2020/2021

Excellence in First-Year

The English Department Writing Program & The Gayle Morris Sweetland Center for Writing

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Excellence in First-Year Writing 2020/2021

The English Department Writing Program and The Gayle Morris Sweetland Center for Writing

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Excellence in First-Year Writing

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EDWP Writing Prize Committee

Martha Henzy	Ryan McCarty
Margo Kolenda-Mason	Kelly Wheeler
Ellie Reese	

Sweetland Writing Prize Chair

Gina Brandolino

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Jimmy Brancho	Simone Sessolo
Catherine Cassel	Naomi Silver
April Conway	Carol Tell
David Karczynski	

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Laura Schulyer Aaron Valdez

Winners List

Feinberg Family Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

Katie Burgin, "When Pop Culture Critiques: How American TV and Film Examines the Links Between Politics, Justice, and the Judiciary's Legitimacy" *Nominated by Bryan Kim-Butler, ENG 125: Investigating the Law: American Legal Writing*

Carolyn Glasser, "Did Shen Fever Really Just Predict COVID-19?" Nominated by Júlia Irion Martins, ENG 125: "I would prefer not to": Pushing Paper in Late Capitalism

Adalia Kirby, "How White Feminism Feeds Misogynoir" Nominated by Molly Lynch, ENG 125: What is Social Justice?

Matt Kelley Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

Sharon Kwan, "Cardcaptor Sakura's Life-Changing Guidance"
Nominated by Ali Shapiro, ARTDES 129: Matters of Taste
Audrey Tieman, "Ratatouille the TikTok Musical"
Nominated by Elisabeth Fertig, COMPLIT 141: Great Performances

Excellence in Multilingual Writing

Chaewon Kim, "Liberty Renewed—Not Just Artistically" *Nominated by Scott Beal, WRITING 120* **Yuyang Rao**, "Is the development of hydroelectric power in accordance with the principles of sustainable development?" *Nominated by Shuwen Li, WRITING 120*

Excellence in the Practice of Writing

Genta Gollopeni, "Remix to the Letter to Your Younger Self" Nominated by Simone Sessolo, WRITING 100 William McGraw, "Gene Therapy: What You Need to Know" Nominated by Jimmy Brancho, WRITING 100

Feinberg Family Prize Nominees

Diana Abbass Meera Agrawal Sarah Akaaboune Nicole Alexander Ariana Augello Nadine Bazzi Grace Beal Katie Burgin Gretchen Carr Chhabra Emma Clapp Elisha Cooper Esha Elahi Aniyah Fisher Carolyn Glasser Talia Goldstein Hailey Gross Aidan Harris Alicia Haun Allayna Hight Corinne Hinson Eric Ii Adalia Kirby Carly Kubiak

Paige Leistra Tiffany Li Emma McGaraghan Victoria Mendez Hannah Momblanco Annika Moran Max Murray Johanna Neggie Jarett Orr Ashvin Pai Shruti Patel Sarah Pesta Ella Price Sam Reisbord Jacob Seabolt Benjamin Shaevsky Katherine Song Cara Teixeira Lynne Trang Isabelle Weathersby Christian Weichsel David Wilborn Jacquelyn Zamora

Feinberg Family Prize Nominating Instructors

Carolyn Glasser	Molly Lynch
Júlia Irion Martins	Katie Burgin
Adalia Kirby	Bryan Kim-Butler

Matt Kelley Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing Nominees

Anya Baldus Rae Beck Mira Bhandari Elizabeth (Elle) Blackwell Julia Boughner Josephine Broyles Morgan Cole Kelly Deng Shichi Dhar Lilly Dickman Amanda Dowdican Kseniva Dzhala Matthew Eitzman Yilin Fang Hailey Fiel Akash Gandhi Nadir Gerber Leah Greenspan Samuel C. Hausmen-Weiss Zan Huang Sofia Ketels Laine Kibler Tatum Olivia Kleis Sharon Kwan Janice Lee Maya Levy Nora Mary Lewis Polinna Makney Alex McCullough

Madison McElliot Aidan Meador-Woodruff Soham Mehendale Connor Moore Nina Naffziger Udoka Nwansi Leo Parikshak Tiara Partsch Yi Peng Elle Pugh Barbara Ribeiro Maebh Ring Nicole Lila Rubenstein Kylie Schache Ella Sheedlo Sara Short Sarah Stolar Audrey Tieman Hannah Triester Katta Vaishnavi Abhipol (Dee) Vibhatasilpin Madeline Vincent Darby Williams Jason Wing Julian Wray Alexander Yee Daisey Yu Jingqi Zhu

Matt Kelley Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing Nominating Instructors

XX7 1. A 11.	
Walter Allison	Michael Koletsos
Catherine Badgley	Amanda Kubic
Scott Beal	Katie LaPlant
Leah Bernardo-Ciddio	Xiaoyue Li
Cat Cassel	Graham Liddell
Sueann Caulfield	Marina Mayorski
Sheira Cohen	Shelley Manis
Imani Tameekia Cooper	Júlia Irion Martins
Sascha Crasnow	Alex Moskowitz
Alexandra Creola	Katelin Mikos
Andrew Crocker	Shannon Ness
Erin Davies	Ana Popovic
Elisabeth Fertig	Susan Rosegrant
Jennifer Goltz-Taylor	Ali Shapiro
Kristin Hass	Taylor Sims
Allie Hirsch	Leslie Stainton
George Hoffmann	Carol Tell
Tyler Johnson	

Excellence in the Practice of Writing Nominees

Genta Gollopeni
William McGraw
Nicholas Gillin
Megan Justesen

Doane Kiechel Sara Ojala MaryClare Sacca Chloe Marie Terada

Excellence in the Practice of Writing Nominating Instructors

Jimmy Brancho	Stephanie Moody
April Conway	Simone Sessolo

Excellence in Multilingual Writing Nominees

Chaewon Kim Andrew Gao Yujia Gao Jo-Fen Hsiao Mackee Khoo Brian Lyu Yuyang Rao Yuqin Wan Leiqi Ye Yuhuan Ye Zhong Zheng

Excellence in Multilingual Writing Nominating Instructors

Scott Beal

Shuwen Li

Introduction

All LSA undergraduates and students from several other colleges take at least one first-year writing-intensive course. These courses are offered in several departments: English Language and Literature, Slavic Languages and Literatures, the Residential College, Comparative Literature, Classics, History, and the Honors program. Those of us who teach these courses discover anew each term how a focus on writing improves students' thinking, learning, and rhetorical creativity. At the end of each term, we applaud our students' various achievements and the ways they have grown by applying themselves seriously to the hard work of structuring their ideas, understanding readers' expectations with particular genres, addressing an academic audience effectively, inventing strategies for revision, crafting a multimedia essay, refining their prose style, reading and giving feedback on peers' drafts, and engaging with a range of texts in a variety of genres. These are rewarding courses to teach, for students' growth as writers is readily apparent at the end of a term—to themselves as well as to their instructors.

Each year, faculty and graduate student instructors encourage undergraduates to submit their very best essay for First-Year Writing Prizes. Fellows in the interdisciplinary Sweetland Seminar for Writing Pedagogy read the submissions and rank them according to their overall excellence. This is an intellectually interesting exercise and generates considerable discussion about what we value when we read students' work. The Fellows this year described for each other the qualities they admired in the submissions. Here are some of the ways they defined excellent writing: the argument is complex without loss of clarity or purpose; the piece presents a novel argument or assertion (e.g., coming to their own conclusions based on multiple texts); quotes are thoughtfully introduced and integrated into the argument; the evidence is compelling; the structure of ideas is easy to follow; the conclusions are persuasive, and the writers use rich, evocative language. All of the essays submitted are outstanding, and all of the students should feel very proud of what they accomplished.

This volume showcases the prize-winning essays, which are truly impressive. They witness to the robust intellectual life of the university, and to the splendid courses and instructors who inspired and supported the writers' accomplishments. They witness as well to the students' commitments to their own intellectual development, their growing capacities as writers, the care with which they craft their prose, and the attention to detail they show in revising their work.

Thanks are due to the many people who made this volume possible. The Senior Fellows who thoughtfully judged the essays are Louis Cicciarelli, Sweetland Center for Writing; Jennifer Cummings, Psychology, Biopsychology; Sofya Khagi, Slavic Language and Literatures; and Jie (Jackie) Li, Earth and Environmental Sciences. The Junior Fellows (Graduate Students) are Andrew Bernard, Anthropology; Domenic DeSocio, Germanic Language and Literature; Marisol Fila, Romance Languages; Michael Martin, Slavic Language and Literatures; Wilson Merrell, Psychology; Katy Rossing, English Language and Literature; Marissa Spada, Film, Television, Media; and Field Watts, Chemistry. Much gratitude is also due to Aaron Valdez, who designed this volume; Laura Schuyler, who coordinated the submission and judging process; and Gina Brandolino, who chaired the Sweetland Prize Committee and edited the volume. Finally, thank you to the students and instructors who strive for—and achieve excellence in writing and writing pedagogy.

Theresa Tinkle

Director, Sweetland Center for Writing Arthur F. Thurnau Professor and Professor of English

Introduction to the Feinberg Family Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

The essays nominated for this year's Feinberg prizes illustrate the rich, capacious range of creative and critical thinking and expression that is possible in our first-year writing classrooms. Even as insights germinate from a seed, the essays are situated in particulars yet gesture toward broader significances that extend beyond specific examples. While each of the nominated essays exceed our expectations, the winning essays in each category demonstrate an additional depth of thought and thoroughness of engagement in the issues into which they delve. Moreover, the pieces reflect a willingness and capacity to investigate ideas that carry resonance beyond the context of the class assignment, as the students produce arguments that matter to academic audiences and beyond. Ultimately, these excellent essays illuminate the dispositions we encourage in our students: to think critically and deeply, to challenge existing perspectives, to probe into the spaces of inquiry.

While this collection only includes the three winning essays, we would like to honor all of the essays nominated for awards in the narrative, analytical, and research-based argument categories. We acknowledge the lecturers and graduate student instructors whose class topics and assignments offered the foundation for meaningful inquiry; we express gratitude for the judges who volunteered their time, energy, and enthusiasm to reading and evaluating the essays. And we extend our heartfelt appreciation to the English Department Writing Program and the Gayle Morris Sweetland Center for Writing for their support.

Despite the challenges that students and instructors faced during a year punctured by disruption and displacement, intellectual inquiry found a space to thrive, even flourish, in our writing classrooms. This collection of essays illustrates the fruits of students' and instructors' individual and collective efforts; the essays elucidate original, compelling insights into ourselves and our worlds. The three essays printed here exemplify the sheer breadth and depth of writing work that students are doing in first-year writing classrooms. Among many compliments, our judges this year commended these essays for engaging thoroughly with sources, demonstrating an advanced awareness of audience, and exemplifying the multiplicity of ways arguments can be forwarded in writing. Adalia Kirby's analytic argument examines how the notion of feminism evoked by the language of singer Lana Del Ray ignores the importance of intersectionality and uplifts White women while engaging in rhetoric harmful to Black women. Carolyn Glasser's narrative argument intertwines personal experiences in this COVID-19 era with analysis of the novel *Severance* to reflect on and problematize the role routines play in our lives. Lastly, Katie Burgin's research-based argument explores how pop culture representations of the judiciary have served to seemingly delegitimize the court system by influencing public perceptions.

We hope that sharing these examples of extraordinary writing can bring us together into a cohesive writing community during a time of profound uncertainty and change. We invite you, the reader, to become immersed and inspired by the insights that emerge from these essays. In looking toward the future, we hope this collection encourages in you a continued spirit of intellectual inquiry and empathy that guides you in academic contexts and beyond.

Andrew Moos and Ruth Li

Graduate Student Mentors, English Department Writing Program

Feinberg Family Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

When Pop Culture Critiques: How American TV and Film Examines the Links Between Politics, Justice, and the Judiciary's Legitimacy

by Katie Burgin

From ENG 125: Investigating the Law: American Legal Writing Nominated by Bryan Kim-Butler

Katie Burgin wrote this essay in the Fall 2020 term for my English 125 course, "Investigating the Law: American Legal Writing." For the second part of the course, we focused on cultural representations of the American legal system in television episodes and a documentary film concerning controversial societal issues such as reproductive rights and capital punishment. Katie took a remarkably ambitious and sophisticated approach to utilizing our course materials in developing her own research-based argument. Her essay, written in response to my open-ended prompt, clearly demonstrates the highest levels of writerly confidence and control, legal comprehension, and argumentative skill and complexity. Her work, with its many unique qualities, speaks for itself.

That said, Katie's work manages to be incredibly capacious, yet never strays from her self-formulated focus on her area of interest: in her words, "whether the public thinks the courts are legitimate" and capable of enabling justice when the American judiciary is often perceived as "extremely partisan and politicized." Her essay presents a clear central idea, but she boldly makes her topic multifaceted, considering different perspectives and subtle variations on her central concern, refusing to oversimplify her complicated subject. In doing so, she seamlessly incorporates sources as diverse as the *Yale Law Journal*, relevant appellate court cases, a *Law & Order* episode, and her own knowledge of very recent legal-political events. Katie's essay consistently educates her readers (including me), no matter how familiar they may be with her materials, about vital current issues in law and American culture. I find especially admirable Katie's unapologetic judgment to make her own voice and viewpoints clearly heard throughout her essay. While Katie's essay leaves her readers more informed, it also intrigues and encourages them to remain curious and open-minded. Katie's work leaves her readers contemplating and questioning the deep issues involved in the American court system, the democratic public's views of the judiciary's legitimacy, the role of popular culture in the law, and the pursuit of justice.

-- Bryan Kim-Butler

When Pop Culture Critiques: How American TV and Film Examines the Links Between Politics, Justice, and the Judiciary's Legitimacy

Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey (Supreme Court of the United States, 1992) caused quite a stir; many believed it would be the case to overturn Roe v. Wade (Supreme Court of the United States, 1973) and revoke a woman's constitutional right to an abortion. However, conservative justices defied expectations and upheld Roe, albeit by adding an ambiguous "undue burden" standard. Because abortion is a divisive issue (to put it mildly), the justices realized their ruling in Casey had to be made with utmost care. The plurality opinion, written by Justices O'Connor, Kennedy, and Souter, observes, "the Court cannot buy support for its decisions . . . [and] it cannot independently coerce obedience to its decrees. The Court's power lies, rather, in its legitimacy, a product of substance and perception that shows itself in the people's acceptance of the Judiciary as fit to determine what the Nation's law means and declare what it demands" (12, emphasis added). In other words, because courts do not control the armed forces and do not write laws, their power rests in their legal judgments and how those judgments are perceived by society. Their power is constrained by whether the public thinks the courts are legitimate.

Clearly, legitimacy is an important factor in the workings of the judicial system. This fact raises a question: what makes a court legitimate? It has something to do with the layman's perception of the court, yes, but how is this perception formed? In his article "Law, Lawyers, and Popular Culture," Lawrence Friedman discusses the ways in which people judge legal systems. He concludes that lawyers associate freedom, democracy, and the like with due process; if legally proper procedure is followed, lawyers believe the system is fair and just. Justice, however, is a remarkably ambiguous idea open to multiple interpretations. Friedman claims that common people, unlike lawyers, "think of justice, freedom and democracy in markedly *substantive* terms"; they are "result-minded . . . [T]he 'legitimacy' of

law and legal institutions. . . is understood and assessed by what these institutions *do*" (1603, 1604). Essentially, to assess the legitimacy of a court when a decision is made, the public asks the big question: was justice served? Did the court come to the morally right conclusion? A jury that lets a guilty man walk free is likely to be seen as illegitimate, for instance, even if legally prescribed procedures were followed. Along the same lines, the public won't be satisfied if an innocent woman is stuck in prison. If a court strips people of their rights, that court is also likely going to be decried as unsound and illegitimate. Once again, this public perception is important because the court's power rests on whether average citizens believe it is doing its job properly.

Since legitimacy is important to the functionality of the court system, and because we know the public largely measures legitimacy on the basis of whether "justice" is served, we come to yet another question: how do we assess the public's opinion of the judiciary? Friedman answers, "clues to the legitimacy of courts . . . are not to be found in the structure of doctrine, or in the formal texts of jurists, but in the broad messages traveling back and forth between the public and the organs of popular culture" (1605). These "messages" could be found in "books, songs, movies, plays and TV shows which are about law or lawyers, and which are aimed at a general audience" (1580). Examples abound: the recent television programs Boston Legal and Law & Order; the films On the Basis of Sex (2018), Kramer vs. Kramer (1979), and To Kill A Mockingbird (1962); and so on. Even though these pop culture representations may focus on different legal issues-abortion, civil rights, divorce, criminal trials, and more-there are plenty of similarities. In his article "The American Courtroom Trial: Pop Culture, Courtroom Realities, and the Dream World of Justice," David Ray Papke examines popular culture representations of courtroom trials. Focusing on these depictions of trials, he reviews many overarching similarities: the courtroom is "woodpaneled, well-upholstered, and soothed in soft light," defense attorneys are often heroic, and lawyers are "articulate and impassioned as they deliver the special type of argumentative soliloquy indigenous to a legalistic culture" (921, 925). Overall,

Papke argues that pop culture representation of the legal system "contributes mightily to the popular understanding of law" and "transports us to the dream world of justice" (932). Papke's assertion that pop culture representations teach the public about the law is indisputably accurate, but Papke's claim that these representations transport viewers to a "dream world of justice" glosses over an important point. In his assertion, he forgets that popular culture can also critique. In fact, many movies and shows criticize the American court system, pointing out various inequities and injustices. These critiques give a clue about public perception of the court system and thus its legitimacy.

Critiques of the court system vary, but numerous pop culture representations of the legal system raise similar issues, therefore demonstrating where the public finds fault in the legal system. One issue consistently raised is the politicization of the judiciary. Over the years, the American court system has become increasingly politicized and partisan. In 2020, the appointment of Amy Coney Barrett to the United States Supreme Court displayed the depth of this partisanship. Politicization of the judiciary isn't new, though, and the issue has been raised in pop culture representation for years. Episodes of popular TV shows *Boston Legal* and *Law & Order*, and the documentary film *Reversing Roe* (2018), for example, all examine the politicization of the judiciary. These portrayals have a common purpose: they demonstrate how the politicization of the judiciary decreases the courts' legitimacy. This loss of legitimacy occurs because the public loses faith in the judiciary, labeling it as just another partisan branch heavily shaped by politics.

Boston Legal: A Broad Criticism of Politicization in the Court System

Because lawyer Alan Shore (played by James Spader) goes on a lengthy diatribe against the Supreme Court in the 2008 episode "The Court Supreme" of *Boston Legal*, this episode offers a broad overview of how politicization of the judiciary decreases the American court system's legitimacy. In the episode, Shore presents an appeal to the Supreme Court for Leonard Serra, a man sentenced to death after being convicted of raping an eight-year-old girl. Serra, who has an IQ of 70, insists that he is innocent of the crime, but Shore technically cannot argue actual innocence and must stick to constitutional issues when arguing the appeal. When this strategy fails, Shore gives an emotional rant about the death penalty and the Supreme Court in general. *Boston Legal* offers many messages to its viewers, and as Friedman discusses, these messages offer clues about how the legal system is perceived by the public and thus whether it is seen as legitimate. Because the episode focuses mainly on the death penalty, the main message is the cruelty of the death penalty. Shore identifies many issues with it, mentioning how "[there is] an epidemic of wrongful convictions in this country . . . too many of them ending up on death row" (*Boston Legal*, "The Court Supreme"). Because the death penalty is painted as unethical, the episode injures the legal system's legitimacy. However, the anti-death penalty position is not the only message about the legal system in this episode.

Shore spends a decent portion of his speech arguing that the politicization of the judiciary is a monumental problem that decreases the Supreme Court's legitimacy, as the public dismisses the court as just another partisan branch of government. After the Chief Justice admonishes him, "Mr. Shore! I don't like your demeanor . . . And I would remind you of where you are" (BL), Shore snaps. His retort is quick: "I know exactly where I am . . . and let me tell you, you folks aren't as hot as all get out" (BL). His sharp critiques that follow are important, as they demonstrate real problems of politicization that exist in the American court system and what Americans think of the issue. Even if the viewing public doesn't have these opinions of the court before watching the episode, they might afterwards. Friedman discusses how in modern society, "media [is] . . . the most powerful carrier[] of popular culture," and it "forms or helps form popular legal culture, [which is] what people think about law" (1596, 1597). In sum, Friedman argues that pop culture representations of the law both *reflect* and *influence* average citizens' opinions about the legal system. Therefore, Shore's speech gives clues as to whether Americans believe the legal system is legitimate.

So, what exactly does Shore say about the politicization of the judiciary,

and how does this politicization affect the court's legitimacy (which one must remember is a product of public perception)? Shore's most direct attack is this:

The Supreme Court was intended to be free and unadulterated by politics. It is now dominated by it. You're handpicked by presidents with ideological agendas, and of the two dozen 5-4 decisions in your 2006/2007 term, 19 [were] straight across ideological lines. That's politics! . . . If that's the way it's gonna be, at least have the decency to put your names on ballots like the rest of the politicians so we the people get a voice. (*BL*)

Here, Shore argues that the court, which advertises itself as nonpartisan and free of politics, is actually extremely partisan and politicized. This decreases the legitimacy of the court. If the judges vote straight across ideological—i.e., partisan—lines, the public cannot expect the court to decide each case fairly. Justices are too impaired by their partisan beliefs to fairly interpret the law. Their actions are compromised, tainted by partisan politics, and thus any court rulings with which the public disagrees are easier to discount as biased and wrong. The court has lost its legitimacy; it is just another partisan branch of government.

Of course, this phenomenon might not be so bad if the court still comes to "just" results. Remember, the public largely judges the court's legitimacy based on what it *does*; the public is less concerned about procedure and more concerned about the *outcome*. So, even if a court has a biased, partisan makeup, maybe this could be overlooked if the court still manages to come to the proper conclusion. However, Shore contends that the court is clearly *not* coming to the proper conclusions in the cases it decides. He asserts, "[The Supreme] Court, with your narrow majority, has turned back the clock on civil rights, school segregation, equal protection, free speech, abortion, [and] campaign finance. You've been overtly and shamelessly pro-business, making it impossible for some plaintiffs to so much as sue corporations, especially big oil and big tobacco" (*BL*). Later, he challenges, "Who are you people? You've transformed this court from being a governmental branch devoted to civil rights and liberties into a protector of discrimination, a guardian of government, a slave to money interests and big business" (BL). It's implied that these negative developments are caused, both directly and indirectly, by the extreme politicization of the court system. Thus, the politicization of the judiciary decreases its legitimacy. Legitimacy is damaged because the court is coming to the wrong conclusions, at least in the eyes of the general public. What good citizen would want a court to "turn[] back the clock on civil rights"? Who would support a court that obstructs free speech? In Shore's critique of the Supreme Court, justice is shown to be crippled because the politicized court is biased in favor of the wealthy and powerful instead of giving everyone fair treatment.

"The Court Supreme" doesn't only offer abstract examples of how a politicized court hinders justice and thus decreases its legitimacy; the death row inmate Serra's story demonstrates the same theme. There are compelling reasons as to why Serra should not be put to death: he's mentally disabled, non-homicidal rape convictions generally do not result in death sentences, he has no prior criminal record, and, importantly, there's a chance he's entirely innocent. The court fails to consider any of this. Of course, some of this is because the court is forced to follow procedure. Nevertheless, the court still comes across as callous and cruel. Why are they sticking by a "law[] passed by politicians . . . around election time when they're desperate to appear tough on crime" (BL)? Can they not declare the Louisiana law permitting the death penalty for child rape unconstitutional, or at the very least give Serra some other pathway to survival? The result, which leaves Serra on death row, leaves the viewer angry and unsatisfied. The viewer may infer, with at least partial correctness, that the outcome may have been different if the court was not "dominated" by politics. Hence, *Boston Legal* paints the legal system as unfairly politicized in two way-both in Shore's speech and Serra's storyline. This politicization delegitimizes the court, as the public perceives the court as a partisan branch hindering justice.

Reversing Roe: Politicization of a Specific Legal Issue

No discussion of politicization in the legal system is complete without considering what is arguably the most politicized, highly partisan court case in U.S. history: *Roe v. Wade* (Supreme Court of the United States, 1973). The

aftermath of this case offers an example of how when the court becomes deeply immersed in a partisan issue, politicization of the judiciary decreases the court system's legitimacy. Before discussing how abortion has impacted the legal system, though, it's important to note that abortion wasn't always a partisan issue. Before *Roe*, there was societal conflict, to be sure. For instance, feminists like Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem joined the movement for decriminalization of abortion, while the Catholic Church took an opposing stance (Greenhouse and Siegel 4). In *Roe*, the court recognized this conflict, mentioning, "We forthwith acknowledge our awareness of the sensitive and emotional nature of the abortion controversy . . . and of the deep and seemingly absolute convictions that the subject inspires" (1). However, while abortion was divisive pre-*Roe*, the division wasn't along partisan lines. In fact, a 1972 Gallup poll found that 68% of Republicans believed abortion should remain between a woman and her doctor. In comparison, 59% of Democrats agreed with the statement (Greenhouse and Siegel 9). This was just a year before *Roe*.

How did abortion become such a partisan issue? Clearly, when *Roe* was decided, partisanship played no role in the court decision. Credit where credit is due—the Republican Party successfully hijacked the issue, turning it into a partisan affair for their political gain. Originally, as seen in the Gallup poll, the Republican Party was more pro-choice than the Democratic Party. With their emphasis on individual liberty, it makes sense that the Republican Party shunned excessive governmental regulation in healthcare. Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Donald Trump, and other prominent Republicans were originally prochoice (*Reversing Roe*). Eventually, though, party strategists realized abortion was a galvanizing issue that could increase Republican support among cultural conservatives like Catholics, evangelicals, and other members of the emerging "moral majority." Therefore, Republicans began to push the religious right's agenda. This approach, combined with the Southern Strategy, worked. Cultural conservatives began voting Republican, giving Reagan the White House in 1980. Of course, by then, Reagan had shifted his tone on abortion, becoming an

anti-abortion spokesman. Thus, it is evident that the politicization of abortion occurred *after* the Supreme Court decided *Roe*. When Roe was decided in 1973, few people were decrying the decision as illegitimate. That occurred later.

The 2018 Netflix documentary *Reversing Roe*, directed by Ricki Stern and Annie Sundberg, examines the partisanship that emerged surrounding abortion, demonstrating how partisanship decreases the legitimacy of the court system. Like the *Boston Legal* episode "The Court Supreme," *Reversing Roe* contains many messages about the legal system. Both take liberal stances on their respective legal issues: the *Boston Legal* episode is anti-death penalty, while *Reversing Roe* conspicuously leans pro-choice on the issue of reproductive rights. Although both pieces of media have clear points of view about controversial social issues, they both critique the partisan politicization of the legal system. Once again, this criticism is valuable because pop culture representation of the law both reflects and influences society's opinions. *Reversing Roe* gives many examples of how the partisanship surrounding *Roe* negatively affects the judiciary. A few examples in particular stand out: how the issue of abortion is used in Texas politics, and how the executive branch intrudes into the judiciary. These both decrease the legitimacy of the judiciary.

In Texas, politicians' stances on abortion reveal how cavalierly they treat *Roe*, thus decreasing the court's legitimacy in the eyes of the public. In other words, when partisan politicians make it their goal to overturn a Supreme Court ruling, the politicians do not believe the court or its ruling is legitimate. If politicians— who are our leaders, theoretically some of the best and brightest among us—do not respect the legitimacy of the Supreme Court, how should we expect the public to think the court is legitimate? Inserting politics into the legal system therefore impairs the judiciary. This phenomenon is brilliantly illustrated in *Reversing Roe*. John Seago, the Legislative Director of the organization Texas Right to Life, states, "If you're running in Texas as a Republican, you have to claim to agree with prolife principles" (*Reversing Roe*). This quote is juxtaposed with statements from Texas politicians, demonstrating just how partisan the issue has become in Texas.

Governor Rick Perry, for example, uses abortion rhetoric to further his partisan goals. At a Right to Life convention, he brags about passing a sonogram law that will convince women not to have an abortion. In another instance, Governor Perry states that he wants to "make abortion at any stage a thing of the past" (RR), a goal that directly contradicts Roe and other abortion cases. Right to Life activists predictably have considerable control over the politicians, as shown in Reversing Roe. And what do these activists think about abortion and the Supreme Court? Unsurprisingly, they don't respect the court's legitimacy. Carol Tobias, President of the organization National Right to Life, complains, "Our roadblock has always been the Supreme Court. [But] we're going to keep plugging away to overturn Roe v. Wade" (RR). This is not the attitude you take when you think an institution and its decisions are legitimate. Of course, technically, these activists and politicians should not be able to lobby the court; the judiciary should remain insulated from partisan politics. The court should not need lobbying because its role is to objectively interpret the Constitution and the law. Justice Scalia argues this exact point in his dissent in Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey (1992), a landmark decision regarding abortion. He laments, "We have been subjected to what the Court calls 'political pressure' by both sides of this issue. . . . How upsetting it is, that so many of our citizens (good people, not lawless ones . . .) think that we Justices should properly take into account their views, as though we were engaged not in ascertaining an objective law but in determining some kind of social consensus" (38). Scalia is mourning the injection of politics into his court. When partisan politicians and activists try to interfere with the judiciary's methods, the court cannot do its proper job and is consequently delegitimized.

Another issue presented in *Reversing Roe* is how the executive branch's intrusion into the judiciary—obviously partisan, political interference—further decreases its legitimacy. This complication arises because the president appoints numerous judges, most notably Supreme Court justices. Thus, it's almost certain that the president will have an ideological impact on the court system, and presidents have increasingly used that to their advantage, boosting their support

in elections and public opinion polls. President Trump's appointed justices were all painstakingly selected according to how they interpret the law. For instance, Justice Barrett supports increased restriction on abortion, as seen in *Planned Parenthood* of Indiana and Kentucky, Inc. v. Commissioner of the Indiana State Department of Health (US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, en banc rehearing denied, 2018). Therefore, her appointment to the Supreme Court furthers Trump's partisan goals, a phenomenon of which Trump is acutely aware. Trump is often a reckless, impulsive president, but his careful strategy on judicial appointments is a deviation from this norm. Reversing Roe illustrates how Trump's stance on the judiciary and abortion played a large part in getting him elected. Evangelicals and other cultural conservatives were wary of Trump, but they also held the belief that, as stated by Carol Tobias, President of the National Right to Life organization, "If we want to change the laws, we have to change the Supreme Court" (RR). The President of the United States is the one who holds the power to "change the Supreme Court." Accordingly, evangelicals were wooed to Trump's side in part because of his promise that "the justices that I'm going to appoint will be pro-life" (RR). Trump was not the first president to politicize the legal system in an effort to raise his support among voters, as portrayed in *Reversing Roe*. President Reagan was elected in part because of his opposition to abortion. As president, he continued this opposition by nominating judges who voiced anti-abortion stances. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, one of Reagan's three appointments to the Supreme Court, told the Senate during her confirmation hearings that she was firmly opposed to abortion "as a matter of birth control" (RR). George H. W. Bush, who also took a strong-anti abortion stance to win the presidency ("I believe that we should work to Overturn Roe v. Wade" (RR)), nominated two conservative justices to the Supreme Court. In Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey (Supreme Court of the United States, 1992), the Bush administration asked the Supreme Court to support further limitations on abortion. The Solicitor General argued in the Supreme Court that Roe should be overturned because "the state does have a compelling interest in the potential life, in fetal life" (RR). The Bush

administration's involvement in this case was so pervasive that Kathryn Kolbert, who was arguing the case for Planned Parenthood, stated, "President Bush has done all he can do to ensure that my arguments are likely to fall on deaf ears" (RR). This situation demonstrates how the president often inserts politics into the judiciary, hijacking it for political gain. While this might be good for the electoral outcomes of the president and their party, it is bad for the judiciary. The court's role is to objectively apply the law. Politics and ideology should play no part in this application, even if it is the President of the United States giving their two cents. When the judiciary is politicized, its legitimacy is decreased. The public perceives the court as open to political persuasion, not as a fair, impartial body. Therefore, if the public decides they don't agree with a court case, like Roe v. Wade, they don't feel obliged to accept it. The ruling can be discounted as illegitimate, the product of a court submerged in partisan politics. Then, after rejecting the decision, the public can proceed to fight it, similar to how anti-abortion activists continue to fight Roe v. Wade and other opinions regarding abortion. As illustrated by Reversing Roe, it is clear that politicization of the judiciary decreases the courts' legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

Law & Order: Non-Partisan Politicization of the Court System

In *Boston Legal* and the controversy surrounding *Roe v. Wade*, the negative politicization of the legal system is deeply partisan; disagreement revolves around Democrats and Republicans in the American party system. However, politicization of the judiciary doesn't have to fit within this binary partisan system. Some people may act outside of this traditional system but still insert their political opinions into the judiciary, hindering justice and negatively affecting the courts' legitimacy. Perhaps the most prominent example of this in American society is the sovereign citizen movement. Sovereign citizens are, as described by the FBI, "antigovernment extremists who believe that even though they physically reside in this country, they are separate or 'sovereign' from the United States" (Kalinowski 154). They defy conventional classification in the political sense. Since they don't see themselves as politically governed by the United States, they cannot belong

to an American political party. Their beliefs are more fundamental than that. However, their actions are still political; their behavior fits within a Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of the word, which states that something "political" is "concerned with acts against a government or a political system" ("Political"). Thus, when sovereign citizens get involved in the legal system-which they do quite frequently-their actions affecting the system can be described as politicization of the court. One real example occurred in 2016, when armed antigovernment protesters occupied a wildlife refuge in Oregon. This occupation, which challenged federal authority over public lands, is distressing enough, but what occurred in the legal system after the protesters were arrested was even more troublesome. Despite their guilt, a jury acquitted the group of federal conspiracy and weapons charges. This is an example of jury nullification, which "happens when a jury returns a verdict of Not Guilty despite its belief that the defendant is guilty of the violation charged" ("Jury Nullification"). Justice was not served, as the guilty parties walked free. This can decrease the legitimacy of the court system in the public's eye.

The 1997 *Law & Order* episode "Nullification" shows a fictional representation of the sovereign citizen movement. An attempted heist of an armored car leads the police to the New Sons of Liberty, a suburban group of men who claim to be a militia at war with the United States government. For their failed heist, which caused the death of one of the guards of the armored car, the group is charged with conspiracy to commit armed robbery and felony murder. Phil Christie (played by Denis O'Hare), who is both the lead defendant and the *pro se* attorney for the defense, uses bizarre claims in court. Before the trial even begins, he claims that he and his group are prisoners of war exempt from trial under the Geneva Conventions. This motion is denied by the trial judge for its absurdity and lack of foundation in the law. At trial, Christie encourages the jury to acquit—to engage in jury nullification—because the people, not the courts, are sovereign. He never even argues his innocence. Instead, his claims rest on abstract ideas about American society and government. His other arguments are just as

ludicrous: Christie claims that the robbery was an act of self-defense against an enemy army (the "enemy army" being the U.S. government), he claims his group is resisting tyranny, and he asserts that the U.S. government has been sold to global corporations. In his words, "Freedom starts with a 'no" (*Law & Order*,

"Nullification); he wants the jury to say "no" to the "tyrannical" government. These ideas, however illogical, are political. And, unfortunately, the jury seems to accept Christie's claims: not being able to decide on a unanimous verdict (even though the defendants are clearly guilty), the trial ends in a mistrial, to Christie's utter delight. This means the jury was thwarted by politics; politicization of the court system hindered justice. To the viewer, there was really no question as to whether the New Sons of Liberty were guilty. The mistrial was inherently political. Because the jury took an interest in Christie's political, albeit nonsensical, arguments, the "right" outcome was not reached. The man who was murdered by the New Sons of Liberty did not get justice; his killer (who was most likely Christie, as revealed during the trial) remains free. Thus, the Law & Order episode "Nullification" represents a slightly different way in which politicization of the judiciary hinders justice and decreases legitimacy. The court system's legitimacy is damaged because the guilty men were not convicted. What type of system lets the guilty get off scot-free due to unfounded and bizarre political grandstanding? A fair, legitimate system shouldn't be so easily corrupted by wild arguments about tyranny. It cannot be trusted to reach justice.

Conclusion: How Popular Culture Representations of the Legal System Are Relevant Today

In 2020, it feels like the insertion of politics in the legal system has reached new heights. After the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, there was a bitter, partisan fight over Amy Coney Barrett's confirmation to the Supreme Court. This fight was so intense due to political circumstances: a very contentious upcoming election. Because both Democrats and Republicans realized the election could come down to the Supreme Court, à la *Bush v. Gore* in 2000, each side wanted friendly justices on the Supreme Court. There have already been numerous lawsuits concerning the 2020 presidential election. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court, for instance, ordered a three-day extension for ballots mailed on or before election day, a move Republicans claim is unconstitutional (Liptak). Because of a deadlock, the United States Supreme Court let the decision stand. Justices Thomas, Alito, Gorsuch, and Kavanaugh all wanted to grant a stay blocking the order, a move that would likely help President Trump because mail-in ballots favor Democrats. These justices were all nominated by Republican presidents (two by Trump himself). With the election still unfolding, it has become evident that this decision could be crucial. Trump had an early lead in Pennsylvania, but Biden overtook him as mail-in ballots were counted. Trump then tweeted, "I easily WIN the Presidency of the United States with LEGAL VOTES CAST ... votes accepted during this period must be determined to be ILLEGAL VOTES. U.S. Supreme Court should decide!" (Trump). Twitter flagged this tweet as misleading. What is important to note, however, is how Trump is politicizing the court: he believes the Supreme Court-which is now packed with conservative, Republicanappointed justices-should decide the election. It is evident that partisanship within the court has become a major issue in 2020. As both Democrats and Republicans rely on the courts for crucial election decisions, the American public increasingly perceives the court as partisan and politicized. The court is losing its legitimacy in the eyes of the public. However, this phenomenon is not new to 2020. Politicization of the court system has long been at issue, as demonstrated by pop culture representations of the legal system.

Boston Legal, Reversing Roe, and Law & Order all demonstrate that politicization of the judiciary decreases the courts' legitimacy. The public loses faith in the judiciary, dismissing it as just another partisan branch of government. Interestingly, all of these portrayals are directly relevant to current events. In the Boston Legal episode "The Court Supreme" (2008), Alan Shore offers sweeping criticism of the judiciary, claiming that "The Supreme Court was intended to be free and unadulterated by politics. It is now dominated by it. [Justices are] handpicked by presidents with ideological agendas" (BL). This criticism is

pertinent in 2020, when several "handpicked" justices all favor a decision that would help the Republican president. Reversing Roe (2018), a documentary about the history and law of reproductive rights, demonstrates that when a president inserts partisan politics into the judiciary, the courts become delegitimized. In 2020, Trump nominated now-Justice Amy Coney Barrett largely because it was expected that she would restrict access to abortion and even potentially be the key vote in overturning Roe v. Wade. Thus, Justice Barrett furthers his partisan goals; she helped Trump woo the anti-abortion vote. Once again, the court appears to be just another partisan branch. Luckily, in 2020, there have been no prominent incidents of jury nullification like the one illustrated in the 1997 Law & Order episode "Nullification." However, far-right militia members, similar to the New Sons of Liberty, have certainly been trying to circumvent the legal system. Recently, a group in Michigan, unhappy with the state's government, including its judicial system, made plans to kidnap Governor Gretchen Whitmer and hold their own trial to keep her accountable for her "tyranny" (United States v. Fox et al., 2020). The group was caught, fortunately, and will stand trial. Their trial has yet to occur, but if they somehow manage to be acquitted, it would be another example of jury nullification that hinders justice and delegitimizes the courts. Overall, these examples demonstrate how extraordinarily important popular culture representations of the legal system are. These popular culture representations of the courts reflect and influence public opinion, critique injustices in the law, and highlight how crucial public perceptions of the court system's legitimacy really are.

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Feinberg Family Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

Did Shen Fever Really Just Predict COVID-19? by Carolyn Glasser

From ENG 125: "I would prefer not to": Pushing Paper in Late Capitalism Nominated by Júlia Irion Martins

When the university sent my students home in March 2020, I overhauled my syllabus. In keeping with the "office job" theme of my English 125 section, I replaced all the remaining readings with Ling Ma's Severance (2018): a dystopian office novel about a pandemic that originates in China and subsequently decimates the American economy. After reading, students were to write a narrative argument essay that put their personal observations and experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic in conversation with the themes and questions raised by the novel. While all my students rose to the occasion, impressing me with critical readings of the novel and their lives, Carolyn's work stood out. Carolyn's essay is a remarkable example of what good first-person writing does: it uses the personal to illuminate the universal. In Carolyn's close readings, Candace (the novel's protagonist) becomes a character in Carolyn's world, and Carolyn a character in Candace's. That is to say, Carolyn uses Severance to interpret her experiences with COVID-19 and her experiences with COVID-19 to read Severance. She pairs her literary analysis with critiques of overworking, research on social media, her own theorizations about time and nostalgia, and still manages to fit in a compelling read on how we interpret and trust mass media. If that sounds like a lot, that's because it is.

But with Carolyn's strong, charismatic written voice and deft guidance, following these threads is natural, elucidating, and fun.

-- Júlia Irion Martins

Did Shen Fever Really Just Predict COVID-19?

I remember my last time in real society, mostly because it was only a month ago, but also because it was the last time I felt like a real person. I traded my daily study groups in the dining hall with my friends to living in my pajamas in front of my computer and TV with my mom. Don't get me wrong, spending time with my family and waking up thirty seconds before my online lectures is great, but I've had to confront my worst nightmare as my new social platform: technology. I already have too many problems with slow computers and crashing programs, so reverting to this technology as my new way of living is not ideal. The world we once knew is being torn apart by a virus that we can't even see, and it's so drastic that we are all collectively agreeing that the media isn't biased for the next few months so that we can see how the world unfolds once we make it to the other side. But what does this other side even look like? Can we really just pick up life where we left off once we are able to breathe freely in public and have actual human conversations again? While this is an unprecedented time in history, Ling Ma draws out our situation in her novel *Severance* to reveal scary revelations about our changing world and about our human nature.

While we are not running off with strangers to plunder houses for food under the orders of some awkward tech guy who is now in control after living behind his computer screen all his life, we are more similar to Candace than we think. Shen Fever quite literally broke the world in Ling Ma's novel *Severance*, just as COVID-19 is breaking our world as we speak. Written just two years before COVID-19 struck, its parallels to our world right now are so accurate it's actually scary: not only does it follow the events leading up to the pandemic almost perfectly (both coming from China, causing mass panic, and being downplayed by the media), it reflects a scary revelation about human nature: our world is run by routine. Shen Fever is not just a fictitious disease that Ling Ma made up: it's the epitome of who we are as people. Candace, the narrator, reminds us that we have been the fevered before the fevered even existed:
Shen Fever [is] a disease of remembering, the fevered are trapped indefinitely in their memories. But what is the difference between them and us? Because I remember too, I remember perfectly. My memories replay, unprompted, on repeat. And our days, like theirs, continue in an infinite loop. We drive, we sleep, we drive some more (Ma 112).

While we are constantly treading through the monotonous routine that is the present, we force ourselves to live in the past and imagine our lives in the future, just as Candace points out. To be in the present is to be routine, and something about this is inherently boring, so we constantly imagine ourselves in a different time. Just like the fevered (those contracting Shen Fever who lose touch with reality and go into routine overdrive) , we are also forced into routine but dream of the past, and psychologist Erin Olive agrees. She says that "so many of us humans tend to go through our days on autopilot, which is essentially the opposite of mindfulness... we spend most of our energy rehashing the past or rehearsing the future: wishing, hoping, panning, ruminating, missing, regretting." If COVID-19 has done anything besides causing mass destruction and chaos, it has shown how valid this statement is. I'm just like Candace, who follows this very accurate depiction of so many young adults like us. As the novel progresses, we get more flashbacks from Candace about the importance of her family and the times when her ex-boyfriend Johnathan begged her to move out of the city with him. Candace just ends up following her routines, but when the situation becomes more desperate, she turns to her past to give her some light of hope.

My flashbacks exist in my phone. I spend countless hours scrolling through pictures in my camera roll and replaying videos in my memories on Snapchat. I scroll through everyone's throwback posts on Instagram, yearning to return to the days when I can actually talk to people face-to-face. I've spent so much effort this past month reminiscing on some of my best memories from college and using them to imagine picking up this life again once we return, whenever that will be. If only I could go back to enjoying scrambled eggs and conversations with my friends every morning before greeting the freezing Michigan winter air to rush to my first lecture. To destress with glow-in-the-dark cells in my research lab. To enjoy my nights playing card games in the lounge and hosting movie marathons that last into the next morning. Just thinking about my life in college gives me hope that I can soon return to normalcy and that this situation won't be as scary as it seems. Maybe it's the memories, or maybe it's my way of shielding what's going on around me.

Shielding: isn't that what routine does? It numbs us to what's going on around us in the present, leading us to believe that the present is boring and that drawing on past and future events provides us with the excitement and closure that we constantly seek out. From a young age, we are taught to believe that work is the only thing that our lives should lead up to. But once we're there, the excitement leaves. Why do we live like this? It's routine, or "hustle culture," as Erin Griffith likes to call it. "It is obsessed with striving, relentlessly positive, devoid of humor, and — once you notice it — impossible to escape." Candace is just your classic hustler living in the headquarters of hustle culture, living up to be the kind of person that our society idolizes. She lives by her mom's and society's expectations that she should "make use of [herself]," but it takes people like Johnathan who "want [their] time and [their] efforts to be [their own]" (Ma 143, 96). While our society strives to live like Jonathan, so many of us are stuck living with Candace's mom's advice. Our generation thrives on this perpetual cycle of idolizing work, which nubs us to the routine that we unconsciously force ourselves into. And now that COVID-19 is disrupting our daily routines by locking us in our homes and stripping us of real human interactions, we desperately strive to create new routines for ourselves because that is what we are wired to do. I can't go to my classes like I usually do, but I still make sure to keep my own routine at home. Yes, I'm one of those crazy people who still wakes up at 7:00 a.m. to eat breakfast, and yes, I take time out of my day to watch TV shows at their regularly scheduled hour, and yes, I run the same trail every morning at the same time. I'm even more predictable now than I was before. We are all adapting to this new situation by creating new routines. But this isn't so bad, right?

Well, there's still Candace: when everyone in her life seems to fall off the face of the Earth, she takes this as a sign to keep working. While I wouldn't recommend anyone to move into their abandoned work building, she seems to thrive picking up a new routine where she can fend for herself. When she finishes her work for the publishing company she works at (Spectra), Candace creates her own work by revitalizing her long-forgotten photography blog (Ma 174). If nothing else, Shen Fever and COVID-19 have given us more time to pick up hobbies that we didn't have time for before the pandemics hit. For Candace, this forces her into an even tighter routine, but for me and so many other people across the world, this allows us to realize our talent-or lack thereof-for cooking, dancing, singing, reading, all of these activities that we didn't realize we had time for until now. Who knew that I would be so good at burning cookies with my mom and spending entire afternoons watching New Girl on Netflix? I never really had the time to try out any of these things before. As great as our new free time is, we are wasting most of it in front of the computer screen, even more than we did before the pandemic hit.

Unlike Candace's world, which experiences the death of technology, our world is seeing the opposite. While Candace's world ditched phones and news outlets out of fear, our world is using these as hope. I am an avid believer that social media and streaming services are both the best and the worst things to happen to the twenty-first century. Remember nature? Me neither, because everyone would so much rather scroll through TikTok videos or glue their eyes to the TV to watch Netflix for hours on end. Even in Candace's world, people seem to continue our cycle of eating, sleeping, partying, and working. Their world, like ours, is run by big tech companies that engrave technology into human nature. But where does that leave us? As Candace notices, technology is used to further push us to live in the past.

The internet is the flattening of time. It is the place where the past and present exist on one single plane... perhaps it is more accurate to say that the internet almost wholly consists of the past... our eyes have become nearsighted with nostalgia, staring at our computer screens. Because

being online is equivalent to living in the past. And, while we can agree that the internet has many uses, one of its significant side effects is that we all live too much in the past... this loss of the internet presents an opportunity. We are more free to live in the present, and more free to envision our future (Ma 81).

At least someone else sees the internet like I do, even if she is just a made-up character. While technology has typically been used to reminisce on the past, it is now forcing us to live in the future more than ever. Andrew Hutchinson, a daily reporter, is noticing this trend as well, noting that "people are obviously looking for support and reassurance amid the pandemic, and the ongoing uncertainty around its impact, and they're turning to online communities for this purpose... [and] the longer the crisis goes on, the more reliant people will become on such groups... moving more of our community engagement into digital realms, and further altering how people communicate, maybe forever." Our shift to online classes and work has forced us to rely solely on the internet for anything new. As we are moving to virtual living, we are turning more and more towards our "trustworthy" sources to give us hope for the future, and I have seen a change in the perception of news media that completely reverses a popular debate that has taken over American politics for the past few years. The emergence of "fake news" has divided Americans, which makes us watch the news to debate rather than to get information. Politics aside, people have trusted the media less and less these past few years, but thanks to COVID-19, we are putting all of our trust into the news, for the better or for the worst.

My mom and I tune into the news every night now from six to seven p.m., giving us a dose of reality before tuning in to watch Alex Trebek and the three contestants show off their knowledge on *Jeopardy* to lighten the mood, at least temporarily. We are all collectively agreeing that the news isn't bad for the next few months because it is our only source of hope for the future. Just as Candace uses her blog, *NY Ghost*, as her way of documenting that the world still exists, we turn to the news and the media to remind us that the world still exists and provides hope that we will soon be able to return to what we once had. "In the middle of a massive and growing coronavirus shutdown, social media is more important than ever" (Donovan). We no longer argue the facts but accept the news for what it is because it is our only real connection to the world. All day, we are cooped up in our homes to communicate over the phone, bringing back the popularity of FaceTime and online video conferencing. Against our instincts, we ignore the "infodemic, which is defined as 'an overabundance of information some accurate and some not — that make it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when we need it'" (Donovan). The internet is giving us hope in desperate times to not just imagine but prepare to pick our lives back up again.

Our world is changing by the second, but many of these changes have already been predicted by Ling Ma. She envisioned our world today before COVID-19 even existed. We are the New Yorkers fleeing the city to be with family. We are the New Yorkers who are fevered and are forced to live in the past while constantly being in routine. We are the New Yorkers whose soul concern is following society's ideal "hustle culture." We are the fevered. But will that last?

No one knows what the world will bring in the coming months. States could start opening up public attractions as soon as next week or delay it until next year. I could be returned for my research next month, or waiting until classes resume in the fall, or maybe I wouldn't even return to campus until 2021—what a scary thought! It's us against the virus, but not even Ling Ma can tell us who will win in our world. Living in the past and dreaming of the future is what will get us through these hard times to combat the uncertainty that we face. Routine is never uncertain, but it's this same uncertainty which allows us to be vulnerable and human. Ling Ma may have predicted everything leading up to the pandemic, but none of us really knows what our world will look like in the coming months, so we leave it up to our imagination by living in the past and in the future. And that is okay.

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Feinberg Family Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

How White Feminism Feeds Misogynoir

by Adalia Kirby

From ENG 125: What is Social Justice? Nominated by Molly Lynch

Adalia's essay opens up the beautiful experience in which, as a reader, you get to learn alongside the writer. In teaching writing I emphasize this an ideal: in my course syllabi and in my lectures, I explain that one of our goals is to use writing as a means of learning. But I don't think I ever needed to mention this as a goal to Adalia. She is someone whose principal concern, as a student, is learning; and so it goes without saying that she would work very hard to unpack her ideas in real-time, on the page, as she does so well in this essay. She's a first-year writer who seems to intuitively understand that the purpose of producing a critical argument is not to win or dominate, but to explore, to understand, and to invite the reader into that process.

I feel that it's this concern that leads her to be as careful as she is in this essay in examining and analyzing her evidence, in developing her interpretations and in unpacking her possible bias. She does this last move with introspective language that works to deepens her analysis.

Clarity is one of the strong attributes of this essay. This clarity starts in the opening as she lays out relevant background that the reader will need in order to follow her argument. Her clarity is sustained as she makes the subtle and complex points that ultimately form her argument. Her argument comes off as strong and clear and something to take with us as a lens and tool as we think about the world.

Here is what I find most important about this essay: it's important. And it reminds us that important issues are everywhere; in places we might forget to look. Indeed, Adalia takes up something that might easily be overlooked: a negative comparison that Lana Del Ray makes between herself and a number of Black female artists, as she attempts to defend herself against sexist criticism. By trying to get to the bottom of what's wrong with Lana's comparison, Adalia opens a window onto a much bigger problem, a problem whose magnitude can't be underestimated. As Adalia puts it: "There already is a place in feminism for a white, cisgender, able-bodied, heterosexual woman. Arguably, it is this type of woman whose voices and stories are amplified in the feminist movement. It is Black women, disabled women, queer women, trans women, etc. who need a place for them in feminism. They are the ones whose voices and stories are taken away from them...."

As a reader, you finish this essay with renewed and new understanding of the vital importance of inclusion, empathy and solidarity. It's an essay to learn from.

-- Molly Lynch

How White Feminism Feeds Misogynoir

Elizabeth Grant, a white alternative singer better known by her stage name Lana Del Rey, began questioning the role of feminism in the music industry as she took to Instagram to make a post highlighting the criticisms that her music has faced throughout her entire career. Specifically challenging lack of inclusivity for passive women in the feminist movement, the singer claims that her lyrics with submissive themes and emotionally abusive undertones were constantly misinterpreted to be glamorizing or promoting abuse, when in reality they were Lana's personal experiences that relate to the all-too-common abuse that women face in relationships (Grant). Lana feels that the industry was harsh in their critiques against her, sometimes accusing Lana of being anti-feminist or "setting women back." Through her victimizing language she paints herself to be a delicate, passive woman undeserving of such merciless and hyperbolic accusations. Lana shows the unfairness she's faced as a female music artist by not only drawing comparisons between the themes of her past music and the music of today but providing examples of successful female artists who make explicit music. Lana points out the fact that modern music discusses some very vulgar and sexual topics yet receives praise whereas her non-sexual, emotionally focused music received a great deal of negative feedback. Yet there was something I noticed while Lana made her comparisons and gave her examples. Four out of six of those female artists she used as examples were Black women. Additionally, Lana uses language that plays upon stereotypes and biases towards Black women throughout her post. As we start to see the problematic elements in Lana's post it opens up the door to an entirely different problem, one that is often overlooked in the world of feminism: the harm caused by the relationship between white feminism and misogynoir, wherein white women ignore the unique issues and prejudices that Black women face.

Lana begins her "question for the culture" by listing six female music artists who have had great successes with their songs that talk about issues such as "being sexy, wearing no clothes, f*cking, cheating..." (Grant), including Doja Cat, Cardi B, Beyoncé, and Nicki Minaj. Lana then asks if, now that topics such as these are normalized in mainstream music, she can go back to making music about "...feeling beautiful by being in love even if the relationship is not perfect, or dancing for money..." (Grant) without facing backlash or being accused of being a bad role model. In drawing comparisons and giving her audience examples, Lana effectively shows how public attitudes towards women's music has changed and become more accepting toward a wider variety of topics, and it makes her audience start to understand her frustration in being bashed for her music despite it not being as bold or inappropriate as some of the music that the artists she listed has released. While it seems that Lana is just trying to provide proof behind her claims, the women she used for examples as well as the way she describes their music genre is where the issues lie. Four of the six women she has compared herself to are Black artists, three of them being rappers. These women are nowhere near the same musical category, and likely have very different fan bases and critics. Their music obviously tackles different issues, rap music being rooted in Black culture and dealing with topics that are apart of Black life. It is clear to see why comparing apples to oranges is a waste of time. It would be more effective for Lana to compare herself to the artists within her own genre that are her actual competition. Furthermore, Lana reduces these women's songs to being about "being sexy, wearing no clothes, f*cking, cheating..." (Grant). This is extremely problematic, as it feeds into the hypersexualization of Black women while making the women's music seem to have no substance and undeserving of praise. Also, it completely discredits both the backlash that these women have also faced due to their song lyrics and the hardships they faced breaking into the music industry especially as Black women. Lana makes sure to carefully word the way she describes her music, though, saying it's just her "feeling beautiful" or "dancing for money" a.k.a. stripping. This makes what her music is talking about seem to be more meaningful and acceptable than, say, "f*cking" someone. As mentioned before Lana's rhetoric here is powerful in that it causes her audience to

feel her frustrations, but then those frustrations are turned upon innocent Black women who are making music about important topics that are relevant to them, whatever the topic may be. Lana's comparisons not only causes her audience to target undeserving Black women, but also disregards them, their struggles as Black women, and all their hard work.

Due to the prevailing feminist movement that has shaped our world, many young girls are encouraged to be strong, independent, and have a cando attitude. Yet Lana del Rey feels that submissive women like her have been excluded from the feminist movement, and that her lyrical exploration of women in submissive relationship roles is widely misconstrued as anti-feminist which has caused her music to be unfairly judged by critics. Lana says, "...there has to be a place in feminism for women who look and act like me...the kind of women who are...delicate...The kind of women who get their own stories and voices taken away from them by stronger women...". In using this type of verbiage, Lana makes herself out to be very meek and unable to stand up for herself. This makes Lana seem like a victim in the eyes of her audience, in need of a voice to protect women who "look and act" like her. In reality, the entire feminist movement was created by people who "look and act" like Lana. There already is a place in feminism for a white, cisgender, able-bodied, heterosexual woman. Arguably, it is this type of woman whose voices and stories are amplified in the feminist movement. It is Black women, disabled women, queer women, trans women, etc. who need a place for them in feminism. They are the ones whose voices and stories are taken away from them. In disregarding her privilege as a white woman in the feminist movement, she continues the oppression and lack of representation that Black women face within feminism. It is also important to take note of the words that Lana uses. She describes herself as "delicate", being dominated by "stronger women" in the music industry. In using this victimizing language after name dropping four Black women, it seems that Lana is upholding the harmful stereotype of Black women being more strong or masculine than white women, and entertaining the narrative of the strong Black woman bullying the timid white woman.

As a Black woman myself, at times I find myself hesitant to speak up when I notice microaggressions. Nowadays many people say that we bring race into everything, when it has nothing to do with race. I wondered if, as a Black woman, I was reading too deeply into what Lana del Rey was saying. Maybe Lana del Rey really is just a fed-up woman who wants to talk about her experiences with abuse. As a woman, I understand Lana's frustrations. But as a Black woman, I feel attacked. Black women are already the most abused group on social media. (Byrd) Why would she compare her struggles of lyrically exploring topics of abuse to Black women being sexually free? Further than that, why would she reduce these highly successful Black female artists – three of whom just made history on the chart's - music down to just being about sex, especially when Black women are already hypersexualized and at higher risk for sexual assault? Why is she not celebrating how far feminism has come, instead of trying to cause unrest among her followers? Why is she not celebrating Black women for making history on the charts? It seems as though Lana was riling up her large following to attack the women she listed. As a feminist, I know that it is unnecessary to put down other women as you uplift yourself. I know that it is important that we celebrate other women, even when they are successful in parts where we have failed. As someone with people and money on hand Lana could have written something that conveys her message with the same effectiveness, yet instead decided to make a post containing hints of misogynoir, outing Lana as not a feminist but a white feminist.

Many women such as Lana are quick to call themselves feminists, yet where is this unanimous unity amongst the movement? Where is this unwavering support for ALL women that the movement promotes? While speaking up on women's issues it is important to not be ignorant about the individual privileges we have and to not bring down other women in the process. Yes, white women face oppression. But they also have more privilege than a Black woman. As a white feminist, ignoring the fact that Black women face a plethora of additional issues just because they're Black is misogynoir. Feminism is about uplifting and enabling ALL women to do whatever they choose to. How can one do that as they compare themselves to other women to draw negative attention towards those women? Feminism extends far past the white woman. How can one be a feminist if their feminism is not intersectional?

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Introduction to the Matt Kelley Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing, Excellence in Multilingual Writing Prize, and the Excellence in the Practice of Writing Prize

First-year writing courses are a rite of passage at the University of Michigan. Whether students enroll in the Practice of Writing, College Writing for International & Multilingual Students (both Sweetland's own courses), or one of the many other first-year writing courses offered by other departments, they face the challenge of developing as writers in a new academic context. This year's winners didn't just meet that challenge; they excelled. The essays you'll encounter here are inspiring models of not just how to respond to writing assignments "correctly," but also, and even more so, with genuine curiosity and creativity.

On behalf of the Sweetland Center for Writing, it's my pleasure to congratulate this year's winners: Sharon Kwan and Audrey Tieman, recipients of the Matt Kelley Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing Prize; Chaewon Kim and Yuyang Rao, recipients of the Prize for Excellence in Multilingual Writing Prize; and Genta Gollopeni and William McGraw, recipients of the Prize for Excellence in the Practice of Writing Prize.

The Writing Prizes are a labor of love at Sweetland; many of us work together to select and honor our Prize winners. Scott Beal, Jimmy Brancho, Catherine Cassel, April Conway, David Karczynski, Shuwen Li, Simone Sessolo, and Naomi Silver read and judged this year's essays. Angela Berkley, Raymond McDaniel, and Carol Tell also judged essays and, in addition, served on Sweetland's Writing Prize Committee. Last and most crucially, Laura Schuyler and Aaron Valdez provided essential support; awarding these prizes and honoring our winners wouldn't be possible without them. The essays that follow showcase the intelligence, creativity, and hard work of first-year writers at the University of Michigan. Enjoy them!

Gina Brandolino Chair, Writing Prize Committee Sweetland Center for Writing

Matt Kelly Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

Cardcaptor Sakura's Life-Changing Guidance

by Sharon Kwan From ARTDES 129: Matters of Taste Nominated by Ali Shapiro

Sharon's essay about her relationship with the anime "Cardcaptor Sakura" models the deep questioning that makes for a strong personal narrative. On one level, Sharon's essay points towards the importance of representation and the profound influence that queer narratives can have on their audiences. But Sharon goes deeper still, drawing on her own interest in art to analyze the specific effectiveness of animation to convey these queer stories.

-- Ali Shapiro

Cardcaptor Sakura's Life-Changing Guidance

One of the main reasons I became an art major was my passion for animation. Though it took me 17 years to act on this passion, I have always loved animated works. I grew up with Japanese and American cartoons, and Disney, Pixar, and Studio Ghibli films. But as a child, I wasn't aware of the cinematic/ storytelling choices or the depth of the character arcs. Back then, my love for animated works was based purely on entertainment. At some point, I gained the appreciation and respect for animated works that I have now, and upon revisiting my relationship with *Cardcaptor Sakura*, I realized it might have begun there.

Cardcaptor Sakura (CCS) is a magical-girl/slice-of-life anime aimed at children, adapted from a manga series by CLAMP. It ran from 1998 to 2000 and follows the story of Sakura Kinomoto, a 5th grader who discovers her magical powers by breaking a seal on a mysterious book she found. In doing so, she accidentally releases 52 magical cards. With the help of her friends and family, she must collect all the cards and prevent them from wreaking havoc on the world. I first watched *CCS* when I was 12 years old and I loved it. But six years later, I now see that it helped develop so many of my current values and principles, particularly in one area: relationships.

Sakura's strong relationships with her friends and family are a recurring theme in *CCS*, and as an impressionable 12-year-old, I looked up to these relationships. I didn't really have much else to choose from; my mother is amazing, but my father is emotionally abusive, leading to their separation. Seeing the scars my father inflicted on my family led to extremely high expectations for my future because I felt, and still feel, the need to make up for my dad's harm by doing as much good as I can. I put a lot of pressure on myself to work towards a future that will support a life and family of love, peace, and stability. As a child, my image of this happy family came from the media, so it consisted of a wife, a husband, and children. To get there, I needed to find a good boyfriend. And that is exactly what Sakura gets at the end of the show. Syaoran Li is first introduced as Sakura's rival when he joins her class as a transfer student from Hong Kong. Syaoran also has magical powers and is descended from the creator of the cards Sakura was tasked to capture. He sought to take over the role of "cardcaptor," but over time, they grew to be close friends. By the end of the series, he falls in love with Sakura and the couple becomes endgame. It's hard to think of a fifth-grade romance as an example of a longlasting, healthy relationship, but that's the beauty of fiction: Sakura's joyful and optimistic personality balances perfectly with Syaoran's more serious and grounded character. I loved their relationship. I loved their dorky, cute moments and how they complement and care for each other. Now that I'm older, I realize that I wanted my own Syaoran, because to me, that was the first step in building the happy family that would make up for my dad's damage. But I ran into a *bit* of a rut.

The year I watched *CCS* was the same year I realized I was queer. I developed my first crush, and it was on a girl. I still remember the exact moment of realization: I was in the car with my mom, on our way home from the grocery store. Upon realizing my feelings for this girl were romantic, I didn't know how to process it, and I remember trying to hide my panic by fixating my eyes on the sky, dyed orange and purple by the setting sun. I thought that being queer ruined my plan of having a positive future to make up for my dad's wrongdoings. Being queer shattered my perception of what a "happy family" was. I didn't know what to do with my realization, so I just denied it. But *CCS* helped me face it through Yukito.

Yukito Tsukishiro was Sakura's first crush, and her brother, Touya's, best friend. ¹In episode 65, "Sakura and Who She Likes Most", Sakura tells Yukito she likes him. Despite being much older than Sakura, he doesn't dismiss her feelings but instead gently asks her to consider if her affections are more familial. Later in the conversation, Sakura correctly guesses that Yukito likes her brother.

¹ Madhouse, *Cardcaptor Sakura #66: Sakura and Who She Likes Most*, CLAMP, provided by Crunchyroll, assessed December 12, 2020, video, 25:00, https://myanimelist.net/anime/232/Cardcaptor_Sakura/episode/66.

"Touya may be my number one, but I'm not sure how he feels..." Yukito admits.

"I'm sure you're number one for onii-chan [Touya] too!" Sakura exclaims. "But if *onii-chan* is ever mean to you, Yukito...please call me! I'll give him a piece of my mind!"



Yukito and Sakura discuss his "number one", Touya (also spelled Toya or Tōuya), his best friend and Sakura's older brother²

Looking back at this scene, I realized that *CCS* was not only a basis for my outlook on "normal" relationships, but queer ones too. Yukito's liking for another boy was treated so casually that I was shocked, but happy. Yukito didn't need to "come out"; he just had to say who his number one person was, and that was that. Sakura treated the conversation the same as if Yukito had said he liked a girl. Sakura is kind and accepting to everyone, and her friends are the same way. When Sakura confesses her feelings to Yukito, he doesn't disregard them because she is a child, but instead asks her to consider them more closely, still accepting and validating her feelings. I now see the issues with their age gap, but I still hold this lesson of open-mindedness very close to my heart. As a child in denial about my sexuality, this acceptance of all kinds of love in *CCS* was like a safety blanket.

² Chibi Yuuto, "CLAMP Interview – Card Captor Sakura Memorial Book (February/2001)", Chibi Yuuto's Chronicles, Kondansha, February 27, 2001, https://chibiyuuto.com/ clamp-interview-card-captor-sakura-memorial-book-february2001/.

The idea that the gender of someone's "number one" person doesn't matter is one I grew to preach and although it took me another 2-3 years to fully accept my queer identity, *CCS* helped curb a lot of the heteronormativity I had internalized over the years.

At around the same time, I came across a quote from a *CCS* interview in which the leader of CLAMP (the creator of the *CCS* manga), Nanase Ohkawa, stated, "I wanted a story with a protagonist[Sakura] who had an open mind towards different family structures, different kinds of love, and different perspectives from society...I am glad that the readers are happy that Sakura and Syaoran got together, but that anyone would think it's because they make a normal couple...it's a little disconcerting...if Syaoran had been a girl...as long as he was still Syaoran, I think Sakura would have fallen in love with him. It'd sadden me if you thought they're a good couple because they're normal". The fact that the lead creator of one of my favorite shows said this meant so much to me. I embraced this ideal of open-mindedness by extending it to others and eventually to myself. I realized that I could have that life and family of love, peace, and stability no matter what gender my "number one" person ended up being.

In hindsight, this progressive outlook on love that *Cardcaptor Sakura* offered played a huge role in building my passion for animation. My intense admiration for animated works began with this series because I experienced firsthand the impact an animated show could have. And thinking about it now, if *Cardcaptor Sakura* was not animated, it would not have had the same effect on me.

Animation has the ability to express things in ways that live-action cannot achieve. Animated works can make sunsets more beautiful, rain more tranquil, storms more turbulent, and emotions more raw. The stylistic nature of animation allows it to exaggerate qualities that cannot be effectively altered in real life. This stylization also forces characterization to be more in-depth; since animated characters don't *look* like real people, more care must be taken to make them *feel* real. Most animated characters are not drawn/modeled realistically and

sometimes are not even human, but even though their appearance is a constant reminder of their fictitious existence, animated characters can feel deeply genuine through personality/mannerisms and character arcs. Sakura and her friends were no exception. Yes, they were designed as humans, but they also had unnaturally big eyes, pointy noses, and colorful hair, and they lived in a world with magical cards. Yet, they *felt* real because they were so thoughtfully developed, written, and animated. They felt like my friends, and they brought me comfort and guidance. People, especially children, often learn by observing, and I learned a lot about what I wanted from myself and others by observing the characters in *CCS*. I loved and looked up to Sakura and her friends, so to see them being accepting of all forms of love was incredible. *Cardcaptor Sakura* was so effective in shaping who I am because it made me feel in ways that live-action works never did. These strong feelings led to an attachment to the show, its characters, its story, and its teachings.

It's been six years since I first watched Cardcaptor Sakura, and since then, I've seen many more examples of impactful animated work. A quick browse through fandoms on the web or social media will reveal how animated works move and inspire all kinds of people. I want to be a part of this impact, the impact that gave my 12-year-old self some much needed guidance in life and love, the impact that Cardcaptor Sakura introduced me to. My dream is to make this impact by creating my own world, story, and characters, one that can be transformed into an animated work, a beautiful mingling of visual art and storytelling and music and writing that has the power to reach people. Like how Cardcaptor Sakura reached me, a young girl struggling with her queer identity, I want to create something that reaches other queer people. But I don't want to stop there. I want to reach people of all types and ages, particularly ones that have been starved of representation in the media. I want to not only surpass expectations in art and storytelling, but also in representation of life and love and people in all of its forms. This potent dream motivates me in my everyday life, and I now see that Cardcaptor Sakura helped shape that dream.

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Matt Kelly Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

Ratatouille the TikTok Musical

by Audrey Tieman From COMPLIT 141: Great Performances Nominated by Elisabeth Fertig

Audrey created this TikTok essay for her final research project, in which the prompt allowed for a multimodal composition in response to a performance. This outstanding video essay not only makes full, innovative use of the medium incorporating clips from other TikTokers as well as props/costumes in the narration clips—it is also a brilliant meta-reflection on the medium itself. The argument is complex and convincing, the structure is intricate and energetic, and the whole thing is just really fun to watch.

-- Elisabeth Fertig

Ratatouille the TikTok Musical



View Audrey's video at <u>https://youtu.be/NlUKtdsjpjc</u> A transcript of the video follows. So, Greek drama—You probably have a vague idea when I say that.

Maybe you've heard of Oediupus Rex? That play about the guy who had sex with his mom?

Or Madea, the one about the woman who killed her children and then killed herself?

Yup, that's Greek drama.

The Ancient Greeks are considered the founders of what we today call 'theatre', specifically western drama.

Think that play your school did that you had to go see because your friend was in it.

You can blame the Greeks for that.

Or maybe you were in it, in which case, hey what's up, glad to have you.

The Greeks created drama, but their version of theatre, and how it was produced, was pretty different from our own, which we'll come back to in a second.

Now let's talk about Modern theatre.

Perhaps you've heard of Hamilton or Hamilton?

That's an example of our modern *commercial* theatre.

Stress on the word commercial.

Broadway and the West End are, for all intents and purposes, commercial theatre machines.

And sure, some of the forty odd shows on Broadway during normal times have come from a place of sincere artistic expression, but a fair few are out for the money.

The commercial theatre machine has produced such gems as Tarzan and Spiderman: Turn Off the Dark.

Now, I'm not saying these are bad shows.

I wouldn't know, I've never seen them because first rate professional theatre has become something only the privileged few who reside in and around major cities or have the cash to drop on plane tickets, hotel rooms, and show tickets priced in the hundreds of dollars can afford to experience, while, if the rest of us want to see it, we watch hastily recorded illegal bootlegs and then get shamed for it, even though corporate theatre could have avoided the bootlegging in the first place if they produced fairly priced streams or released professional recordings like most major opera companies.

But, who knows, maybe SpongeBob the musical is...good.

That's not to throw shade on Industrial theatre by the way, which are musicals produced by a company to promote that company's products.

Like Progressive the Musical!

Or the Diesel Dazzle!

They are truly gems and if you want to learn more about those check out Bathtubs Over Broadway on Netflix, it's great.

So a lot of what ends up on Broadway, and therefore in the public consciousness, is dictated by what a few particular production houses think will sell.

Places like Disney Theatrical Productions, which has a long term lease on a Broadway theatre.

The Nederlander Organization, who actually own 9 Broadway theatres.

And the Shubert Organization, who own another 17 Broadway theatres.

So that's 27 of the 41 Broadway houses controlled by a whopping 3 organizations.

Who are the others owned by, I wonder?

Another 6 organizations.

So that's 9 organizations who decide what goes into 40 of the 41 Broadway theatres. Not a very democratic system.

Where'd the pencil go? This is why I hate math.

Oh, and shout-out to the Circle in the Square Theatre for being the only independently owned and operated Broadway theatre.

We're going to put a pin in commercial theatre for a sec—just remember that it is nine organizations who decide what shows make it and what don't.

And to introduce our final player, TikTok.

Called, "a refreshing outlier in the social media universe" by the New York Times, and considered worth banning by the president, it's the social media app that's taken the internet by storm.

The Vine of Gen Z, if you will.

One thing that TikTok does very well is show you the kinds of content that you personally enjoy.

The algorithm of the app sees who you follow, what you favorite, what you search, and puts all those things on your 'For You Page'.

So it's very easy for communities to pop up on the app,

Like book tok

(Video by @thebooksiveloved)

Tree tok

(Spoken by @jewslovetrees) "Hi my name is Tobin Mitnick and I'm a Jew who loves trees. And today we're going to pair our pine cones with some lovely single malts."

And where we lay our scene, theatre TikTok.

Musical theatre TikTok to be specific.

Because Musical theatre TikTok has been up to something, and weirdly enough, they're actually tapping back into a way of creating theatre that is as old as theatre itself.

It all starts here: with Ratatouille the Musical!

Yes, that Ratatouille.

The 2007 animated Pixar film starring Patton Oswalt about a rat who cooks.

What got the ball rolling was when Daniel J Mertzlufft created this sound.

(Sung by @danieljmertzlufft) "Remy the ratatouille, the rat of all my dreams."

Based on a song by @e_jaccs.

This is considered the big Act 2 finale number and once this was out there musical theatre TikTok EXPLODED.

An account was created for Ratatouille The TikTok Musical and submissions were opened.

(Spoken by @ratatouillemusical) "Calling all musical theatre nerds! I need your help! It's clear that everybody wants a ratatouille the musical and it's time to make it a reality."

And people did it! Actual artists have been making things for this musical.

And there's no longer just the one song, we've got a solo for Remy.

(Sung by @mikeyjosemusic) "I'm Remy, I'm Remy, with passion through my blood."

A solo for Skinner.

(Sung by @sophiajamesmusic) "Well, it seems as though this parasite is feeding people's appetites. He's cooking, and I testify, I knew I smelled a rat!"

A song for Emile.

(Sung by @blakeyrouse) "See it's the rat's life for us, little Remy, we don't cook food, let alone where we don't go. Rat's life for us, little Remy, we feast where the grime, the fungus, and bacteria grow. Grab a menu and follow me, there's a whole buffet that I'd like you to see. So Remy, don't look so gloomy, this is your duty to grow. The rat's way of life is the way to go."

And a song for Remy's dad which has gotten, not just choreography, but also a working stage model.

(Sung by @fettuccinefettuqueen) "Don't waste your whiskers on dreaming, try to see life as I do. Take in the smell of it steaming! This wonderful dump, here in front of you."

And that is not all!

We've also got puppet design!

(Spoken by @brandon.hardy.art) "So I had this idea where maybe Remy is the only rat in the whole show that has actual fur. He washes his hands, he eats right. 'If you are what you eat, I only want to eat the good stuff.' But everybody else eats garbage so maybe all the other rats are made out of garbage."

Playbill design!

(Graphics by @siswij)

And orchestration!

(Spoken and played by @brentviola57) "Violas in the orchestra... Cellos in the orchestra..."

This is like a full production guys! It's incredible!

But what does this have to do with Commercial theatre? Or Greek Drama for that matter?

So we've talked about how the Greek's created theatre but how did they actually create theatre? Well, to explain that, we have to talk about what purpose theatre served in their society, because it wasn't something you just went to on a night out like it is now.

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Now to start with-Actually, hang on.
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*costume change* Much better.
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I know it's not historically accurate but all I had was a bed sheet and a stick crown so just go with it.

Classical Greek theatre was part of a religious festival in honor of the God Dionysus. In 5th century Athens, which was the hub of Greek Democracy, this festival was called the 'Great Dionysia'. Dionysia? Ni-sa? One of those.

Because of this, the theatre itself was a very different being than it is today.

It was a place where the citizens of Athens gathered, as many as 16,000!

On certain specified days during state festivals to watch dramas performed by 3 actors and a chorus.

The performances weren't just for entertainment, although they were entertaining—They served a societal function that we can't reproduce today.

And this interweaving of them as a civic festival, which also gave them a religious dimension, and as a public competition invited a sense of participation and partisanship among the audience that is not felt at all in our modern commercial theatres.

Our current attitude towards the role of the audience is so vastly different from that of the Greeks, and here's a great example.

In modern theatre there's this thing called the fourth wall. A thing I'm breaking now to address you, hello, it separates the world the actors are in from the one the audience is in.

To the characters onstage, the audience doesn't exist.

That's how we treat the separation of that actors and the audience now, let's compare to how the Greeks did it.

Oh wait! They didn't.

E. Reichenberg noticed in 1966 that there is no Greek word or expression that equates to 'the fourth wall', nor any ancient source that contains anything even close to the concept.

For the Greeks, the fourth wall didn't exist.

The audience was as much a part of the performance as the actors were; theatre wasn't just for professionals, it was by and for the community.

And how the audiences felt about the performances mattered! Earlier, I mentioned that the festivals had a competitive element to them—the dramatic competitions hosted 3 plays a year, and each year the playwright with the winning performance would be awarded a spot in next year's festival.

But was the winner for who got to continue making theatre at the highest level determined by nine corporations in a smoke filled back room?

No! This is Greece, the birthplace of democracy, it was put to a vote!

Ten judges were somewhat randomly selected.

You had to be able to read... and also be a man.

From the ten tribes of Athens and after all three plays had been performed, each judge would cast his vote by his top choice on a tablet and placing it publicly in an urn.

Urns: not just for dead relatives, also for democracy.

And before you decide that this is basically just nine corporations deciding *outside* a smoke filled back room, the opinion of the citizens was a factor for the judges.

Several sources talk about audiences trying to sway judges with their noise, and one of the only primary sources we have of the judging process from, my man, Vitruvius, says, "They applaud the poet as never before and shouted that he should win and commanded the judges from above to write no other name but Aristophanes."

Pretty much every Athenian could be a judge at one of these competitions, and every Athenian could scream themselves hoarse in support of their favorite playwright.

The audience was an enormous part of Greek theatre, it even dictated where the performances were held!

These shows always took place in open-air areas during the day so that everything could be seen, and they were outside so that no one was excluded by building capacity.

D. Wiles stated that, "Everything that happens on the Greek stage is manifestly laid out for the audience's benefit."

You know what isn't laid out for the audience's benefit?

Modern commercial theatre.

Tiny theatres with limited, expensive, seats, all concentrated in a single, expensive city.

Ah, but here's the twist: You know what is laid out for the audience's benefit?

TikTok!

You don't need to buy a ticket to see Ratatouille the TikTok musical, everything I showed you in this, and a bunch of other tiktoks, are completely free.

And the tiktoks that are the sum total of Ratatouille are able to find their audience because of TikTok's curated algorithm that, while it does show you what you like, also throws in a bit of randomness.

So people who've never ventured to musical theatre TikTok are exposed to Ratatouille as well.

And again, none of this is something you have to pay for—In true Greek tradition, it is by the community, for the community.

And you might be saying to yourself,

'But Audrey, Ratatouille isn't even a real musical, it's just a bunch of performances strung together by a common story.'

To which I say:

Wow, didn't know you knew my name since I didn't introduce myself, but it's a fair question. The answer?

Well, if a musical isn't a series of performances strung together by a common story then I don't know what it is.

But you do make a fair point—Ratatouille is a musical in development. And, unlike commercial theatre, TikTok allows us to be direct witnesses to and participants in that development. Which is, shocker, just like the Greeks!

There were a large number of performers and non performers involved in these dramatic competitions, and they probably talked about the shows they were in. News about the shows spread through word of mouth, which is really similar to how news about Ratatouille spread—By individual people, not advertising.

Modern advertising has an economic motive, but since TikTok musicals, nor religious Greek festival performances, need to make money, modern advertising doesn't apply.

And in terms of watching a musical in development, it's not like the Greeks could hide what they were working on in outdoor, open air, venues.

Theatre common sense tells us that the theatre would've been in almost constant

use for weeks leading up to the actual performances, so the shows would've been on public display well before the festival began.

Unless they were purposefully blocking people out, anyone could've walked in to see them rehearse, work out the kinks, stuff like that.

And Ratatouille the TikTok Musical is on display in the same vein—people can watch songs be flushed out, new numbers added, possible costumes, possible sets, everything. Like this!

(Spoken by @irishbirdy) "I think I solved the proportion issues with Remi and Linguini in the Ratatouille Musical. Hear me out. What if there is a second platform built into the stage where, when Remi is underneath Linguini's hat, he's on top and they mirror each other's blocking so you know they're together at all times."

The Greeks were aware of their audience just as much as TikTok is, and that's not just in the rehearsal process—Remember, the Greeks had no concept of the fourth wall, and TikTok doesn't really either.

The people who make tiktoks are aware their videos are being viewed by other people on TikTok, there's no attempted separation.

Plenty of TikTokers address the audience in their videos, and those who don't have to make it clear they're in a scene by stating "pov: …" in the title. The natural state of TikTok is for the audience and performers to be in on it together, just like the Greeks.

Christina Dedoussi says, "The spectators, who were hearing rather than seeing the performance, responded to the monologues in that spirit, well aware that they were participants in the same public performance of dramatic works. Actors and chorus colluded in the same set of shared assumptions."

And unlike a commercial theatrical venture, Ratatouille popularity and growth is all due to community participation and support, not seeming sellable to backers.

It's become so popular that it's been noticed by the mainstream theatre scene.

Playbill.com did an article on it and a real, two time Tony award winning producer made a tiktok to say that he's interested.

(Spoken by @kendavenportbway) "Hi, my name is Ken Davenport and I'm a Broadway producer and this video goes out to all the creators of Ratatouille the Musical. This is my pitch to you. I want to be the producer to bring your show to Broadway, I hope you'll let me do it."

And, and this is true, it's been announced that a concert version will get a real life performance at the St. James Theatre on Broadway for charity on January first (2021).

So just like the Greeks, we're seeing that if enough people shout at the judges, we can make a show succeed.

Aaaahhhhh!

So yes, TikTok and Greek theatre are similar, I've talked your ear off about that, but what does it matter? I mean, it's just one musical, right?

Wrong. What we're seeing now is a shift back to accessible, community supported theatre.

Broadway has been shut down since March due to the pandemic and it's unlike that we'll be seeing those commercial theatres open back up until next summer, if then.

But that hasn't stopped Ratatouille—We've seen theatre professionals, amateurs, and just enthusiasts take up the mantle and create something extraordinary, and successful, without the support of those nine organizations.

And yes, if Ratatouille is put on Broadway as an actual commercial musical, aside from the charity performance, then that would feed into the corporate theatre machine, but it's a step in the right direction.

I'm no Karl Marx, but what we've seen TikTok do is literally seize the means of production.

You know those stage models I mentioned earlier?

(Stage models by @shoeboxmusicals)

Well for a Broadway musical a working quarter inch model can cost anywhere between \$8,000 and \$10,000—And TikTok has made multiple for free!

This is a colossal shift away from the heavily guarded money driven productions that have become the norm, with so many different artists contributing and the community pushing it into the public eye.

This is the beginning of a new era,

which is really a return to an old era,

of democratized theatre.

Ratatouille the TikTok Musical is a flare, signaling that you don't have to be some highly commercialized professional to get a musical off the ground—You can just be you, and make something for your community. Like Remy proves— 'Anyone Can Cook'.

(Sung by @chamberlin_kevin) "He doesn't cook, but he could! You know what I always say; Anyone can cook. Anyone can cook. All you have to do is look inside yourself. Anyone can cook. You could even write a book! It could sit right next to mine there, on that shelf. There's not a soul who could tell you how to broil or to braise—A casserole can be droll but if you want to amaze try some wine, it's divine, when you want to deglaze. Cause anyone can have some fun and anyone can cook. Anyone can cook. Bon appetit!"

Excellence in Multilingual Writing

Liberty Renewed—Not Just Artistically by Chaewon Kim *From WRITING 120 Nominated by Scott Beal*

Chaewon Kim's outstanding essay presents an incisive description of Doug Webb's surrealist image of the Statue of Liberty in a bathtub, then synthesizes her observations to present a focused and complex understanding of how this image works to critique a concept of liberty that Americans love to celebrate, but that remains elusive for many immigrants for whom the Statue's promise is meant.

-- Scott Beal
Liberty Renewed—Not Just Artistically

The American Dream has been an umbrella term for many ideas. Most of those, however, fit the definition of an 'American' Dream if and only if they state immigration to the US has to be a given condition in order to be successful. The belief, if not the blinded obsession, that moving to the land of freedom will raise the quality of life. The home of such belief in life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The utopia founded by immigrants that grew up to be the global superpower in one and half centuries. America itself quite enjoyed this title and turned this propaganda into an inspiration for many artworks. The most famous icon, undeniably, would be the Statue of Liberty.

The gift from France commemorating the centennial of independence could not be a better symbol of freedom and democracy. As thousands of immigrants on board were greeted by this verdigris colossus, her image as a promising guardian of opportunity was solidified. Liberty Renewed, a serigraph on paper created by Doug Webb in 1985, is one of the many pieces that took the symbolism of Statue of Liberty. It creatively fuses an image of a bathtub and a landscape of the State of Liberty and the skyline of New York to capture how the meaning of American liberty has changed over time in a single scene.

The background of the picture can be simply described as a wall of a bathroom. The upper half is a sky blue tiled wall with two x-shaped shower knobs, a switch between them, and a faucet below the switch. They are all aligned symmetrically, so that the switch and faucet lies on the line that bisects the painting to matching halves. The lower half is a smooth, white bathtub with a circular silver drain located directly below the faucet. The tub is almost filled with water, up to the point where the lower half of the drain is submerged. Judging from the direction of shadows cast by the knobs, switch, and the tub, the source of light must be located on the right side of the picture.

The tiled wall blends into the daytime skyline of New York. The forest of colossal skyscrapers of Manhattan is clustered across the left half of the picture,

a smaller Brooklyn downtown neighborhood on the right side, the wide East River separating two districts, and the faint silhouette of a bridge, either the FDR Bridge or the Brooklyn Bridge, across the river. The gigantic Twin Towers especially stand out among the skyscrapers (Remember that this artwork was created in 1985, before the bombing terror in 1993 and later the infamous one in 2001 that demolished them.) The faucet hangs right above the skyline, blurring the boundary between two different realities.

At the exact center of the picture stands the famous Statue of Liberty on Liberty Island, facing the right side of the picture. Her signature color of verdigris, a result of the oxidation of copper, glows in a much lighter shade of turquoise, presumably due to the light. Judging from how the air of the picture seems light yellow in general, it can be safely assumed that the time setting of this picture is the morning. However the island is not surrounded by the Atlantic ocean, but the bathtub water. In addition, a block of white soap with round bubbles sits next to it, surrounded by the tiny green trees. Again the boundary of two realities is obscured by this surreal harmony.

The original Statue of Liberty faces the southeast, gazing over—to quote "The New colossus," a sonnet by Emma Lazarus that is mounted inside the pedestal of the statue—the tired, poor, huddled masses yearning to breathe free, who would land on Ellis island and await to finally step on the promised land of opportunity and freedom. By shifting the perspective of the statue, the image of Liberty is highlighted; at the break of dawn, when the immigrants exhausted from weeks spent in ships finally reach America, the green lady lifting her lamp beside the golden door greets them, promising that a new future awaits them.

However, the overall light yellow atmosphere creates the sense of fadedness, as if this image of promised Liberty is from the distant past. It is true that the boom of American immigration peaked around the late 1800s and early 1900s, but it is also true that America still remains as the welcoming home to thousands of immigrants. In 2018, 44.8 million people, or 13.7% of Americans, were foreign-born, which was as high as 14.8% from the 1890s when

the immigration boom was at its peak. The boom began to decline around the 1910s, and was at the lowest point of 4.7% in the 1970s, after the Immigration and Nationality Act was passed in 1965.¹ Around 1985, when this artwork was painted, the rate was slowly rising up again.

From 1984 to 1986, the Statue of Liberty underwent the most extensive restoration: rusted iron armature bars were replaced with stainless steel bars, multiple coatings from the interior copper skin were removed, and a new torch was covered with gold leaf (Do not miss the small detail of how the torch in the picture is painted in the faded, almost light yellow turquoise, just like the rest of the statue.)² The reconstruction must be the primary inspiration for Webb; while the statue was cleaned and the torch was coated in gold, he interpreted 'cleaned' literally and combined it with the image of a bathtub. The Statue of Liberty is being renewed—in a bathtub with a block of soap! With all the rusted faults removed and the lamp covered in gold, so that it can shine forever in its glory, the pride of American liberty is redefined to fit the change of time.

Webb himself stated that even though he works in a hyperrealistic or photorealistic style, he considers himself as a classical romantic surrealist who juxtaposes oversized objects within scenes to create meaningful metaphors, like René Magritte, one of the most influential Surrealist painters. He also explained that his forte is the reconciliation of opposites, where monotonous everyday scenes blend into the nature-based utopia fantasy.³ In this case, the utopia would be the scene of New York, where dreams of immigrants—solidified as the Statue of Liberty—come true.

However, after several decades, as xenophobia and racism loomed across the nation, the fantasy of the American dream was tarnished to a great extent. There are several implications of fading glory scattered across the picture. First, the overall faded yellow tone that adds an antiquated aura to the picture was briefly mentioned earlier. In addition, the holes in the drain are arranged to resemble the silhouette of the rising sun or the setting sun. Furthermore, it is placed directly

¹ https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/20/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/

² https://www.nps.gov/stli/learn/historyculture/liberty-island-a-chronology.htm

³ https://www.dougwebbart.com/artist-statement/

behind the statue, as if ashamedly trying to hide its dwindling past glory. Also, there are shadows formed at the southeastern corner of the painting, possibly formed by the wall of the tub, overcasting the part of the island. Last but not least, there are several shadows formed by the knobs and switch, and the shadow on the left points toward the... Twin Towers.

Of course, there is no way Webb predicted the future that devastated the towers and every American citizen, but combined with the overall faded aura, it creates the warning of how the definition of liberty in America will never be the same as the one from centuries ago. Liberty is renewed not just by its appearance, but also its socio-political definition. After all, soap makes things clean and shiny, but it is also slippery thus harder to reach. Liberty might have become cleaner, but simultaneously it became harder to reach, as if refusing to taint it both physically and conceptually with an unwanted flood of immigrants.

The presence of a soap raises an additional question. Why is the Statue of Liberty placed in the middle of a bathtub? Bathtub is not the only place where you can find water in everyday scenes; there are kitchen sinks, birdbaths, fishbowls, even gutters or toilets. Among the places where you can locate such items, the bathroom is arguably the most personal one—it is where privacy is (usually) guaranteed. Rather than being offered to the public, the symbol of liberty is kept privatized and excluded in the bathroom, away from the immigrants whose only reason to leave their home behind was liberty.

If Webb chose other settings to merge with an image of liberty, such as gutters or toilets, the intention to ridicule the liberty by placing it in a considerably unhygienic location would have been more explicit, thus less appealing to the viewers. By choosing a bathtub as an everyday object that is mundane enough to pass as a comical touch to the artwork, Webb balances out the ratio of 'black' and 'comedy' of the black comedy this painting implies. Specifically, he painted the bathtub and the statue in eye-catching bright shades and placed them at the center of the picture for the audience to initially interpret this work as a clever comedy. Only when they notice the disguised elements of cynical anti-immigrants, the clever comedy transforms into a much darker comedy, if not tragedy.

Furthermore, if Liberty Island is located inside a bathtub, no one can cross the ocean enclosed by the walls of the tub. Similarly, no one can reach the forest of skyscrapers painted on the tiled wall. This ridiculousness created by two different realities blending in together contributes to the surreal black comedy of this art. What good does liberty do if no one can access it? The image of liberty shown in the picture is cleaned and redefined to be an unattainable and abstract concept, the decision made in a certain white building located in Washington DC, one of the most important buildings in the US (and in the entire world as well) whose rectangular exterior strikes a resemblance too strong to ignore with a block of soap.

While the famous Statue of Liberty was undergoing restoration, its physical appearance was not the only thing that was going to change. Webb did not overlook that and captured every possible change of liberty in his artwork by creating a surreal coexistence of the fantasy of American Dream and the wearisome reality and concealing darker implications behind the bright tone. Lamentably, as the word immigrant has somehow become an insult in a nation founded by immigrants, Webb's insight cannot help but be confirmed to be valid.



Excellence in Multilingual Writing

Is the development of hydroelectric power in accordance with the principles of sustainable development?

by Yuyang Rao From WRITING 120 Nominated by Shuwen Li

As one of the long-sought options of renewable energy sources, hydroelectric power has been discussed and adopted worldwide. However, do hydroelectric power projects indeed generate more positive impacts? In his qualitative research project, Yuyang analyzed one of the most controversial hydroelectric projects—the Belo Monte Dam in Brazil, weighing its impacts against the United Nations sustainable development goals. Yuyang's report consists of a rigorous literature review of the existing studies on the impacts of hydroelectric power, a comprehensive case narrative constructed from multiple sources, and a careful analysis of all sides of the impacts of the Belo Monte Dam. His analysis exhibits explicit warrants and backing. His writing is lucid and firm.

-- Shuwen Li

Is the development of hydroelectric power in accordance with the principles of sustainable development?

Introduction

In recent years, the issue of global warming has been deteriorating at an increasing rate and has drawn the attention of many people. Our increasing need for energy generated with fossil fuels is the major cause of this problem. Thus, some countries are looking for alternative renewable energy sources to satisfy their energy needs. One of the most popular sources of renewable energy is hydroelectric power as it is normally cheap compared to other energy sources, including fossil fuels. However, recently, the sustainability of hydroelectric power has been brought into question as it is claimed to have multiple negative environmental and socio-economic impacts. The question now is: is the development of hydroelectric power in accordance with the principles of sustainable development? I will be attempting to answer this by examining the case of the Belo Monte Dam in Brazil using the United Nations sustainable development goals. I decided to select the Belo Monte Dam as the case since it is one of the most controversial hydroelectric projects in modern times. I believe that, despite the fact that the development of hydroelectric power does satisfy some of the goals, it goes against many other goals and it cannot be deemed sustainable. Through this research, I hope to allow people in areas where hydroelectric power is planned to be developed to make a more informed decision on whether they should embrace it or not.

Overview

Hydroelectric power has multiple benefits compared to other types of power generation methods — one of which being that it can be used for hydrological management in addition to its primary function of generating energy. Turkey, which experiences extremely unevenly distributed rainfall within its borders, has used reservoirs originally created to generate power to store clean water. In fact, 25% of the total area of freshwater in the country are man-made reservoirs. The clean water is then distributed throughout the country and the need for water for the entire country is satisfied (Yuksel, 2008). Such practices of storing freshwater using hydroelectric dams are also common elsewhere in the world and serve as a side benefit of hydroelectric power.

Furthermore, another benefit of hydropower is its relatively low cost. According to the National Hydropower Association, the cost to produce one kilowatt-hour of energy using hydropower is a third of that of natural gas, 27% of that of coal, and 21% of that of nuclear energy (2020). In the long term, hydropower is among the cheapest sources of energy (Yuksel, 2008). This has led many developing countries, which have the fastest growing need for energy, to adopt hydropower on the wide scale. At least 3,700 dams with power generating capacities of one megawatt or more are being planned or constructed, most of which are in developing countries (Zarfl et al., 2014).

Besides, one of the most talked-about benefits of hydropower is that it is a clean energy source without any emissions of greenhouse gases. According to the International Hydropower Association, if all hydropower on Earth is replaced with burning coal, 4 billion tons of additional greenhouse gases will be produced, which will lead to a 10% increase in global greenhouse gas emissions (2020). In fact, hydropower accounts for 71% of the world's renewable energy in 2016 (Moran et al., 2018). The "environmental friendliness" of hydropower led to a recent revival of dam building, which had been largely suspended in developed countries by 1975 (Moran et al., 2018).

However, the notion that hydroelectric power emits little to no greenhouse gases does not hold in some parts of the world since they can emit greenhouse gases through another process. Hydroelectric power dams create a reservoir upstream. The reservoir floods all of the vegetation under it and causes most of the vegetation to die off. Bacteria in the water then decompose the dead organic matter. If this process takes place in an oxygen-poor environment, methane, a type of potent greenhouse gas with 25 times the warming potential of carbon dioxide, is released. If this process takes place in an oxygen-rich environment, carbon dioxide is released (Fearnside, 2008). In other words, no matter the conditions of the reservoir, some form of greenhouse gas will be created by the decomposition of flooded organic materials. In a study conducted by Kemenes, Forsberg, and Melack, the methane release of the Balbina Reservoir, the largest reservoir in the Amazon, was estimated. The results were shocking: the reservoir's methane release contributes a similar amount of warming to the globe as 34000 metric tons of carbon dioxide per day; this is 8% of the warming created by all fossil fuel usage in the Brazilian metropolis of São Paulo (2007). Some other reservoirs even generate similar amounts of greenhouse gases per unit energy compared to fossil fuels (Kemenes et al., 2007). Since greenhouse gases released from the reservoirs are generated by the decomposition of organic material, the amount released is affected by the amount of organic material present. Tropical regions tend to have greater amounts of organic material per unit area. Thus, reservoirs in tropical environments, like the one studied by the Kemenes, Forsberg, and Melack (2007), tend to release more greenhouse gases. As a result, the common belief that hydroelectric power is a clean form of energy with little to no release of greenhouse gas is not true in some cases.

Moreover, the idea that hydropower is a relatively cheap source of energy may also be false in some circumstances. Development planners, engineers, and economists are known for being overly optimistic when judging the cost of a hydropower project and systematically underestimating costs. Plus, unexpected environmental and social costs are common for large hydroelectric projects. These factors combined mean that the actual cost of a dam is often much higher than predicted, with one in ten dams costing more than three times the predicted value (Latrubesse et al, 2017). Therefore, the claim that hydropower is a low-cost energy source is also undermined.

In addition to greenhouse gas release and higher-than-expected costs, another prominent drawback of hydropower is that hydroelectric dams disrupt fish migration. Construction of a dam can block or delay fish migrating upstream, thus leading to the decline or even extinction of fish species. For fish species that migrate downstream, they could be damaged or killed when trying to pass through the turbines or spillways of a dam in an attempt to continue down the river. As much as 90% of all fish passing through turbines and up to 37% of all fish passing through spillways are killed (Larinier, 2001). The lentic (still and fresh water) environment created by reservoirs can also act as "filters" for migratory fish species that rely on free-flowing water, hindering their migration (Timpe et al., 2017). These factors had detrimental effects on fish populations: salmon, which migrate upstream to spawn and back downstream to their normal habitat in the ocean, have disappeared from multiple rivers in France due to dam construction (Larinier, 2001). Therefore, hydroelectric dams disrupt fish migration.

Besides, hydroelectric power stations can also significantly alter the hydrology of a river, negatively influencing human and aquatic life. Dams alter the natural flow of a river by changing the magnitude, frequency, duration, timing, and rate of change of the flow. They also modify the transport of sediments, nutrients, and biota (animal and plant life) of the river (Timpe et al., 2017). In other words, nutrients transported by the river may not be able to reach floodplains. This could affect the productivity of crop fields as most of the farmland in the world depends on nutrients deposited onto floodplains by rivers. Dams can also change the rate and frequency of pulse events such as floods; this effect could lead animals that have adapted to the natural cycle of pulse events in the river to be caught off guard by the unnatural behavior of the river. In addition, multiple dams along the same river can have cumulative effects and further increase the alteration to the river. Furthermore, the alteration to the river downstream from the dam is normally larger than that upstream (Timpe et al., 2017). Therefore, not only can hydrological alteration caused by a hydroelectric dam negatively affect the ecology of the river, but also humans.

As discussed, although there are a few benefits concerning hydroelectric power, there are also many drawbacks. Plus, some of the benefits do not apply to every hydroelectric project, meaning that the benefits hydroelectric power can bring may not be as significant as advocates of hydroelectric power claimed.

Case Study: the Belo Monte Dam

Brazil is a rapidly developing country. Energy use per capita grew by 50.4% and the population grew by 25.2% between the years 1995 and 2014 (World Bank, 2014), meaning the total energy consumption of the country grew by around 88.3% during this span of 19 years. The country is the home to the world's largest river — the Amazon, and it has a similarly large amount of potential for hydroelectric power. Recently, the Brazilian government saw this potential and started a wave of dam building to satisfy the country's ever-growing need for more energy. 246 dams are currently planned in the Amazon basin, most of which are within the borders of Brazil (Lees, 2016). The largest dam in the Amazon basin is the Belo Monte Dam, which sits on the Xingu river, a major tributary of the Amazon. It is capable of generating 11,000 megawatt of power, the fourth highest installed power generating capacity in the world. However, the project had been protested by the locals and environmentalists, and therefore it remains one of the most controversial hydroelectric projects till this day.

The energy company that owns that dam, Norte Enertia, claims that no indigenous land will be flooded by the project. In fact, the site was specifically chosen to avoid flooding any indigenous areas: the original plan for the dam would have produced a reservoir with an area of more than 1200 square kilometers, but the plan was changed to only creating a reservoir of around 450 square kilometers as the original plan would flood the Bacaja Indigenous Area, home to more than 1000 indigenous people (Fearnside, 2006). Norte Energia claims that not only does this protect indigenous land, but also the environment. The dam also has a 1200-meter-long channel installed to allow fish to migrate through the section of the river. Norte Energia also claims that they have invested in improving the sanitation of the region near the dam, including projects aimed at building sewage treatment systems and eliminating malaria. Plus, they are also investing in the region's education and housing (Norte Energia, 2018). The dam's installed power generating capacity is 11,000 megawatt, which is 7% of the power generating capacity of Brazil in 2016 (World Bank, 2016). The

power generated could allow for significant economic growth and provide jobs to many people in the area.

However, environmentalists, indigenous people, and some researchers disagree with the claims. They argue that since most of the electricity generated by the Belo Monte dam will be used in the aluminum industry, which is mostly owned by large international corporations and employs very few employees relative to their energy use, few job opportunities will be provided and not many people will be benefited in that respect (Fearnside, 2006). Indigenous people who own land just downstream from Belo Monte also claim that the dam poses a threat to their way of life. Environmentalists say that diverting the river's flow to power the turbines will lead to damage to large swaths of the Amazon and reduce fish stocks. Other critics of the project also claim that the dam will be hugely inefficient since during the dry season, it can only generate power at 10% of its installed capacity (Duffy, 2010). Another point that Norte Energia rarely mentions is that the Belo Monte Dam will require a series of dams upstream to be more efficient. These dams are already being planned and one of which, the Altamira Dam, will create a massive 6140 square kilometers reservoir. Another one of these dams, the Jarina Dam, will flood part of the Xingu Indigenous Park (Fearnside, 2006), meaning the Belo Monte Dam will flood some indigenous land in an indirect manner. However, the upstream dams are already moving through the process of approval from the government despite the backlash from indigenous communities, environmentalists, researchers, and even some wellknown institutes in the country.

The two sides' arguments are sometimes contradictory. This makes it even more difficult to judge if the project is in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. Therefore, I will look at each claim made by the two sides and analyse if the claim goes against or along with the United Nations (UN) sustainable development goals.

Results and Discussion

To begin with, one of the UN sustainable development goals is quality education. Details of this goal include "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". In the case of the Belo Monte Dam, the power company, Norte Energia, promised to invest in education in the area, benefiting more than 20 thousand students. They promise to build important educational spaces, such as 38 computer rooms and 34 reading rooms (2018). These facilities, which are relatively rare deep in the Amazon rainforest, could greatly improve the quality of education. Therefore, I believe that, if Norte Energia is able to keep its promise, the Belo Monte Dam does help achieve the sustainable development goal of quality education.

Another one of the UN sustainable development goals is affordable and clean energy. Details of this goal include "ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all." Although Norte Energia claims that they produce clean energy, I believe that the Belo Monte Dam does not help achieve this goal. First, whether the energy provided by the dam is sustainable is the question this paper is trying to answer. Therefore, it cannot be used as a criterion to judge if the dam helps achieve the goal. The reliability of the energy generated by the dam is also low since, as previously mentioned, during the dry season, it can only generate 10% of its installed capacity. A 90% decrease in energy production during some parts of the year is far from reliable. However, the greatest contradiction of the Belo Monte Dam to this goal is that it does not provide energy for all. The dam was built primarily to satisfy the energy needs of the Aluminum industry, not the people of the area. This does not ensure access to energy for all. Rather it ensures energy access to only some as the Aluminium industry is likely to have the priority to energy access. Considering that the energy will be mostly going to the Aluminum industry, the affordability of the energy becomes less of an issue since the Aluminium industry is mostly run by large multinational corporations that care less about energy cost. Therefore, I believe that the Belo Monte Dam does not help achieve the goal of affordable and clean energy.

Besides, another one of the UN sustainable development goals is climate action. Details of this goal include "take urgent actions to combat climate change and its impacts". Although Norte Energia claims that they are providing renewable energy which helps combat climate change, I believe that whether the dam helps combat climate change is uncertain. As previously mentioned, tropical reservoirs create methane through the decomposition of organic materials under the oxygen poor water (Fearnside, 2008). Reservoirs in tropical regions, which have higher density of organic materials, produce more methane. Some may produce enough methane that energy production from these dams is less clean than that from fossil fuels in terms of how much it warms the Earth (Kemenes et al., 2007). The Belo Monte Dam is located in the Amazon rainforest, a very densely vegetated region. Therefore, it will likely produce an above average amount of methane. Nevertheless, the exact amount of methane released due to the Belo Monte Dam is unknown. The issue is further complicated by the series of planned dams upstream from Belo Monte designed to make the Belo Monte Dam more efficient, some of which have much larger reservoirs than Belo Monte. A reservoir with a larger area floods more organic materials and gives off more methane. The complexity of the issue and the lack of research for the methane release of the Belo Monte dams means that it is difficult to determine if it helps combat climate change. Therefore, I believe that whether the Belo Monte Dam helps achieve the goal of climate action is uncertain.

Furthermore, the next 2 goals on the UN sustainable development goals are life below water and life on land. Some details of these goals include conserving fish resources in the oceans, sustainably managing forests, and halting biodiversity loss. I reckon that the Belo Monte Dam goes against this goal. Although the UN is more focused on fish resources in the ocean, some fish species migrate from oceans into rivers. Therefore, protecting fish migration routes in rivers is also essential to conserving fish populations in the oceans. Norte Energia claims that fish migration can continue since they installed channels designed to allow migratory fish to pass through. However, as previously mentioned, alterations to rivers extend beyond the immediate proximity of the dam. The reservoir created significantly changes the river's state upstream from the dam to a point which some species may not be able to pass through the reservoirs. Dams also affect the natural cycles of the rivers (Timpe et al., 2017), which is significant for the Xingu River (on which the Belo Monte Dam sits) due to its large seasonal variations in flow rates, the same variation that leads to the variation in energy generating capacity of the dam in different periods during a year. Migratory fish may find it difficult to adjust to the new cycle of the river, causing fish migration to stop and fish stocks in the oceans to be depleted. The Xingu River eventually flows into the Amazon, meaning that fish migration in the entire Amazon river basin could be affected. These goals also call for the sustainable management of forests. However, the Belo Monte Dam floods hundreds of square kilometers of the Amazon rainforest, completely destroying the forests in the areas flooded. Diverting the river's flow to power the turbines will also affect the forest downstream from the dam as less water will pass through the original river channel. This could also negatively impact an even larger area of the Amazon. Finally, these goals call for halting biodiversity loss. With the destruction of the natural river habitat upstream from the dam and the destruction of large swaths of rainforest both due to the reservoir, the existing biodiversity in these areas are inevitably lost. Although reservoirs create a new type of habitat and can support new biodiversity, the biodiversity of reservoirs are typically lower than that of free-flowing rivers (Timpe et al., 2017). Due to the damage Belo Monte can cause to biodiversity and natural habitats, I believe that the Belo Monte Dam does not help achieve the goals life below water and life on land.

Last but not least, one of the most prominent UN sustainable development goals is good health and well-being. Details of this goal include "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages." I believe that the Belo Monte Dam satisfies part of this goal but goes against the other part. On one hand, Norte Energia promised to invest in improving the sanitation of the region near the dam, such as building sewage treatment systems and eliminating malaria. This achieves the good health part of this goal as there will be less cases of malaria, a disease that can significantly compromise the health of the locals. A sewage treatment system can also greatly reduce the risks of waterborne diseases; this can give the local people even healthier lives, achieving the good health part of the goal. However, I believe that it does not go along with the well-being part of the goal. Well-being is defined as "the experience of health, happiness, and prosperity. It includes having good mental health, high life satisfaction, a sense of meaning or purpose, and ability to manage stress" (Davis, 2019). Indigenous people have conveyed their dissatisfaction towards the Belo Monte Dam many times before since they believe that it poses a threat to their way of life. I believe that this claim is valid, in spite of Norte Energia claiming that no indigenous land will be flooded. As stated before, the alterations to a river by a dam is the greatest downstream from the dam (Timpe et al., 2017), which is exactly where some indigenous land is located. The alteration to the river will likely be significant near their land. Indigenous tribes have lived in the rainforest for thousands of years and have adapted to the natural flow and cycles of the river. Changes to these features are likely to threaten their way of life. Plus, although Belo Monte will not flood indigenous land directly, the series of planned upstream dams designed to make Belo Monte more efficient will; this affects the indigenous people in those areas, who have also protested against the dam. Therefore, I believe that the Belo Monte Dam does not satisfy the well-being part of the good health and well-being goal.

In total, I conclude that the Belo Monte Dam helps achieve just one of the UN sustainable development goals (quality education) and partially satisfying another (good health and well-being), while going against three goals (affordable and clean energy, life on land, and life below water), with the conclusion for another goal (climate action) being uncertain. The goals that the dam project does satisfy (good health and quality education) are not directly related to the dam project. They are mostly seen as compensation by Norte Energia for the inconveniences the dam will bring to the local residents. This means that the investment Norte Energia promised to make in education and health facilities can be made even if the dam was not constructed. As a result, in my opinion, the Belo Monte Dam goes against the principles of sustainable development to a large extent.

Conclusion

While my discussion mainly focuses on the Belo Monte Dam, similar conclusions can generally be drawn for large hydroelectric projects elsewhere since they have similar impacts around the world; most large hydroelectric projects generally go against the principles of sustainable development. However, the implication of the research is limited by the fact that there are some impacts of hydroelectric projects that cannot be generalized, such as the methane release of a reservoir. Specific research is needed for each hydroelectric project to determine if they even satisfy their most stereotypical benefits: reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However, overall, the other less case-specific drawbacks of hydroelectric power is enough to cause it to be generally unsustainable.

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Excellence in the Practice of Writing

Remix to the Letter to Your Younger Self

by Genta Gollopeni

From WRITING 100: Becoming Writers at U-M Nominated by Simone Sessolo

Genta was able to effectively turn a textual letter into a multimodal artifact. Of particular praise is the choice of adding a "calendar" that allows viewers to experience Genta's development and progression this semester. Each photo is thematically relevant to the attached text, and the whole remix is visually pleasant.

-- Simone Sessolo

Remix to the Letter to Your Younger Self



December 2020

Dear GG,

I know you won't understand me calling you that, but people will mispronounce your name so often that GG is pretty much your new nickname. You don't know it yet but the dynamic of your life will shift completely. You will not graduate from Loyola Gymnasium. You will not attend University of Pristina. Crazy, I know. There are things I need to tell you about what you are about to experience. You are about to discover that you are not in control. Growing up you will experience a mix of emotions. You will experience sorrow and pain. You will also experience unconditional love and support. There is great mystery in this life and you will never know what your next step is, no matter for how long you've been planning it out.

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February 2016

You are a full-fledged adult now, can you believe it? At 14 you just wanted to graduate with your close friends, Sara and Rita. Remember when we thought we had life all figured out? When we thought nothing would come in between our friendship? Well, 5,638 miles and the Atlantic Ocean did. We were wrong. One day you will wake up, go to school, and be excited to see your friends. You guys will complain about how many notes you have to take and you will try to understand why you have to attend a Latin class that day. It is a dead language after all. Then, on the drive back you will think about the homework you have to finish. Just an ordinary day in your life as an 8th grader. Except is isn't just like any other day.



When you arrive home dad will nonchalantly vocalize that our family won the Green Card. You will be in complete disbelief and will think it's just another one of dad's pranks. But to your surprise it is 100% true. You are suddenly given the chance to move to America, the land of Hollywood and all the shows you grew up watching. You are up for the challenge. Remember what you have learned so far and be ready to surrender what you think for sure. Your own little bubble you grew up in is about to be taken from you, if you allow it. Let that go. Every ounce of effort you will put into this substantial change will be worth it and will mold you into a better person. There will be fear and anxiety along the way, a lot. But there will also be massive amounts of joy, triumph, and accomplishments.



Many people will expect you to be sad throughout this process, and sure, you will be. You will not see your friends everyday anymore, you will not have sleepovers with your cousins, and you will not get to eat grandma's delicious crepes whenever you want. You will move through grief and loneliness sometimes. But you have to keep in mind, you can be happy even when you don't know how everything's going to work out. Life is full of surprises and trying to predict every single step will lead to futile results. You can have a meaningful life even when life takes a complete turn on you. So don't let people's assumptions of what you are going through get to you because regardless of the outcome, you are going to be proud of your experiences. Hopefully you aren't annoyed of my advices already; there are many more coming throughout this letter, FYI.



July 2016

On July 3rd, 2016, the documents will be all set up, the goodbyes will all be said, and your plane will take off. First destination, New York City. You will see your first skyscraper. The city is as beautiful as it is in movies, maybe even better. Your next stop is your new home, Shelby Township, Michigan. Although it is not as beautiful as New York, you will love how family-friendly this town is. You will love visiting all the lakes. As you see the hundreds of trees turn from a bright green to a gold orange and reds, fall will soon become your favorite season. You will finally experience a trip to Target which I know you have been dying to experience ever since you started watching those "A Day In My Life" vlogs. Remember when they would say "you go to Target and let Target tell you what you need"? Well, that is very much true.



June 2020

All this sounds exciting but there are times where your confidence simply disappears. The houses are all set up differently, the stores, and even the schools operate differently. It is quite the change! The road will not always be easy but I can promise you it is an incredible journey with so many exquisite blessings along the way. You will soon start high school and realize there are no mean girls who wear pink on Wednesdays and will be mean to you. Stop wasting time worrying about fitting in. You will find new friends, have sleepovers, attend school dances, and even join National Honor Society and Student Council together. Be serious about school. It might not seem like a big deal now at this age, but it will later. Strive for good grades, respect your teachers, and study for the SAT. This will all pay off in the end because after you graduate Utica High School, you will be accepted into the #3 best business school in the U.S., Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. You might be asking how did you go from living in a partially recognized small country to attending one of the biggest, best schools in the world? I am still wondering myself. It truly is a dream I never thought was achievable.



September 2020

I know you're not going to take much notice of what I'm writing anymore as I am sure your head is still wrapping around the fact that U-M is your new school, but here goes... Believe in yourself. College is challenging and there will be many moments where you experience imposter syndrome. Don't give up though! You got in for a reason. The admission team saw something in you and knew you belong here, so it is time you start believing that too. You are going to have the opportunity to experience some amazing things. From seeing the Wolf Monster perform his violin on State St. to walking past the Big House, excitement will never leave your side. Being an adult and all the freedom that comes with it is even better than you imagined. The ability to walk to Joe's at 3 a.m. without mom stopping you. Setting your own schedule to do what you want to do, when you want to. You will not experience this alone, however.



October 2020

You are going to meet amazing friends who you will grow such a bond with. They will be there with you to watch gameday from your twin bed to grabbing dinner together anywhere. Oh, you are wondering why we watch the football games in our rooms and not in the Big House? You'll be disappointed to know that there is a global pandemic currently happening right now, which has hindered our college experience. Hopefully, everything will return to how it used to be soon, but that is something you will have to find out for yourself.



November 2020

You will grow older and older, but never for a second think that you are done growing up. You will have learned that as long as you have mom and dad you will have a place to call home. You will not be everyone's cup of tea and that is okay. Never change yourself for others. You do not know everything. Listen. Be alert. Be open-minded. If you don't completely love the person you see in the mirror, you will never truly be happy. Be proud of who you are. You will be given advices along the way. Use it as your guidance! Lastly, but most importantly, keep in mind that there will be countless moments of joy and gratification that make your entire world light up.

Enjoy the ride, GG

Excellence in the Practice of Writing

Gene Therapy: What You Need to Know

by William McGraw

From WRITING 100: The Practice of Writing Nominated by Jimmy Brancho

Will wrote enthusiastically all term long on a topic both scientifically and philosophically challenging: human gene therapy. His remediation assignment culminates his study in a pragmatic and accessible infographic that takes the topic from the stuff of sci-fi and fearmongering to locate it in our real world. His reflection essay describes a process of selection, combing through the 15 pages of writing he'd done this term for the most effective pieces for an infographic containing less than 200 words. With a clean, simple format, the information comes out neatly organized, focused on the benefits and potential side effects of real gene therapies being used today.

-- Jimmy Brancho

Remediation Reflection

For this remediation project I was primarily interested in giving my audience a simple, easy to understand infographic that didn't overflow with statistics or writing. I tried my best to cut to the point and eliminate unnecessary information. I also wanted to keep the infographic engaging and pleasing to the eye. I added graphics that corresponded to the text to incorporate some contrasting imagery.

As I mentioned earlier, I wanted to make the infographic easy to follow and give my audience memorable information about gene therapy. To do this, I used mainly simple terms and provided a few examples to give a feel for what gene therapy was capable of. I tried to stay away from the ethical and controversial side of things and focused mostly on the topics I felt were most important to know about. I decided to use the layout that I did because I felt it didn't crowd the text too much, it allowed for spacing, had different colors, and it allowed me to include some graphics.

I probably spent around two hours working on this project. This included collecting answers to the questions I posed, formatting the infographic, and choosing graphics that connected to the information being presented. I think that time was right around where I expected it to be. Almost all of the information in the infographic came from both my Op-Ed and Research paper, so I didn't have to search too hard for new evidence. I mainly just reformatted it. I initially planned out what I wanted my infographic to say (what questions I would want to answer) and then after I worked on formatting and adding graphics.

Given the feedback I was given, I would keep most of the infographic the same. I might look to cut out the names of the FDA approved gene therapies to keep the infographic even more general or less confusing to the audience.

The most difficult part for me while making this infographic was choosing which information I wanted to include. To me, gene therapy is an extremely interesting topic, so I could have written a lot more than I did. That being said, my goal was to make the infographic informative without sacrificing the engagement of my audience. To do so, I kept the written parts clear and concise. The biggest lesson I learned from this project was the power of including only the most important information in the text. I got mostly positive feedback from my peers which demonstrated to me that I did an effective job at communicating my message.

Gene Therapy

What You Need to Know

How does it work?



Gene therapy involves introducing genetic material into cells to correct a mutated or faulty gene. When genes are mutated, they can interfere with the function of necessary proteins in the body. The goal of gene therapy is to restore the mutated or faulty gene to allow the proteins to operate as they normally would. It is typically injected or given through an IV.

How is this different from gene editing?



Gene therapy actually falls under the category of gene editing. Gene therapy is referred to as somatic gene editing which only alters the blood cells of the patient. The other type of gene editing, called germ-line gene editing, involves altering the genome of a human embryo at its earliest stages, thus affecting the descendants of that patient. Germ-line gene editing has become very controversial in recent years.

How is it being used?



The FDA has approved multiple gene therapies and each day many companies continue to experiment with this technology. Approved gene therapies include LUXTURNA, a drug that has cured blindness in children who suffer from two missing copies of a gene and ZOLGENSWA, another drug that has cured Spinal Muscular Atrophy (a rare genetic disease that results in loss of muscle function) in children under the age of 2. Other companies are in the process of testing this technology on different gene mutations.

What are the side effects?



Side effects primarily depend on which gene therapy is given and how that drug is introduced into the body. Some gene therapies have resulted in permanent damage, while others have resulted in only mild side effects. For example in the ZOLGENSMA study, a common side effect was vomiting. Typically, if the procedure involves surgery it is more likely to inflict harm onto the patient. The LUXTURNA procedure, mentioned earlier, resulted in a permanent loss of vision for 2/41 patients in one of their studies due to the involvement of surgery.

What does this mean for the future?



Gene therapy provides hope and promise for many families who had none before this technology. Each day, the medical field looks to improve this technology and apply it to other genetic mutations. The approved gene therapies have demonstrated the capability to change lives. Unfortunately, this technology remains high-priced due to the fact that gene therapy is used to treat relatively small populations. Families must decide whether the benefits outweigh the costs.

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