

Idea for a Novella (title it “Intoxication” - not only referencing the legal age of 21 to drink but also the initial intoxicating, dissonant, and alienating feeling of Adornian art):

It is 2037, where MPA’s rating system was changed from Content Maturity to Conceptual Maturity (in my Adornian framework). Donnie Darko (a re-screening from 2001) is rated CM-21. These rules apply and are legally enforced: Films with CM = 16-18 should require the viewer to be at least 18 years old to watch or accompanied by a parent or guardian 21 years of age or older (even when accompanied, the minimum age should be 16). films with CM > 18 (19-21) should require the viewer to be at least 21 years old to watch or accompanied by a parent or guardian 25 years of age or older (even if accompanied, the minimum age should be 18) Valid proof of ID should be required.

Yvonne, who is 18 years old, is extremely agreeable but of rather low openness on Big 5 (Openness 15%, Conscientiousness 50%, Extraversion 75%, Agreeableness 100%, Neuroticism 83%). She has a crush on the pretentious and pseudointellectual Andre (Openness 50% (intellectual but is pretentious about it), Conscientiousness 20%, Extraversion 30%, Agreeableness 10%, Neuroticism 100%), aged 17, and wants to accompany him to the Donnie Darko viewing partly to impress him and spend time with him. Andre’s best friend is Jackson, aged 18, who is Openness 5% (anti-intellectual), Conscientiousness 0%, Extraversion 100%, Agreeableness, 40%, Neuroticism 40%. Jackson watches the movie out of the intention of a social media trend (“successfully watch a CM21 film while underage”)

They all sneak to the theater presenting fake IDs, and each watch the film and react to it themselves. They come out of the theater to reflect on their viewing (but only Andre has substantial reflection, even if

pretentious), and the novella ends with showing how the movie has altered each their personalities/worldviews.

Suppose that this novella takes place in Yvonne, Andre, and Jackson's senior year of high school, shortly before final exams in May 2037. Additionally, suppose the crux of the prologue of this novella takes place in AP Literature, where the curriculum is specifically curated based on the Conceptual Maturity construct. The movie screening takes place the weekend before the AP Literature exam in May 2037.

Alternately, to avoid copyright concerns, another CM21 film other than *Donnie Darko* could be used for this short story. Or, just invent an in-universe CM21 film.

Let Yvonne be the protagonist/narrator here.

Additionally, let's name the AP Lit teacher Mrs. Lisa Thompson, who personally hates MPA's legal adoption of Conceptual Maturity even though she reasons it as an improvement from Content Maturity, but is forced to teach it to her students (and calibrate her AP Lit curriculum based on Conceptual Maturity) due to Conceptual Maturity extending to educational curriculum as well. Lisa Thompson's husband, Kurt Thompson, works at the movie theater as an easy, mind-numbing job, while he pursues his real passion in science and math but can't find a job in it. Kurt spots the trio of high school students and recognizes the fake IDs but gets convinced by Andre to let them in.

Also suppose that 1 year later (in 2038), with Andre, Jackson, and Yvonne all in college, Yvonne is dead due to suicide, Andre is a struggling student in philosophy (Andre one year later is a college dropout after failing his philosophy classes), and Jackson is in a coma from too much alcohol intoxication in college. However, the story should be purposefully opaque on how this happened.

In the end of the novella, there is an announcement of a newly released “sanitized”/”less conceptually mature” version of Donnie Darko, or whatever in-universe film this novella uses.

I should write the narrative text in how Yvonne would think - the vocabulary should be simple and to the point. Most of the narrative is supposed to be from Yvonne’s simplistic and emotional perspective.

Character full names:

Yvonne Chen

Andre Dubois

Jackson Walker

Yvonne should have a crush on Andre, mistaking the latters' intellectual pretentiousness for true insight that she lacks.

The entire novella should use no more than 5th grade level vocabulary because it's written from Yvonne's perspective (maybe even after she kills herself, it could retain her own perspective)

The invented/in-world CM21 film (equivalent to Donnie Darko) should be called “Intoxication”.

Andre uses development in that he’s the embodiment of the Dunning Kruger curve.

Yvonne Chen could have a best friend named Kayla Peters whom she invites to the movie as well but for some unknown and only inferred reason, Kayla declines saying she’s uncomfortable with the idea.

Yvonne could be an "artist" herself but her passion is simple pastel drawings and crafts (including miniatures of houses) that evoke immediate emotional pleasure and homeostasis. This way this novella both adopts and critiques Adorno's Aesthetics implicitly. We should

also show and communicate that Yvonne's own art is ironically more autonomous than the fictional film "Intoxication" (or the whole conceptual maturity scale) which has become a symbol of intellectual and cultural prestige.

One of Jackson's lines within the story could be a moment of genuine reflection thinking that "maybe art isn't meant for us - maybe we're too immature to handle it and will ruin art and make it into a shitty tiktok trend or something"

Let's not name Adorno at all in this whole novella, and only hint at the fact that Andre reads aesthetic philosophy (tbh even maybe not hint that the book is about aesthetics, just about some sort of philosophy). If we explicitly mention Adornian aesthetics, this whole novella becomes didactic per Adornian aesthetics and collapses to propaganda or instruction.

Let's also mention Jackson is an underage alcoholic (at age 18), who once says "You don't want me to accidentally spill Jack Daniels all over your book, do you, Andre? Maybe you shouldn't slam your book on the table in front of you like you always do, even when you're not reading it."

The weeks after the watching of the CM21 film Intoxication, Yvonne tries to "detox" by building her miniatures but inadvertently finds that her own art is subconsciously becoming dark and distorted.

Also, the in-universe film "Intoxication" in this novella should actually represent the Adornian ideal of true art. In addition, Yvonne should actually faint for around a few minutes during the screening of the movie "Intoxication". Ironically though, Yvonne is the only person out of the trio engaging in "Intoxication" authentically and with autonomy, feeling the art rather than conceptualizing it via cultural ideology (Jackson's motivation to watch this for the "CM21" social media trend)

or pretension (Andre's motivation), even if she doesn't really understand it but is at least smart enough to intuitively know something is very very wrong. In particular, Jackson taunts Yvonne for fainting and brags about how he didn't even feel queasy.

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Let's expand on this. Perhaps in the very end despite this relegation, could be a subtle hint of a random person in a vintage DVD store asking for the "uncut"/"original" version - which hints at how in Adornian theory, art doesn't just live and die like humans, it can re-emerge later in history.

What should the fictional film "Intoxication" be about? Could it be a meta recursion that dictates this very novella idea but in a twisted/warped way? Crucial Idea: The movie "intoxication" in my novel idea "intoxication" should literally foreshadow in its own content what might happen next in this very novella called "intoxication" but in a distorted and abstracted way. In the novella itself, what happened to the trio of high schoolers after the viewing of the film is intentionally left opaque - it is only revealed through very subtle symbolism during the fictional film "intoxication" that demands very careful reading.

Additionally, we do not let Intoxication (the film) contain any actual sexual content, direct gore, drug references, or profanity at all. The film if rated by the original MPA would be G.

Also, suppose Yvonne initially wanted to watch something much lighter, a cutesy aesthetic film that she liked, but was peer pressured by Andre and Jackson into watching Intoxication. (Jackson motivated by the "internet challenge of resisting vomiting or fainting during the movie, or watching the movie while taking a shot every time the

screen flickered as some drinking game”, and Andre motivated by wantnig intellectual/cultural capital)

What if we make the director of Intoxication the film me (the person writing this novella idea)

To add depth to Yvonne’s character, she is simultaneously bored by mundanity (which is why she seeks out Andre and develops a crush on him) but ultimately embraces it as comfort and happiness.

In the novella there should also be ongoing debates and chatter about whether the age restriction is even justified bc the film Intoxication would be rated G otherwise. The republican president of the time, Trinity Staples, is against the new conceptual maturity framework and calls for its abolishment, and she claims that her young children could watch it without any concern at all. Trinity as well as the majority of her republican cabinet argues that sexual innuendo and profanity or overt references to drugs are much worse things to expose kids to and that the MPA should revert to original standards.

Suppose there was considerable tension in the house and senate around spring 2037 since staples’s inauguration on whether the conceptual maturity framework should be abolished and in May 2037 the senate was in the process of voting on the bill. Right after the main trio of the novella watches Intoxication, the bill gets passed and MPA reverts to its original criteria on censoring profanity, sex, and drugs.

More: What could a 2036 election season political debate between Trinity Staples (fictional republican candidate) and Hector Field (fictional democratic candidate) look like? Also, have Yvonne back in fall 2036 begrudgingly sit through the televised debates, because her family always played it on TV.

Suppose Hector Field was the fictional democratic president 2032-2036 and is running for reelection in 2036.

Let's make Hector Field born in 1953 and Trinity Staples born in 1992.

Yvonne should canonically have rather poor grades. In her senior year of high school, she could have around a 1.79 GPA.

The recursion here (Intoxication film containing basically an abstracted and muddled version of this very novella's plot) could potentially be infinite. (Think in terms of the joke "The B in Benoit B Mandelbrot stands for Benoit B Mandelbrot")

It should also be implied, although not overtly stated, that Yvonne Chen has a mild to moderate intellectual disability.

How would I explain Yvonne Chen being in AP Literature her senior year despite her intellectual disability? Perhaps this could be due to Yvonne's own drive and secret admiration of creativity and symbolic thinking, and her agreeable parents welcoming her stance on self improvement. Or perhaps, have some new law or rule passed by Field's administration in 2032-2036 that implements something similar to the "no child left behind" policy in schools. Have it be a combination of these two reasons. It could also be implied that Yvonne had to have an IEP meeting at her high school back in her freshman year, in 2033. Also, this scene could also include a psychometric evaluation (IQ test, Rorschach Creativity test, Alternative Uses test, and/or Big 5 test). It would be intriguing that Yvonne scores decently on the Rorschach Inkblot Creativity Test but very low on the Alternative Uses test.

Let's also make both Trinity Staples and Hector Field canonically Christians, but of different sects - Staples being Baptist and Hector being non-denominational.

Let's flesh out some characters more.

Yvonne Chen's parents (Let's call them Haoran Chen (father) and Rebecca Chen (mother) for now):

Haoran Chen: Judging from his refusal to fully assimilate into American culture when he immigrated from China (this is subtly implied through his name still being a Chinese name), he naturally holds more traditionalist and conservative views from his Chinese upbringing. However, Haoran ends up paradoxically supporting the democratic candidate Hector Field despite his ingrained conservatism, due to being convinced by Hector's academic ethos and rationality/science/psychometrics studies. His stance is also motivated out of fear - he is constantly afraid that one day, Yvonne's low intellect and low tolerance of abstraction is what will cause her demise (in which he was ironically correct), and she wasn't built to tolerate meatier ideas. Maybe Haoran's less fluent English could also be a marker of his resistance to assimilation to American culture

Rebecca Chen: functionally apolitical, but in 2036, she supports Trinity Staples's populist republicanism over Field's democratic elitism only because she believes Yvonne isn't inherently intellectually disabled and she has great creativity in her miniatures and pastel drawings that she makes. Rebecca has repressed the horrifying memory of seeing her daughter's near-drown and suffer an anoxic brain injury back in the year 2024, and wants to believe her daughter can really succeed and start her own art studio in the future.

Also, perhaps Yvonne's implied intellectual disability could also be subtly referenced by a vague memory of a "drowning in a pool" when she was 5 (back in the year 2024 in this worldbuilding). (Realistically, drowning triggers v-fib and with slightly delayed CPR, neurological functioning quickly and irreversibly plummets.) The drowning could dually also serve as a symbol of "drowning" in sensory overload of the



film "Intoxication" and of political and intellectual abstraction around her.

To develop more: what might be Yvonne's parents' opinions on the movie Intoxication in 2037, both before its release date in theaters on May 16, 2037 (the date when Yvonne, Jackson, and Andre go see it and have their lives radically changed) and after? Also suppose that Yvonne's 18th birthday was on May 9, 2037 (she was born May 9, 2019).

Let's set this story in the fictional town of Eigen, California. (population of 59049 in 2037)

During the screening of the film Intoxication on May 16, 2037, Yvonne should have a latent subconscious realization (that she doesn't consciously realize) that the female protagonist in Intoxication (the film) is actually her and predicts her fate, which causes her to faint in the middle of it. Andre and Jackson on the other hand are not as perturbed or even aware that the film also encodes their own fates (negative truth-content that hasn't happened yet but is inevitable) but in a more abstract manner.

The tagline for the movie "Intoxication" could be "a poison much stronger than alcohol".

Let the AP Lit exam take place the week after the Intoxication screening. Let Yvonne really struggle on the exam and not articulate at all on her essays, but somehow suppose that she actually gets a 4 on the exam, a noticeable improvement from a mock AP Lit exam done before the Intoxication screening.

maybe Andre Dubois could be a 2nd generation french immigrant. During a particular lesson in AP Lit about the actual philosopher W.E.B. Du Bois, Andre Dubois tries to “correct” Mrs. Thompson that “his name was actually pronounced DOO-BWA! Show some cultural refinement please!” This could be a comedic relief in this overall unequivocally grim novel outline.

Field's stance could also be protecting art from misinterpretation from teens as much as it is protecting teens from alienation the art provides. Field is correct conceptually but the moment he tries to implement theory into law it invites catastrophe and collapses the very point of the theory, due to law now generating a new form of cultural virtue signaling and commodification.

To show palpable contrast yet similarity I think it should be shown that before the CM framework teens were just as rowdy about watching R rated movies. Maybe include in dialogue?

The intoxication movie poster should be just black all over except a single fuzzy white dot somewhere near the lower right corner. On the fateful night of the screening, Andre walking in the movie theater overanalyzes just the poster while Jackson scoffs and says “that white dot is clearly just the ink peeling off at the edge due to the weather getting hotter. It ain’t that deep.” It’s not revealed whether Andre or Jackson is correct.

Also, have there be a different film contrasting from “Intoxication” that also makes its way to the cultural zeitgeist of 2037 America - this film is named “Danger Danny 4”, the 4th installment in the series “Danger Danny”, released in August 2036. Unlike Intoxication, Danger Danny would be unambiguously rated R (or even NC-17) by original MPA standards but has little to no conceptual maturity - it is crude, straightforward, and any attempts at subtlety just reduce to just

gratuitous graphic imagery and shock value. “Danger Danny” is a generic spy film about an assassin named Danny who violently murders any enemy spies and along in the process has graphic sexual relations with quite a few women. Danger Danny hence is rated CM-10 and in 2036-2037, due to the still pending recall of Field’s Conceptual Maturity framework, the age required to watch Danger Danny, despite its R rated material, is only 10. This becomes a heated point of contention during the Field vs. Staples 2036 fictional presidential debates, particularly after a televised incident of a 14-year-old boy watching it and being inspired by Danger Danny (at least reported to have been inspired by Danger Danny) to wield a knife at school and stabbing random people for what the boy calls “[his] sadistic pleasures” (this happened September 2036, around the beginning of the 2036-2037 academic year). However, have it be intentionally ambiguous whether the 14-year-old boy, who ended up causing 1 death and 5 injuries, was even “inspired by Danger Danny” to begin with, even if the media reports (particularly conservative/republican ones that Staples condones) say it. Suppose that the boy was named Daniel so people, particularly the conservative Staples and her supporters, quickly drew connections/conclusions that Daniel saw the fictional “Danger Danny” as an idealized version of him. Staples uses the “Danger Danny” incident as leverage to back up her political campaign in the Fall of 2036. Staples uses it to impugn the practicality of the Conceptual Maturity (CM) framework because Danger Danny was rated only CM-10 due to its remarkably straightforward messages and delivery (no political commentary, no subtlety at all, just gratuitous shock content) but would've been easily NC-17 on the original MPA framework.

Actually, you know what, have the real Daniel be in the same high school Yvonne, Kayla, Andre, and Jackson are in. Suppose this happens in that very high school.

Jackson relishes the Danger Danny films (1st through 4th installations) and brags about handling the graphic gore without any trouble at all.