further exhibited in Gabriel’s encounter with Miss Ivors. In this scene Gabriel thinks, but does not actually express, his opinion that “literature [is] above politics” (434) this sentiment could be derived from his lack of self confidence. He has to put his work above the work of Miss. Ivors in order to feel assured of his own value. Gabriel’s refusal of Miss. Ivors’ friendly invitation to “the Aran Isles” (449-50) is indicative of his attempt at distancing himself from his Irish countrymen and finding his merit outside of his ethnicity. He not only distances himself but also his wife. Miss Ivors extends the invitation to Mrs. Conroy by saying, “it would be splendid for Gretta too if she’d come. She’s from Connacht, isn’t she?” (452-54). Gabriel responds shortly with, “Her people are” (455). He does not say that Mrs. Conroy, his wife, is from Connacht but only that she is partially associated to it through “her people” (455). This scenario depicts the separation that Gabriel is striving for through his rejection of all things provincially Irish. This rejection could stem from his preconditioning by his mother in terms of his education to rise above the common Irishman. His mother’s view on Irishness is illustrated in her terming of Gretta as “country-cute” (388). This term is demonstrative of his mother’s opposition to the marriage as unfitting for Gabriel because of Greta’s Irishness. The very act of Gabriel going against his mother’s wishes and marrying Gretta is an important distinction about his character that Cheng never discusses. Gabriel decided when he married Gretta, to lower his social expectations in his wife. This act is against the common interpretation of Gabriel’s character as a superior sophisticated gentleman.

A characteristic that seems obvious in Gabriel is a dominating male egocentric attitude. He enjoys being in control and in the center of attention, as illustrated by his depiction of his grandfather and his horse Johnny on pages 180-81. This characteristic is further illustrated by his response to Aunt Kate’s despairing cry of “Where is Gabriel? Where on earth is Gabriel? There’s everyone waiting in there, stage to let, and nobody to carve the goose!” (694-96). Gabriel responds animatedly with “Here I am Aunt Kate! Ready to carve a flock of geese.” (696-97). The reference to a stage is significant in that throughout this scene Gabriel is acting out a part, the part of a confident head of the household. He states later that “he felt quite at ease now for he was an expert carver and liked nothing better than to find himself at the head of a well laden table” (723-25). In this situation Gabriel is in complete control, he knows the role he needs to play and he plays it masterfully, thus further illustrating his quest for dominance over the situations in his life. But is Gabriel really searching for dominance and superiority or does he just want to know his place? His actions could be indicative of a man who is attempting to fit in and fulfill a role. The role that Gabriel is trying to fill is a typical male role of that time, one of control, poise, and sophistication. The problem is that he is merely putting up this front to impress others, his actions are not who he really is. His true character is revealed at the end of the tale.

This dominating factor Gabriel adopts as a part of his personality is very potent in his lustful thoughts about his wife after he has seen her on the stairs listening to the song “The Lass of Aughrim.” His very manner of observing her is proprietorial, he wishes to paint her and name it “Distant Music” (1157). His thoughts about Gretta represent
both his education in his search for symbolism and his aggressive ownership of her person and appearance. He has adapted to the cultural normality of ownership of his wife, he believes that he has the right to have her. Later on in the narrative he states “he longed to cry to her from his soul, to crush her body against his, to overmaster her” (1393-94). This is a powerful example of Gabriel’s domineering and insensitive attitude towards the pensive, sad mood that his wife is experiencing. Gabriel does not yet realize his and Gretta’s equality; his thoughts are operating as the society of his time dictate.

In this light, Gabriel’s response of becoming jealous of the boy, Michael Furey, whom Gretta is remembering with sadness, is understandable. Gabriel does not know how to deal with his desire for complete ownership of her person and being, while there is this part of her that he knows nothing about. He responds to Gretta’s thoughtful confession with “a dull anger began to gather again, [leading to] the dull fires of his lust [beginning] to glow angrily in his veins [again]. Someone you were in love with? He asked ironically” (1447-50). This response to Gretta’s emotional upheaval is brutish in its selfishness. All that Gabriel can think about is the effect that other people’s emotions, actions, and pasts affect him. He is not concerned with her sadness but only with his jealousy. However, this sentiment of jealousy stems from his inability to fulfill his role as a male head of household who has everything under his control, his frustration and anxiety with this is illustrated in his lashing out at Gretta. Cheng paints Gabriel as a “well meaning domestic tyrant” (350). This is an apt description of Gabriel. However, Cheng also implies that Gabriel’s prime motivator is an “aggressively masculine colonization, aestheticizing, and objectification of women” (358). This depiction of Gabriel is arguable in that he does control his actions and does not force himself upon Gretta. This restraint speaks of a deeper respect he holds for her and her person than that of simple dominance. However, Michael Furey represents to Gabriel the passionate love that he, Gabriel, finds lacking in his marriage. He shares this sentiment in line 1590-92, “he had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love.” Gabriel reveals his feelings of inadequacy in this quote. This feeling of inadequacy is another aspect of his feelings of inferiority and pressure to fulfill a specific role. His adoption of a superior attitude towards all that he comes in contact with illustrates his inability to function on a humble level. He has to be in control, yet he gives up this control in regards to Gretta in the closing scene of “The Dead.”

In this scene Gabriel finally realizes his wife’s need to grieve for this boy who she said “[had] died for me” (1498). He gives up his sarcastic, insensitive manner and “continued to caress her hand” (1503). This is his futile attempt at comforting her. A few lines earlier in the narrative he has a feeling of “vague terror…as if, at that hour when he had hoped to triumph, some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him, gathering forces against him…He shook himself free of it with an effort of reason” (1499-1503). This “effort of reason” signifies Gabriel’s conscious attempt to dispel his dominating attitude. The “vague force” could be interpreted as the social and educational normality’s that he had been raised with. However he rejects these in favor
of an attempt to comfort his wife. He not only represses his feelings of dominance but he also recognizes that he cannot help her, that she needs to be alone, he “held her hand for a moment longer, irresolutely, and then, shy of her grief, let it fall gently and walked quietly to the window” (1546-48). The very words used to describe his actions, gently, shy, and quietly, speak of his recent realization of her privacy and their equality. Here he treats her as an equal for the first time in the narrative. He observes her with new eyes and looks “unresentfully at her tangled hair and half open mouth” (1551). His observation of her as a human, not as an objectified aesthetic property of his, shows this shift in attitude in the last scene.

This shift of attitude is further illustrated in his scrutiny of his now sleeping wife and realization of his own finitude. The domineering superiority that is seen throughout the story “The Dead” is obviously absent in the closing paragraphs of the tale. Gabriel becomes aware that he is not different than his Irish peers and ancestors, his statement that “the time had come for him to set out on his journey westward” (1604) illustrates his final understanding and rediscovery of his Irish roots. The west typically symbolizes the untamed and pure Ireland of the past that he is now traveling towards.

Gabriel becomes sensitive to the equality of humanity in the last portion of the story; “his soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead” (1612-1615). He realizes that despite his attempts to distinguish himself from his Irish peers the end of all things is death, “one by one they were all becoming shades” (1584). This plane of equilibrium is a novel idea to Gabriel and he responds to it with humility and meekness. He accepts its inevitability and embraces the country of his birth. Gabriel’s insensitivity is derived from his upbringing, social, and the English influences upon his life, however, by the end of this story he has undergone a transformation. This individual epiphany regarding himself and his finitude brings him to a new level of understanding of himself and the people around him. This self awareness is a distinctive feature for Gabriel, previously he was aware of himself but only in a selfish way. He wanted to be the center of attention because that was the only way he knew how to fulfill his socially acceptable role of male dominance. However, Gabriel now knows himself, he realizes that essentially he is not above his family; they are both headed towards the inevitable end, death. His musings concerning the snow falling on “all the living and the dead” (1614-15) strongly shows his final revelation of the equilibrium of the human race.

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