WHAT IS SPECTRUM?

SPECTRUM is an annual competition in academic essay writing sponsored by the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee at Saint Mary's College. Submissions are read by a panel of judges and cash awards are given at the end of each spring semester. All winning essays are published in SPECTRUM the following fall.

SPECTRUM seeks to publish essays from a wide-range of disciplines, and all undergraduates at Saint Mary's College are encouraged to submit essays written as part of their coursework for consideration. Please note the following exceptions: essays written for seminar should be submitted to The Undergraduate; fiction and poetry should be submitted to riverrun.

Submissions for the 2000-2001 contest may be sent via campus mail to Lisa Manter, c/o English Department, or may be placed in the SPECTRUM mailbox on the 3rd floor of Dante Hall, opposite the elevator. All submissions should include the name of a faculty sponsor who is willing to help with editing should the essay be selected for publication. Please mark all submissions with "Attn: SPECTRUM," and make sure they contain the author's full name, a local phone number, and the name of the professor and the course they were written for.
SPECTRUM 2000

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to all those who submitted their work and to all of the professors who encouraged students to submit their finished essays to SPECTRUM. Please keep those essays coming – we can’t do it without you.

This year saw a few changes in the SPECTRUM contest. In place of faculty judges, we had a panel of student judges, making this year’s publication more student-centered. Together we worked to select essays that not only displayed intellectual sophistication, excitement, and precision but also reflected the range of disciplines, approaches, and styles of the essays received.

This year’s panel of student judges included:

   Erin Brennan
   K.C. de Clercq
   Amber Meyers
   Ken Rocha

Thank you for all your help and good insights. If you are interested in being a student judge for the 2000-2001 competition, please contact Lisa Manter, X4457 or lmanter@stmarys-ca.edu.

In producing this year's SPECTRUM, I received invaluable help from Hilda Ma, who not only scanned and proofed the essays, but also helped me edit them. Thanks also to Martin Cohen and all the library staff who made the media center accessible, and to Gail Drexler, English Department secretary, who helped keep things running smoothly.

As always, thanks go out to Pod and Katie Boothe, whose support makes the SPECTRUM competition and publication possible each year.

Lisa Manter
Faculty Moderator
SPECTRUM 2000

FIRST PRIZE WINNERS

ANDREW DENMAN, “Caliban and the Implications of the Fish – Man” 1
Shakespeare, Professor Alan Pollock

SUSANNE SCHWEITZER, “How to Gain the Freshman Fifteen (Or 20, 30, 40)” 7
Composition, Professor Janice Doane

SECOND PRIZE WINNERS

JAIME MARTIN, “Put to the Test” 11
Advanced Composition, Professor Ed Biglin

GLEN SILVA, “‘Come on in, the water’s fine…’: Water as Wealth in
Cheever’s ‘The Swimmer’” 17
Introduction to Literary Analysis, Professor Glenna Breslin

HONORABLE MENTION

ANNEMARIE BOOTH, “A Discourse on ‘Race’” 27
Anthropological / Sociological Theory, Professor John Ely

JASON CASSIDY, “A Review of Dogma” 33
Law and Public Policy, Professor Diane Weddington

CHERISE REVELL, “Why My Brother?” 39
Argument and Research, Professor Naomi Schwartz
Though vivid accounts of colonial adventures in the Americas were available to William Shakespeare during the writing of his play *The Tempest*, he does not directly use any of them, as Stephen Greenblatt notes in his introduction to the play in *The Norton Shakespeare* (3051-2). Still, many of the serious issues raised by these tales, such as the subjection and exploitation of native peoples by colonists as well as the very nature of "the savage," do find their way into Shakespeare's play (Greenblatt 3052), only they are shrouded in swirls of mysticism and outright fantasy. Caliban is the primary vehicle for the exploration of these themes as well as one of the strangest and most memorable characters in the play. Perhaps the most fantastical aspect of Caliban is the physical deformity Shakespeare assigns to him: he is "legged like a man, and his fins [are] like arms" (2.2.31-2). Trinculo is even uncertain if he is "a man or a fish" (2.2.24).

Shakespeare's exaggeration of the "darkest European fantasies about the Wild Man," as Greenblatt calls it (3052), particularly in this utterly bizarre physical description, generates several seemingly contradictory results; it both sympathetically amplifies Caliban's regrettable condition and cynically distances the audience from it.

On the one hand, the nature of Caliban's deformities helps to symbolically (and sympathetically) convey Caliban's condition, that of the displaced and subjected native. Shakespeare could have chosen any animal -- fox, lion, wolf, bird, ape -- with which to identify Caliban, yet he chooses a fish. Symbolically, this designation of Caliban as a fish-man is highly efficacious for several reasons.
Among animals, fish belong least to man's world; birds rule the air but must touch ground, bears live in the woods but are free to venture out, but the fish is bound entirely to a life beneath the waves. As such, Caliban's physical being itself suggests that he is a fish out of water, an idea that is clearly advanced by much of Caliban's interaction with other characters. Prospero and Miranda both berate Caliban in scene 1.2 because of Caliban's lack of gratefulness for what they have given him (323-378). Miranda taught Caliban to speak while Prospero "used him . . . with human care," treating him like a promising student until Caliban tried to rape Miranda (1.2.357; 349; 335-339; 350-351). The irony is that Caliban is punished for his inability to function within a societal structure that is not his own. The fact that Shakespeare stresses Caliban's alien nature begs the question of why Caliban should adapt to Prospero's way of life. Prospero seems to make no attempt to adapt to Caliban's world, yet he expects the savage to be tamed (1.2.348-351), despite the fact that Caliban is the native inhabitant. Ultimately, though Caliban has not been removed from his environment, his environment has been removed from him by Prospero's societal impositions. "This island's mine . . . / which thou tak'st from me," Caliban reminds Prospero (2.1.334-335).

The fact that Caliban is halfway between man and fish emphasizes his current inability, caused by his unwilling relationship with Prospero, to fully belong anywhere, a realization which makes Caliban appear very sympathetic. Even when Caliban determines to kill Prospero and free himself from the "tyrant" (3.2.40), he does so not to regain rule of the island, but to become Trinculo's and Stephano's subject (3.1.171-176). Here Shakespeare is exploring the slave mentality; Caliban has spent so much time as Prospero's "poisonous slave" that he can no longer function autonomously (2.1.323), let alone return to his unbounded atavistic state. Shakespeare merely exaggerates the profundity of poor Caliban's plight by stationing him between man and fish, poised in the great elemental rift between earth and water, land and sea.
Conversely, this same physical description of Caliban distances his experience from the terrible reality of displacement and subjugation of native peoples in the process of colonization. Fish garner some of the least reverence of any major group in the animal kingdom. They are seldom anthropomorphized as are owls with their wisdom, foxes with their cunning, or lions with their pride and strength. Fish swim and that's all. They are a food item in almost every country in the world, and they are the only pets that never get petted. In this way, Caliban's fish-like body reduces his sympathetic aspects by overshadowing his human aspects. Were Caliban not so physically distinct from the human race, Prospero's numerous and terrible threats of physical violence (1.2.328-333; 368-373), his remark that Caliban is "a born devil, on whose nature/ Nurture can never stick" (4.1.188-189), would take on a much more disturbing character. Prospero can own Caliban if he is an animal, but the owning of a person is a somewhat more delicate matter. Of course, Prospero does not enslave Caliban because of his deformity but because of Caliban's violence against Miranda. Still, Prospero speaks far more frequently of Caliban's ugliness than of his betrayal, referring to him as a "freckled whelp ... not honored with a human shape" (1.2.285-286), a "Hag-seed" (1.2.368), a "misshapen knave" (5.1.271), a "demi-devil" (5.1.275), and a "thing of darkness" (5.1.277) whose "body uglier grows" each and every day (4.1.191).

Likewise, it would be much harder to forgive Shakespeare's heaping of character stereotypes on Caliban were the only corresponding physical distinction something as trivial as complexion or origin, particularly because those stereotypes, as Greenblatt points out, coincide with many European's fearful preconceptions of the so-called "Wild Man" (3052). As it is, Caliban's "lecherous, evil-smelling, treacherous, naive, drunken, lazy, rebellious, violent, and devil worshipping" characteristics are concomitant with his utterly alien, sub-human, fish-like exterior (Greenblatt 3052).
Caliban's grotesque appearance also makes his particular resolution at the end of *The Tempest* a bit easier to take. Were Caliban a human slave, his realization after an unsuccessful rebellion that he was a "thrice-double ass" and ought to willingly serve his master in the future would be hideously offensive and disheartening because it would validate the subjection of one human being to another (5.1.299). As it is, Caliban's last statements are only somewhat disappointing and befuddling. Had Shakespeare chosen an actual race or ethnicity for Caliban, Caliban's reformation might garner as much disgust as the punishment of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* so often receives from Semitic and non-Semitic peoples alike (4.1.342-396).

Caliban's bizarre body also factors significantly into Stephano's and Trinculo's reactions to him, namely their desire to possess Caliban for material gain. Trinculo callously states:

> A strange fish! Were I in England now, as I once was, and had but this fish painted, not a holiday-fool there but would give me a piece of silver. There would this monster make a man. Any strange beast there makes a man. When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian. (2.2.26-31)

Trinculo sees that Caliban's freakish nature, being so outwardly distinct from his own, is certain to earn him fame and money. Stephano's initial inclination upon seeing Caliban is not dissimilar, to "keep him tame and get to Naples with him" (2.2.65-66). On the one hand, Caliban's physical appearance validates Trinculo's and Stephano's reactions; it is certainly easier to understand why a person would pay to see a fish-man than a "dead Indian." Again, were Caliban's only outward distinction one of race, the men's unfeeling, presumptive desire to use him for their own benefit would be horrific. As a fish-man, however, Caliban can be disassociated from humankind and robbed of the respect afforded (albeit perfunctorily) to its members with little effort. On the other hand, so can Trinculo
and Stephano; they are not merely unsympathetic characters, they are Shakespeare's classic, mean-spirited, unredeemable buffoons. The irony of their perception of Caliban as something less than human, a "moon calf" (2.2.100), a "ridiculous monster" (2.2.157), because of his exterior differences, no matter how extravagant, is that even taking these differences, and the character flaws Trinculo and Stephano are unaware of, into account, Caliban is still a more redeemable character than either man. In this way, the extent of Caliban's "otherness" actually amplifies his humanity. Shakespeare further emphasizes Caliban's superiority by contrasting the eloquent verse of the "savage" with Trinculo's and Stephano's stumbling prose (see especially scene 2.2.145-168).

Moreover, Stephen Greenblatt glosses Trinculo's "Any strange beast there makes a man" line as referring both to the fortune Trinculo expects Caliban to generate and the possibility of Caliban "becoming a man" (3078 footnote 8). The statement, of course, is a ridiculous one in light of Prospero's experience. Prospero's investment in Caliban, his attempt to make him a man, was no success; rather it was his one great failure (4.1.188-190). Caliban's alien exterior serves to illustrate the impossibility, and perhaps inappropriateness, of the attempt.

Ultimately, Shakespeare's designation of Caliban as a physically deformed, subhuman fish-man simultaneously affirms European fears and stereotypes of native peoples and provides an apropos illustration of the generally negative encounters such people must endure when they come into contact with outsiders. Caliban's form both validates the European's tendency to exploit native peoples and critiques that tendency. Which ideological position Shakespeare would claim as his own is hard to determine. Perhaps given the expectations of his audience, Shakespeare must pander to their preconceptions by making Caliban freakish, while subtly using Caliban's deformities as a tool to generate sympathy for his plight (and the plight of native peoples colonized by Europeans in general).
Shakespeare makes Caliban treacherous but grants him every justification for that treachery. Moreover, as Greenblatt observes, "it is not Caliban's mumbled reformation but his vehement protests that leave an indelible mark on *The Tempest*" (3053); in much the same way, Shylock is remembered far more for his moving "Hath not a Jew eyes" speech than for his bitter defeat (*The Merchant of Venice*, 3.1.49-61). That being the case, it may well be that Caliban's sympathetic qualities are what Shakespeare wants the audience to remember. Regardless of Shakespeare's intentions, however, Caliban's fantastic physical condition does symbolically advance his cause, but it also lessens the reality of his situation. Indeed the mystical, enigmatic quality of the entire play works in this fashion, both evoking serious dramatic meaning and forcing those same issues to lurk only in the play's rich subtext, never allowing them to emerge into *The Tempest's* unreal reality in their true, unmasked form.

Works Cited


How to Gain the Freshman Fifteen
(Or 20, 30, 40)

by

Susanne E. Schweitzer

First time college students around the country are experiencing the joy of a phenomenon known as the “freshman fifteen.” For those who are not familiar with this term, the “freshman fifteen” occurs when college students away from home turn, rightfully, to food for comfort in a strange environment. Many freshman gain weight, and this extra mass has been termed, so alliteratively, the “freshman fifteen.” More likely than not, however, the disease turns out to be the freshman fifty . . . and sometimes more. Despite what society and many nutritionists say, the “freshman fifteen” is a healthy and beneficial rite-of-passage. Outlined below are five easy steps to make sure every new Saint Mary’s student can take advantage of this experience.

First, cease and desist from exercising. Map out a basic course to all your classes, and then find ways to cut corners. The only walking that is strictly necessary is to classes and Saga. Go to the post office once a week, instead of once a day. Better yet, make your roommate get your mail. Don’t fidget; you may be accidentally burning off surplus calories. Avoid situations that involve movement of any kind. When the urge to exercise rears its ugly head, sit down and play video games until it has gone. Better yet, take a nap. Take a lot of naps.

Second, eat vast amounts in the dining hall. Change your dining
plan to unlimited, if you haven’t already done so, to take better advantage of the all-day long quality eating. Take full portions of everything offered. Eat the greasy foods first. Drink plenty of milk and soda. Water is no longer your friend. Avoid eating vegetables, unless they are deep-fried. When having a salad, load up on dressing, eggs, croutons and cheese. In fact, don’t eat salad. What are you thinking?! Eat a lot of bread. Take three or four or eight deserts. Then go back to the dorm and order a pizza. Order two.

Third, drink a lot of beer. Drink beer before breakfast. Drink beer with breakfast. Drink beer instead of breakfast. Eschew labels with the words “light” or “lite” on them. Hard shots of liquor are detrimental to the increase of your weight gain, as they contain fewer calories. Drink dark beer, like Guiness. The darker the beer, the better. Eat while drinking; this assures maximum added weight.

Fourth, eat anything, all the time. When a friend in the dorm says she hasn’t had dinner yet, lie and say you haven’t either. Go to late-night twice, and eat until you feel sick. Get Chinese take-out at least eight times a week, but only if you can drive to get it, or have it delivered. Keep massive amounts of food in the room, and eat it anytime you aren’t sleeping or studying. Go to other people’s rooms, and eat their food. Don’t use the library unless strictly necessary; the librarians won’t allow you to eat and study.

Fifth, stop doing any thinking outside of class. This can be helped by mindlessly watching television all the time. Try not to watch intellectually stimulating shows; thinking burns calories. If there isn’t a television in your room, use the Internet constantly. Sit in one chair and try not to move.
Don't go into chat rooms, you may have to actually type, which won't add a thing to your incoming poundage. Don't read any books outside of class work. Don't do crossword puzzles, play card games, or talk to people who insist on "deep" thinking. Don't go to friend's dorms; make them come to you. When leaving Greek Thought class, leave the argument there too; definitely don't do any excessive reflecting.

In order to flaunt the new look adequately, one may need a new wardrobe. Buy smaller clothing, and wear shirts that don't quite cover the newly developed "beer belly." The more skin you can show, the more you will be appreciated, so show off those legs! Uncover those arms! You've got a fabulous new look, and it's time the rest of the campus knew it. Despite opinions to the contrary, waddling is much sexier than just walking, and shirts that show off your midriff are a right, not a privilege, so go ahead and abuse it.

If discouraged, remember that one cannot put the "freshman fifteen" on in one day. It takes a lot of time and effort, and more planning than one might think. Students who are serious about obtaining this wonderful benefit must put huge amounts of time and thought into the process. Sometimes setbacks will occur, and one may find that he or she has reached a plateau of weight gain. In some cases, students may actually lose weight! If the pounds just refuse to stay on, don't lose heart. Amble on over to Oliver and chug the entire bottle of olive oil by the salad bar. That's what it's there for.
Ranching, from the earliest signs of color in the sky to the time when the horizon settles at the end of the day, is just one of the mesmerizing things about the country life. Piercing whistles filling the air that mean nothing, except to the cattle dogs racing across the field to heed your warning. Dusty arenas, dirty pens, and the smell of animals just come with the life. The natural smell of the first rain calming the wind blown dust in the arena. It's natural, it's real, and it's what I call home. Raising horses, sheep and pigs is something that just comes naturally. Part of the glory of ranching is using the knowledge that I gain daily, and being put to the test.

However, there comes a time when even my instincts can't tell me what to do. My entire life has been spent around animals and all the problems that come with ranching. I had thought I had been put to the test as much as I could. I was wrong. Babysitting one weekend during the late winter, I found myself with only a girl, 15, and two boys, 13 and 10, left on the ranch to tend to the animals. It wasn't really babysitting -- they were capable enough to take care of themselves. I just had a license and a car, in case anything went wrong, which is always wise when you live 15 miles from the nearest town. Running a sheep ranch is time consuming work, and getting a break is hardly feasible. When John and Marie Rohr asked me to stay at their ranch, while they escaped to Las Vegas for the weekend, I readily agreed. I had been raising sheep since I was 6, and I thought that I had seen all the problems that these white lovable animals could bring. Besides, it was two full weeks before lambing season.

Friday night, the four of us had just finished checking the herd out to pasture and were tending to the other animals. When we headed to bed, it was around 9 p.m. We set up a schedule for checking the animals during the middle of the night. The
ewes had to be checked every few hours, plus one lamb had fallen ill that afternoon and needed medication twice during the night. About midnight, Doug, the youngest came into the room where I was sleeping. *Jaime! JAIME!! She's ble she cry an sh won ge up an I!* In my sleeping stupor, I had no idea what he was saying. Carrie and Wes came into the room, totally dressed and yet still asleep. Being at school had taken me away from breeding animals, and I had forgotten what it was like to wake up and have to be dressed in two minutes flat. I quickly remembered. Once outside, I found a ewe in severe labor, on the ground, bleating desperately for help. Adrenaline running, we moved the ewe into the lambing barns. She settled quickly under the heat lamp and the comfort of the new straw. So much for lambing season being two weeks away.

*Jaime! Jaime! JAAIIIMMEE!!* Doug came around the corner into the lambing barns where Carrie and I were sitting with the ewe. His words rang throughout my tired body. *There's another one on the way. Why is it that when one ewe goes into labor, all the rest must also?* Carrie and I moved the next ewe into the lambing pen also, and got her settled.

"Carrie, how many more pens do we have?"

"That's it. We only have two available because we have that pregnant ewe with the triplets in the last pen on the other side of the barn. We do have that extra room in the house though." I looked at her from the corner of my eye, and said dryly "I'm sure your mom would love that one." *Although I'm sure it's not the first time that a ewe had been brought in there, considering the old baby crib that had been turned into a holding pen in the corner of the room.* Close to 1 a.m. I stepped outside the barn into the fresh night air. What a weekend it had turned out to be! Marie said that none of the ewes should go into labor. There went that theory. A brisk breeze sent the sweet smell of the molasses grain we just fed the ewes in front of me. Looking behind me, I found Doug asleep on one of the ewes in the barn. The breeze blew again, and the smell was anything but sweet! *Where did that stench come from? What was that?* This horrible, smell of rotten overwhelmed me. I walked around to the back of the barn. Another ewe was walking with her lamb next to her, and she was carrying this horrible
smell around with her. I started racking my brain about lambs, and this smell was not familiar. As I got closer to the ewe, the stench got stronger and stronger. I stopped, unable to get any closer to her without gagging. I called to Carrie and Wes. When Carrie got there, I showed her the ewe that was absolutely drenched with stench. She told me that the ewe had her first lamb two weeks before. Only one! My mind raced. It was possible for the ewe to have one lamb, but it was more common for this breed of lambs to have twins. If she had only one lamb, then that stench could be only one thing. I started to gag with the thought; it was the other lamb, rotten inside of her. The combination of molding body parts and rotten birthing fluid was more than I thought I could handle. By the look of the ewe, I figured we had till daybreak until she died. By 2 a.m. that morning, she was separated from the rest of the flock, because the deteriorating smell was so bad. In fact, it was so horrible that I could only be near her for a few minutes at a time before I started convulsing. Yet somehow, knowing that I was going to lose one of the Rohr's flock, I managed to get to her. She was frothing at the mouth, foam shooting out of her nostrils at every bleat, and finally she collapsed from complete exhaustion on the ground. Thankfully I am friends with the town vet, so I didn't feel bad calling at 3 a.m. I had no idea how to deal with rotting lambs.

"You are going to have to pull the lamb out of her, in order to let her live."

"I have to do what?"

"Reach in birthing canal and pull out the lamb."

I had never heard of a more repulsive idea before. But that is what the vet said I had to do. Wes found some latex gloves for me in the barn. He held the ewe standing while Carrie kept the ewe calm. And I went to work. The smell was so bad because the lamb was not only rotting inside of her but was already in pieces and beginning to deteriorate. As I pulled a black, slimy and furry piece out of the ewe, she bleated in pain and I screamed in utter amazement and shock at what I was doing. Finally, when I thought that I had pulled enough pieces out that when put together could make a lamb, I stopped.
We moved one of the other ewes into the spare room in the house, and put her in the barn. I certainly wasn't going to deal with that smell inside the house, too! We gave her a shot and she seemed to calm down. Wes got Doug back inside and I started herding everyone back to bed. Once inside I took a shower, but I couldn't seem to shake the stench off of me. After I changed, I realized Carrie was still awake. I went in to talk to her; she was visibly upset. We both knew that we were going to lose that ewe tonight. There was nothing we could do now but wait and see how she was in the morning. Carrie knew this fact as well as I did. Yet, I could tell she wasn't content.

Forgetting my need for sleep, we went back outside and sat in the lambing barn until dawn broke. Carrie fell asleep on one of the hay bales. By 5:30 that morning, the ewe inside the house had twins, normal, healthy twins. The second ewe outside had also had her twins. And the ewe that had been in so much pain all night had finally died. I felt horrible. As I looked at her exhausted form lying on the ground, I thought of all the pain she had gone through. We had lost one of the flock. Losing any animal on a ranch is like losing one of the family. I found her lamb and started weaning the two-week-old to another ewe. They took right away to each other, which was one worry out of the way. I woke Carrie and we dragged the dead ewe to the back of the truck, where we drove down to the creek and buried her. When we got back to the house at 7 a.m., the boys were up doing the morning chores. They had moved the ewe out of the house and back to the barn. I jumped in the shower, again. By 7:30, I was out of the shower and had breakfast cooking. I was completely exhausted, and there was still so much to do on the ranch. However, today's list of chores seemed so simple compared to last night's. Everyone came in for breakfast, and Doug, who had slept through most of last nights events, asked me, "So, did I miss anything last night?"

Even after being away from the ranching life for two years, I still miss it. It has been bred into me to work with animals and to make things happen with just my hands. When you are raised with something, not only does it become a way of life for you, it becomes part of who you are. Every once and a while, no matter how many things I think I have seen or done, I am put to the test. School constantly pushes me with exams, papers and deadlines, yet I find myself untested. It is the ranching life that
makes me feel like I need to be one step ahead and always striving to reach that point. Here, as much as I like the area, I miss the "roll-up-your-sleeves-and-get-the-job-done" attitude I find I am expected to give at home. There are times I grow tired of having emergency animal problems, and would rather shoot the damn thing than have to deal with it again. Yet I know that I would do it, any of it, again in a heart beat if I were asked – just so I could be put to the test.
We begin our lives in the water of the womb; our bodies are almost all water; we must take in water to survive. In a clever twist, Cheever puts forth the idea that water is a source of wealth and success: immersion in certain waters can be akin to immersion in a fountain of youth or riches, almost like Achilles being dipped into the river Styx to become immortal. Born into a world of magic waters Neddy Merrill navigates them with ease, the consummate swimmer. A man of leisure with no need to work at anything except having a good time, his is a charmed life, which reflects the perfection of life among the rich and privileged. The pools Neddy swims in have something special, as if the water is holy, containing the power to confer a blessing from God on the swimmer. But as he nears the end of his journey, one or two of the pools he swims in are not blessed, almost unholy, unclean.

At the beginning of the story Cheever shows Neddy as a man in control of his destiny, in the flush of success and youth, who decides to go on a great adventure to celebrate life's perfection. The plan is simple: by way of the pools of his neighbors he will swim home (a distance of eight miles), thus becoming legendary. But as he swims we see time become disjointed, compressed, with large segments missing. We are shown what looks like a summer's day moving slowly, lazily along, as Neddy begins swimming the first
of sixteen pools. By using this strategy, Cheever makes the reader see Neddy's decline step-by-step, parallel with the changing weather and seasons. The names of neighbors are important, as are the descriptions of certain colors of water and foliage. In the end, Cheever makes a statement on friends, status, wealth, and how one can lose all without knowing it is gone.

The story begins poolside at the Westerhazy's on "one of those midsummer Sundays when everyone sits around saying, 'I drank too much last night . . ." (268). The conversation gives the reader a feeling for the hangover each person must have: feeling a bit hazy (at the Westerhazy's). We can almost hear the affectation in their voices. Also at the Westerhazy's we see one of the details that runs through the story, a description of water: "The pool, fed by an artesian well with a high iron content, was a pale shade of green" (268), the color of money, the driving force in Neddy's world. The artesian well suggests the flow of wealth and its accompanying aura are a natural feature, one given to the Westerhazy's through divine intervention or naturally occurring for the benefit of those deserving it most, springing up pure and untreated. The pool is a metaphor for Neddy's life at this point in his journey; we see him "by the green water, one hand in it, one around a glass of gin" (268) -- the two waters of his life in each hand.

Neddy is a man to be admired, with the glow of health and wellbeing, brimming over with confidence, knowing his place in society is secure. The narrator presents a picture of a man who flows through life without strain or worry:
He seemed to have the especial slenderness of youth—and while he was far from young he had slid down his banister that morning and given the bronze backside of Aphrodite on the hall table a smack, as he jogged toward the smell of coffee in his dining room. He might have been compared to a summer’s day, particularly the last hours of one, ... the impression was definitely one of youth, sport, and clement weather. He had been swimming and now was breathing deeply, stertorously if he could gulp into his lungs the components of that moment, the heat of the sun, the intenseness of his pleasure. It all seemed to flow into his chest. (268)

Cheever makes Neddy almost superhuman, as if he can pull magical particles from the air and synthesize them into fuel, propelling him toward greater success. At this point in the story, Neddy is on top of the world, full of boyish enthusiasm, slapping Aphrodite, the goddess of the sea, sailors, and love on the "backside" in a show of hubris. But Cheever merely builds him up in order to destroy him -- he is compared to the last hours of a summer's day, the special light fading fast.

The journey begins as Neddy dives into the Westerhazy's pool with gusto, having "an inexplicable contempt for men who did not hurt themselves into pools" (269). Cheever presents water as Neddy’s private domain, a home away from home, almost lifegiving, welcoming: "To be embraced and sustained by the light green water was less a pleasure, it seemed, than the resumption of a natural condition" (269). Thus far Neddy derives his strength and vitality from the water. As he leaves the water and heads across the lawn, arriving at the pool next-door at the Grahams', we begin to see something
wrong with time. As Neddy walks through a hedge and onto the Grahams' property, a small but important shift occurs in the season: it is midsummer and Neddy walks under "some flowering apple trees" (269). The apple is a tree that flowers only in spring. Cheever suddenly and without warning moves time ahead nearly one year.

The swim in the Grahams' pool is uneventful, as are the dips Neddy takes in the pools of the Hammers, the Lears, the Howlands, and the Crosscups. "His heart was high and he ran across the grass . . . a man with a destiny, and he knew that he would find friends all along the way; friends would line the banks of the Lucinda River" (269). The narrator uses the word "banks" in what seems a double sense: the "banks" of the imaginary river described, and "banks" as a place where money is kept; "friends" line the "banks," as if they are ready to hand out money to Neddy.

Neddy now makes his way to a pool party at the Bunkers' where Cheever presents a scene of wealth and success. We see Neddy still in his element as he greets "prosperous men and women gathered by the sapphire-colored waters. . . . Ned felt a passing affection for the scene, a tenderness for the gathering, as if it was something he might touch" (270). Again, as at the Westerhazy's, water is the color of something of value: sapphires. Cheever also slips in another clue that all is not well when he describes the gathering as "something he [Neddy] might touch," as if it is not quite touchable, somehow getting out of reach. Still everyone is happy to see Neddy and he is given a drink by a "smiling bartender he had seen at a hundred parties" (270). Though eager to be on his way, he dives in the water
but steers clear of the only person in the pool: a man named "Rusty Towers" floating on a raft. The name "Rusty Towers" brings to mind a thing submerged and to be avoided for fear of collision, bringing on rust and disrepair -- damaging the fragile coating of wealth that protects Neddy, as though the water is already tainted.

Almost halfway home, he heads along "Alewives Lane" (270) to the Levys', where no one is home. The reference to "Alewives," a type of fish that swims upriver from the Atlantic Ocean to spawn in the spring, suggests Neddy is being driven by something beyond his power to resist, as if the adventure isn't his idea at all. Nature is now in control. Fittingly, a storm brews quickly: "rain lashed the Japanese lanterns that Mrs. Levy had bought in Kyoto the year before last, or was it the year before that?" (271). Cheever presents a dilemma: how many years have passed? The "year before that" would be a total of three years -- how long has Neddy been swimming? "The force of the wind had stripped a maple of its red and yellow leaves.... Since it was midsummer the tree must be blighted, and yet he felt a peculiar sadness at this sign of autumn" (271). We know it is fall, but not what year; like Neddy, we are becoming confused.

Neddy heads for the next pool at the Welchers' (as in "to welch" on a bet, or agreement), and finding it empty, becomes a fish out of water: "This breach ... disappointed him absurdly; ... he felt like some explorer who seeks a torrential headwater and finds a dead stream" (272). Neddy is being abandoned by the very people he counted on to help him during his adventure.
"He started off then for his most difficult portage" (272). In this ominous line Cheever warns of change, impending doom. At this point, Cheever shifts our perspective on Neddy, speaking directly to the reader: "Had you gone for a Sunday afternoon ride that day you might have seen him, close to naked, standing on the shoulders of Route 424, waiting for a chance to cross" (272). Literally and figuratively Neddy is about to cross over the line of no return, and with the second-person "you," the common people (the readers and those passing by in cars) get to see how far Neddy has fallen. Cheever presents a heartbreaking scene when Neddy is ridiculed as he waits to cross. The reader thinks back to Neddy poolside at the Westerhazy's -- that Neddy Merrill would no more wait for "a chance to cross" a road than be standing there in the first place. Unthinkable! Crossing the road Neddy reminds us of a fish swimming upriver, its only thought to keep going forward to the place of its birth: "Why... was he unable to turn back? Why was he determined to complete his journey even if it meant putting his life in danger?" (272). We now know he has no choice, either due to his own nature or something larger in Cheever's plan.

Neddy's journey now takes him to the public pool in "the village of Lancaster" (273), probably for the first time in his life. Cheever presents this pool as a low point of Neddy's life: "It stank of chlorine and looked to him like a sink" (273). Here we see the abuse of the common man as the lifeguards blow "police whistles" (273) and yell at people breaking the rules in the foul pool. In Neddy's world, he and his friends make the rules that everyone plays by -- following the rules is a foreign, abstract thought. Neddy worries the chlorinated pool might be an acid bath: that he "might
contaminate himself -- damage his own prosperousness and charm -- by swimming in this murk" (273). In the public pool Neddy begins to lose the protection of his wealth, as well as part of his identity, as the lifeguards yell: "Hey, you, you without the identification disk, get outta the water" (273). With that line Cheever shows us it is obvious to the lifeguards that Neddy is no longer special, that the glow of money and health is gone, eroded: he is a nobody -- common.

As Neddy makes his way through some woods, he enters what becomes the worst part of his voyage as he steps onto the Halloran estate. Cheever takes great care to make them seem like gracious hosts, wonderful friends, charming, unusual people: "They were zealous reformers . . . and yet when they were accused . . . of subversion, it seemed to gratify and excite them" (273). Cheever says this in a casual way, throwing the reader off the trail by making them seem a slightly eccentric, very wealthy, "elderly couple" (273). Their pool is the "oldest in the country... fed by a brook. It had no filter or pump and its waters were the opaque gold of the stream" (274). The Hallorans' pool starts to take on a touch of evil and their "subversion" seems as ominous as the lack of a filter in their pool. Perhaps Cheever wants the reader to think of the water as being impure or dangerous: it certainly has a bad effect on Neddy. After he swims the length of the pool nude (the Hallorans wear no suits in their pool), he puts on his trunks only to find them loose: "he wondered if, during the space of an afternoon, he could have lost some weight. He was cold and he was tired . . . and their dark water depressed him" (274). Neddy thought that basking in the glow of the Hallorans' wealth would help
him -- instead it sucks the life out of him. Their water is not only unfiltered, unclean but, perhaps, unholy, too.

Cheever reminds us of the approach of winter as Neddy treks to swim the pool of his old friend Eric Sachs: "Leaves were falling down around him and he smelled wood smoke on the wind" (274). Time is running out for Neddy as he closes in on his goal. But first Cheever throws the ace up his sleeve on the table as Neddy, looking for a drink at the Sachs' is told by Eric's wife Helen: "but there hasn't been anything in this house to drink since Eric's operation. That was three years ago" (275). Cheever finally makes the passage of time plain and it comes as a shock to Neddy and the reader. The scars on Eric's stomach silently testify to the awful reality Neddy is forced to see: "three pale, [one for each year lost] sutured scars, two of them at least a foot long" (275). Cheever shows Eric as a gutted man -- a man-fish like Neddy -- who doesn't speak a word to his friend. The fact that he is the son-in-law of the Hallorans', married to their only daughter Helen and scarred for life gives wicked, evil meaning to the "subversion" which seems to "gratify and excite" the Hallorans.

The next pool in Neddy's path is at the Biswangers' home, where he is rebuffed by Grace Biswanger and a bartender who serves Neddy a drink "rudely" (276). Unlike the party at the Bunkers', there are no smiles or greetings of welcome for Neddy, who swims quickly and leaves for the home of Shirley Adams, his ex-mistress. Here we are reminded of Neddy's hubris, which he expressed earlier when he slapped Aphrodite's bottom after sliding down the banister at home. Shirley is an angry goddess of love (having been
scorned by Neddy), who stands "at the edge of the lighted, cerulean
[heavenly] water" (276) and sends him packing to his doom. Heaven and
redemption become impossible for Neddy to grasp: his strength gives out, and
for the first time, he uses the ladder climbing out of the pool.

Cheever now presents Neddy as a spent, pathetic human being nearing
the literal end of his life. Everything has gone wrong and he is "miserable,
cold, tired, and bewildered" (277). Nothing left to do but swim the final pools
of the Gilmartins and the Clydes. He has made the journey forced upon him
by some power beyond his understanding: his own hubris, vindictive gods, or
the subconscious desire to return to the beginnings of his success and power.

Cheever's strategy -- to bring the reader along with Neddy on his
voyage, step-by-step -- has worked: we feel the same emotions for Neddy as
for the salmon returning to its place of birth, only to die on arrival. How sad
to see such a fount of strength, determination, and sheer will become
extinguished, wasted. The water that has given life, wealth and power has
taken back its gifts, and Neddy is no longer the wielder of greatest power
who makes the rules ex nihilo.

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A Discourse on "Race"

by

Annemarie Booth

Although Foucault's discussion of power relationships in *The History of Sexuality* is focused on sexuality, his argument could be applied to the discourse of race as well. Like sexuality, race is a discourse used to control the behaviors and lifestyles of people. It dictates the norms of how people within a certain "race" should conduct themselves, and what are normal physical and mental characteristics of these races. Like the discourse of sexuality, the discourse of race is based on attributes or behaviors that may have existed innocuously in the past but have become a means for labeling groups of people. Race, like sexuality, has been medicalized in order to give it scientific validity. According to Foucault, we have no choice but to internalize this concept of racial identity by living in a society in which the discourse of race is imbedded. Even if we do not personally hold the concept of race to be true, the power relations in our society are so firmly based on race that it is impossible to separate ourselves from this racial "web" of power.

Foucault states that "where there is desire, the power relation is already present" (81). Although he is describing sexual desire, the desire for economic control can also be discussed in this way. Generally, a discourse on race begins because one group of people wants something (usually a material item) from another group of people. In the United States, the discourse on race can be traced back to when the British government, through the colonists, desired control over the land held by the Native Americans. It was necessary to create a discourse on the "superiority" of the "white race" over the "red race" in order to achieve this control over the people. Foucault states that "the functional
requirements of a discourse . . . must produce its truth" (68). The race discourse in the case of the colonists produced a "truth" that Native Americans as a "race" were lazy and did not effectively use the land. The colonists were able to establish themselves as the main node of power in the early United States, thus they were the conductors of knowledge as well. Their definition on how to "properly" make use of the land became a social truth because of this power.

Due to this control of knowledge, the "white race" was the creator of all the laws. Foucault points out that "power . . . has its central point in the enunciation of the law" (90). Through law, the "white" people were able to make their abstract notion of race a legal reality. A good example of this is the law that defines what amount of "blood" in a person makes him or her "black." The legality went beyond skin color as a racial determinant, making the racial discourse more complicated. Foucault argues that "sex is placed by power in a binary system: licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden," and that "power prescribes an 'order' for sex that operates at the same time as a form of intelligibility" (83). This can easily be applied to the racial power structure. In the racial discourse there is a similar binary opposition: white vs. colored, civilized vs. barbaric, industrious vs. lackadaisical. The definitions of race built into American law, like the law mentioned before that defines who is "black" and who is not, helps race to be "deciphered on the basis of its relation to the law" (83). Law made sense of the originally abstract concept of race by defining it elaborately in its legal codes.

Now that a web of power had been formed, it was possible to channel this discourse in other directions. Race was established as a societal truth and people were categorized according to that truth. With this categorization came rules regarding appropriate and inappropriate behaviors of each race. Each group was expected to follow these rules. Foucault states "a legislative power on one side, and an obedient subject on the other" is established through this exertion of power (85). In the case of the Native Americans, the law was they were to remain on the
reservations provided for them by the "white race"; in the case of the slaves, they were to remain with their masters. In the future, segregation became the legal method for controlling the behavior of the "colored" people. Again they were required by the racial discourse to only occupy certain areas as determined by the white power structure. These rules contributed to fulfilling the desire for land and property that went hand in hand with the white discourse on race. By dictating the lives of the "lesser races," the "white race" was able to secure economic power for itself.

Foucault argues that "the logic of power exerted on sex is the paradoxical logic of a law that might be expressed as an injunction of nonexistence, nonmanifestation and silence" (84). Like the characteristics of perversion that were included in the discourse on sexuality, the characteristics pinned on each race were supposed to be banished into nonexistence as well. After the "white race" had established the "inferiority" of the African slaves and Native Americans, these groups of people were expected to rid themselves of the so-called traits that had been attached to their "race" by the white power structure. Thus these two "races" were caught in a paradox; if they acted according to what the white "race" expected of them, they were punished, yet if they did not behave in the prescribed way, their behavior was considered abnormal and this led to punishment as well. This is clearly illustrated by the concept of the "uppity" African-American. By behaving in a dignified or cultured way, the African-American was seen as "overstepping" his or her racial "boundaries" established by the "white race." However, if the individual was to act in the way the white power structure had prescribed for him or her, he or she would be severely punished in order to remedy the "innate laziness" of the so-called "black race."

Science is also used to strengthen the power of a discourse. As America became more "progressive," it was necessary, especially after the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, to establish a more solid reason for why the present power
structure/race discourse was valid. Thus science stepped in. Foucault states that "science subordinated in the main to the imperatives of a morality whose divisions it reiterated under the guise of the medical norm" (53). Because the "white race" was the main node in the web of power, whites became the "medical norm" against which the other "races" were measured. Measurements taken from African-Americans and Native Americans "proved" that they were "deviations" from the "white norm." Because often the cranial measurements were smaller than those of white people, scientists concluded that this indicated a dearth in the capabilities of the "lesser races." By "claiming to speak the truth," science used its research to further imbed "racial differences" into the American culture (53).

Foucault points out through his description of the scientific processes used to analyze sex that "misunderstandings, avoidances, and evasions were only possible, and only had their effects against the background of this strange endeavor: to tell the truth of sex" (57). Science similarly muddled and evaded the biological "truths" of their findings on race: that cranial size had nothing to do with brain capacity. (Amusingly enough, a well-renowned white professor was found to have a smaller cranial measurement than that of a bricklayer.) The discourse of race required science to support the power relationships already established between whites and non-whites, and therefore, science could not divulge the biological truths of their findings.

This desire for control through the discourse of race continues on into the twentieth century. "Our bodies, our minds, our individuality, our history [are brought] under the sway of a logic of concupiscence and desire" (78). Everything in society according to this theory is based on desire; in the case of race it is a lust after material wealth. Even though the "scientific realities" discovered in the nineteenth century about race and mental capacity were eventually disproved, it was necessary to leave those concepts intact, for the white power structure "would lose its effectiveness and its virtue" if it divulged that the bases for their "truths" about "racial superiority" were not physical realities (57). While not blatantly
preached any more, the old racial discourses are left in place to justify the control of the "colored races."

Foucault believes that "you are always-already trapped" in the power structure of society (83). Based on his theory, the "racism" inherent in our culture is inescapable. Everything in American society is dictated by our "race" and the stereotyping that goes along with the label. The "white race" is still very much the main node of power in the United States. The fact that it was white government that wrote up the Civil Rights act, that it is a white government that controls affirmative action, and other racially based programs, clearly demonstrates the control the "white race" maintains on the power structure. Similar to Foucault's statement that "power is what dictates its law to sex," the laws created by a white government are directly tied to the power structure that supports its "superiority." This government defines what rights are to be given to a people, and which rights are not. As long as the "white race" maintains its control on the power structure of this country, Foucault's theories will hold true: we are all caught in its web of racial politics.

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A Review of Dogma

by

Jason Cassidy

When I went to see Kevin Smith's 1999 film *Dogma*, I did not expect to enjoy it. I had seen news stories about protests and condemnations of the film by a number of religious groups, so being Catholic myself, I was surprised by how much I liked watching it. I quickly discovered there was much more to this movie than some of its critics seemed to realize.

The story has two fallen angels, Loki and Bartleby, trying to get back into heaven by exploiting a loophole that Cardinal Glick of New Jersey has opened in God's scheme of things. As part of a marketing campaign designed to bring Catholics back into the Church, the cardinal has offered a plenary indulgence (forgiveness for all sins) to anyone who walks through the doors of his church. If Loki and Bartleby do this, their sins that got them banished from heaven will be forgiven, contrary to God's wishes. Thus, God is fallible, and since God cannot be fallible and still be God, She and Her Creation will cease to exist. To avoid this, God recruits Bethany, an alienated Catholic woman, to stop the angels from entering the Cardinal's church. The story follows Bethany on her mission to save Creation, which for her also turns out to be a spiritual journey to save her own faith.

My first thought about the film was why it is entitled *Dogma*. Dogma is a doctrine that is supposed to be uncritically accepted by believers. While dogma can contain truth, it can also be a substitute for personal judgement and critical thought. This may be why some religious groups are outraged about this film, even though many of their members have not yet seen it themselves. Their attitude makes me grateful for
the benefits of an education, such as we get at Saint Mary’s, that is based on critical thinking. You may have valid objections to this film, but to be persuasive, your objections should result from a reflective critique of your own, not rely on the dogmatic criticism of others.

The writer/director of the film, Kevin Smith, apparently agrees with this rule. At the beginning of the film he indicates his fear of dogmatic attitudes by asking viewers to approach the film as a satire, one that even God might appreciate, given the sense of humor evident in the Creator’s design of the platypus. That kind of introduction to the film is an invitation to keep an open mind about it; so I did, and I was rewarded for it.

There are justified complaints against the film, such as its stereotypical portrayal of organized religion. We are shown a Church that is more concerned with this world than the next. For example, when Cardinal Glick is asked to compare Catholicism to the tobacco industry, he says “If only we had their numbers!” forgetting how the tobacco industry got its numbers. Thus, this line equates the ends (although not the means) of the Church with those of a socially irresponsible business. In addition, there are several scenes in which sacred symbols are made fun of, for example, when Cardinal Glick practices putting golf balls into a golden chalice. The Cardinal is also shown to be willing to replace the image of Jesus suffering on the cross with “Buddy Jesus,” a thumbs-up, winking trademark for a PR campaign to bring lapsed Catholics back to the Church. And when the Cardinal explains the reason for “Buddy Christ,” he says that the crucified image of Christ is too upsetting and that “Christ didn’t come down to Earth to give us the willies!” But the Cardinal never tells us why he thinks Christ came down to Earth, and it’s not all that clear that he knows why, either. Also, I do not think the film

He also apologizes to the platypus for the putdown. To me this is not just an attempt to stretch out a successful gag line; it is also a sincere expression of respect even for one of God’s ugliest creatures.
tried hard enough to tell the other side of the story; that is, what it is about the Church that for two thousand years has made it worth the love and sacrifice of millions of Catholics. This demeans Catholics and the purpose of their Church, and I understand why some thoughtful, religious people might be angry at this film and find it sacrilegious.

However, I do not think it is sacrilegious. To me, there is a big difference between a critique of the Church and a critique of God. I believe that “Buddy Jesus” satirizes not Christ but the Church’s willingness, in Smith’s view, to compromise tradition, to make itself more “relevant” and appealing. *Dogma*’s iconoclasm suggests what I believe is the message of the film, which is that the Church needs to renew itself. In fact, Cardinal Glick himself symbolizes the need for renewal — he knows that something is wrong because attendance at Mass is down and the Church is just not what it used to be to its people. But what the Cardinal does not realize, as shown by his notion of renewal as simply a PR program, is that he is part of the problem. The Cardinal symbolizes a too worldly view of the ministry of Christ, and this is alienating otherwise loyal Catholics.

Of course, it may be that the film’s writer/director, Kevin Smith, is among the alienated and is so disillusioned and angry with the Church that he wants to insult and attack it. But I don’t think this is the case. Not only is the film impartial in its irreverence — for example, it mocks corporate America and the film industry for its greed through the false idol Mooby, a golden calf in Mickey Mouse pants — it also portrays its struggling Catholic heroine Bethany with sensitivity. Smith’s treatment of Bethany, who, even though she is disillusioned with the Church, is still clinging to her faith in Christ, suggests his sympathy for and even possible identification with her difficulty spiritual journey.
I saw in Bethany the story of many Catholics, who at one time or another face a crisis of belief. Her disappointments in life (a bad marriage, her inability to have children) have shaken her trust in God. She still goes to church every Sunday, but she does not know why. She works at an abortion clinic but gives part of her pay to the Church. Obviously, she is confused about her religious beliefs. The film emphasizes her disillusionment in one scene in which Bethany and a friend agree that when you are young you are impressed by all the Church’s majesty and ceremony, but when you grow older, “your glass is bigger and needs more spiritual substance to be filled.” Bethany now sees her glass as half empty. She says “I think God is dead,” and her friend replies “The sign of a good Catholic.” Like another good Catholic, Saint Augustine, Bethany finds reason prevents her from accepting the Church’s teachings as dogma. But also like Augustine, whose inexplicable desire for something greater led him back to the Church as a convert, Bethany’s stubborn faith leads her back to the Church, or at least to the doors of one in New Jersey.

I believe that even though Dogma strongly criticizes the Catholic Church, it offers a positive message about the Catholic faith. The film testifies to the existence of God -- we actually see God in the end and before then her existence is never questioned; in fact, God’s reality is the basis of the story. It also affirms the authority of the Church -- for example, dumb as the Cardinal’s PR scheme is, his plenary indulgences worked “as advertised” (otherwise, we would have no story). Dogma also reaffirms important doctrines of the Church: there is a God; angels and Satan, Heaven and Hell, do exist. The film, moreover, supports the divinity of Jesus by echoing the original immaculate conception in Metatron’s announcement to Bethany that she will bear a child to continue Christ’s line. The film also shows the greatest respect for the authority of God, as we see in the ugly fate of the angels Loki and Bartleby.
In conclusion, *Dogma* made me laugh and it made me think -- I haven't laughed as much in a long time or thought as deeply about my religion since attending Catholic grade school. I was also impressed and challenged by the film's insight into the nature of faith. When Bethany is told of her miraculous conception, we see in her expression that she is herself "born again" into her faith. She asks Metatron why she of all people was chosen to save the world, and he tells her, "it has to be revealed gradually. It can't be revealed all at once." To me, that is what faith is -- something you grow into. For these reasons, like Buddy Jesus, I give this film an enthusiastic "thumbs up."
Why my brother?

by

Cherise Revell

I can only imagine what my brother looked like lying on the Sutter Medical Clinic bed. Fully sedated, eyes wide open and completely glazed, seeing chemically induced visions of another world. Outside the room, in their own world of shock, my parents speak with the doctor and nurse about the events preceding their arrival at the hospital. But my brother never did "hard core" drugs . . . at least, so I thought.

Imagine you are taking a slug of whiskey. a [sic] puff of a cigarette. a [sic] toke of marijuana. a [sic] snort of cocaine. a [sic] shot of heroin. Put aside whether these drugs are legal or illegal. Concentrate, for now, on the chemistry. The moment you take that slug, that puff, that toke, that snort, that shot, trillions of potent molecules surge through your bloodstream and into your brain. Once there, they set off a cascade of chemical and electrical events, a kind of neurological chain reaction that ricochets around your skull and rearranges the interior reality of the mind. (Nash)

What mechanism makes some people prone to addiction and others only occasional users? Is society simply fooling itself into thinking that some people are not prone to addiction? Or by using "gateway drugs" are we all following a slow path to addiction? Numerous medical as well as psychological scientific studies cite the causes, predictors, and the effects of drug addiction. With newer technology like PET scanners and advanced biochemical tests, researchers have discovered the pathway drugs take to produce their effect. But even with these new advances in research, no one has pinpointed what causes addiction, or why it happens in some people and not others. For example, although methamphetamine, the drug I will focus on in this essay, can be used for medical
problems such as hyperactivity, narcolepsy, and obesity, and some people can occasionally use this drug without serious repercussion, other people are more vulnerable to addiction because of their biological makeup.

**What are Methamphetamines?**

Methamphetamines are a synthesized, purer form of amphetamines; they come in a fine white crystalline powder or clear crystal, most often odorless and bitter tasting (Murray, Mylinski). Methamphetamines can be administered into the body intranasally, intravenously, orally ingested, or smoked in a free base form called "ice or crystal" (Beebe and Walley). This drug is classified as a stimulant, specifically a "strong central nervous system stimulant" (Beebe and Walley). Methamphetamines, especially the most pure form of ice, are twice as toxic amphetamines and are similar to cocaine in their effects. When made illegally for non-medical purposes, the drug is prepared in home laboratories, which does not insure its purity. Some street names for methamphetamines are crystal, speed, chronic, and go-fast (Murray, "Stimulants," Beebe and Walley, Mylinski).

**The Chemical Interaction: Introduction to Dopamine**

Methamphetamine, like other drugs, is simply a mind-altering chemical that brings about an euphoric "state of pleasure" (Murray) or causes a negative dysphoric mood by its absence. Upon taking methamphetamines, the body may experience the following reactions: a rise in blood pressure, pupil dilation, a raised pulse rate, relaxation of smooth muscles of the gastrointestinal tract, suppression of appetite, blurry vision, and dry mouth (Murray, Stimulants). The feeling of euphoria (pleasure and elation) that this drug brings about has been attributed to the neurotransmitter dopamine, which is responsible for all enjoyable feelings and helps control learning and memory. When this message carrier molecule, dopamine, is over-stimulated, it floods the synapses. When methamphetamines or
cocaine are introduced to the brain, the neuron that produces dopamine is displaced from its original terminal. The people, places, and things connected with this process for the user are etched into the brain, making these images trigger a desire for the drug. As a result, dopamine is "the master molecule of addiction" (Nash). A simple analogy of this concept would be a garage. If a garage (terminal or receptor) were only meant to have one car parked inside, then trying to park two cars (dopamine neurons) inside would make it overfull or simply not allow any car in (displacement). Research has uncovered that, "Dopamine seems to play the most important role in the MAP [methamphetamine] effect . . . MAP has two major mechanisms of activity: (a) stimulation of the brain's synaptic sites, which leads to production of a state of arousal, wakefulness, or mood elevation; and (b) suppression of appetite. MAP releases stored energy from the body reserves by chemically interacting with CNS [Central Nervous System]" (Nutt). This is not to say that dopamine is the only chemical affecting the use and abuse of drugs; there are many other chemicals involved in the production of drug induced "highs," like serotonin, a mood elevating chemical found in the brain.

**Drug Abuse "Dopamine Overload"**

This essay will define addiction, or dependence, as physical addiction: the "alterations in brain function that lead to the experiences of withdrawal," (Nutt) also characterized by the development of a tolerance for the substance, and most often inducing cravings for the substance if the user temporarily stops use. Brain functions alter because the "misused drugs are neuroactive substances that alter brain transmitter function" (Nutt). And after continual use, the altering of brain function contributes to the reduced number of sites (or receptors) that the dopamine can bind to, causing the user to continue use to feel normal. Altering the function of the brain causes the body to require more and more of the drug (tolerance) so that the body can perform normal functions (avoid withdrawal). Tolerance is a state in which the drug's actions diminish after repeated use, and the
body will require more to achieve the same effects as the initial use. Withdrawal is where the body refuses to function normally without the presence of the abused drug and usually has physically observable symptoms such as seizures and paranoia.

**The Abuse Cycle**

Most important to the addiction process is the power of the drug: "Generally, the more efficacious [speedy and efficient] the drug is at producing its pharmacological effect [euphoria or high], the greater the addiction potential" (Nutt). Since methamphetamines are a very powerful dopamine-producing stimulant, its potential for addiction is enormous, as well as its ability to set the user into a cycle of abuse. The addiction process of methamphetamines is influenced heavily by the "dopamine pathway" because of its brain altering capacity, and once altered, the person is hooked or addicted, causing the person to settle into a cycle of drug abuse: administration, euphoria, stabilization (come down), repeat. This cycle of drug abuse causes the body to have high amounts of dopamine inundating the brain during administration of the drug, and the deficiency of dopamine receptors caused by the alteration of brain function when the drug is not available.

For this reason, the use/abuse of methamphetamines is a serious health problem for long-term users. Chronic, or long-term, users of methamphetamines may exhibit signs of anxiety, confusion, insomnia, malnutrition or severe weight loss, violence, psychotic hallucinations, delusions, and paranoia (Mylinski, "Stimulants"). The more hazardous physical effects of chronic methamphetamine abuse are hemorrhaging of the brain, arrhythmia and heart palpitations, pulmonary edema, hyperprexia, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea (Beebe and Walley).
Vulnerability to Drug Abuse Linked to Genetics

Americans tend to think of drug addiction as a failure of character. But this stereotype is beginning to give way to the recognition that drug dependence has a clear biological basis. (Nash)

As far back as 1991 researchers have been learning about the genetic basis for predisposition of drug use and believe the "Cascade Theory of Reward" causes people to turn to drugs. This theory is based upon the idea that neurotransmitters, in their normal pattern of stimulation and inhibition, interact and spread their effects of well-being and ultimate reward in a cascade like way. Therefore, people who abuse drugs have a deficiency or imbalance that interrupts the cascade, sending them in search of an outside source of reward or pleasure, usually in the form of a drug. Research by Kenneth Blum and Ernest P. Noble has "suggested that, since the D2 dopamine receptors are deeply involved in the reward cascade, this uncommon allele [A1 allele gene] may be associated with an altered number of D2 dopamine receptors." After further research, their laboratories confirmed their hypothesis: "We found that carriers of the A1 allele, compared to the A2 allele, had approximately one-third fewer receptors. It is possible that those individuals inheriting the gene that produces a fewer number of receptors (the Aq [sic Al] allele) may not feel much pleasure unless their receptors are stimulated with large amounts of dopamine that is normally released with alcohol or other drug use" (Blum and Noble). In laymen's terms, the presence of the inherited gene, Al allele, is correlated with a decreased number of dopamine receptors, causing the person to have a decrease in their feelings of well being. This sends them searching for substances or actions that produce higher than normal levels of dopamine to temporarily balance out their deficiency. Blum and Noble's findings give an unshakable basis for the idea of drug dependency being highly influenced by genetically encoded traits.
Mental Illness: Genetics and Family Come Together

First, and foremost, family must be given credit already as a contributing factor to the causes of drug addiction since it is through the reproduction process that the A1 allele gene is passed on. The family is also a contributing factor because they can pass mental disorders on to their offspring. "Depression, chronic anxiety, attention deficit disorder, and other mental disorders that are under genetic influence may also raise the risk of addiction by reducing the capacity for rewarding experiences" ("Addiction"). These reasons intermingle genetic and familial factors that cause drug dependence, reinforcing the dopamine theory and the genetic disposition towards dependency.

My Brother

I became interested in the topic of drug addiction because my family has a long history of dependence on various drugs, including methamphetamine, and my younger brother Michael, I call him Mikey, recently engaged in his first use of drugs. In my family, there runs a deep and consistent line of alcoholics, and in the past two generations, a move to other drugs, primarily marijuana and occasionally speed. I never became truly interested in how this addiction ran so deeply throughout both sides of my family until Mikey was admitted into a psychiatric ward for inpatient detoxification.

My brother has had learning and behavioral problems since his early childhood and was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in grade school. Mikey had many emotional problems due to the chemical imbalance in his brain; this made it hard for him to concentrate, control his emotions, and express himself without frustration. But starting in his freshman year of high school, about three years ago, this semi-normal behavior started becoming more deviant, aggressive, and his normally high scholastic performance dropped drastically. These signs all began to occur after his expulsion from Cordova High
School for possession of a joint of marijuana. Most of my family, including myself, shrugged it off as normal since most of us had tried it once or done a stronger drug than marijuana. However, his actions began to get more attention as they escalated to more disturbing behaviors.

He became more anti-social, angrier and more aggressive towards the family; he began running away after big confrontations with our father and became very secretive about his friends and where they were going. I also noticed that he was speaking of using alcohol and marijuana more frequently. After I left for college, these behaviors continued to escalate until one Sunday night in January. My father phoned and told me that my brother had come home from being out with his friends and was playing with a razor while talking to my parents about how much he hates life and probably won't live past 35. My parents saw his glazed eyes and were worried about him using the razor to cut himself, so they asked him to give up the razor. When he didn't, my mother stepped on his hand and told my father to grab the razor since by now blood was streaming from his hand. After removing the razor from his hand, Mikey tried to bolt for the door, but my mother blocked it with her body. My father, no little man, had to run and grab a pair of old handcuffs and grapple him to the floor and cuff him, and my brother did not submit until my mother kicked him in his genitalia. They immediately drove him to the psychiatric center and admitted him, where they had to sedate him until the effects of the "chronic" in his system had subsided. From that point on, Michael has struggled at rehabilitation, and he has been diagnosed as bipolar manic (formerly called manic-depression) and put on anti-depressant medication to control his mood swings and dopamine levels.

**Family Environments Role in Abuse**

In my brother's situation, I attributed some of his actions to his problematic relationship with our father, that gave way to the anger and depression that he
was trying to remedy through drugs. Whether or not a person's parent(s) has an addictive personality or mental disorder influences whether or not that person will also have similar behavioral and mental disorders. In a study of gender in substance abuse transmission done in 1996, researchers note that

Parental gender appears to be a salient [prominent] moderator in the transmission of substance abuse. Same- and opposite-sex parents may influence their offsprings' drug-abusing behavior differentially via their modeling behavior, their psychiatric disorders, and their relative roles in child-rearing. (Ripple and Luthar)

This study found that in males, parental modeling, especially same-sex modeling, was the key transmission mode; in females, the depressive or anxious symptoms displayed by both parents played a key role. This difference is attributed to the tendency of males to externalize feelings and to develop external disorders like drug abuse and antisocial behavior, whereas females are more likely to internalize their emotions, leading to internalizing disorders like depression and anxiety (Ripple and Luthar).

Social Reasons For Abuse

In past decades, addiction was usually linked to social or environmental attributions rather than biochemical and genetic attributions. Some people still believe that social factors are the most important risk factor of drug dependence. One argument says that for drug dependence to arise and continue, a sufficient amount of readily available substances must be present. However, even in a geographic area where drug use and production is heavy, like in a low-income urban ghetto, not all of the community's members are drug users, and most of their abuse can also be attributed to mental and behavioral disorders. The idea that social factors work alongside genetic and biochemical factors is the most widely accepted medical view of the causes of drug dependence. The Harvard Mental Health Letter, in "Addiction and the Brain-Part II," recognizes that
"sensitivity to the addictive powers of drugs are almost certainly influenced strongly by genetics." However they also emphasize that "People risk addiction most when they lack other capacities, interests, and choices, other ways to solve problems, [and] other sources of attachment to something outside themselves.” The brain's motivational cascade is easily thrown out of balance when there are many other environmental disturbances, allowing "economic conditions, cultural traditions, formal and informal social controls, and the companionship and approval of other drug users" ("Addiction") to play a role in the addiction process. Basically, this is explaining that environmental factors do affect drug abuse because we react with them, and in the process, our brain will either increase or decrease its level of dopamine production, causing feelings of well being or deficiency that may lead to substance abuse.

**The Answers**

Research has uncovered that vulnerability to drug dependence depends on multiple factors: genetically encoded mental or behavioral disorders, the inheritance of the A1 allele gene, family history of mental or substance abuse disorders, parents' modeled behavior and role in child rearing, availability of drugs, gender, coping skills, and environment. As to whether we are all on a slow path to addiction has not yet been explored, or at least, I did not find any answers; however, all drugs do have their addictive qualities since they all produce effects by altering the function of the brain. So, why my brother? The combination of genetically encoded mental and behavioral disorders, family history of substance abuse, father’s parenting model, easy access to drugs, gender, and lack of coping skills has attributed to my brother’s bout with substance abuse. He is still not cured, but treatment is an intricate process involving a combination of steps aimed at the alleviation of withdrawal symptoms (if needed) along with a combination of behavioral, cognitive, and pharmacological approaches integrated into rehabilitation. The goals are to
maximize commitment to abstinence, help rebuild a life free of substances, and to develop strategies for preventing relapse. (Schuckit)

An easy cure to drug addiction will never be discovered because the causes of the addiction are an intertwined network of biological, psychological, and environmental factors that no pill or shot could ever ease. As Mylinski notes, part of the problems is that

In our drug-dependent society, we expect drugs to cure our diseases, correct our disorders, and help bridge our crisis in life. Most of us have learned to take advantage of their benefits with a minimum of risk. In truth, however, all drugs are poisons and few are cures. Most simply soothe our symptoms or help us cope. . . . The problem of drug addiction will never be solved simply through medications" (Mylinski).

Rehabilitation from drug abuse takes a lot of time, effort, and personal empowerment, which is the hardest part of the journey.

Works Cited


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