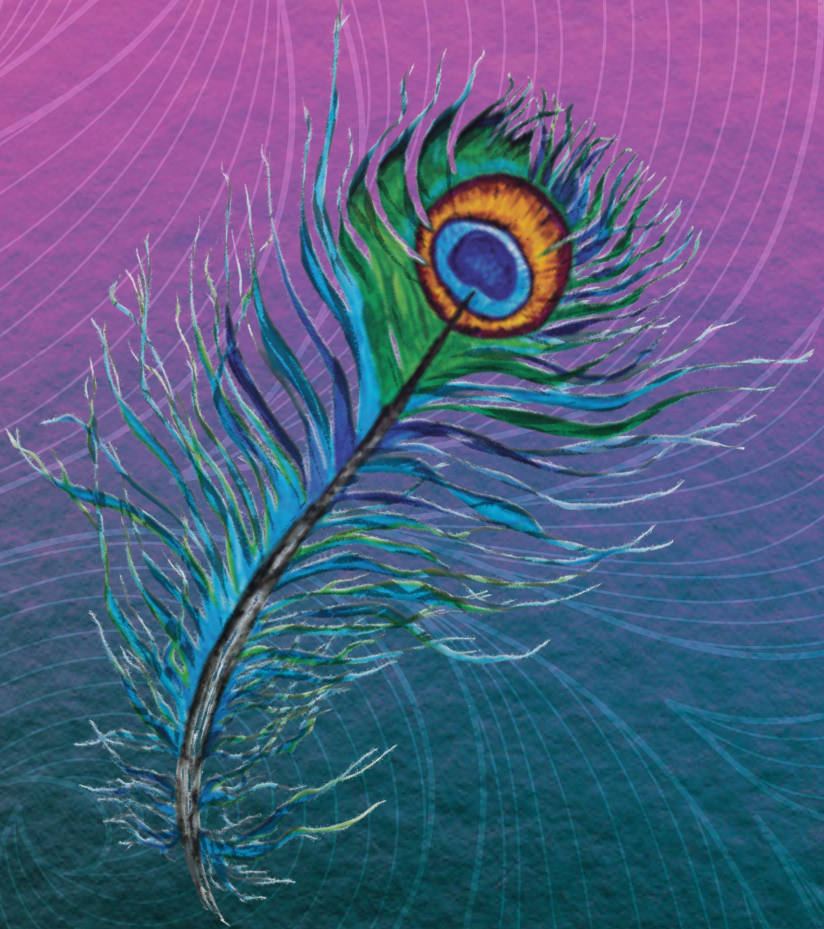


# MILESTONES

ACADEMIC JOURNAL

2023-2024 : VOLUME 19



A PUBLICATION OF  
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS - PULASKI TECHNICAL COLLEGE

# **MILESTONES**

## **Volume 19**

### **2023–2024**

Milestones is a publication of:  
University of Arkansas – Pulaski Technical College  
3000 West Scenic Drive  
North Little Rock, Arkansas 72118  
501-812-2200  
[www.uaptc.edu](http://www.uaptc.edu)

**Advisers**

Logan Oliver  
Dr. Richard Moss  
Dr. Ana Hunt

**Editorial Board**

Jennifer Atkins-Gordeeva  
Jonathan Purkiss  
Jessica Wise

**Managing Editor**

Leslie J. Lovenstein

**Graphic Design**

Chris Blackall

**Cover Art**

Watercolor by Savannah Brinkley

**Our Thanks To:**

Dr. Summer DeProw; Rita Fleming; Tim Jones; Chris Blackall; Lennon Parker; Minette Boulier; Michelle Anderson; the staff of the University of Arkansas–Pulaski Technical College Libraries; and the faculty, staff, and students who have continued to show interest and enthusiasm in this publication.

**©2023 UA–Pulaski Technical College**

Works appearing in Milestones are printed with the permission of the authors. Copyright reverts to authors immediately following publication. Milestones is published annually by UA–Pulaski Technical College through the Division of Fine Arts and Humanities.

Submissions to Milestones are accepted year-round via e-mail at [milestones@uaptc.edu](mailto:milestones@uaptc.edu). The publication accepts academic essays, personal narratives, and creative nonfiction. Anyone associated with UA–Pulaski Technical College is encouraged to submit to Milestones.

The views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of UA–Pulaski Technical College or those of any of the college personnel or people responsible for publishing this journal.

**Founding Sponsor**

Joey Cole

**Founding Editors**

Wade Derden  
Angie Macri

**Previous Editors**

2011–2013

Sandy Longhorn

## **PLEASE NOTE:**

The language and content contained in this journal  
may not be suitable for all readers.

# MILESTONES

## 2023–2024 : Volume 19

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Editor’s Note</b> _____	7
<b>Dalton Pellerin</b> _____ <i>In Humility, I Believe</i> Personal Narrative	9
<b>Kendall Green</b> _____ <i>Humanity Has More Pressing Matters than Colonizing Mars</i> Argument with Research	13
<b>Jacob Pachosa</b> _____ <i>Oppenheimer: Worth the Watch?</i> Movie Critique	20
<b>Phillip Hill</b> _____ <i>Analysis of “Drug Dealer” by Macklemore</i> Song Analysis	24
<b>Shifa Rattani</b> _____ <i>Reflecting Authenticity: A Rhetorical Analysis of Dove’s Reverse Selfie</i> Rhetorical Analysis	28
<b>Mia Raso</b> _____ <i>A Girl in the World of Esports</i> Personal Narrative	32
<b>Eli Chennault</b> _____ <i>Beast in Man’s Clothing: Animal Imagery in Homer’s Iliad</i> Poetry Analysis	37
<b>Sophia Kohlenberger Bazzi</b> _____ <i>Progressive Plastic Policies</i> Argument with Research	41

<b>Shontel Stott</b> _____	<b>44</b>
<i>Journey on Kilimanjaro</i> Personal Narrative	
<b>Phillip Hill</b> _____	<b>49</b>
<i>A Story of Subtext: Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been</i> Research Paper	
<b>Shifa Rattani</b> _____	<b>51</b>
<i>Artificial Intelligence: Human Advancement or Replacement</i> Argument with Research	
<b>Ciara Robinson</b> _____	<b>56</b>
<i>Rich Richard Cory or Poor Richard Cory?</i> Poetry Analysis	
<b>Johnnie Frank</b> _____	<b>61</b>
<i>Wisdom in the Cozy Café</i> Personal Narrative	
<b>Raychel McLaney</b> _____	<b>64</b>
<i>Going against Tradition: How Female Perspective Changed Courtly Love in Lanval</i> Literary Analysis with Research	
<b>Mia Raso</b> _____	<b>69</b>
<i>Addicted to Being Connected</i> Argument with Research	



## Editor's Note

Writing has the power to help us figure things out. When we are faced with chaos or confusion, we turn to writing to help make sense of things. In Volume 19 of *Milestones*, we celebrate the ability of writing to help us work through both individual and shared challenges.

As we read the personal narratives “In Humility, I Believe,” “A Girl in the World of ESports,” “Journey to Kilimanjaro,” and “Wisdom in the Cozy Café,” we get a glimpse into the complexities of our peers and the challenges they face.

As we read the arguments “Humanity Has More Pressing Matters than Colonizing Mars,” “Progressive Plastic Policies,” “Addicted to Being Connected,” “Artificial Intelligence: Human Advancement or Replacement,” and the critical review “Oppenheimer: Worth the Watch,” we gain insight into the multifaceted complications facing society.

Finally, the scholarly analyses of works of music and literature from *The Iliad* and *Lanval* to “Richard Cory,” “Where Are You Going Where Have You Been,” and “Drug Dealer,” reveal that humanity has contemplated the challenges we face from ancient to contemporary times.

May the talented UA-PTC students whose words fill this volume remind us that we can overcome whatever challenges we face. So keep writing, keep learning, and keep hoping.

**Leslie J. Lovenstein**  
*Managing Editor*





# Dalton Pellerin

## *In Humility, I Believe*

When I was a young boy, I watched as my father was shipped out to Afghanistan for the first time in 2002. In a dark parking lot in front of the building where he worked, we said our goodbyes not knowing how long he would be gone. My father was an Army Special Forces member. They have the best training, the best gear, and the best people in the Army. These are the people the commercials and movies are made about, and they were about to go make history.

My father returned home more than a year later. After a much-needed break from work, it was almost time for him to deploy again and we weren't sure how long it would be before he was home. We never really knew how long he was going to be gone.

Year after year, deployment after deployment, it seemed, especially to a young boy like me, that it would never end. I remember wondering "Does my dad have to be the one?" One day when we were spending time with him before another deployment I asked, "Why do you have to go so much?"

Dad replied, "You may not understand it now, but you will one day. I'm doing this for you and your sisters and for everyone in America. Protecting your future and our way of life is why I am gone so often."

He was right. I didn't understand at all. At the time, I probably would have said something like "That's dumb, why can't anybody else do it?" but I stayed quiet.

I may not have understood what he was saying at the time, but I do now. That day he taught me a lesson in being humble, perhaps without even realizing it. The humility in those words

sticks with me to this day. He wasn't doing it for the money, fancy stuff, or other materialistic reasons. He only cared about us and made sure he did what he could to ensure we had a future.

When it came time for me to decide what I was going to do with my life, I was looking at college or the military. Honestly, as an 18-year-old, I can say there was no way I would have had what it takes to get through college. I just was not disciplined enough for it. So, I decided to go into the Air Force, and on December 6, 2011, I was shipped out to basic training.

It was scary for the first time when I left home to go somewhere new. I had just turned 18 a few months prior and now I was going to be expected to live on my own and take care of things like taxes, and bills. High school didn't teach me any of that. Thankfully most bills could be paid online by this time, and after a couple of months, I just stopped with the checkbook because I could track everything online.

The military is a very humbling experience if you allow it. For me, basic training is where I got my first dose of some needed humility. I was complaining to some flight members, while we were going about our daily rituals of cleaning and getting our areas in pristine order, about how annoying it was that we had to make sure everything in our lockers was in absolutely perfect order. I remember my flightmate saying, "Yeah I can't see how making sure our uniform faces a specific direction in the locker matters to military training."

Unknown to us at the time, our military training instructor had overheard the conversation. We must have been louder than we realized. The sound of stomping boots coming in your direction is never a good feeling. This time, instead of yelling at us, he paused and calmly explained, "Sometimes the tiny details in the operational Air Force are the difference between life and death. Being forced to work on the smallest details and being held accountable for them builds the habit and skill set for

attention to detail.”

Several years later, our commander walked around the various buildings congratulating those who were going to be promoted to Technical Sergeant. At this moment, only the commander and his team knew who would be promoted. Five eligible Staff Sergeants in my unit took the test and could possibly get promoted. He walked into our building with just one certificate.

Standing next to me was a friend who had been in the Air Force longer than I had been, but I was caught up to him in rank. Jesse always gave good advice when I was younger in my career but had trouble with test taking. Since a test made up roughly 60% of your final promotion score, this meant he was often passed over.

Out of the five of us who could be promoted, I wanted Jesse to be the one. After all, he had the most experience and had been in the Air Force the longest. My commander gave a very short speech, then said, “Alright let’s get on with it, shall we? With a line number of 5302 . . .”

Time seemed to pause for me in this moment. If Jesse got promoted that number would be very low, not nearly as high as it was. As I am looking around, trying to think of who might be getting promoted with that high of a line number I heard the commander, “Staff Sergeant Dalton Pellerin, come on down, and congratulations on your selection to Technical Sergeant.”

I was confused, elated, sad, and excited all at once as I walked up to shake my commander’s hand. My commander asked, “Would you like to say anything?” I had to pause for a moment, I was still processing the fact that I had been chosen for promotion. When I collected myself, I remembered seeing my dad up on stage thanking everyone but himself, so I made sure I did the same thing. I looked at my commander and said, “Yes. I would

like to thank Jesse and the rest of my teammates. Thank you to my supervisor, and my subordinates, because if you all weren't as awesome as you are, I wouldn't get to focus on working towards this goal." Then I stepped off the stage.

Now I try my best to live by what my father's words meant and what they continue to mean to me. Nothing I do is purely for myself, that is, at least, not my intention. I constantly strive to make sure I am bettering someone else's life in any way I am able. Being a leader for several years in the Air Force was very challenging but when I thought of my dad's words, "I'm doing this for you" it helped me get through anything that was brought to me. I always thought *if my dad could do all he did for us, certainly I can do everything in my power to help make somebody's day a little brighter or a bit easier.*

Everybody puts in their own hard work to get somewhere or to earn something, but we all have help, and sometimes it's more help than we think. Humility is the most important thing to have. Humility allows us to see and understand how our family and friends have helped us reach new heights but remain grounded when we do reach those heights.

# **Kendall Green**

## ***Humanity Has More Pressing Matters than Colonizing Mars***

As humanity moves into a new era of science, space colonization has become a topic that society must address. With The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) planning to send astronauts to Mars by 2030 or 2040 and big names in the space industry like Elon Musk claiming there will be civilizations on Mars by 2050, the discussion of space colonization has become a topic that has crept up on humanity slowly but surely. Nevertheless, with the issue gaining relevance, it becomes clear that waiting on this decision would prove to be more beneficial to society than expanding into space would ever be. Even though colonization could become possible soon, the health risks and costs outweigh the need to act, especially since we have more pressing matters to focus on here on Earth.

### **Background Context**

Space travel has always been an exciting topic to discuss. From the simple beginnings of sending the first human to space in the early 1960s to the first moon landing, countless countries have achieved many significant feats. What started as a dream to many soon became a reality to all, and scientists began to ponder the next step for humanity: colonization. While this may seem far-fetched for some, the first Mars rover landing in 2021 has sparked the idea of colonization and filled scientists with vigor and hope of life on the red planet.

### **Health Risks**

One fear of space colonization that comes to mind is how people will deal with the health risks outer space proposes. While some people may believe that they would be minimal, there are

significant threats that we should address before colonization can be tackled.

Microgravity, or the condition where gravity is minimal yet still present, is something humans have not been exposed to in daily life. Because of this, humans have no simple way to counter the effects that would occur while establishing a colony on Mars. According to David Hart, the author of the article “Homo sapiens—A Species Not Designed for Space Flight,” evolution had no chance to adapt to microgravity due to having no exposure to it. Therefore, astronauts affected by it while living in low Earth orbit (LEO) or even during flight have had this gene remain dormant, making adjustment to the atmosphere difficult.

With the human race not prepared for space flight, specific countermeasures must be erected, especially for living in LEO for prolonged periods. Hart compiled a table showing the effects of living in LEO for extended durations (See Fig. 1) to explain the needed treatments. The table lists the conditions one may expect to deal with when returning from a trip. From muscle or bone atrophy, arrhythmia, altered vision, and others, most, if not all, of these effects are directly caused by microgravity. The vital part of the table is the effective countermeasures list, as these are solutions humanity has already created. While some conditions may be countered with a daily exercise routine, some may require more drastic measures. For example, bone atrophy may need prescription drugs to recover fully, fluid redistribution and arrhythmia are best countered with artificial gravity, and we have yet to discover an effective counter to behavior or memory issues. With these problems still being a significant risk, sending a colony to space would raise multiple complications. Say travel from planet to planet becomes normal for our society; how would people adapt from LEO back to normal gravity?

**Fig. 1** - A table put together by David Hart listing responses to LEO, effective countermeasures, and presumed causes of these conditions (Hart, David).

Table 1. Summary of Human Responses to Long-Duration Living in LEO<sup>a</sup>.

Tissue/System	Response	Effective Counter Measures	Presumed Cause
<b>MSK System</b>			
Muscle	Atrophy	Exercise protocols	Microgravity
Bone	Atrophy	Partial (Exercise/Drugs)	Microgravity
Ligaments	??—Not reported		
Tendons	??—Not reported		
<b>CV System</b>			
Heart	Arrhythmia, LV mass, <sup>b</sup> Cardiac output	Compression, Artificial gravity	Microgravity, Radiation?
<b>Vascular</b>			
Fluid	Redistribution	Artificial gravity /Compression	Microgravity
Tissue	Altered function	No—most recover on return	Microgravity
	Remodeling	May persist	Microgravity
Eyes	Altered vision (fluid and/or neural)	Glasses—some recover on return	Microgravity
Immune System	Viral reactivation, White blood cells	Stress reduction	Stress, Circadian disruption
DNA	Epigenetic	None—some reversible on return	??—likely multi-causal <sup>c</sup>
Bone Marrow	Fat infiltration, Hematopoiesis?	None—recovery on return	Microgravity, Others?
<b>Neural</b>			
Central	Cognition, Behavior, Working memory, Structural alterations	None presently	Microgravity, Others?
Peripheral	Neuromuscular, Vestibular, Cardiovascular	Exercise	Microgravity

<sup>a</sup> This table summarizes many, but not all, of the responses of astronauts to life in LEO conditions. However, individual responses are quite variable, and not all astronauts experience the changes to the same degree. As most astronauts to date have been male, the potential to elucidate sex-specific alterations must await additional flights and tenure of female astronauts at locations such as the ISS. <sup>b</sup> Left ventricular mass. <sup>c</sup> Multi-causal = stress, circadian rhythm disruption, radiation, alterations to hematopoiesis.

Another question is, will these symptoms worsen with an extended period away from Earth? Following that line of inquiry, if someone was born into that environment, would they ever be able to visit Earth since they were never exposed to gravity? These questions must have solid, concrete answers before we consider colonization.

Pregnancy and raising a child is something many people hold dear to their hearts. What people have not considered, is how microgravity would affect repopulation. Consider the studies conducted by Ijiri and Ronca in the early 2000s that depicted pregnancy in mammals with the factor of microgravity or LEO. While they concluded it is still feasible, it comes with significant challenges, such as a tedious labor process and an increased rate of stillbirths. Continued studies done by Straume, Blattinig, & Zeitlin proved that cosmic radiation could be detrimental to newborns, as it could cause malformations and abnormalities to form while the fetus develops (qtd. in Schuster, and Peck). With deformities and stillbirths occurring often in LEO, the risks that come with pregnancy rise tremendously for both parties.



The risks of pregnancy do not end at just the mother and child. The crew can be impacted just as much, if not to a greater extent. Resources may drain faster due to the pregnancy, and if the mother is out of commission for a day, their workload is divided among the remaining. With this, stress may arise in the crew as the pregnancy continues, especially if it is a small team where every person matters. Pregnancy in space is a topic humanity has yet to conquer, and we may not figure out an accessible solution for anyone involved for a while.

Mental health and space flight is a topic that has to be approached with delicate care. NASA provided a report that showed how, while behavioral health issues only appeared in about two percent of cases, it is a factor they must consider as they ended missions during extreme circumstances (qtd. in Morris). If these issues affect trained professionals, how would ordinary civilians adapt to space flight? Morris talks about the rigorous training required to reduce any risks of mental health issues appearing. These include multiple hours of screening to see if candidates qualify for space flight, having a team of professionals on standby to aid the crew while on missions, and required calls with medical staff every two weeks to check their mental state. With colonization on the horizon, should we use these requirements, or even stricter ones, when transporting people to Mars? If so, wouldn't the cost be astronomical to implement for the entire colony? It is needed, yes, but with the number of people proposed to live on Mars, the process should be streamlined beforehand to provide a better experience to all.

### **Save Earth, Not Mars**

Many people believe that Mars is our future as a society, and we should focus our efforts directly on establishing a colony. However, those people tend to forget the issues encroaching on our home planet. This mindset is as dangerous as it is toxic because there is still plenty of work to be done on Earth before establishing a foothold in the galaxy.

To begin with, the idea that Mars will be our haven for everyone as the Earth deteriorates is not a beneficial mindset to anyone but the wealthy. According to Amitai and Eli Etzioni, two writers for *The National Interest*, “If the Earth does overheat to the point that we all fry or becomes so polluted that we all choke, there will be no way to move the world’s population to Mars. Not even one child per family. Rather, the idea is that the survival of the human species will be ensured; the select few that go to Mars will survive, procreate, and gradually build a new population.” With space travel being costly, there is no feasible way to migrate all eight billion people, so people expecting to have a reserved seat on a shuttle may be in for a rude awakening if they are not in the upper echelon.

Being stuck on Earth is not a negative, though, because we have plenty of work and research we need to conduct to save this planet. The Etzionis believe that even though big names such as Musk stated that sending humanity to Mars is just a Plan B for our future, the implication that saving Earth is something we should give up on is a disappointing conclusion. They tell their readers that we need not a second planet we can ruin, but instead, we should focus on and fix the issues cropping up here. While some people believe we still have plenty of time to find a solution to the multitude of issues, if we keep delaying, our time to find a breakthrough that can save Earth will dwindle until it is too late. We have plenty of time to focus on Mars in the future, but with Earth, shouldn’t that be our priority as it is the only planet that is one hundred percent habitable now?

### **The Costs**

When discussing space travel, costs will inevitably appear at some point. Space travel is not cheap, and even Elon Musk himself believes that colonization will come with high costs, with him planning to charge ten billion dollars for each of the twelve astronauts he intends to send to Mars (qtd. in Etzioni.). With the costs of just what the astronauts would have to pay totaling one

hundred and twenty billion, it would be better to put that money towards other avenues of research. Many breakthroughs and cures could arise from new technological advancements; with that kind of money, we could progress at speeds never seen before.

### **Counterargument**

Even with the negatives listed above, some people conclude that we should still colonize for a straightforward reason: we must ensure the survival of the human race. While their point is valid, a simple solution can solve this problem: waiting. Humanity is not on the brink of extinction right now, and while there are problems, they are problems we can still fix. The risks listed above may even become obsolete with new technology breakthroughs. So, while colonization could improve our survival chances, the abovementioned risks propose too much of a dangerous threat at this point. It would be beneficial to wait  $x$  amount of time, where  $x$  is the number of years until these issues become non-existent or trivial, before progressing further. During this time, humanity should focus on saving Mother Earth as well, as it will provide us more time to research new technology and give the people who cannot afford a trip to Mars a safe home.

### **Conclusion**

Space exploration has been a relevant topic to discuss for scientists around the globe. The breakthroughs within the last few years have allowed deeper conversations surrounding the issue, yet even with those conversations, we are still deciding whether to venture into the great unknown. Even with our recent advancements, there are still many difficulties and challenges to overcome before it will become our present. Therefore, waiting until we have set solutions to these problems will benefit all involved.

## Works Cited

Etzioni, Amitai and Eli Etzioni. "Humanity Would Be Better off Saving Earth, Rather than Colonizing Mars." *The National Interest*, The Center for the National Interest, 25 Aug. 2018, [nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/humanity-would-be-better-saving-earth-rather-colonizing-mars-29712](https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/humanity-would-be-better-saving-earth-rather-colonizing-mars-29712).

Hart, David A. "Homo Sapiens—A Species Not Designed for Space Flight: Health Risks in Low Earth Orbit and Beyond, Including Potential Risks when Traveling Beyond the Geomagnetic Field of Earth." *Life*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2023, pp. 757. ProQuest, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/i-homo-sapiens-species-not-designed-space-flight/docview/2791670224/se-2>, doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/life13030757>.

Morris, Nathaniel P. "Mental Health in Outer Space." *Scientific American Blog Network*, Scientific American, 14 Mar. 2017, [blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/mental-health-in-outer-space/](https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/mental-health-in-outer-space/).

Schuster, Haley, and Steven L. Peck. "Mars Ain't the Kind of Place to Raise Your Kid: Ethical Implications of Pregnancy on Missions to Colonize Other Planets." *Life Sciences, Society, and Policy*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2016, pp. 1-8. ProQuest, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/mars-aint-kind-place-raise-your-kid-ethical/docview/1865237294/se-2>, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40504-016-0043-5>.

## Jacob Pachosa

### *Oppenheimer: Worth the Watch?*

*Oppenheimer* is a critically acclaimed movie directed by Christopher Nolan. The movie was first released on July 21, 2023. It is a three-hour-long film. The movie had a budget of 100 million dollars and accumulated 959.2 million at the box office. Notable actors include Cillian Murphy (Oppenheimer), Robert Downey Jr. (Lewis Strauss), Matt Damon (General Groves), and Emily Blunt (Kitty Oppenheimer). The movie has already racked up a plethora of awards and nominations, most notable being Best Motion Picture - Drama, Best Actor (Cillian Murphy), Best Director (Christopher Nolan), and Best Supporting Actor/Actress (Robert Downey Jr. and Emily Blunt). The movie has a content rating of R and was released by Universal Pictures. *Oppenheimer* is a highly accredited and successful film with powerful and emotional acting and highly immersive technical elements such as costume design, visual effects, and a soundtrack that place you into the story of J. Robert Oppenheimer. I have a highly positive opinion of the movie and believe it is the only one of Christopher Nolan's works to rival the previously acclaimed films *Tenet* and *Interstellar*.

*Oppenheimer* is a story based on theoretical physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, who is known as the creator of the atomic bomb. We're shown a young Oppenheimer in University, trying to figure out the mysteries the universe holds, when he decides to bring physics back to New Mexico. He begins a school of quantum mechanics and is later offered the position of director for a project unbeknownst to him. The story places Oppenheimer's role in the infamous Manhattan Project and the first atomic bomb, Trinity, into film. *Oppenheimer* later develops moral qualms with future projects and is later put through a security hearing for his associations with communist parties.

*Oppenheimer* has a cast of talented actors, most notable being Cillian Murphy who plays Oppenheimer, Robert Downey Jr. who plays Lewis Strauss, Emily Blunt who plays Kitty, and Matt Damon who plays General Groves. The cast displayed heart and emotion during their performances. The acting sold the importance and emotional weight of certain scenes. Cillian Murphy does a good job of putting Oppenheimer's mind on display, with scenes that demonstrate his wit and intelligence. Murphy makes it clear that Oppenheimer is passionate about his work by the enthusiasm put forth. He also shows that Oppenheimer struggles a lot with himself, and in some scenes showcases the moral qualms and inner turmoil that Oppenheimer later develops. Later in the movie, Murphy emphasizes Oppenheimer's distress in his acting, ranging from the tone of his voice, facial expressions, gestures, and execution.

Moreover, the technical elements of *Oppenheimer* are not to go unnoticed. Elements such as the costume design, soundtrack, and visual effects all play a role in creating an immersive atmosphere for the time period. The costume design is era-accurate, ranging from WWII-era military uniforms to how the main characters dress. Christopher Nolan put a ton of emphasis on the soundtrack which was composed by Ludwig Goransson. Throughout the movie, there is always a track playing in the background that supports the scene depending on how emotional or grave it is. The soundtrack relies on the violin to create feelings of wonder, anxiety, and chaos. In certain scenes, the violin plays a crucial role in demonstrating how chaotic and imaginative Oppenheimer's mind is. In others, it is emphasized in scenes that want to portray terrifying visuals or unsettling thoughts. The movie's soundtrack is very unique and complicated, with over 21 tempo changes in the track "Can You Hear the Music" alone, which is also the most played song off of the movie's soundtrack. Composer Ludwig Goransson has already won awards for the movie's soundtrack such as Best

Score from Critic's Choice Movie Awards and the Golden Globes. The visual effects used in the movie simultaneously inspire awe and fear in the audience. We see many instances where visual effects are used to portray the quantum world and its intricacies, and in others, we're shown realistic and large-scale explosions. Visual effects have been used to visualize Oppenheimer's fascination with the quantum world. We often see what are to be atoms being shown throughout the movie. On the other hand, we also see dark and intimidating explosions that instill fear into the viewer. The visual effects also show us the magnitude of what a large-scale nuclear war could look like.

Although *Oppenheimer* has been highly acclaimed, there is one aspect of the movie that needs work. Despite the actress being very talented and demonstrating great skill, the character of Jean Tatlock (Florence Pugh) seems very lackluster, but it's no fault of the actress. I believe that Jean Tatlock's character was shallow and not explored thoroughly, and the problems expressed later in the movie do not have any significance to the audience because her character wasn't developed enough to provide anything meaningful. Although she had a great impact on Oppenheimer, not much is known to the audience about her to resonate with the viewers. The story does emphasize the relationship she and Oppenheimer had, but it was not elaborate to the audience. This could have been intentional by the writers to make sure the relationship did not take away from the screen time of Oppenheimer's overall story.

Despite its flaws, *Oppenheimer* is the ideal movie for science, history, and biography lovers. The movie instills awe but also a feeling of dread with how it reveals the terrible possibility of nuclear war. The cast of *Oppenheimer* put on a wonderful performance filled with emotion and passion. The costume design and visual effects are era-accurate and make it seem like you're reliving the life of Oppenheimer. The soundtrack also applies a nice touch of immersion and accompanies a majority of

scenes throughout the movie, with supportive music progression and a sometimes haunting but enthralling violin with a dynamic tempo. Overall, this is another great display of Christopher Nolan's creativity and imagination and places highly with the rest of his work such as *Tenet* and *Interstellar*.

### **Works Cited**

Oppenheimer. Directed by Christopher Nolan, Universal Pictures. 2023.



## Phillip Hill

### *Analysis of “Drug Dealer” by Macklemore*

The song *Drug Dealer* by Macklemore discusses the opiate epidemic that was pushed by the big pharmaceutical companies and how payoffs to Congress allowed the selling of pill form heroin to the entire nation. The lyrics tell the gradual decline of Macklemore and his personal fight with addiction to opioids. It speaks of widespread addiction pushed by corporations and billionaires.

The song was released in 2016 to build awareness of the very real problem of addiction to and overdosing on prescription drugs. The song was released a year prior to the epidemic reaching its peak in 2017 when the Federal Government declared it a national emergency (“Opioid Facts and Statistics”). Macklemore also released a documentary on the subject titled *Prescription for Change: Ending America’s Opioid Crisis*, which featured the rapper interviewing President Barack Obama. Macklemore wrote the song for the documentary. A key excerpt from the interview is when President Obama states, “Deaths from opioid overdoses have tripled since 2000. A lot of time, they are from legal drugs prescribed from a doctor, so addiction doesn’t always start in some dark alley; it often starts in a medicine cabinet” (Blistein).

In “Drug Dealer” the chorus echoes the sentiment:

*My drug dealer was a doctor, doctor,  
Had the plug from Big Pharma, Pharma,  
He said that he would heal me, heal me,  
But he only gave me problems, problems.*

Online news source *Statnews* did a line-by-line breakdown of the song. In the article, the following lines are analyzed in such a way that I felt inclusion of the entire analysis of the following

three lines was warranted: “The whole while, these billionaires, they caked up / Paying out Congress so we take their drugs / Murderers who will never face the judge.”

The analysis by *Statnews* breaks down the deeper meaning behind the lyrics:

The makers of prescription painkillers wield significant clout on Capitol Hill and in statehouses all over the country. Over the past decade, they spent more than \$880 million on federal and state lobbying, often seeking to block measures meant to curb the opioid crisis. That’s more than eight times what the gun lobby spent over the same period, according to a recent investigation from the Associated Press and the Center for Public Integrity. (Robbins)

The call for change is very clear. We, as a country, need help. And that addiction is not something that can be cured with other drugs. In fact, the first lyrics of the song detail the death of the artist’s friend due to overdosing on “Subs” or Suboxone. According to recent data from the CDC National Center for Health Statistics, in 2020, more than 56,000 deaths involving synthetic opioids (other than methadone) occurred in the United States, which is more deaths than from any other type of opioid. Synthetic opioid-involved death rates increased by over 56% from 2019 to 2020 and accounted for over 82% of all opioid-involved deaths in 2020. The rate of overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids was more than 18 times higher in 2020 than in 2013 (Synthetic Opioid Overdose Data | Drug Overdose | CDC Injury Center). That means that more people died from misusing the most common form of prescribed treatment than from the epidemic it was created to fix itself. Another chemical created by companies that profit off the situation regardless of the damage and death that stems from a result of the newest “Answer.” In my opinion, the government’s response to substitute one pharmaceutical chemical dependency for another is a half

measure that at best helps a very limited amount. While the intent of the drug is to help assist those with opioid addiction, and in spite of the \$1.1 billion dollars pledged to providing therapeutic drugs to assist those struggling (Mangan), the level of abuse of Suboxone is widespread and in a lot of ways has only shifted who is responsible for the bill. When asked to elaborate more on what it takes to beat addiction Macklemore states “Addiction is a ‘life-long disease’ that is a continuous battle. I need to work at this thing every single day” (Weber). In another article on the song and topic, he summed up the battle we as a nation face:

When you’re going through it, it’s hard to imagine that there could be anything worse than addiction. But shame and the stigma associated with the disease from seeking the help that they actually need. Addiction isn’t a personal choice or a personal failing, and sometimes it takes more than a strong will to get better; it takes a strong community and accessible resources. (Blistein)

While funding has increased, and treatment options have expanded dramatically in the seven years since the song’s release, the problem has not gone away. Unfortunately, the song is still just as relevant today. Great strides, program creations, and milestones have been made in the fight against opioid addiction and abuse, but 1.6 million people still died of opioid overdose last year alone (“Opioid Facts and Statistics”). The raising of awareness and getting the message out there in a way that shared the personal struggle of the artist helped to get people to the resources to fight towards sobriety. But sadly, there is no end in sight for those fighting this losing battle. A new addict is born every day and the pharmaceutical companies still develop and peddle their poison to the vulnerable and desperate. In my opinion, unless strict political reform is imposed regulating the industry and profits made from human suffering capped, the tide will never turn, and we will remain a nation plagued by chemical

dependence.

## Works Cited

Blistein, Jon. "Rolling Stone." *Rolling Stone*, 25 June 2018, [www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/hear-macklemores-meditative-addiction-ballad-drug-dealer-115817](http://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/hear-macklemores-meditative-addiction-ballad-drug-dealer-115817)

Mangan, Dan. "Government Expands Access to Drug Used to Treat Opioid Abuse." *CNBC*, 6 July 2016, [www.cnn.com/2016/07/05/government-expands-access-to-drug-used-to-treat-opioid-abuse.html](http://www.cnn.com/2016/07/05/government-expands-access-to-drug-used-to-treat-opioid-abuse.html)

"Opioid Facts and Statistics." *HHS.gov*, 7 Feb. 2023, <http://www.hhs.gov/opioids/statistics/index.html>

Robbins, Rebecca. "We Break Down Macklemore's New Song About Opioids, Line by Line." *STAT*, 13 Oct. 2016, [www.statnews.com/2016/10/13/macklemore-opioid-addiction](http://www.statnews.com/2016/10/13/macklemore-opioid-addiction)  
Synthetic Opioid Overdose Data | Drug Overdose | CDC Injury Center. [www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/deaths/synthetic/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/deaths/synthetic/index.html)

Weber, Bo. "Macklemore's 'Drug Dealer' Sends Bold Message to Big Pharma." *Music in Minnesota*, 15 Aug. 2019, [www.musicinminnesota.com/macklemores-drug-dealer-sends-bold-message-to-big-pharma](http://www.musicinminnesota.com/macklemores-drug-dealer-sends-bold-message-to-big-pharma).

## Shifa Rattani

### *Reflecting Authenticity: A Rhetorical Analysis of Dove's "Reverse Selfie"*

I was seventeen, sitting on my bed, scrolling through Instagram. I stopped on a picture of Kylie Jenner. I showed it to my cousin and said, "Just look at her. She is so beautiful. Her skin is flawless, and her hourglass figure is so attractive. She's a mom, yet she looks perfect, and, on the other hand, look at me. I'm gaining so much weight, and my face is covered in acne. I wish I were as pretty as Kylie Jenner." Little did I know that her beauty came from plastic surgery and photoshopping. The vision statement of Dove states, "We believe beauty should be a source of confidence and not anxiety. That's why we are here to help women everywhere develop a positive relationship with the way they look, helping them raise their self-esteem and realize their full potential." Dove is a renowned personal care brand with a rich legacy of solid messages that revolve around self-esteem, body image, and the celebration of genuine beauty. Dove has come up with a variety of statements and campaigns that promote self-esteem over the years. In 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Dove came up with its "Reverse Selfie" advertisement.

This ad is an influential video that exposes self-doubt and then inspires self-acceptance, urging viewers to redefine beauty on their terms by using strong visuals. The ad reaches a broad audience concerned with self-image and beauty standards. Ethos, pathos, logos, and Kairos effectively convey a message of self-acceptance and authenticity in beauty.

Dove's "Reverse Selfie," a collaboration with Ogilvy and Mindshare, highlights the significant impact on young girls caused by extensively altered photos. On YouTube, we can find

a short 60-second video featuring a young girl. She is a pretty young teenager with long brown hair, gorgeous green eyes, and soft facial features. In the video, she's trying to fit into the artificial world of social media by using various filters on her selfie. What's unique about this video is that it plays in reverse. It begins with the fully edited selfie and goes backward to reveal all the adjustments and enhancements, ultimately showing the real young girl in the picture. The primary purpose of this ad is to demonstrate how many young women modify their pictures on social media and how this practice can be awful as it creates unrealistic beauty standards.

The target audience of Dove's "Reverse Selfie" ad primarily includes individuals, especially women and teenagers, who use social media and may be concerned about self-image and beauty standards. The ad aims to reach those who have experienced self-doubt and insecurity related to their physical appearance, particularly when comparing themselves to the idealized images on social platforms. Young teens transitioning from being a girl to a woman are affected mainly by heavily altered selfies. Dove's website has posted a parent's kit and a teacher's kit.

The purpose of these kits is to encourage and provide steps to the mentors to boost the self-esteem and self-confidence of these young girls. By this, we can also detect that Dove focuses on the people who can mentor these teens.

The "Reverse Selfie" ad shows Dove's credibility by using ethos. Throughout the video, Dove does not promote any of their products. Dove wants to be seen as trustworthy. They show real people with real problems and insecurities, not actors, making you believe in their message.

The video ends with the statement, "Let's change beauty." This way, they gain your trust and convince you that they know what they're talking about. Dove has been promoting self-acceptance and natural beauty for a long time. This is what makes Dove a

trusted brand.

The “Reverse Selfie” ad uses pathos by showing a very emotional approach. It includes emotional music and touching, supportive messages to create an emotional connection with the viewers. They show the edited selfie, where the young teen looks happy. As the video goes in reverse, progressing to take the edits and alterations off, we can see the girl looking sad and insecure. One of the statements at the end of the video states, “The pressure of social media is hurting our girls’ self-esteem.” This makes the audience understand and feel the message. By showing the vulnerability of the girl, the ad aims to elicit empathy, and empathy is one of the core elements of pathos.

Logos has also been used in the “Reverse Selfie” ad by using a logical progression, starting with the edited selfie, and then reversing the editing process to reveal the real girl. This structure makes a clear and rational argument about the dangers of excessive photo editing. The YouTube description box states, “By age 13, 80% of girls distort how they look online. \* Let’s change that.” And “Have the selfie talk with a girl you love to reverse the damage and celebrate real beauty.” “The Dove Self-Esteem Project can show you how.” The statements give statistical and logical information. Logos is being used to appeal to the viewer’s sense of reason and logic, emphasizing the importance of addressing this issue and having conversations about self-esteem and authentic beauty.

Dove came up with the “Reverse Selfie” ad in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic caused an increase in screen time. Kairos has been used in the ad because of the timeliness of discussions around self-esteem, body image, and the impact of social media on self-perception. The advertisement utilizes social media platforms where young people are actively engaged. By using social media to promote the “Reverse Selfie” concept, Dove aligns its message with the platforms and mediums at the forefront of the issue. At the time of the pandemic, the topics of

self-esteem, body image, and the impact of social media were highly relevant. They were discussed widely in society, making it an opportune moment to address them.

In conclusion, Dove's "Reverse Selfie" ad exemplifies the power of effective rhetoric in addressing critical societal issues. Through a combination of ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos, the advertisement tackles the problem of distorted self-images, particularly among young people influenced by the pressures of social media. By featuring a real problem, embracing authenticity, and urging conversations about self-esteem, the ad not only captures the timeliness of the self-esteem and body image discourse but also stands as an inspiring call to action. As we navigate an increasingly image-centric world, this advertisement encourages us to critically examine the media we encounter and the messages we internalize. Dove's "Reverse Selfie" ad reminds us that the path to self-acceptance and genuine self-esteem begins with being honest to ourselves, celebrating natural beauty, and recognizing that our self-worth should never be distorted by the lens of a camera or the screen of a smartphone. Ultimately, it invites us to reverse the damaging effects of an image-driven culture and embrace the authentic beauty that lies within each of us.



Figure 1 Dove's "Reverse Selfie" Advertisement



# Mia Raso

## *A Girl in the World of Esports*

If you have ever watched any major sports competition, you'll likely notice that something stands out from all of them: There is never a woman competing. Esports is no different. There is a stigma in esports against women. As a woman, I face this stigma as an obstacle. For instance, I faced these stigmas in my first esports tournament. I battled with the hatred, pessimism, and doubt I would have to face and found a way to reconceptualize them as a challenge, not as an obstacle, to my success in esports.

My passion for video games began when my mom got our first family computer. It wasn't much, an old HP desktop that would look hilariously underpowered compared to the phones we carry around in our pockets nowadays. It was enough, however, to pique my interest in PC tech and video games. It wasn't long before I was fiending video games from dawn to dusk.

My mother, on the other hand, resented me for my hobby. She would constantly try to prevent me from playing by setting up barriers. These barriers only increased my technical skills for bypassing security on those archaic, early versions of Windows. This memory is as clear as if it happened yesterday: One day, she came home from work early, only to find that I had gotten past her flimsy attempt at a password and was in the middle of practicing with my team in Halo, my game of choice. Her nostrils flared out, the complexion of her face shifted hues from pale peach to a hot and violent red only known in horror movies, and her eyes practically bulged out of their sockets. A bellowing screech of broken Spanglish surfaced from what seemed to be a bottomless pit in her lungs.

"Mia! Hija, malcriada! What did I say about playing without my permission?" she screamed.

“But it’s so unfair that I don’t get to play when I haven’t done anything wrong,” I protested naively.

“There are better things to do than to waste your time playing these stupid games,” she fired back as she heaved her weight against my chest to shove me out of the way and sent me crashing towards the cold floor as she ripped the power connecter from the clutches of the wall outlet.

It wasn’t just my mother who would try to prevent me from doing what I loved; it felt like everyone I had interacted with in my games was trying to bash me down emotionally. Playing games competitively required me to talk with my teammates verbally to coordinate our gameplay. I often hopped into a Skype call with ten to twenty guys from other teams to get some practice in. This led to me having to apprehensively squeak out words that would, unfortunately, give away the fact that I’m a girl. Sometimes, it would be fine, and no one would bat an eye. Other times, the verbal beating I would receive was instantaneous. Sometimes, it would be the usual misogynistic comments such as “Go make me a sandwich” or “You belong in a kitchen,” but other times, it would be words that shouldn’t ever be repeated. I didn’t know how to combat these remarks, so all I could do was take the assault that penetrated my mind. It started to kill my motivation to even want to play. I would have to constantly do mental gymnastics to overcome the hurdle to join these hobbies. It wasn’t until I had made a friend that my perspective shifted on these issues. Thanks to my friend, I would start enjoying my hobby again.

I didn’t have many friends as a child, perhaps due to my unusual interests as a girl. When I finally found someone who kept asking me to join them in matches every day, it made me overjoyed. His name was Alec, a young boy living on the island of O’ahu in Hawaii. Even though he was six hours back in time and from what seemed like another world, he still shared the same love

for the game. It wasn't uncommon for me to be up until 4 a.m., laughing and having a good time as we played match after match. We eventually had a conversation between rounds that would shift my perspective on the issue that troubled me the most. I told him I didn't want to compete in tournaments because I felt like I would just get bashed for even trying.

“Why would you care what they say if you're just better than them?” he retorted. “If they don't respect you, make them respect you through your play.”

It was like this overwhelming blast to the neuron receptors in my brain, the epiphany I needed. He was right. My thoughts evolved from hopelessness and dread to a motivation to improve and prove them wrong. This was the jump start I needed to restart my dying battery.

I used hatred to fuel my desire to improve. My gameplay looked like I was relentlessly trying to send a message with every shot and every kill. This transitioned me from a quiet and shy mouse to an assassin with the intent to digitally murder everyone in her path. I began to improve dramatically. I entered online tournaments and started placing higher and higher among the leaderboards. No one could stop me, and it seemed no one wanted to try. Their fragile egos could not fathom losing to a girl. As I started scaling the electronic Everest of players, sending avalanches with every win I got, I was gaining respect. The loud and violent comments I would receive turned into soft murmurs and would eventually be cut out entirely. It wasn't long until I became the highest-ranked player—number one on the leaderboard, standing triumphant, on top of a mountain of players. By then, everyone knew who I was and that I was on a mission to win my first championship and show women worldwide that it is possible to be the best.

My adrenaline pumped as I catapulted through the creaky school bus doors like a parkour professional as I set my eyes

on my house's weathered and disparaging door. I was a homing missile with my target set on my computer. Door after door, I vaulted through them with immense speed. I knew what was waiting for me in my email inbox. I had reached my destination and punched the power button with vigor. The Windows boot progress bar was going slower than I had ever remembered, almost teasing me with its inching progression. Finally, after what felt like an eternity, I was in and quickly opened my email to reveal my invitation, "Congratulations on qualifying. You are formally invited to the Halo Grand Championship!" I read the words one by one, each elevating my heart rate as my clammy palms gripped my mouse tightly, my knuckles shining white from the tension, my excitement climaxing by the last word. After the rollercoaster of emotions subsided, I knew there was still an issue to hurdle. How was I going to get to the venue? It was in downtown Atlanta, only about an hour from where I lived, but I was twelve, and I thought there was no way my mom would agree to take me. At least, that's what I thought.

I thought convincing my mother would be a challenging endeavor. I didn't realize how quickly her view on the trip would change after I showed her how enthusiastic I was. That, and the large cash prize for the winner. She just never knew how big something like playing games could be. After some back and forth with questions and answers, she was on board, and our plans were set for the next week.

I felt calm and collected during the drive there, but that soon changed as I walked into the venue. I was hit by an intrusive wall of odors ranging from fried foods to the overpowering stench of gamers who hadn't showered in a few days. I had made it. But it didn't take long before my nerves got the better of me. Doubt had settled in, and it had a stranglehold around my neck. All I wanted to do was retreat to my shelter, my room. I knew I couldn't go back though. I had made it all the way here and had so much support behind me. Everyone else believed in me, so

why couldn't I? I went up on stage and met my team, the guys I had been playing with for the past year, day in and day out. Instantly, my nerves calmed. Their energy and warmth as they crowded around to introduce themselves made me feel at home. This is where I belonged. We shared a few laughs and recounted memories of our past matches, similar to veterans sharing their war stories. By the time the first match was about to begin, any feeling of anxiety had been quelled, and I was honed in.

We made quick work of every team, triumphant and undefeated as we made our way to the grand finals. Only one best-of-five left against the returning champs until we could claim the title of champions for ourselves. We voiced our frustrations with every loss and cheered joyfully with every win. The crowd's roar from the stands for every kill constantly sent shockwaves of adrenaline through my body. It was blow for blow, shot for shot, until the dust had settled. We stood out on top against all odds. To call us underdogs would have been a massive understatement, but we persevered, and I donned the title of Halo champion.

I proved it was possible to be one of the best, even as a girl. Nothing set me apart from the rest, and my skill showed that. This victory wasn't just a victory for me, but also for women everywhere. The toxic and harmful environment I had to trudge out of now stood in my past but had not magically vanished. I know there's still work to be done to improve our culture, but the first step is having women set examples that it can be done.

## Eli Chennault

### *Beast in Man's Clothing: Animal Imagery in Homer's Iliad*

*The Iliad* has, throughout millennia, proven to be a work of literature that is integral to understanding the culture of the Classical era. Penned by Homer in the eighth century B.C., the tragic poem covers what it means to be honorable and glorious in the eyes of the people of Ancient Greece. Set during the Trojan War, Homer portrays scenes of ruthless, awe-inspiring carnage, skillfully employing a variety of figurative language within his work to showcase the violence at hand as the battle seems to continuously rage on around the characters. The most prevalent of these instances involves animals. In multiple forms, animals appear within the story. Whether they be the comparison of combatants to myriad beasts or the beasts themselves and the various roles they play in the story, a wide array of animals is used to depict the scenery and carnage of war during *The Iliad*. Within this broad imagery, three aspects shine through brighter than others: the comparison of men to predators and prey, the symbolism of dogs, and the intermingling of these two ideas, in which a parallel is drawn between the portrayal of men and dogs within *The Iliad*.

In the heat of battle, it matters not who emerges victorious or who is defeated when it comes to how Homer portrays them. Win or lose, assailant or victim, any character is subject to being portrayed as little more than an animal. It is neither the Trojans nor the Achaeans that fall into the category of prey or predator, since both tribes of warriors end up on both sides, hunting and hunted, depending on the scene. Rather than relying on any specific meaning or symbolism for the animals used in any particular comparison beyond what role they naturally serve, the animals are used to draw out the bestial, savage

nature of the combatants. Here, lions are not representative of courageousness, but rather only the predatory nature that it possesses. Likewise, a bull in this text wouldn't be a symbol of stubbornness or any other trait but instead would represent the simple truth that it oft falls prey to more dire threats. Homer depicts his characters as beasts to drive home the message that war reduces its participants to thoughtless, primal violence, stripping them of their humanity and overwhelming them with bloodlust. One of the best examples of this is during the fight between Patroclus and Hector. At first, both combatants are described as "like lions . . . [fighting] over a slain deer," but once Patroclus is struck down and Hector delivers the killing blow, the tides turn, and Patroclus is demoted to a boar in the simile while Hector remains a lion (Homer 16. 756-757, 823). *The Iliad* is rife with many more instances like this, but given the way that Patroclus acts in this scene, it felt especially fitting. This is one of the more dehumanizing scenes in the poem, seeing as Patroclus denies warning after warning in favor of chasing glory and fueling his blind rage for more bloodshed. By shifting from lion to boar mid-scene to describe Patroclus, Homer emphasizes that the specific animal conjured up via imagery doesn't matter so much as its status and power, which can be subject to possibly massive change amid battle from as little as one lucky strike.

Though occasionally the warriors on either side are compared to dogs, the more important message lies with the presence of the actual dogs of *The Iliad*. The text makes a specific mention of a star by the name of "Orion's Dog," further characterizing the mythos of this celestial body with the following: "most radiant it is, but it makes an evil portent, / and brings great feverish heat on pitiful mortal men—" (Homer 22. 29-31). In the text, the star is being compared to Achilles, who is actively running down Hector in order to kill him, thus clarifying that the "evil portent" at hand may be synonymous with an untimely, unfortunate end for the hero of Troy. Littered throughout the poem are other moments where dogs are portrayed as animals tied strongly to death.

Often, they are found in the aftermath of a battle, scouring the field for bodies to consume, in stark opposition to the typical Western reader's connotation of dogs as companionate and friendly. The words that most aptly lay this symbolism bare are Priam's, with the father entreating his son to abandon hope of running from Achilles and to take refuge behind the walls of Troy instead. With desperation, the king exclaims:

*and I myself, last of all, at my very gates, my dogs  
will rip raw, when some man with sharp bronze,  
stabbing or casting, will strip the spirit from my limbs—  
the dogs I raised in my halls and fed at my table as guardians  
of my gates,  
these, maddened by the drinking of my blood,  
will sprawl in my doorway. (Homer 22. 66-71)*

The raw primal nature of the dogs is portrayed by specifying that not only will dogs descend upon Priam once he succumbs to the Greek army and dies, but it will be his own dogs that rip him apart. Showing no mercy or favor to their former owner, he becomes little more than food for these omens of death. Once standing guard and symbolic of the death of those who intruded upon Troy and attacked its inhabitants, now they are symbols of Priam's death, carelessly marring his corpse.

Furthermore, there is a connection to be made between dogs and the men waging war on one another. While separate (but perhaps still adjacent) from the death symbolism, Priam's aforementioned words can still tell the reader something about the nature of man upon closer inspection. By highlighting that dogs aren't just scavengers that follow death wherever it goes, but have a practical use in Greek society as guards and perhaps companions as well, the dual nature of the dog is revealed. In the same vein, humans could also be viewed in this same light. While the presence of Aegean men on Trojan shores spells doom, that same species of man stands guard at the walls of Troy,



primed to do battle and die to protect their city. This realization that men, just like animals, aren't inherently evil or good, valiant or oppressive, emphasizes even more how animalistic people are. Beyond that, even the individual men themselves are seen switching between civilized, respectable people with merits that expand far outside the scope of warfare to utter monsters, completely hell-bent on inflicting destruction and ruin upon their enemies. As Gottschall puts it in his essay about the conflict between nature and civilization within the characters of *The Iliad*, "War can make the mildest, most humane man a berserk, slaving animal" (Gottschall 280). This dichotomy of man, civilized and bestial, only further supports the connection between man and dog in the poem, which may be partly a consequence of man's domestication of the dog and simply an extension of the duality of man passed down to another form of animal we tried to elevate above the natural order by "civilizing it," but regardless, the comparison is nigh undeniable.

Most of the similes used within *The Iliad* are of animals and men, further proving the claim that Homer intended to shed light on the inherent animal nature lying dormant within all men, waiting to spring into action. Within that animal nature is a close connection to the dog as a symbolic figure of death, which draws a stark, striking parallel between the two creatures. Inextricably, the two are linked, with man bringing the domesticated dog into existence. The unshakable sense of animality within humans is timeless and will continue to be a topic of much debate and pondering, no matter how much mankind intends to distance itself from the primal circumstances that gave rise to the shining ideals of humanity and civilization.

### Works Cited

Gottschall, Jonathan. "Homer's Human Animal: Ritual Combat in the Iliad." *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2001, pp. 278-294. ProQuest, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/homers-human-animal-ritual-combat-iliad/docview/745951432/se-2>.

Homer. *Iliad*. Translated by Caroline Alexander. *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*, edited by Martin Puchner. W. W. Norton & Company, 2018. 279, 281, 297-298.

# **Sophia Kohlenberger Bazzi**

## ***Progressive Plastic Policies***

Plastic was invented in the 20th century. It was revolutionary, and it has impacted how the world produces and consumes products. The cheap cost to produce plastic and its variety of shapes and uses made it convenient for producing everyday goods. The excitement did not last long; debris of plastic waste was found in the ocean for the first time in the 1960s. The environmental impact of plastic waste is now a global issue. It does not only financially impact companies but the ecosystem around the world as well. The World Economic Forum (WEF) predicts that “Plastic waste in the ocean would outweigh fish by 2050” (qtd. in “Plastic Waste”). Changes need to be made to overcome the stark predictions about single-use plastic pollution. There should be more austere legislation that has a greater impact on this threat.

There are not any federal laws against disposable bags or single-use plastic products in the United States. There are states like California, Oregon, New York, and Washington that have implemented laws to ban the use of plastic bags in the past few years. These laws have had a massive impact on a corporate level and have been banned in some states like Florida due to plastic industry lobbying. Some counties and cities have also made laws to reduce single-use plastic products and to decrease the amount of waste generated by these products. People should keep the government accountable for protecting and preserving the environment where their constituents live, rather than be given a blind eye because of powerful corporate interests. Some regions are following in the footsteps of the states mentioned above. For example, they are charging fees as little as ten cents for paper bags in Chicago.

The environmental impact that came with the creation of plastic is catastrophic. The convenience of plastic products made society's consumption exponentially increase over the years. People were used to going to a grocery store to buy fresh bread and to refill their glass milk bottles back in the day. Nowadays people buy bread that will last weeks wrapped in plastic and gallons of milk in plastic containers. According to National Geographic author Laura Parker, "About 8 million tons of plastic waste escapes into the oceans from coastal nations. That's the equivalent of setting five garbage bags full of trash on every foot of coastline around the world." Not only does the overconsumption of plastic impact the environment but also the way these products are disposed of. Recycling ameliorates this issue, but it is not the sole solution; only a small portion of plastic bottles are recycled after consumer use.

According to writer Matthew Savoca, "The private sector also has a crucial role to play in reducing plastic use and waste. We would have liked to see more discussion in the report of how businesses and industries contribute to the accumulation of ocean plastic waste and their role in solutions." Corporations consider their product pricing and have a cheaper plastic alternative driven by lower production costs. Plastic production is considered over other options because of its lower price range. There are options to lower plastic pollution like creating more sustainable options rather than using it in everyday products. In Thailand, there is a grocery store that now wraps its produce in banana leaves, which is a genius way to repurpose banana bi-products and decrease plastic wrap prevalence.

There are people who believe a single-use plastic ban will not address major environmental issues like climate change and deforestation. Every effort to reverse the problems caused by plastic over the past 70 years is worth it. According to Pat Franklin from the Container Recycling Institute, "Each day in the US more than 60 million plastic water bottles are thrown

away. Most end up in landfills or incinerators, and millions litter America's streets, parks, and waterways." If each person starts using a reusable item regularly, this number will drop drastically. The ideology of reducing, reusing, and recycling should be taught at an early age.

The world has now over eight billion people. It is asinine to say that individuals cannot make a difference. There is an overconsumption of plastic that plagues the planet. This viewpoint should be recalibrated to an environmentally sustainable outlook rather than an economic one. The disproportionate use of single-use plastic comes with the negative environmental impact of pollution. Everyone should be more conscious of their purchases and how they impact Earth. We must vote for politicians who share these values to protect Mother Nature. Keeping companies accountable in the process is vital for this cause.

### **Works Cited**

Franklin, Pat. "Plastic Water Bottles Should No Longer Be a Wasted Resource." Down the Drain, Container Recycling Institute, <https://www.container-recycling.org/index.php/issues/.../275-down-the-drain>.

Parker, Laura. "Plastic Pollution Facts and Information." Environment, National Geographic, 3 May 2021, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/plasticpollution>.

"Plastic Waste." Gale Opposing Viewpoints Online Collection, Gale, 2022. Gale in Context: Opposing Viewpoints, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/IELUDL214986212/OVIC?u=ftla\\_pultch&sid=bookmark-OVIC&xid=5eac81f5](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/IELUDL214986212/OVIC?u=ftla_pultch&sid=bookmark-OVIC&xid=5eac81f5). Accessed 15 Nov. 2022.

# Shontel Stott

## *Journey on Kilimanjaro*

Have you ever heard a song and the memories from a specific time in your life come rushing back? That is how I feel about John Denver's song "Take Me Home, Country Roads." Except, I wasn't going home and I wasn't on country roads. I was hiking the famous mountain of Kilimanjaro, a dangerous 19,341 feet. Climbing Kilimanjaro was significant to me because it taught me that I am so much stronger than I think I am.

We arrived in Tanzania, Africa, on a beautiful sunny day in June. After traveling for the last 48 hours, we were dead to the world. I can remember not only the fatigue but also the wave of excitement rushing over me to finally be there. A couple of days before our hike, we were staying in a town called Moshi. Our hotel had the best view of the mountain. I remember standing on the balcony observing the mountain. We could see almost all of it, except the top because it was covered in big white clouds. This is when I began to worry about my abilities and strength. Was I strong enough to do this? Was I in over my head?

The night before we started our trek, our guides, Davis and Redmond, asked to meet with us. My husband, Joe, his cousin, TJ, our friend, John, and I met the guides in a large conference room in the hotel. There was a big colorful map of all the different Kilimanjaro routes painted on the wall. Davis explained in detail what routes we would take and why. We chose the longer route so we could spend more time on the mountain acclimating to the altitude. The last thing you want to get on the mountain is altitude sickness and have to get carried off. After we discussed the route, they asked to see our packs and what we brought. They looked through our clothes, shoes, and toiletries to make sure we had everything we needed to survive the freezing temps.

Luckily, we all passed the first check-off.

The morning of the hike, Davis and Redmond returned with an oddly shaped beige color van and a crew of guides, although this wasn't even half of our crew. They packed our belongings, and off we went. About one hour later, we arrived at the base of Kilimanjaro. Everyone jumped out of the van and our porters and guides started unpacking. We were met with a total of nineteen men and women to help just the four of us up the mountain. Before we could begin, every porter had to weigh in. This was part of their regulations with the state, and each porter was only allowed to carry so much weight. After weigh-ins and final checks, we received the okay to begin the hike.

We left before the porters with our two guides. Within the course of one or two hours, we were getting passed by porter after porter. I was in awe of how strong these men and women were, especially their necks! They would carry packs and baskets on their head while also carrying packs on their backs and still pass us.

After four hours or so, we finally made it to our first camp where everything was already set up and waiting on us. I remember lying in our tent the first night listening to the dainty chirps of insects, footsteps around camp, and the porters singing. When Joe and I realized what they were singing, we burst into laughter. The porters were singing John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads." This song became our anthem for the rest of the days on the mountain.

Each morning, we were woken up by Puse, one of our porters. He was a tall young man designated to be our assistant. In the mornings, he would gently knock on the tent, tell us good morning, and proceed to bring us a large bowl of warm water to wash with. After washing and putting on our hiking clothes for the day, Joe and I would meet TJ and John in the dining tent for coffee and breakfast. After we finished eating, Davis and

Redmond would join us in the tent with a bag of goodies. His goodies consisted of a blood pressure cuff, an O2 monitor, and a form to track our daily vitals. As the days went by and our altitude increased, our oxygen decreased.

At around 13,000 feet I was beginning to feel altitude sickness. I was worried because altitude sickness only gets worse the higher you get, and the only way to stop it is to go down in altitude. Before leaving the States, I had an appointment with my doctor to get medication for the trip. A drug called Diamox was highly encouraged to treat altitude sickness. At that moment, I was extremely thankful I brought it.

Each day, we averaged around eight miles. After a few days, this hike became a mind-over-matter battle. It was the internal struggle of wanting to make it to the top but my body telling me to rest. I remember a conversation Joe and I had one evening in the tent regarding how we felt and if we could continue.

Joe asked, "How are you feeling?"

"Tired," I replied.

"Do you think you will be able to make it?" Joe asked.

"I really want to, but my body is struggling to keep up. How are you feeling?"

"I'm tired too. What should we do if one of us can't keep going?" he asked.

"If one of us can't keep going, the other one has to continue on. We didn't come all this way for at least one of us to not make it up the mountain," I replied.

Joe said, "We will both make it up. I have no doubts."

The next morning was our hike to base camp. The base camp was called School Hut and sat at 16,000 feet. School Hut was only going to be our home for a few hours. We had no idea the

exhaustion, defeat, and victory we would feel over the next twenty-four hours. On our way to base camp, John began to get sick. He was stumbling on rocks and having to stop often to catch his breath. Davis noticed and began to worry. We weren't far from camp, and John wanted to continue and see how he felt once we arrived. His condition only got worse, and Davis made the decision that John could not continue. He had severe altitude sickness and needed to go down immediately. Redmond and another guide packed up his belongings and started to carry him back down the trail. The sadness and disappointment on John's face was heartbreaking. We were so close; he was almost there.

With just three of us left now, we began our push for the summit at 10 p.m. that night. There was a full moon to guide our way. The moon was so bright that we didn't even have to use our headlamps. For the next eleven hours, we hiked. Along the trail, we passed other hikers outside of our group. We walked by hikers passed out on the trail and our guide Davis would kick them to wake them up. If they stayed too long, they could freeze to death. With the wind chill, it was -20 degrees.

At one point in the night, I got very sick. I was feeling small doses of altitude sickness, but I wasn't giving up. Throughout the night our guides would sing to us in their native language of Swahili. They cheered us on and never stopped smiling. Their constant encouragement was enough to get us to the top.

"You're doing good. You're doing great! Pole. Pole!" Davis said.

It was 9 a.m. and I could see the top! It was now just Joe, myself, and our other guide, Little John. TJ and Davis fell shortly behind. There was a skinny shoe-printed trail two feet deep in the snow waiting to guide us to the top of the world. All you could see is the wooden sign in the distance and clouds as far as you can see. The endorphins hit like I hadn't just hiked eleven hours and I made a fast dash to the summit. I was the first to make it, followed by Joe.



“We did it! Oh my God, we did it!” I screamed.

Little John, with the biggest smile on his face, turned to Joe and me and said, “Congratulations, you’ve made it!”

Tears began to fall as I stopped and took everything in: the cool crisp air against my face, my runny nose, clouds for miles. I had never felt so small, but large at the same time. In this moment, I was so grateful and proud of what we had just accomplished. I felt the rush of what I can only relate to as a runner’s high. All of my exhaustion had left my body, and I couldn’t stop smiling. We were only allowed fifteen minutes at the top due to the lack of oxygen, but I took in every second of the fifteen minutes I had on the top of Kilimanjaro.

On day nine, we made our final descent off the mountain. Waiting for us at the bottom was our oddly shaped beige van. I had never been so excited to see a vehicle in my life. We returned to our hotel dirty and tired and probably smelling like feet. Waiting for us was the hotel staff, our guides, and John. They greeted us with hugs and smiles. It was at this moment that I knew we had just accomplished something huge. We celebrated with cake, a song, and our official certificate. The mountain means a lot to them and now to us too.

Looking back at everything we did and the people we met, I get emotional. We could not have done it without our amazing porters and guides. I could not have done it without the support and constant words of encouragement. I learned so much about myself and just how strong I am on the mountain. I had let the fear of failure hold me back for the majority of my life. I learned to persevere and not give up. If we never push ourselves, we will never grow.

## Phillip Hill

### *A Story of Subtext: Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been*

The story “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” by Joyce Carol Oates tells a dark story that leaves the ending to the imagination of the reader. The disturbing subject matter paired with its imagery makes a bold and impactful impression on the reader through its face-value narrative. The real story, however, is not the actual easily visible story but the deeper meaning and subtext. The most interesting piece of this subtext is in how the protagonist and the antagonist of the story are mirror images of one another, with Arnold Friend being the extreme personification of each of Connie’s character flaws and the usage of this to drive home important life values in the writing.

Connie as well as Arnold both place high value on outward looks and use appearances as tools to get what they want throughout the story. In the story, Connie is almost two people. The narrator says in the opening paragraphs, “Everything about her had two sides to it, one for home and one for anywhere that was not home” (Oates 671). Arnold is also two people. The shorter, older, pedophile, murderer under the wig and makeup vs. the façade of a charismatic, 18-year-old man who just wants to show Connie what love is. In exaggerating the negative aspects that Connie portrays throughout the story, the author gives a worst-case version of those traits in Arnold and thus makes him into the big bad wolf type character. This comes to a head in the actual “blow your house down” moment when he tells her, “Anybody can break through a screen door and glass and wood and iron or anything else if he needs to . . . specially Arnold Friend” (Oates 682). With this one line, Arnold turns Connie’s safe and secure home into nothing more than a flimsy box that he can violate at any time of his choosing.

The last interesting subtext that is worth discussing is the underlying moral lessons that the author tries to have permeate

the story. The mentality of the era the story was written about can be felt in each undertone. Don't objectify yourself lest you be objectified. Vanity is only skin deep. Don't judge a book by its cover. Do unto others as you would have done unto you. Arnold is the boogeyman incarnate that is the literary device used to drive home the lessons and repercussions that ignoring the sage teachings and moral mentality bring about. Ultimately, the author drives the point home that looks are not at all important in the end and that when sex is the goal, men really don't care about the woman as more than an object to possess. This is seen at the end of the story when Arnold says to Connie as she is finally coming out, "My sweet little blue-eyed girl" (Oates 687), even though her eyes are brown. He doesn't even care about the eye color of the woman he has stalked to the point of knowing every one of her friend's names and the schedule and names of her family because he is so enamored with her. She is an object of lust to be used to satisfy one's desires and the minute details of her don't matter. Even her looks, which she values above all else, are just details of the larger picture and desires of others.

The story is a harsh look at how bad things can go when vanity takes center stage in a person's life. The too-late realization of the things that matter in the story turns this from a work of suspense into a cautionary tale against not being "that" person in life. If she had listened to her mother and not focused on her hair or thought herself "So pretty" (Oates 670) as her mother brands her in the first paragraph of the story, would it have been different? Had Connie been the well-behaved, boring daughter who was more like her sister and had just gone to the barbeque with the family, would she have ever found herself in the horrific situation she was trapped in at the end? That is the ultimate message of the author. The real monster of the story isn't Arnold Friend as much as it is the shift in morals and the obsession with beauty and sexuality in the youth in society during the author's time, which Arnold Friend represents.

### **Work Cited**

Oates, Joyce Carol. "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been." UA-PTC Composition Mix, edited by Erica Wnek, W.W Norton & Company, New York, 2020, pp. 669-686.

# Shifa Rattani

## *Artificial Intelligence: Human Advancement or Replacement?*

Self-checkout machines replaced cashiers; automated language translation replaced human translators; automated customer service representatives replaced call centers; and robotic cleaners replaced human cleaners. Does this list ever end? Who knows how many more humans will be replaced by artificial intelligence (AI) and machines? In our fast-paced world of technological leaps, the big question is whether swapping humans for machines is ethical. As tech whizzes forward with automation and artificial intelligence taking center stage, businesses are bringing significant changes in work enforcement by giving tasks once done by humans to AI. Supporters cheer for the benefits: things get done faster, costs decrease, and mistakes become rare. However, critics worry about people losing jobs, the warmth of human connections fading away, and the tricky ethics of letting machines make complex decisions.

The question arises here: Is this a futuristic utopia or a slippery slope into an ethical maze? The increasing integration of artificial intelligence and machines into various industries presents a double-edged sword, offering both transformative potential and inherent challenges, coupled with the risk of significant job displacement, necessitating a thoughtful and collaborative approach to ensure that the benefits of AI are maximized while preserving the essential qualities of humanity.

Replacing humans with AI comes with many advantages. AI promises to revolutionize efficiency and productivity across numerous sectors by automating tasks, minimizing errors, and operating tirelessly. This technological advancement can lead to reduced costs, enhanced precision, and the potential for a more

flexible work structure. AI's ability to work without fatigue or breaks holds the promise of extended working hours, potentially disrupting the traditional nine-to-five work norms. Moreover, AI's accuracy and reliability can bring a new level of consistency to tasks, particularly in industries where precision is necessary. For instance, AI-powered systems can handle complex financial calculations with unparalleled accuracy, reducing the risk of human error. However, the rapid adoption of AI and machines raises significant concerns regarding job displacement. As AI systems become increasingly sophisticated, they threaten to replace human workers in various occupations.

Additionally, AI systems may need adaptability and creative problem-solving skills to navigate unforeseen circumstances. This highlights the need for human oversight and intervention, especially in situations that demand ingenuity and adaptability. The integration of AI and machines also poses financial challenges for businesses. The upfront investment required to implement AI systems can be substantial, particularly for smaller organizations. While the long-term gains may be significant, the initial costs can act as a barrier to adoption, limiting access to these technologies. Furthermore, the increasing reliance on AI in customer-centric professions raises questions about the role of human empathy and emotional intelligence. AI systems, while capable of handling routine interactions, may need help to provide the personalized, empathetic support that is often crucial for building customer loyalty and trust.

“And mark my words, AI is far more dangerous than nukes. Far. So why do we have no regulatory oversight? This is insane.” Elon Musk, a well-known businessperson, made this statement in 2018 at the South by Southwest (SXSW) conference (CatClifford). The advanced capabilities of AI systems raise concerns about cyberattacks targeting sensitive data, potentially leading to identity theft and corporate surveillance. Misuse extends to the creation of convincing fake content through AI, such as

deepfakes, amplifying risks of misinformation and manipulation. Facebook shut down its chatbots in August 2017 due to concerns about language development, ethical considerations, and potential misuse. The bots' ability to develop their language raised ethical questions about whether they were aware or conscious. Additionally, there was potential for the bots to be used to spread misinformation or to manipulate and harass users. As AI's influence expands, the increasing threats of data theft, misinformation, and privacy infringement underscore our responsibility to regulate AI and bots. Implementing robust frameworks and ethical guidelines is crucial to protect individuals, businesses, and society from the potential harms associated with the misuse of these advanced technologies.

In the past decade, a primary concern from the continuous advancement of artificial intelligence is its potential threat to conventional jobs. Routine tasks may be delegated to AI systems, raising concerns about ordinary people losing their jobs. In industrial settings, automation has taken over human roles, with robots seamlessly executing tasks once undertaken by human workers. The advancements in autonomous vehicles threaten the livelihoods of taxi drivers and long-haul truckers. Moreover, within retail environments, machines are gradually taking on the responsibilities traditionally held by cashiers and stock managers. The retail industry is significantly shifting towards automation, making self-checkout machines increasingly prevalent. As of 2016, there were over 255,000 self-checkout machines in stores worldwide, and this number was expected to surge to over 400,000 by 2022, according to data from London-based research and consulting firm RBR (Walmart ramps up self-checkout). While technology has contributed to economic growth, it has also raised unemployment rates. Some economists believe that millions of middle-class workers may need to retrain for new jobs to regain employment (Condon and Wiseman). Despite robust economic growth and low unemployment across

most sectors, the retail industry has experienced a consistent decline in employment, shedding over 140,000 jobs since January 2017. The retail industry lost 11,000 jobs in March 2019 alone (Stych).

Specific jobs demand qualities that robots cannot replicate, and understanding college degrees is vital for students to secure their future careers. Occupations such as artists, therapists, and strategists require distinctly human skills like creativity and problem-solving. Similarly, counseling and social work roles rely on strong personal connections, which is a challenge for automation. In healthcare, occupations like nurses and doctors create an irreplaceable human touch involving kindness (Urwin). Safeguarding these unique human roles gains significance as technology advances. College degrees emphasizing human skills, like humanities, social sciences, and fine arts, resist automation by nurturing creativity and understanding. Healthcare degrees focusing on kindness and connection stand resilient. Education, management, and leadership degrees utilizing people skills and critical thinking offer robust defenses. Despite this resilience, recognizing the dynamic nature of the job market underscores the mandatory need for learning and adapting to emerging technologies. Staying ahead in a changing work landscape involves continuously developing new skills and staying informed. While robots can handle specific tasks, they need more delicate understanding, emotional intelligence, and creativity inherent in human capabilities. Therefore, cultivating and preserving these uniquely human skills is not just a career strategy but a testament to the enduring value of the human touch in an ever-evolving technological era.

While replacing humans with AI is unfair and not ethical, navigating this technological transformation and finding a harmonious equilibrium between harnessing AI's advantages and preserving humanity's unique essence is essential. We certainly cannot stop the development of AI. However, this

generation is responsible for shaping an equitable future where AI's benefits are maximized while upholding the values that define our humanity. This necessitates a collaborative effort between policymakers, businesses, and individuals to ensure that technological advancements improve society rather than replace the human spirit. Integrating AI and humans should be viewed as a complementary relationship rather than a competitive one. AI can automate tasks, improve efficiency, and increase human capabilities. However, human ingenuity, empathy, and creativity remain essential for solving complex problems, navigating unforeseen circumstances, and building meaningful relationships. This transformation necessitates proactive measures to support those affected by job displacement. By acknowledging technology's transformative power and working collaboratively, we can prepare for a redefined future of work that embraces human potential (Condon and Wiseman). By balancing efficiency and human connection, we can create a future where AI empowers us to live better lives while preserving the irreplaceable human touch.

### Works Cited

CatClifford, Catherine. "Elon Musk: 'Mark My Words - A.I. Is Far More Dangerous than Nukes.'" CNBC, CNBC, 14 Mar. 2018, [www.cnbc.com/2018/03/13/elon-musk-at-sxswa-i-is-more-dangerous-than-nuclear-weapons.html](http://www.cnbc.com/2018/03/13/elon-musk-at-sxswa-i-is-more-dangerous-than-nuclear-weapons.html).

Condon, Bernard, and Paul Wiseman. "Many Jobs Will Be Replaced by Technological Innovation." *What Are the Jobs of the Future?*, edited by Roman Espejo, Greenhaven Press, 2015. At Issue. Gale In Context: Opposing Viewpoints, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/EJ3010950202/OVIC?u=ftla\\_pultch&sid=bookmarkOVIC&xid=8d254bc4](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/EJ3010950202/OVIC?u=ftla_pultch&sid=bookmarkOVIC&xid=8d254bc4). Accessed 2 Dec. 2023. Originally published as "AP Impact: Recession, Tech Kill Middle-Class Jobs," 23 Jan. 2013.

Stych, Anne. "Self-Checkouts Contribute to Retail Jobs Decline." *Bizjournals.Com*, 8 Apr. 2019, [www.bizjournals.com/bizwomen/news/latest-news/2019/04/self-checkouts-contribute-toretail-jobs-decline.html?page=all](http://www.bizjournals.com/bizwomen/news/latest-news/2019/04/self-checkouts-contribute-toretail-jobs-decline.html?page=all).

Urwin, Matthew. "AI Taking over Jobs: What to Know about the Future of Jobs." *Built In*, 12 Sept. 2023, [builtin.com/artificial-intelligence/ai-replacing-jobs-creating-jobs](http://builtin.com/artificial-intelligence/ai-replacing-jobs-creating-jobs).

"Walmart Ramps up Self-Checkout by Letting Customers Ring in Items While Shopping." *The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, 22 Oct. 2017. Gale In Context: Opposing Viewpoints, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/A511008540/OVIC?u=ftla\\_pultch&sid=bookmark-OVIC&xid=32ac145f](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A511008540/OVIC?u=ftla_pultch&sid=bookmark-OVIC&xid=32ac145f). Accessed 2 Dec. 2023.



## Ciara Robinson

### *Rich Richard Cory or Poor Richard Cory?*

Some of the time, well most of the time, in a lot of different art forms, the art mimics real-life situations. In those situations, the art allows other things to be analyzed and examined. The art form that is being used in this examination or analysis is poetry. The poem is titled “Richard Cory,” written by Edwin Arlington Robinson, no relation. The poem was published in the collection *The Children of the Night* in 1897 (“Edwin Arlington Robinson”). *The Children of the Night* was his second manuscript written and was published by a vanity press which was ignored by reviewers during the time it was released (“Edwin”). Robinson’s luck turned around in 1904 when Kermit Roosevelt brought “*The Children of the Night*” to the attention of his father President Theodore Roosevelt who helped it to get the recognition it deserved (“Edwin”). Through its use of imagery, symbolism, and irony, Edwin Arlington Robinson’s poem “Richard Cory” portrays the theme of deceptive nature of wealth and social status, revealing the emptiness and isolation that can exist beneath the surface of success.

The poem is set in Tilbury Town, which is a fictional New England Village with a fictional character named Richard Cory (“Richard Cory”). The poem contains sixteen lines with four-line stanzas that follow an ABAB rhyme scheme using an iambic type of meter. This is evident with the words, “town,” “crown,” “him,” and “slim” in the first four stanzas (lines 1-4). The speaker is established as “the people on the pavement” in the first stanza: “Whenever Richard Cory went downtown/ We people on the pavement looked at him” (1-2). The use of the phrase “people of the pavement” creates a sense of community among those who are not as wealthy or successful as Richard Cory (2). The tone of the speaker reflects the admiration that the people

had for Richard Cory. The diction used is a direct reflection of the speaker's tone riddled with admiration. Robinson used the repetition of the word "And" when he started six out of the sixteen lines of the poem (5-6, 9-10, 14-15). The first four "Ands" added to the expression of Richard Cory's wealthy image to the people of the town (5-6, 9-10). The setting takes place in a fictional town based in England where they are ruled by an Absolute Monarchy ("Richard"). The king or queen has all the power, but in this poem to the people, Richard Cory is richer than them both (9).

The first two lines also establish that the poem would have the reader ready to imagine what the people would see when they looked at Richard Cory. Then imagery is used in the second half of the stanza: "He was a gentleman from sole to crown/  
Clean favored, and imperially slim" (lines 3-4). The poem leads the reader to envision someone of those features that were mentioned in those lines. The words "sole to crown" make me imagine things that show royalty and a well-dressed man in nice shoes. The poem emphasizes his outer appearance and paints a vivid picture of Richard Cory's physical appearance, describing him as "imperially slim" and "quietly arrayed" (4-5). The use of the phrase "imperially slim" suggests that Richard Cory is not just thin but also has an air of royalty or nobility about him (4). The reference to his clean and handsome features reinforces this image of perfection. The phrase "quietly arrayed" suggests that Richard Cory is not flashy or ostentatious but rather dressed in a reserved and dignified manner (5). It shows how the people judged Cory's status by his outer appearance and how he carried himself. They believe that Cory has everything together. They even want to be him: "In fine, we thought that he was everything/  
To make us wish that we were in his place" (11-12). It portrays the people as thinking highly of him by saying that they want to be him blindly, not knowing what lies beneath what meets the eye. The use of the word "thought" suggests that the people's

perceptions of Richard Cory were misguided and incomplete (11).

The symbolism in the poem is particularly powerful in conveying the theme of the deceptive nature of wealth and social status. We must consider that the poem was written in 1897 and the term “gentlemen” symbolizes wealth (3). Cory symbolizes the upper society. He is the symbol of what wealth, class, looks, and acts like to the people. To say that he was just wealthy as described would be an understatement to the people. Robinson used symbolism to emphasize the speaker’s claim to wealth that Cory had: “And he was rich- yes, richer than a king” (9). Now, I can’t think of any broke kings even if I had to. Cory, being a symbol of wealth, had deep issues to be revealed. The issues that he carried the people could not see because of what they made to be true to them. The people didn’t think to consider that their beacon of wealth had a suicidal thought or could possibly be struggling with anything in life. To the people of the town, he symbolized everything they wanted.

The irony of this poem is revealed in the last two lines: “And, Richard Cory, one calm summer night/ Went home and put a bullet through his head” (15-16). The lines describe the nature of his death which was suicide. The poem had a dramatic turn at the end in a classic sonnet fashion. Even more ironic is that the only words Richard Cory spoke throughout the poem were “Good Morning” (8). The people based most of their judgment based off his outer appearance. The people thought just because he was graceful and carried himself with class that he didn’t have any problems. They looked at him as if the only thing that could cause happiness is money. The poem uses irony to express how the people felt after a visit from Richard Cory: “So on we worked, and waited for the light/ And went without the meat, and cursed the bread” (13-14). The people on the pavement were at work and could not leave so they had to continue working. When they “went without the meat” it was referring to more than just meat on a sandwich (14). The people, who represent the

lower-class and working-class people, still go without privilege and the meat represents the obtainable privileges and restricted luxuries and the bread represents their disadvantaged status in life. The people didn't want what they were used to getting out of life they wanted more out after seeing Richard Cory. The poem never expressed how Richard Cory felt when he was in town. It only gave the perspective of the people. The reason is to show how people perceive the wealthy as being without flaws. The use of the phrase "calm summer night" creates a contrast between the peaceful exterior and the turmoil that exists within Richard Cory's mind (15). The fact that he kills himself with a gun underscores the severity of his despair and the sense of hopelessness that led him to take his own life. The irony of the situation is that, despite his wealth and status, Richard Cory was not immune to the pressures and stresses of life. In fact, his success may have contributed to his isolation and sense of alienation.

The poem portrays the theme of the deceptive nature of wealth and social status, revealing the emptiness and isolation that can exist beneath the surface of success. The deception falls on the people. The people idolize Richard Cory and look up to him. The poem expresses how the people viewed Richard Cory as "human when he talked" (6). When the word "human" was used, it was used in a way to make him relatable to the people of the town (6). The poem mentions how "he fluttered pulses" to describe the effect Richard Cory has on people's pulses suggesting that his mere presence is enough to excite and impress those around him. Based on the ending of the poem, Cory was a troubled man. His money couldn't help him or his class. He was troubled so much that he chose to take his own life (16).

This poem which was written many years ago still holds true in its message in the twenty-first century. It shows how people can be so superficial, materialistic, and look up to the people who

have things as if they have the world. Throughout history, it has been proven that money does not buy or equal to happiness. By portraying Richard Cory as a tragic figure or poor Richard Cory, Robinson reminds us that material wealth and status are not enough to bring true happiness and fulfillment.

### Works Cited

"Edwin Arlington Robinson." Gale Literature: Contemporary Authors, Gale, 2003. Gale Literature Resource Center, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/H1000083697/LitRC?u=ftla\\_pulch&sid=bookmark-LitRC&xid=5c39e580](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/H1000083697/LitRC?u=ftla_pulch&sid=bookmark-LitRC&xid=5c39e580). Accessed 4 Apr. 2023.

"Richard Cory." Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature, Merriam-Webster, 1995. Gale Literature Resource Center, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/A148922837/LitRC?u=ftla\\_pulch&sid=bookmark-LitRC&xid=2ef88b7e](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A148922837/LitRC?u=ftla_pulch&sid=bookmark-LitRC&xid=2ef88b7e). Accessed 5 Apr. 2023.

Robinson, Edwin Arlington. "Richard Cory." UA-PTC Composition Mix, Norton Custom, 2020, p. 709.

## Johnnie Frank

### *Wisdom in the Cozy Cafe*

In the year 2019, one chilly autumn day in the scenic town of Asheville, North Carolina, I had a chance encounter that left a memorable mark on my soul, reminding me of the power of human connection and the beauty of unexpected friendships. As the golden hues of fall descended upon the vibrant landscape, I was engrossed in the captivating atmosphere of Asheville, a small town in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains. The air was chilly, carrying the earthy scent of fallen leaves and the promise of new beginnings. I had no idea this visit would lead to a remarkable encounter forever engraved in my memory.

The wind whispered through the ancient trees as I wandered the winding streets with old-fashioned shops and cozy cafes. The charming architecture spoke of a past era, its sophisticated details telling stories of a simpler time. The sound of distant laughter and the occasional rustle of leaves filled the air, creating a symphony of calmness.

Settled amidst the bust streets, I stumbled upon a hidden gem—a cozy bookstore called “Pages & Prose.” Its worn sign swung gently in the breeze, inviting me to step inside. Fascinated, I pushed open the squeaky wooden door, and as I crossed the threshold, a soft chime of the bell above announced my arrival.

The interior of the bookstore was a sanctuary of knowledge and imagination. The shelves towered above me, filled with a vast collection of books that seemed to hold the weight of countless stories. The warm scent of aged paper mingled with the comforting aroma of freshly brewed coffee, creating an intoxicating mix that enveloped my senses.

Lost in my world, my fingertips brushed against the spines of the books as I roamed through the maze of shelves. Each book whispered its tale, calling out to be discovered. The flickering light

from the fireplace in the corner cast dancing shadows on the worn wooden floor, beckoning me to explore further.

Engrossed in my exploration, I failed to notice a precarious stack of books perched precariously on a narrow shelf. With an unfortunate misstep, I inadvertently sent the books tumbling to the ground in a symphony of fluttering pages. Embarrassed, I bent down, hastily gathering the fallen books. Just as I was about to return them to their rightful places, a gentle voice cut through the air.

“Allow me to assist you,” said an elderly man, appearing from the aisle beside me. His presence radiated a quiet warmth, and his eyes sparkled with wisdom and kindness. His hands, wrinkled over time, reached out to take a stack of books from me. I accepted his gesture with gratitude, noticing the faint scent of leather on his fingertips.

Together, we reorganized the shelves, each book finding its proper place. As we worked together, the elderly man shared stories that painted vivid images of an Appalachian childhood. His voice conveyed nostalgia and wonder as he described his adventures through these mountains, exploring every nook and cranny. With each tale, I could almost feel the crunch of leaves beneath my feet and the cool mountain breeze tousling my hair.

Once our task was complete, we settled into the bookstore’s cozy reading nook. It was positioned near a large window and offered a beautiful view of the Appalachian Mountains. The vibrant vegetation danced harmoniously with the wind as if celebrating our unexpected union.

As we sat side by side, the soft glow of the setting sun bathed the room in a warm golden light. The crackling fireplace cast a comforting warmth upon us, adding to the moment’s serenity. The mountains stood tall and proud, their peaks piercing the sky like guardians of this sacred space.

In that quiet corner, we shared stories of triumphs and cherished

dreams. The elderly man's words wove a tapestry of inspiration and resilience, reminding me of the strength within us all. With open hearts, we bared our vulnerabilities, finding solace in our respective journeys' shared struggles and joys.

Time seemed to stand still as the mountains whispered their ancient secrets and the rhythm of our conversation mirrored the ebb and flow of nature. The world beyond the bookstore's walls faded away, leaving only the connection between two souls, bridging the gap of generations and experiences.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting a warm golden glow over our conversation, we exchanged heartfelt gratitude for the unexpected encounter. We realized that the universe had conspired to bring us together, and the lessons shared in that humble bookstore would forever shape our lives.

That fortuitous encounter in the rustic charm of the Appalachian Mountains taught me the importance of remaining open to the unexpected, for it is in those serendipitous moments that true magic resides. Through the bonds forged in the cozy haven of a bookstore, I discovered the power of human connection and its profound impact on our lives.

As I bid farewell to my newfound friend, the Appalachian Mountains stood tall and proud, symbolizing resilience and unwavering beauty. I carried with me the wisdom shared that day, a treasure from the mountains. It reminded me to seek connections, to be present in every encounter, and to embrace the beauty of the unknown.

In the following years, whenever life threw challenges my way, I would close my eyes and transport myself back to that reading nook overlooking the Appalachian Mountains. I would remember the elderly man and the serenity he brought into my life. In those moments, I would find solace, reminding myself that even amidst the world's chaos, there will always be unexpected friendships and moments of profound connection to guide us along our journey.



## Raychel McLaney

### *Going Against Tradition: How Female Perspective Changed Courtly Love in Lanval*

The idealized courtly romance trope is a common theme in medieval literature. Most tales from this period focus on the male hero who saves the damsel in distress in a tale of an epic battle and virtuous love. However, one story sticks out from the rest as it puts a twist on the classic literary trope. The story of *Lanval* focuses not on the actions of the brave hero but on the power of the female characters. It tells the story of an outcast knight, his fairy mistress, and the revenge-seeking queen. Most notable about the context of this story is its author. Madame Marie de France authored many stories in her lifetime, but *Lanval* from her book *The Lais of Marie de France* is the most quoted of her lais in modern-day literature. Marie de France uses her perspective as a woman to flip the literary trope of courtly romance and give women a role of power that was not common in medieval times.

Male authors dominated medieval literature during the 12th century. Epic tales of heroes like the *Odyssey* or the *Iliad* were popular in courts and most often transcribed by men as few women knew how to read or write. With it being uncommon for women to have any educational privileges, Marie de France had a great academic advantage. According to the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, historians conclude that she was perhaps of noble birth as she was fluent in many languages and could read and write (pg. 137). Literacy rates amongst medieval people were extremely low and female literacy rates were almost nonexistent. Only a woman of noble birth would have access to an education. Her main audience for her stories was the noble court she was surrounded by. Her stories had a feminist twist that would appeal to female listeners in her audience and make Marie's work stand

out from the “normal” tropes of her time. A revolutionary and unique aspect of her stories was the female protagonist. In this literary era, women were often side characters who said little and were only notable for their heavenly looks and virtuous behaviors.

It is important to understand the “courtly romance” trope that was so famous during medieval times. During the 12th century, literature shifted from the great heroic epics in favor of romantic tales of heroes and damsels. According to William Calin, author of *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England*, courtly romance is defined as a narrative that recalls the fortunes of a simple, noble, active hero. The deeds of love and prowess are accompanied by a story of adventure that takes place in a supernatural setting or has supernatural elements. The courtly romance trope was idealized and highly sought after, even to this day. William Calin states in *The French Tradition* that the elements of any courtly romance include an archetypal quest, voyage, combat, and marriage that was grounded in convention. As a result of these elements, good defeats evil while chivalry and moral codes are upheld with society’s values enforced. As readers find out, *Lanval* is anything but conventional.

The story of *Lanval* focuses on an outcast knight of the Round Table, Lanval. The hero of this story serves his king valiantly, despite the king “... [forgetting] this man ...” and none of his fellow knights “... [putting] in a good word for him ...” (lines 19–20). This introduction of Lanval contradicts the normal male protagonist role of other medieval stories. In most knightly literature, the male protagonist is a popular hero who is regarded highly by all. Unfortunately, Lanval’s dedication to King Arthur is treated with forgetfulness and dismissive attitudes from his fellow knights. Already Marie de France is deconstructing the male’s importance in her story and paves the way for the upcoming female protagonist. Epics before her time and many medieval romances were written by a man, hence the male

protagonist and male perspective. Marie de France gives the courtly romance trope a new direction to take as her female perspective is translated into a newfound freedom for female characters in the story.

In Arthurian legends of this time, women did not play a significant role. Most served as side characters who were praised for their physical beauty and virtue instead of intelligence. They are portrayed as weak creatures in need of protection, which is when the brave knight enters the scene. The women in these stories wield no power and have no freedom, especially sexually. From a societal context, it was unheard of for women to woo or pursue the men that they wanted. In the courtly love trope, the woman would wait for her knight to fight valiant battles and pursue her from a respectable distance while honoring her virginity and morals. Marie de France's main protagonist, the fairy mistress, is the exact opposite of every classic female literature role during this period. As Lanval is out by the river, he is greeted by two beautiful fairies who lead him to their "worthy, wise, and beautiful" (line 72) mistress. The two women are giving power and credit to their mistress already by describing her wits and character before her beauty. This description gives Lanval and readers a sense that the woman they are about to encounter holds great power. Upon meeting the fairy mistress, the poem states that her face, neck, and breasts were bare as she lay on her bed of furs, greeting Lanval for the first time. This blatant nudity would be harshly criticized by devout Christian readers, as Christianity was the prominent religion of the time.

Furthermore, the fairy mistress expresses her sexual desire for Lanval, stating, "I've come for you. I've come from far/I've left my land, to seek you here" (lines 111-112). Again, it was unheard of for women to be so direct with such romantic or sexual advances. Marie's use of a decisive woman who establishes her power and desire with her lover was a very progressive and scandalous take for a religious society. The reversed romance power

dynamic continues as Lanval returns the fairy's declaration of love. The fairy then rewards her lover by offering Lanval "her love, her body, she gave, both" (line 133). In a courtly love trope and Christian society, a woman's virtue is highly regarded and respected. Male protagonists do not sleep with women as it is seen as demoralizing, and any women who attempt to seduce him are evil. Here, Marie establishes a sexual prowess that women could not afford due to power imbalances in medieval society by giving her protagonist the ability to have intimate relations with a man she just met.

The fairy mistress establishes a rule that Lanval can tell no one about her if he ever wants to see her again. However, Lanval breaks this rule as he stands accused by the female antagonist of the poem, Queen Guinevere. Arthurian legends portray Guinevere as an honest, loyal, and humble queen. Marie, however, portrays her as an evil seductress who seeks revenge when her advances are rejected. Guinevere takes a similar direct advance with Lanval by giving him a *druerie*, or love token to signify an affair. She tells Lanval, "You must rejoice in taking me!" (Line 268). She, like the fairy mistress, offers her body and is direct with her sexual advances. Lanval politely refuses these advances. The Queen does not take this rejection well as she accuses Lanval of enjoying the company of men instead of facing the reality that he does not want her. To save his reputation against this woman of power, he reveals his affair with the fairy mistress thus breaking his promise to her (lines 320-324). Despite this, Guinevere tells Arthur that Lanval made advances toward her. Being Queen, Guinevere has the advantage of power over a man and could potentially ruin Lanval's life or have him killed.

As events throughout *Lanval* take place, Marie de France turns the entire romance trope on its head. William Calin suggests in *The French Tradition* that all courtly romances are conventional and uphold tradition, but *Lanval* goes against the moral rules of the society wherein it takes place. Marie does follow some

traditional elements, such as the story containing supernatural beings and following Lanval through his fortunes. This quickly shifts as the fairy mistress disregards any virtuous behavior as she establishes sexual prowess toward her lover. Her virtue is not of the utmost importance to her. Despite Lanval revealing his lover's secret, she saves him from death by revealing her existence and verifying his claims. This overturns the damsel in distress part of standard medieval romance tropes. Furthermore, there is no marriage at the end of the story. Marriage was highly regarded in this strictly religious society and for a man and woman to travel to magical lands, unmarried, was scandalous yet tasteful to female listeners.

Marie turned heads in the courts she wrote for. Her character Lanval was almost useless in terms of power in the story. His counterpart fairy mistress controlled the strings on their affair. In the end, the woman saved the man. This power flip made Marie a revolutionary writer for her time. When few women could read or write, she gave women a voice and an idea for a future where they could have autonomy over their bodies and desires. When women did not believe they could have power, she gave them a character that proved it was possible. Women did not have to sit on a pedestal and only have worth in their beauty. Her female perspective and advantageous education paved the way to give women power by reversing a literary trope that suppressed women and instead gave them the liberation they craved.

### **Works Cited**

Calin, William. *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England*, University of Toronto Press, 1994. ProQuest eBook Central, <https://www.proquest.com/legacydocview/EBC/4670136?accountid=39906>.

De France, Marie. *Lanval*: Norton Anthology of English Literature. eBook Ed., W.W. Norton & Company, 2020.

# Mia Raso

## *Addicted to Being Connected*

With all the advancements that have come to phones and sites to meet the demand of the ever-growing new digital era, along with events such as COVID-19, more and more people are interacting with others online. I'm just like everyone else when it comes to technology. I've adopted it and use it in my daily life, and while I don't use social media as much as the younger generation, I still use it from time to time and can see what effect it's had on myself and those around me. I believe social media, in a way, promotes loneliness and hinders meaningful relationships by requiring less effort to maintain, introducing parasocial relationships, and becoming an integral part of our personal and professional lives to the point where it's hard to distinguish which is which.

As technology advances, so does society. We use these advancements to ease our everyday lives, and one of those ways is by connecting with others. At the start of social media, we saw it as a way to reconnect with loved ones and meet new friends. This, over time, shaped how we view relationships and how we view social media. We went from just accessing sites such as MySpace to talk with family to posting every aspect of our lives with photos and videos to sites such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter for not just our family to see but everyone in the world. We became less mindful of privacy in the search for more companionship. But is this companionship that people strive for online as meaningful as a relationship that one could have outside of technology? I believe so, and I'll explain why that's so.

When you think about it, sending a friend a video of a funny meme or video call takes much less effort than driving to their house and showing them your phone with the same video. For this reason, people have begun putting less effort into their lives

off the internet. Most social media users tend to be young people and adolescents, so spending their time doing something fun at a much lower cost entry than going somewhere physically would make sense. The issue stems from this being the only outlet for enjoyment and when it absorbs too much of your time. People, on average, spend two hours and 29 minutes a day on social media (Karci, 2022, p. 301). To put it in perspective, that's just half an hour short of watching the first installment of Lord of the Rings daily.

This constant usage and upkeep to let everyone be updated on every moment of their life allows social media to entangle its users for so long. Features like endless scrolling, personalized recommendations, and even having others share things with you enable sites to make this more accessible than ever. This ensnaring leads some to social withdrawal because why would you ever leave your house when you have everything you need online? This phenomenon has a word in Japanese where it originated, and it's called hikikomori, which is known as a severe social withdrawal.

According to Ming, Sung K. et al., researchers of fan activity in South Korea and writers of Effects of Online Fan Community Interactions on Well-Being and Sense of Virtual Community, "a parasocial relationship is formed by repeated parasocial interaction, meaning that fans' feelings of intimacy are enhanced through repeated exposure to celebrities, eventually forming a non-existent intimate relationship." This feeling of being close to someone because you know all about their lives leads a person to believe they are friends with them when in reality, that could be the farthest thing from the truth. It's so easy to learn everything about a public figure and feel close to them when they don't even know you exist besides a couple of comments on their posts. This phenomenon of parasocial relationships happens when lonely individuals watch celebrities and get entranced by their personalities. It's hard to distinguish a line between what

a friend is and what a parasitic interaction is with someone whom you consider a friend and not vice versa. In a sense, though, companies that these celebrities work with increase the likelihood of this occurring as it is better for their bottom line. They make community forums, have the celebrities post in them, interact with fans, and make the fans feel like they are cared for by the celebrities (Min, 2023, p. 4).

This leads to the last topic, which is what occurs when you have this excessive use of social media in your personal life, which is being unable to separate your online life from your physical one. The feeling of keeping up both lives can be difficult and stress-inducing as most don't find the time to be able to do both. According to Loiacono and McCoy in "When Did Fun Become So Much Work":

As more people join SMTs (social media technologies), and the encroachment of these SMTs continue in our professional and private lives, an<sup>2</sup> overwhelming pressure to constantly be engaged with the SMT to update one's profile, reply to others, and maintain one's overall online image. As much as users desire to continue to use SMTs, they experience stress in their use. As others in their referent group pressure them to use the SMTs, their stress rises.

As we can see, it's hard to break away from this technology everyone else uses and expects us to use. It's almost as if you are bringing your professional life into your personal life and being unable to separate them. Think of an emergency responder who's always on call to the ER if they're needed at any time of day. It becomes less fun and more work when it's an action we're expected to fulfill to satisfy our interaction needs.

Humans desire interaction naturally and will find any way to do so as easily as possible to quell the feeling of loneliness. It's understandable as no one wants to feel alone and like they don't



have someone to talk with, which is why we have turned to mass media to help with our social isolation, especially in times like the COVID-19 pandemic (Min, 2023, p. 5). However, we have to be aware that these interactions can be less fulfilling and meaningful than interactions we would have outside of them. Being able to sense the presence of an individual next to us and form lasting bonds with people who feel the same towards us is a much different approach than one where it is one-sided.

Social media was initially a great idea and a way to connect with loved ones and be able to follow their lives from a distance. This concept, though, has changed over time as the need for more interaction has increased. This increased need for social media interaction can and has led to individuals feeling more stress and loneliness by requiring less effort to maintain, introducing parasocial relationships, and becoming an integral part of our personal and professional lives to the point where it's hard to distinguish which. What can we do to overcome this? Instead of commenting under a friend's post about how pretty that coffee shop looks, why not ask them to take you and experience it with you? We can all benefit from putting our phones down and living a bit more in the now rather than the perception of now.

### Works Cited

- Karci, Huri D. "The University Students' Awareness of Hyperreality on Social Media and Problematic Social Media Usage: A Qualitative Study." *Selcuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, no. 49, 2022, pp. 300-314. ProQuest, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/university-students-awareness-hyperreality-on/docview/2760235324/se-2>, doi: <https://doi.org/10.52642/susbed.1162290>.
- Loiacono, Eleanor, and McCoy Scott. "When did Fun Become so Much Work: The Impact of Social Media Invasiveness on Continued Social Media Use." *Information Technology & People*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2018, pp. 966-983. ProQuest, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/when-did-fun-become-so-much-work/docview/2090210283/se-2>, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/ITP-10-2016-0239>.
- Min, Sung K., Soyoung Wang, and Seongcheol Kim. "Effects of Online Fan Community Interactions on Well-being and Sense of Virtual Community." *Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 13, no. 11, 2023, pp. 897. ProQuest, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/effects-online-fan-community-interactions-on-well/docview/2892953439/se-2>, doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13110897>.



UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS  
**PULASKI TECH**

---

3000 West Scenic Drive  
North Little Rock, AR 72118  
[UAPTC.edu](http://UAPTC.edu)