

kryptonite #2

I don't expect your avoidant self to dapple with the past, nor do I foresee my attachment letting go so quickly. But if you have any fleeting impulse to introspect, then I, as someone who's spent an ungodly amount psychoanalyzing this situation, can tell you how your avoidance will affect you of all people. I'll admit, you're an intelligent person until it comes to emotions. I may not know every facet of string theory or have "disconcerting" in my jargon, but I possess enough self-awareness to identify a psychology we can never quite escape. It goes like this. We'll continue to believe that people are our problems but fail to recognize that we wage a war against ourselves. We'll paint each other as the villain in our stories, our friends will remember me as clingy and annoying and you as immature and cowardice, and no one will mourn the wicked until the next hot scandal takes its place. We'll make a monster of the person we called home and pose ourselves as the prey. We'll grow a world of bitterness inside our hearts and forever hate each other for a vice that would exist regardless of our death. Our circles will applaud us for being the hero after we fed them a narrative in which we were, yet the details we left unsaid would say otherwise. We'll grow ever more resentful of the monstrous-feminine and the smallest man as we talk to every one but each other, but our conscience will whisper a truth you and I refuse to accept. We'll scout a new person to fill the void inside, craving the feeling we can't quite put a name to but chase nonetheless. We'll be the creators of an unfortunate monster, a failed attempt to replicate a sort of false nostalgia that doesn't quite feel the same. We'll take the shiny new toys to our favorite spots, broken pieces from past play buried in the sand, unbeknownst to the new knickknack and trinket. We'll believe in happily ever afters again and deem ourselves heartbroken heroes that finally found the love they deserve. We'll write our own storylines and characters and live worlds apart. We'll give the principle no thought until the distractions wear way, and that fleeting impulse swims across our stream of conscience but this time with a new and painful clarity. Yet a situation so fresh and potent is still reaching a pinnacle, and we'll continue to suppress the feeling that will inevitably resurface with time.

The epiphany isn't coming

Every summer of my adolescence
has been dedicated to spinning a chrysalis
of master schedules, plans, and deliberate groundwork
wherein I'd isolate myself in a dark, cramped
chamber, plotting the day I'd shed off my vices
and grow a masterful set of wings
Come fall, I'd be a sublime creature unlike
any other—beyond words, indescribable
I'd be the manifestation of my personal ideal
Yet, it's winter now and I am still trapped
in my chrysalis; my plans are just theories
and my wings still imaginal discs
The transformation I envisioned has spoiled
under the flaws of my quixotic fantasies
Now, every winter of that previous summer
has been spent realizing that the epiphany
isn't coming—that my wings will not form if I do
not break free of perfectionism and embrace
the growth that is the chrysalis itself

Who are you?

You know who you are because you have a name
You have a birthday you celebrate once every year
You're a student, an athlete, a human with fears
You eat and you sleep, you're positive you claim
That you know who you are because you have a name
Your dark hair's your mom's and you write with your right
It's tomorrow again, was it not just last night?
You wake up, you go to bed
You repeat, do it again
It was 10, now it's 5
You're running out of time
You breath, you blink
You speak and spell
You cry every night yet you say that you're well
You see, you hear
You observe and feel
Everything repeats
This doesn't feel real
You breath and blink
You reel and think
About what you said
Again and again
You know who you are because that's what you're called
Yet you lay on your pillow and feel nothing at all
You wake up the next morning because you're not dead
But you stare at the mirror and ask, "who are you?" instead

the feeling that will inevitably resurface with time

I do not care

I won't give it my time

I'll spare my thoughts

Leave it behind

Whatever it was

Is now in the past

Because I'm over this thought that has undoubtedly passed

It no longer lingers on the tips of my fingers

Not writing away what I don't want to stay

What's already forgotten I refuse to remember

How something I buried was once my forever

So I say I don't care when I'm well aware

It carries no meaning as long as I'm breathing

But now I've unlearned the thing that I yearn

I'd rather have rotten than live still writing

About a thing I've forgotten

Time, where to begin?

Cursor blinking, clock ticking. My thoughts, fruitless. Terse, cryptic phrases and constrained parataxis quell my compulsivity. At last, the sentences click and control shifts—I am satisfied. Brain fogs the periphery of my glazed, sunken eyes, soullessly perusing every word and each letter. Part of me believes this is right, but in truth, I am merely another aching perfectionist in this egomaniacal world. Me, me, me. All about me—I want it all. And so this power-hungry delusion rocks me to pseudo sleep, depriving my senses but sparing my thoughts. Natural laws and fit societies assume me well-rested ante meridiem, yet here I lie in a sunlit bed, bleary-eyed and symptomatic of carpal tunnel. I seemingly want to be everything; still, healthy is a thing of every I am not being. Every so often, my vision cracks and a feeble tear unknowingly escapes my stagnant eyes, running down the creased outlines of an aged face that was not so long ago full of golden youth. Please, take me home. Take me back to the golden age and simpler times when I was truly, unequivocally happy and not a laugh or smile was plastic. The smile I once had, jagged spaces outlining my crooked teeth, grinning from ear to ear, gleaming at the sight of simple, silly little things. “The moon is following us Daddy!” Now, I, a creature of the night, watch the rocky body from my window and wish I hadn’t switched sides. Smell the roses and seize the day, phrases I heard them all say. But what if I can’t bite the bullet anymore? So bent and out of shape, cost myself an arm and a leg. This is the last straw. Once in a blue moon do I get to call it a day before the clock strikes twelve, so perhaps it’s time to address the elephant in the room. Shame this room has a sound barrier; its pitiful, thick walls guard my deadly lullaby. They absorb my screams to where all is silent and no soul notices—and for good reason. My cries are purely a product of guilt, manifested by self-inflicted, bodily crimes. How much longer shall I kill my body? Better yet, how much more can it take? My sweet temple... please forgive me. How will the king’s horses and men put me together again? Was the wall too tall or was my shell too weak? I always find it to be the latter, though it seems the wall touches the sky. But if the sky’s the limit, how is it still me? Me, me, me. All about me—my veiny self becomes all the more vain. A sable plague, dark as the night, inking my paper-thin body. The window reflects back a gray girl with a melancholy smile, not the toothy grin she knew before. Perhaps they were straight now, but the pearly whites were better called ivories and gleamed rarely. Above which were the eyes whose cracked vision still demanded repair. Still weeping, still longing.

kryptonite #1

“My Best Friend” — a haiku I wrote in 8th grade

They call her Jordan,
but her best friend calls her Brooke.
To me, she is Brooke.

“a stranger I used to know everything about” — a poem I wrote in 12th grade

To me, she is Jordan.
I wish I could tell you when she stopped being Brooke,
but it was somewhere between the onset of high school
and the realization that someone can't be your best friend forever.
It's not her fault for naturally gravitating toward someone new,
nor is it mine for leaving the relationship
before it could hurt me more.

Brooke was the girl who
waited for me to tie my shoe during the mile,
taught me everything there is to know
about getting away with murder,
gave me an octopus plushie every special occasion,
whose pupils never dilated when I recited
every boy in the yearbook's name,
joined my “MAP test study sessions” that
consisted of ordering pizza and talking about boys the whole time,
stopped at nothing to get a confession out of me,
and kicked me every time I uttered “like,” “um,” or “oh my gosh.”

But most of all, she was the girl I called my best friend.

Now, I sit across Jordan at a big lunch table of new friends—
3 feet away, 3 years apart.
I don't know who Jordan is, nor the guy she was talking to
Evie and Amy about in her new beach house bathroom
as I lay half asleep on the floor one room away and 3 years apart.
I didn't know about the ex-boyfriend
who broke her heart last summer until I heard it from my father.
I don't know when she became so loud and critical,
or whether her comments are jokes or personal jabs.
I don't know if she secretly hates me and wants
our friends to turn against me.
I don't know these things because

Jordan is a stranger to me.

Yet somehow, I feel like I know her—
like a part of her would still wait for me to tie my shoes
while the rest of the world rushes on.

I wish I knew who Jordan was,
but I feel like Brooke never really left.

She just found herself somewhere
between the onset of high school
and the realization that someone can't be your best friend forever.

And for that to happen,
she needed to become Jordan—
a stranger I used to know everything about.

“A House Divided Cannot Stand”

Today in class, my peers and I debated whether violet and indigo were “real” colors, or rather, shades of purple with fancy names.

That same morning, the country was red and blue, but by 2 pm, it seemed to manifest as a mix of a martyr’s blood, police uniforms, and a torn realization that no matter the argument, colors blend regardless. Red and blue, although on opposite sides of the spectrum, combine to create something of unity.

Although we cannot put a name to it, indigo or violet or purple, we can agree that regardless of color, we all bleed the same.

Perhaps the idea of a “mix” seems like it can only exist in theory, yet we naturally go colorblind when witnessing the death of a God-given right to freely speak.

This evening, we grasp the painful truth that no color deserves to leave the spectrum for existing, living proof that we the colors, red and blue alike, are capable of mixing.

lambs and wolves

the little girl in my mind
hides as the world hunts
her down.

a place no longer a home,
a safe space for gentle souls
burnt to the ground by
self-proclaimed empaths.

wolves in lamb's wool,
and lambs trying to fit
in with the wolves,
trying not to get eaten alive.

the innocent ripped apart,
the world on fire,
and the gasoline in
our hands.

the script

they gave her the script
tied her shoes, opened the door,
and sent her to Abyss

all she had to do was follow
the steps, boldened and
enlarged, with scheduled prep

the other scouts before her,
made it, so why couldn't she?

they set out on foot,
thought outside the lines
clear goals in mind
and discovered the key

but she, in her oblivious nature,
relied too heavily on the signs.

eyes glued to the lines,
feeble body ensnared
by the vines

alone and defenseless
she cried out for a map, some
sense of direction, but alas,
she was trapped

the scouts after her trailed on,
shoes tied, doors opened,
directions in hand,
a purpose and a plan

her body underneath
decades of sand

You're gonna miss my stupid questions
and my half-witted thoughts
my facepalming heuristics and
the point at which I lose my
line of reasoning

Because somewhere between
the lines of redundant conclusions
and verbosity is the guts to
be imperfect

Perhaps I don't know the global
GDP or stock market logistics,
but at least I have the audacity to
ask dumb questions

To be disconcertingly clueless
but curious all the same

Because maybe someone out
there, even a 1st grader, doesn't
know everything about how the
world works

But at least what a 1st grader
and I have in common is
a kind of shamelessness people
are too proud to possess

So give me your side eyes
and sophisticated prose,
mark up my poem, dissect
every line—that I could have
done this and this

But just know behind my
run-on sentences and
repeated phrases and
flawed reasoning is
a soul that just wants
to be understood

“The Birthday Epiphany”

Somewhere between birth and adulthood
do you begin to realize there's something
more to birthdays than age—a kind of
epiphany you encounter when you
question whether this new number's
supposed to mean something.

The carnival-like parties your parents threw
for you—balloon arcs, towering cakes,
and admiring guests—made for a spectacle
worthy of attention, all in an effort to
celebrate your special day.

It was the only day of the year the world
seemed to revolve around you, yet somehow
these annual revolutions, once novel and
exciting, began to quicken their pace
and blur together.

Each year, the decorations became fewer,
less people came around, and your cake
gradually lost its vibrant colors until
it sits there on a restaurant table across
which your partner waits for a reaction
—a warm smile or reassuring glance
that they did their part in making you
feel like that little kid on their special day.

But all you do is stare at the pink
candle glowing in the center and
wish for it to be over because
somewhere between those childhood
parties and a mid-life crisis
do you realize that 39 means nothing at all.

You and your wife lay in silence
on opposite sides of the bed as
you question to yourself
why birthdays are supposed

to be markers of a new beginning
when you feel the same every year.

Just time passing,
days blurring together,
and memories from a time
when birthdays once meant
something.

Rhetorical Analysis of *The Happiest Man on Earth*,

Eudaimonia is happiness founded on virtue, and Eddie Jaku, in his memoir *The Happiest Man on Earth* was living proof of what it means to be eudaimonic. He describes his experience during the Holocaust as an Auschwitz survivor who, despite unimaginable tragedy, considers himself the “happiest man on earth.” His life is a testament to how one can lead a virtuous life despite adversity, as he comes face to face with death throughout the memoir. His exigence is rooted in the hardships he faced during the Holocaust and the epiphany that changed his outlook on life, after which he dedicated the rest of his years to championing virtue in order to achieve eudaimonic happiness. He recalls a pleasant everyday life in Germany until Hitler came into power, after which he was expelled from his high school for being Jewish. On Kristallnacht, Nazi soldiers beat and arrest him, sending him to Buchenwald, a concentration camp where he spends two months working in oppressive conditions until he escapes with his father across the Belgian border. After a series of subsequent arrests, deportations, and escape attempts, he reunites with his family a final time before they are discovered and sent to Auschwitz concentration camp. For two years, Eddie worked in a torturous environment marked by genocide, emaciation, and forced labor. Fortunately, he successfully escapes and spends the remainder of his life sharing his experience as a Holocaust survivor. Jaku employs aphorism, juxtaposition of oppression and hope, and an appeal to ethos to argue that happiness is not only a choice but an exercise of virtue everyone should practice by championing resilience and empathy.

Jaku assumes the role of a mentor by employing aphorism to simplify the practice of happiness, repeating concise but powerful phrases that attempt to rationalize the complexity of exercising virtue. His aphorisms are interspersed throughout the memoir, specifically before the

opening of each chapter. The speaker reflects on a lesson he learned in Auschwitz that forms the premise of his rhetoric, “Happiness does not fall from the sky; it is in your hands” (156). Jaku couples metaphor with an aphorism to compare happiness to an intrinsic quality rather than an external reward to assert that true happiness is not dependent on outside circumstances but is found within oneself. This short expression helps unravel the nature of happiness by implying that it is chosen rather than discovered. Likewise, Jaku frequently rejects hate throughout the memoir, explicitly describing his refusal to hold resentment for Hitler and the Nazi regime. He writes, “Hate is the beginning of a disease, like cancer. It may kill your enemy, but it will destroy you in the process too” (22) The speaker analogies hate to a deadly sickness, portraying hate as the antithesis to happiness. The simile in which he compares hate to cancer simplifies the nature of hate as an exercise of vice and, therefore, a practice from which one should detach. The comparison develops a stark contrast between the two extremes of hatred and happiness and the negative portrayal of the former singles out happiness as an embodiment of virtue one can (and should) practice by ridding themselves of their resentment. Additionally, the speaker refers to the critical role of morale in ensuring survival during the Holocaust when he states, “There is no medicine for your morals. If your morals are gone, you go” (96). Jaku compares morals to physical health that requires careful attention, insinuating that corrupt morals are analogous to a destructive lifestyle. This, in turn, makes the exercise of virtue the path to leading a fulfilling life and achieving eudaimonia. All in all, the speaker’s use of short but compelling expressions helps simplify the nature of virtue-based happiness, specifically through good morale and letting go of hatred.

Jaku employs juxtaposition, specifically between a hopeful tone and an oppressive setting, to strengthen his argument that happiness is a choice and an exercise of virtue by being a

living testament to the human capacity for resilience and empathy in the face of unimaginably dehumanizing circumstances. Nearly two years after his deportation to Auschwitz, he describes his critical condition: “I was sick with cholera and typhoid, and malnourished, weighing only 28 kilograms” (131). Nonetheless, Jaku remains true to his virtue when he expresses, “I have a belief that if you have good morale, if you can hang onto hope your body can do miraculous things. Tomorrow will come. When you’re dead, you’re dead, but where there is life, there is hope” (132). Jaku juxtaposes his emaciation with the power of hope to prove that optimism is possible even in the face of death. The contrast between extreme malnourishment and a positive outlook underscores the speaker’s remarkable resilience in dire circumstances. He argues that his strong morale was the key to his survival, a mindset that costs nothing, suggesting that his choice to stay positive can be a matter of life or death. Furthermore, the speaker recalls the moment a Polish soldier shot him in his escape attempt: “My only souvenir of my escape was the Polish bullet lodged in the muscle of my leg” (105). Rather than harboring hatred, Jaku embraces empathy when proclaiming, “No, I do not hate anyone. He was just weak and probably as scared as I was” (105). The comparison between the soldier’s injustice and Jaku’s refusal to hate the offender speaks to his ability to be empathetic, even in a genocidal environment, highlighting his resilience and the capacity to overcome the desire to seek revenge, even if it seems justified. Moreover, Jaku follows the recount of his parent’s murder in the Auschwitz gas chamber with the following advice: “If you have the opportunity today, please go home and tell your mother how much you love her” (71). As a result, he juxtaposes his parents’ tragic death with his message of upholding virtue, specifically filial piety or avoiding conflict with loved ones. Despite the injustice of his loss, he does not harbor hatred toward his perpetrators nor dwells on his parent’s death. Instead, he uses their death as an opportunity to impart the message that

people can go at any time and that it is imperative to let go of grudges, showing love to one's friends and family while they still can. All in all, Jaku's use of juxtaposition highlights his remarkable resilience and commitment to virtue even near death, proving the human ability to choose happiness regardless of external circumstances.

Jaku appeals to ethos to demonstrate the strength of his mindset in living virtuously and achieving eudaimonia by sharing personal anecdotes, highlighting the awards and recognition he received, and giving prominence to the wide-reaching impact of his message. At the close of the memoir, he explains the purpose for which he lives: "This is why we live. This is why we work, and strive to pass on the best in us to the next generation" (175). Jaku's mindset is rooted not only in living virtuously but also in guiding future generations towards the same path. He adopts this mindset when he recounts his routine in which he would wake up, kiss his wife, and visit the Jewish museum every week to tell his story, calling attention to the extensive impact of his story: "At first it was the Jewish children who would come to listen. Then the children from other schools across Sydney. Then Australia. And then the adults - the teachers, their friends, their loved ones - began to come to hear what I had to say" (181). The speaker's audience includes people of all backgrounds, occupations, and ages, reflecting the universality of human struggle. As a result, Jaku establishes his credibility as a speaker by sharing the national impact of his message. He recalls a conversation with a mother whose daughter was moved by one of his speeches. The mother exclaimed, "On the contrary! You made a miracle. She came home and she put her arms around me and whispered in my ear, "Mum, I love you." She's 17 years old! Normally, all she does is argue with me" (181). This conversation serves as an example of how the speaker's message helped a member of his audience exercise the virtue of filial piety; it appeals to his credibility by evidencing how his advice is effective at fostering love

and respect, specifically in a generational context. Lastly, Jaku catalogs several honorable nominations, including the Order of Australia Medal and NSW Australian of the Year, and his standing ovation in front of an audience of 5,000 at TEDx (182). His accolades reinforce his credibility as both a mentor and, ultimately, the necessity of exercising virtue. Overall, Jaku appeals to ethos through his broad impact and recognition, strengthening the argument that virtue is the key to achieving eudaimonia.

All things considered, Jaku champions the practice of virtue as life's ultimate purpose, a path to eudaimonia, and to him, the true form of happiness. He effectively employs aphorisms, juxtaposition, and appeals to ethos to argue that happiness is a costless and highly rewarding choice. He argues that his mindset defies any circumstance, even the most inconceivable horrors known to man, and upholds hope, good morale, and kindness as honorable qualities. Likewise, he admonishes the world to steer clear of hatred and replace it with empathy. Ultimately, Jaku was a living testament to the human capacity for resilience and empathy in the most dehumanizing environments, and his compelling rhetoric speaks to the cruciality of virtue in everyday life.

Frankenstein: The Brilliant Fool

To know has always been a measure of success, as evidenced by the diplomas in the hands of an Ivy's graduating class and the rainbow of honor cords around the necks of future tyrants and trillionaires who await glowing accolades of their imminent successes beyond a course of study. History watches again and again as the ill-fated ambitionists join the rat race for a mention in the Hall of Fame when a lasting legacy overtakes genuine curiosity as the raging incentive for acquiring knowledge. We are continuously reminded to know is to have power but fail to understand that ambition is a god to which we sacrifice the principle beliefs necessary for rational decision-making. It is not the extent of one's knowledge but the manner in which one thinks that determines who they will become, which is precisely how Victor Frankenstein's tragic fate was decided. The man who senselessly fed into a fanatical interest for natural philosophy regardless of the ethical ramifications the experiments would entail was the same man whose creation became the very thing that destroyed him. It was he who knew everything but nothing at all, whose intellect revealed the "coulds" but whose foolishness never asked the "shoulds." *Frankenstein* actively suggests that the application of knowledge without a deeply grounded system of ethical judgment bears no real-world value. It is ultimately wisdom or a lack thereof that determines the nature of the consequences from which knowledge stems, as supported by Victor's irrational decisions that sow the seeds of his downfall.

The fruit of Victor's folly largely stems from a deliberate decision to contravene natural law, as he is intrinsically motivated by a desire to unveil life's secrets. "Life and death appeared to me as ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world" (Shelley 32) is the quintessential expression of unchecked ambition, the antithesis of wisdom, with the fallacy of his sentiment rooted in a hunger to interfere with the natural order of the universe. Perhaps Victor Frankenstein knew more than most people, but the system of application into which these mental archives of esoteric knowledge were organized lacked a basis of ethical grounding. The discrepancy lies in the reason for which one acquires knowledge, with power-driven incentives driving the majority into the ground; if that is the case, one has already failed to serve the greater good, as all ensuing decisions will be grounded in self-aggrandizement. It is when one breaks free from the hypnotic allure of wielding power that a system of decision-making turns to the common welfare of others rather than personal gain. Unfortunately, Victor stands with the majority in his attempt to assume a god-like identity by instilling life into dead matter, and it is not until his plan has already come to fruition that he woefully regrets acting upon deep-seated ambition. As revealed in a deathbed lamentation: "Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow" (31). Frankenstein wishes far too late for the wisdom with which he would have recognized earlier that all he had was all he needed to be happy, that if he had abandoned his grandiosity, he would have lived free of the tragedy that manifested itself in a devastating familicide. Professor David J. Pauleen and Dr. Ali Intezari, in the JISE issue *Working Toward Wisdom in IS Education*, affirm Victor's

counterfactual thinking in light of wisdom as an indispensable quality necessary for good judgment: “While universities are encouraged to develop and strengthen connections linking knowledge with practice and academia with industry, we argue that the challenges societies face today, and will in the future, call for solutions that require more than just work skills and work-related knowledge.” The co-authors inculcate in the audience a sentiment in the education system to prioritize wisdom-based teaching over knowledge-based teaching in that encouraging the implementation of critical thinking and ethical approaches is far more effective than the limited scope information-driven learning presents in real-world problem-solving. Ultimately, wisdom is the cornerstone of ethical conduct, and by forgoing this fundamental quality to a single-minded endeavor, one blindly subscribes to a faulty belief system or a lack thereof, from which they offer no value to society. Victor is a dying testament to this, as he navigates life with knowledge of virtually everything there ever was but possesses no moral compass with which he has the ability to make out the best direction to apply his intellectualism.

Frankenstein’s decision to abandon his creation is the second needle that sews the tragic fabric of his downfall. Although the “resurrection” would trigger a series of unfortunate events, it is possible for Victor to have reversed the impending consequences by offering compassion to his creature, yet another case in point by which wisdom would have redirected his life trajectory for the better. Still, due to his lack of foresight, he ultimately loses his chance at redemption when he vacates the premises, not considering the consequences of neglecting a life form for which he is justly responsible. The creature’s guilt-inducing rhetoric unveils a testimony in which he grieves the fate his creator bestowed upon him: “Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed” (69). It was not necessarily the creation itself that destroyed Victor but negligence that antagonized the creature into a quest for vengeance in which murder seemed the only gratifying course of action. Similar to how crops cannot flourish without careful tending, the genesis of the creature was like a seed sown into existence and subjected to the parenting of a creator whose failure to tend its harvest yielded not lush vegetation but thorny vines conditioned to ensnare all in their path. He continues, “Shall I not then hate them who abhor me? I will keep no terms with my enemies. I am miserable, and they shall share my wretchedness” (69), from which he positions himself as a villain in response to his creator’s apathy, a direct reflection of the short-sightedness of Victor, who fails to foresee the instigation that would result from abandoning what he brought into the world. Now obliged to grapple with the aftermath of his irrationality, Frankenstein continues to demonstrate how wisdom plays a keystone role in directing the trajectory of one’s life. Professor Charles D. Oden, Monika Ardel, and Cynthia P. Ruppel, in the BPEJ issue, *Wisdom and Its Relation to Ethical Attitude in Organizations*, re-emphasizes the significance of wisdom in real-world problem-solving: “Practical wisdom requires more than a scientific understanding of facts. It also includes an accurate understanding of how things work and are organized, a comprehension of the written and unwritten rules of a situation, and the ability to make expert virtuous decisions” (143). The co-authors investigate the value of wisdom in fostering beneficent societal change regardless of the degree of information

one possesses, rendering knowledge worthless if one lacks the ability to meet real-world problems with practical solutions. Victor epitomizes what it means to be laden with theoretical knowledge but short of practical wisdom; his tragedy serves as a chilling reminder that intelligence does not equate to good judgment, from which we learn not to waste time trying to play god, as, in the grand scheme of things, power is lost as quickly as it is gained, like how creation can quickly become the master of its creator. Consequently, wisdom continues to be a universal quality necessary to lead a life of altruism and personal fulfillment.

If power is poison, why do humans keep drinking it? The answer is simple: they mistake it for food. Every waking hour, they collect wheat to feed a body that cannot live off bread alone. Sure, bread sustains; it satiates our hunger, but it seems as though satiety is temporary, and soon enough, we are craving again for something we can never satisfy. What does one do when they run out of bread? If a castle crumbles, what good is king to its people? Better yet, what good is a crown to its king? Power does not last. Most fail to see, some choose to ignore, and few will step aside and watch helplessly as the rest enter the rat race and die trying. One day, we crown the king and kill him the next, so again, I ask, what good is a crown to a king? What good is a creator who fears his creation? The clock ticks, and power shifts, one death at a time. We are powerless against nature. Perhaps you can try to tame it, train it, break through it, but death is inevitable, no matter how fervently you try to play god; hence, it is better to live a life happy than chase after ideal bounds with no end. *Frankenstein* serves as a continuous reminder that wisdom determines the nature of the consequences from which knowledge stems, as surface-level judgment is a telltale sign of an imminent downfall. Victor broke through the window when the key to happiness was under the doormat. Likewise, wisdom is the antidote to the venom we call ambition. Wisdom is immortal; it transcends any faulty belief system power will stand on to assume control until the platform on which it stands falls apart. After all, power is a social construct, but wisdom is a mental fortress. To know is to have power, but to be wise is to be happy.

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Iago: A Victim?

To analyze Iago from Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello* is to consider the nature versus nurture debate in the context of sociopathic behavior: is human behavior a product of environmental factors or genetic inheritance? In which case would this point to the presence of antisocial personality disorder (ASPD)? Iago is a master manipulator whose rhetoric sows the seeds of Othello's downfall. His Machiavellian tactics make his character more nuanced than that of a typical villain, as he cleverly deceives his victims by treating them as pawns on a board over which he has free rein. There is no denying that Iago is incredibly skilled in his craft of deception, but his intentions remain questionable. That is to say, Iago remains self-righteous the entirety of the play despite his heinous actions, which suggests his underlying moral code contradicts universal morality, by which the majority abide. Nonetheless, Iago's apathy for a common ethical ground raises doubts concerning psychological stability or a lack thereof. Although Iago provides reasons for his destructive behavior, his primary motivation stems from his sociopathic nature, not the offenses of others.

Iago's refined ability to fabricate stories with the intent of capitalizing on his victims' blind trust evidences his predisposition to manipulate for personal gain, from which he displays a prominent criterion of antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) as reported by the Mayo Clinic, reinforcing the idea that he is primarily driven by nature instead of the situational environment. Iago's lies constitute all his interactions, but the most death-dealing of these transpire between him and Othello. This particular fabrication is especially evident in his suggestion about Desdemona: "Or to be naked with her friend in bed / An hour or more, not meaning any harm?" (Shakespeare 4.1.6-7). Iago's gentle phrasing implements reverse psychology, planting explicit images in Othello's mind that depict Desdemona having an affair

with Cassio; he does this by mitigating the offense of adultery and, in turn, the supposed "euphemism" of sex enrages Othello. Likewise, Iago pulls a variety of other cunning maneuvers, which, coupled with the strategy mentioned earlier, ultimately propel the series of alterations that occasion the play's tragic ending. In another instance, he proposes rhetorical questions such as, "Did Michael Cassio, / When *⟨you⟩* wooed my lady, know of your love?" (3.3.105-06), from which he does not seek an answer but rather an effect; he intends to convince Othello that Cassio interposed Othello and Desdemona's germinating relationship. Additionally, Iago routinely deploys flattery in his conversations, primarily with Rodrigo, "Why, now I see there's mettle in thee, and even / from this instant do build on thee a better opinion than ever before" (4.2.236-38); his entrancing wordplay molds self-esteem as a mechanism to ingratiate his victims. Ultimately, his self-crafted artifices reveal that his character is tremendously well-versed in the realm of manipulation, which upholds the assertion that Iago's corrupt behavior is chiefly tied to ASPD.

Iago's deviation from universal ethics, namely his tendency to pit his victims against each other, meets a leading criterion of ASPD, and further supplements the claim that Iago's reprehensible conduct is a product of genetics and not necessarily a purpose-driven reaction to his circumstances. His instigative actions are particularly apparent in his description of Cassio's behavior during his alleged dream about Desdemona: "And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand, / Cry "O sweet creature!" then kiss me hard, / As if he plucked up kisses by the roots / That grew upon my lips; *⟨then⟩* laid his leg / O'er my thigh, and *⟨sighed,⟩* and *⟨kissed,⟩* and then / *⟨Cried⟩* "Cursèd fate that gave thee to the Moor!" (3.3.477-82). Iago's counterfeit story, filled with infuriating descriptions of an infatuated Cassio, grows Othello's resentment for his former lieutenant for his alleged affair with his wife, with which he successfully galvanizes

Othello, inspiring a desire to murder the two offenders. Likewise, Iago perpetuates Othello's growing anger for Desdemona by making tacit suggestions about her loyalty: "I know our country disposition well. / In Venice they do let *⟨God⟩* see the pranks / They dare not show their husbands. Their best / conscience" (3.3.232-35)." Iago verbalizes an inherently misogynistic stereotype in which he insinuates that Venetian women like Desdemona are clandestine in nature, and in turn, Othello's anger continues to escalate into a pain that incentivizes Desdemona's murder. The frequent instances in which Iago encourages instigative behavior indicates that he lacks basic principle, which backs up the idea that he is symptomatic of ASPD and possesses a destructive nature as a result.

The substantial amount of evidentiary support that Iago has ASPD, as suggested by his adept manipulative rhetoric and instigative actions support the argument that his inhumanity is not necessarily attributable to the environment but more so to an inborn disorder. It is worth mentioning that Iago's potential condition is not a justification for his behavior but rather a possible explanation of his underlying motives. Iago, like virtually anyone who commits wrongs, has a degree of free will through which they have the capacity to bypass an instinctive nature and command their own behavior. This idea plays an integral role in the lawbook of judicial systems whereby criminals are nearly always penalized regardless of psychological stability but still receive accommodations pertaining to their condition. Although moral subjectivism suggests that morality is specific to an individual and that right and wrong cannot exist, it is imperative as a society to live by a common code of principles so that humans can coexist in peace and lead fulfilling lives. Iago is a prime example, as his rejection of universal morality ultimately leads to his downfall.

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Rhetorical Analysis of “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”

Philosophical theologian, Jonathan Edwards, in his sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” details hell as a real, inevitable punishment for unbelievers. Edwards was well-distinguished for his role as an Anglican minister in The First Great Awakening, during which he, among other revivalists, sermonized on the subject of spiritual repentance and swayed a great deal of converts in Colonial America. Ethos, pathos, and logos are a rhetorical triangle of appeals intended to effectively persuade an audience to do or believe something. Ethos, the ethical appeal, builds the speaker's credibility. Pathos is the emotional appeal that attempts to galvanize the audience through emotive diction or visuals. Lastly, logos presents facts and statistics to rationalize the speaker's argument, appealing to the audience's sense of reason. Edwards' argument in the excerpt from “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” uses the rhetorical triangle supplemented with metaphor and repetition to vehemently stress that the audience resist their sinful nature as a means to appease God's wrath and preclude insufferable punishment in hell.

In the opening section of the excerpt, Edwards primarily uses logos to establish a Biblical narrative whose power dynamics form the premise of his rhetoric. He also employs ethos and pathos to present himself as a reputable theologian and enkindle a fear of damnation. Already, Edwards tacitly assumes credibility with his grounding in theology. As a Yale graduate and valedictorian who reportedly arrived at insightful theological analyses, he comes across as a knowledgeable informant in a religious context. Edwards opens his sermon with an informative claim that upholds the existence of God: “Thus it is that natural men are held in the hand of God.” The visual of humans in the hand of a comparatively larger entity captures God's colossal dominance over humanity to instill a sense of inferiority in the audience. The following lines

shift to a harsher tone when the speaker introduces the concept of hell wherein the subject becomes the audience: “They have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked.” Straightaway, Edwards assumes a Bible-dependent line of reasoning that God is a real, dominant force over mankind, who are responsible for his anger and destined for eternal damnation. This is not only an appeal to logos by expounding the condign fate of sinners, but also pathos. The Biblical rationale becomes a word of warning that appeals to an innate fear of pain by referring to hell as a “fiery pit” in which they will suffer under the wrath of God.

Edwards closes his opening section with a final remark through which he prioritizes pathos to recapitulate his argument with greater emphasis on the volatile nature of God’s anger. He appeals to a sense of uneasiness by making it seem as though there is no way to resist their impending damnation: “In short, they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an incensed God.” Edwards implies that God is essentially restraining his own wrath, and when released, will be abysmally unpredictable and destructive. He strategically observes God’s “forbearance,” a pathos-driven assertion intended to make the audience feel compunction for betraying a merciful God, and as a result of their guilty conscience, they might abstain from sin.

The subsequent paragraphs are under “Application,” the final section of the sermon’s four-part structure, one of whose key objectives is to gain the audience’s trust and appeal to a sense of accountability by employing all three rhetorical appeals. Edwards opens with an appeal to ethos, “The use of this awful subject may be for awakening unconverted persons in this congregation. This that you have heard is the case of every one of you that are out of Christ

— That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone, is extended abroad under you.” He reveals that he sermonizes with the intent of warning unbelievers that they are destined for hell; the mere act of warning indicates that Edwards wants the best for his congregation, which presents the speaker as trustworthy, as it gives the impression that he cares about them. Edwards refers to sinners as “you” rather than “them,” a shift from third person plural to second person singular. For the first time, he explicitly holds the audience individually accountable for his accusations. He wants the audience to acknowledge they are living by virtue of God, whose mercy reprieves the infliction of his wrath, an appeal to pathos as well as logos. It aims to make the audience feel indebted to God for sparing their lives while using rich imagery to detail a sinner’s relationship with God.

The following lines delineate God’s wrath in relation to his mercy through image-rich metaphor and repetition that primarily supplement his appeal to pathos. They construct a relationship dynamic wherein Edwards places the reader between two forces to give the impression that God is in control of their fate. The first of which asseverates that “There are black clouds of God’s wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth upon you.” Black clouds generally evoke apprehension because they are widely considered a bad omen; so while embodying God’s wrath, the black clouds also allude to hell as an impending force. Soon after, Edwards uses repetition to describe a sinner’s relationship with God’s creation: “The creature is made subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly,” “The sun does not willingly shine upon you,” “The earth does not willingly yield her increase to satisfy your lusts,” and “The air does not willingly serve you.” The phrase “not willingly” describes how creation does not act in favor of the audience’s sinful pleasure but by God’s will. It

attempts to further establish a sense of inferiority to God by mitigating any idea of power the audience may believe to have over nature.

The sermon's final passages continue to establish image-rich metaphors to further the effectiveness of its fear appeal. The second metaphor compares God's wrath to flood waters, "The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher," and in the following lines, he references God's hand again, "If God should only withdraw his hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury." Again, Edwards follows the same conceptualization of God's mercy portrayed as a hand holding back destruction, but instead of black clouds, his wrath takes the form of a flood. Once more, he repeats this concept in a final metaphor that portrays God as an archer whose bow represents his wrath. "It is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood." Together, these three visuals stress how easily God can inflict suffering on his creation and is held by no other restraint but himself. Edwards repeats the same relationship dynamic across three image-rich metaphors to appeal to guilt, shame, and fear in hopes of compelling the audience to repent out of compunction.

In summary, Edwards, in an excerpt from "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," exhorts that the audience seek repentance to avoid eternal damnation in hell through the use of the rhetorical triangle supported by metaphor and repetition. He begins by establishing the context of the text and then uses that line of reasoning to warn the audience. His initial warning uses an intimidating tone to augment the horrifying concept of hell and shifts to more figurative examples that depict the relationship between sinners, God's mercy, and his wrath. The speaker's

primary use of pathos arouses fear and alarm which aims to make the audience seek a means of preservation. I found this speech persuasive in that it scares me into abstaining from sin because of the petrifying diction Edwards uses to describe the concept of hell. As a “fiery pit” of eternal punishment that I am destined for as a sinner, I would do anything to preclude my damnation. If that way out is repentance, I, as a human with an innate fear of pain, would resort to that measure among many others to preserve myself from burning forever. Edward’s dreadful vocabulary and ominous visuals are uncommon among many rhetoricians, but his ability to convert thousands of people proves how effective the fear appeal can be.

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