

StoryLine Issue 1, Fall 2019: Coastline College's Arts and Letters Magazine

Submitting to StoryLine

StoryLine is published once a year, in the fall semester. Please send your original work, along with the genre in which you are submitting, to ocallum@gapps.coastline.edu by July 1 for consideration for that year's issue.

Submission Guidelines:

Art (drawings, paintings, graphic designs): scan images and send in high-res .jpg format

Poetry: send up to 5 poems in one or multiple Word documents (.docx or .doc) or PDFs

Personal (Nonfiction) Essays: 2,500 words maximum as a Word document (.docx or .doc) or PDF

Short stories: 2,500 words maximum as a Word document (.docx or .doc) or PDF

Digital stories: these are narrative videos that tell an original, compelling story. Send a link to a YouTube video (must be correctly captioned). See [Storycenter](#) website for examples.

Special Call for Digital Story Submissions

We are especially seeking digital stories for Issue No. 2 of StoryLine, due out Fall 2020. See above, and send us your best work!

Call for Graphic Designers

We are seeking student graphic designers for future issues of StoryLine. This is great experience for your resume or portfolio! Email Oceana Callum at ocallum@gapps.coastline.edu for more information.

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Contributor Bios

Dave Barton

Dave Barton has written for OC WEEKLY for the past twenty years, the last ten as their lead art critic. In 2017, he received funding from the Kenneth A. Picerne Foundation to curate the art exhibition “Saved by Beauty,” a collection of photographs and art by homeless women. He is currently facilitating VOICES: Veterans Storytelling Project for Arts Orange County, and teaching creative writing to female inmates at OC Jail whenever he can get a grant to do it. He graduated from Coastline in 2018 and is finishing off his English degree and teaching credential at Cal State Fullerton.

Jax NTP

Jax NTP holds an MFA in Creative Writing from CSU Long Beach. They currently teach critical thinking, reading, and writing through literature and composition courses at Golden West College, Irvine Valley College, and Cypress College. Jax is the Assistant Editor for Fiction at *The Offing Magazine* and Poetry Editor for *Indicia Lit*. They were the Semi-finalist for *Gold Wake Press’s Poetry Book Contest*. Their words have been featured in *Apogee Journal*, *Berkeley Poetry Review*, and *Hobart Literary Magazine* **Tweet** @jaxntp

Chelsea Hausen

I’m Chelsea Hausen, majoring in Sociology, Psychology, and Social and Behavioral Science. I am in route to become a sex therapist through further education at the University of California, Irvine. I have experience working with people with autism. In doing so, I have learned to be much more humble, a trait I’d like to share with others. I hope this essay will shed light on some areas of autism you didn’t know existed, and push you to walk with more compassion, every day.

Duane Ratzlaff

Duane Ratzlaff has taught part-time in the ESL Department at Coastline since 2008 after his teaching position at a small private college in Southern California was eliminated when the

school's ESL program was discontinued. He says that in hindsight he is so glad that he was set free to teach at Coastline. Duane earned his B. A. in English at California State College at Los Angeles (n.d.) and his M. A. in English (Teaching English as a Second Language) at Oklahoma State University. Between these two schools, he did everything from cleaning toilets for the Forest Service to studying glassblowing at the University of Toledo to working with cattle on the plains of western Oklahoma. He lives in Huntington Beach with his wife and two of his four adult children.

Dania Ayah Alkhoul

Dania Ayah Alkhoul (a.k.a. Lady Narrator) is a Syrian writer, poet, and author, born and raised in Southern California. She earned her B.A. in Sociology and her M.A. in Public Policy & Administration from Cal State Long Beach. In 2017, she released her second book *Oceans & Flames*, a collection of poetry shedding light on her experience with, and survival of, domestic violence, and is set to release her third early 2020. She currently manages the nonprofit *A Country Called Syria*, which she and her mother cofounded in 2012, a traveling exhibition of the history, culture, and stories of their homeland.

Elizabeth Cragg

Elizabeth Cragg is a Southern California native. She is currently studying English with an emphasis in creative writing at Coastline Community College and hopes to transfer next fall. The purpose of her writing is to express her thoughts and experiences around life and death. She hopes her writing can open up a dialog on these difficult topics as well as discuss all of the interpersonal relationships we experience along the way. Some of her interest outside of school are travel, volunteering with the marine life at the Aquarium of the Pacific, and her rescue dog, Calvin.

Mia Lehman

Miantha Alvarez Lehman (AKA Mia Lehman) is a 22-year-old student at Coastline Community College studying to be a History major. She works part time to put herself through school as a social media manager for the hospitality company Shilo Inns. After obtaining 3 different associate degrees at the end of Spring Term 2020, she plans to transfer to a four-year university In the Fall to pursue an undergraduate degree in History. She has submitted essays and won awards and honorable mentions for her literary works in the past, but this is her first debut of college level writing. She wants to personally thank her past English professor, Oceana Callum, for encouraging her to submit this specific essay to her school's literary magazine and for being a constant supporter and mentor in her development as a writer.

Alexis Marfil

Born in East Los Angeles, Alexis B. Marfil is a full-time online student and currently resides in the community of Boyle Heights. After spending two years at Orange Coast College she decided to take a year off from school to work full-time outside of California. During this time she worked in Hawaii and Costa Rica teaching students from around the globe. She has returned to school a declared English major and works full-time as a Learning Center Instructor for the non-profit New Economics for Women. She enjoys reading poetry from the romantic era and her favorite poets include Lord Byron and Percy Shelley. On her free-time she enjoys writing poetry, reading, spending time with friends, traveling, and playing with her dog Azul.

Billy Hier

Billy Hier has always loved the written word. It started with reading comic books and evolved into eclectic genre exploration, reading philosophical works, scientific writings, and essays. While consuming art was and is his pleasure, producing art has also been a defining feature of Billy's life. He is a visual artist, a musician, and a writer. He is attending college in the hopes of becoming an English teacher. While Billy happily considers himself an artist, he mostly thinks of himself as a proud father. He has a one little boy and one little girl, in addition to one very supportive wife.

[“The Forgotten AIDS Activists” by Dave Barton](#)

I'm surrounded by protestors, male and female, wearing black t-shirts with bright pink triangles and the words "Silence=Death" printed on them. It's 1991 and we're at the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., chanting "Healthcare is a right! ACT UP!" as we sit on the steps, arms linked, blocking access to Congress. The police are putting on pastel blue rubber gloves, attaching handfuls of plastic zip tie handcuffs to the utility belts on their hips. They think all of us infected with HIV and the gloves are because they're afraid to touch us.

Over the past several years, documentaries about the late 80s direct action group ACT UP have begun showing up in theatres and on television. The wave of nostalgia for all things 80s and the desire for a more activist community, as well as the group's in-your-face tactics and iconography, has made critics sympathetic, earning the films positive reviews. The troubling thing is that no matter how good they are, they're often incomplete. Films *How to Survive a Plague*, *Vito*, and *Larry Kramer in Love and Anger* generally focus on the gay male leadership within the organization, despite the large presence of lesbian activists. While the talking head formats may briefly include female leaders, the

film or interview rarely goes into any depth on why lesbians, who suffered the lowest number of AIDS casualties of all populations, were even involved in the first place. More importantly, accounts never address how women's participation turned regional protests into a national movement about Universal Health Care. This is my third ACT UP arrest with Judy, the woman sitting next to me, her elbows locked tightly with mine. We'd been arrested in Sacramento recently, protesting the abysmal conditions in women's prison facilities by taking over the offices of the Director of the Department of Corrections and the Assistant Deputy Director of Health Care Services. Previously, we were part of an action where we sat-in at INS offices in Los Angeles, protesting the government's banning of HIV+ people from entering the country. As the Feds begin walking towards us, Judy turns to me and says, "Don't let go."

In the 70s, second-wave feminists had created a place for women where they could talk about and work out issues without fear of male interference or influence. Unfortunately, as painfully detailed in Susan Brownmiller's story "Sisterhood is Powerful" for *The New York Times*, the uphill battle to be taken seriously by society and not be dismissed as "man haters" led straight feminist leaders like Betty Friedan to target and remove lesbians—a group Friedan derisively called the "lavender menace"—from chapters of NOW. After years of working on women's issues, they suddenly got the cold shoulder and a shove out the open door from some of the same spaces and organizations they'd helped form. No longer with a political "home," these women went on to take what they'd learned from the movement and use it in more deliberately provocative political actions, while mainstream feminism continued to try and find its place at the patriarchal table.

Our arms are yanked apart and we're separated before we realize it. Judy swears loudly, screaming profanity, and goes limp, forcing the police to drag her to the bus we're going to be thrown into. I'm a big guy and the idea of letting them carry me away is anathema for several reasons. Because I'm already intimidating in size, they could just say fuck it and drop me on purpose, drag me so that I was injured, or grin and bear it and then hurt themselves. I don't like any of those options, so I stand as the police lift me

and speak in soft, polite tones. None of that stops the policeman from ratcheting the zip ties on my wrists even tighter behind my back, of course, especially when I tell him that it hurts.

Feminist ideology was fundamental for the advancement of political thinking about direct action in several ways. Marches and bra-burning gave rise to provocative thinking about gender, asking difficult questions about women's current roles vs. society's expectations. Within that conversation about men and women, people began talking about sexuality, birth control, and healthcare in more explicit and progressive ways. A recent interview with activist Jan Speller, who identified as a lesbian separatist prior to the AIDS epidemic, notes that any previous hostile distance between gay men and lesbians was shattered during the height of the AIDS epidemic:

"Women's Studies classes [taught me] at the core of homophobia lies sexism, that gay men... are reviled and punished by straight men because they're seen as having defected... that they had somehow become like women." As women continued to open up the conversation and unite in support of each other, the simple act of saying "no" to oppression, and the resulting successes that resulted from that confrontation, emboldened women and ensured that their concerns would be noticed, even if society was still slow to take much action on their account.

There's too many of us to go into jail cells, so the Feds dump us in a detention room for processing. The room looks like a class, with a hundred blue and gray plastic chairs instead of wooden desks. After they take my picture and get my fingerprints, I'm free to go and sit in one of the uncomfortable chairs where most of the others are sitting, chatting and laughing, high on adrenalin from the protest and arrest. In passing, I notice that the men and women arrested have separated, each group gathered in their own little cluster together in the room.

I don't see Judy.

The first cases of AIDS began showing up in Los Angeles in the early 80s. In 1986, the fundamentalist Christian group Operation Rescue began targeting abortion providers and family-planning clinics, harassing and intimidating women

that wanted their services. Feminist counter-protesters wore orange vests and linked arms in a human chain to protect the women from abuse, and there is little doubt that those early images of women standing their ground helped influence ACT UP when it formed a year later. Building on punk rock rebellion and queer theory, third-wave feminists began to engage again with the (gay) men that they had previously tried to get away from. In part, this was because time had passed, and the new generation of activists wasn't as strident about separation. The gay and lesbian rights movement was also in full force, and women were in a more aware and less vulnerable state, having created tools to manage and circumvent male control. Activist and intellectual Sarah Schulman says it like this in her book *My American History*. "The coming together of feminist political perspectives and organizing experience with gay men's high sense of entitlement and huge resources proved to be a historically transforming event." (11) While many of the women that got involved at the beginning had gay male friends that were sick, there's some question of whether women were used initially for their "manpower," as desperately needed bodies on the front lines of protest, or taken advantage of for their caretaking capabilities. While still full of anger after years of being slighted in their own sexualities and healthcare, there was definitely a political element to things, but many lesbian's initial involvement seemed to be inspired by the simple desire just to help their friends. Speller notes, "We were an embattled community; not one [of us] believed that the country would do any more to save lesbians if it were us and not gay men dying."

Judy is apart from everyone, sullen and in the midst of a depressive episode. She grunts when I sit down next to her, and turns, saying out of the blue, "You know if the shoe was on the other foot and this was a protest about breast cancer funding, none of you guys would be here." I tell her that's not true, and start to argue, but my words sound empty and unconvincing. I know she's probably right.

Women infected by sexual contact or intravenous drug use were initially ignored or misdiagnosed because AIDS was considered a gay disease and not something that women could get. "[A]ssumptions about AIDS in the early years

of the epidemic...had effects...on who was diagnosed, and on how the disease was treated, both medically and politically..." (Diedrich 28). That ignorance continued for some time because women's symptoms manifested in their bodies in a markedly different way than in men's. In women, AIDS aped pelvic inflammatory disease, HPV, uterine cancers, menstrual problems, and yeast infections, some often going undetected or even excused away until the woman was struck down with full-blown symptoms. This meant that ACT UP women had to refocus the attention of mostly male activists to include women's health. They did this with women-led demonstrations and education around sexual health, including proper condom use, and directed their attention at hospital's ignorance about women's symptoms. This flurry of action only intensified after the Supreme Court's 1989 decision banning abortion funds to federally-funded groups that offered young women counseling around reproductive issues. It resulted in an education and action wing of the group being formed, Women's Health Action Mobilization (WHAM). (Orleck 189). Education was a slow process for some, with many gay men having little understanding of women's bodies, but the result was that things became more inclusive. "The support men in ACT UP gave to the formation of Women's Caucuses in ACT UP chapters was heartening," says Speller. "They weren't necessarily going to do the work, but supported the work and showed up for actions on behalf of women."

Despite the hard work of activists, it wasn't until 1991 that the Centers for Disease Control finally expanded its definitions of AIDS to include women's symptoms. During that three years, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), HIV infection and AIDS grew from the eighth biggest killer of women between the ages of 25 and 44 in 1988 to the fifth leading cause for those same groups in 1991. If lesbian women hadn't raised their voices, those numbers would have been much, much larger.

A decade later, I hear that Judy is sick with breast cancer.

Once the best of friends, we even considered having a child together, but now haven't spoken for years. She has never told me why she decided to ghost our relationship, refusing to speak with me even when I call her after I hear the

news. I tell her roommate to say that I love her and am there for her, but nothing comes of it. She dies a couple of months later. I never even got to say goodbye.

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"Hysterectomy Wanted" by Jax NTP

at twenty i was certain i didn't want to be the wanted maiden
i wanted to be with her — prepositions are tricky when mother
tongues are devoid of them, of course, being off course hetero
proposes problems when you're off white too
letters are excrement of identities being last is better
than being the only child and choosing not to reproduce
since i wanted a hysterectomy and pickled kumquat skin
assimilation is internalized hatred the black crows of self erasure
superstition allows for closure clarity and bridges distance
small strategies about the self come easy with acute pain
an ending of a poem makes transformation seem possible
a riddle is inertia's plaything prolonging death, dear climax
if i were a boy i could easily reject reproduction
lineage is a reminder of its own religion risk
only if you control the dice since forgiveness
is a motionless act of gypsum light and morning why is it
almost impossible to absent yourself from a collective fate
without familiarity of my assigned gender i am less

"Autism Spectrum Disorder Causes and Effects" by Chelsea Hausen

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is one of the most troubling disorders to have within the spectrum of special needs (Berger, 2015). Autism is characterized as a developmental disorder that causes serious challenges with behavior, communication, and social skills. People with ASD

behave and learn differently than most. Their interactions with others, their problem solving, and the way they think is often very different from those without this disorder (CDC, 2016). ASD now includes many syndromes and other disorders, such as Asperger's syndrome, and autistic disorder (CDC, 2015).

Children with ASD may be very interested in people but not know how to interact with others, avoid eye contact, isolate themselves, repeat actions, have trouble adapting to changes, or have trouble expressing their needs using normal words and actions (CDC, 2016). This can be very troublesome and can be the root of behavior problems in the future. Children that have trouble communicating, often grow agitated and behaviors begin to present themselves. Children with autism spectrum disorder have repetitive or restrictive patterns of behavior and are often fascinated with "trains, lights, or spinning objects" (Berger 2015, p.367).

According to the CDC, "about 1 in 68 children has been identified with autism spectrum disorder" (2016). Boys are 4.5 times more likely to have autism than girls, and 1 in 6 children are developmentally disabled (CDC, 2016). In a study conducted about autism prevalence in school aged children, across 254 counties in Texas, a data collection concluded that there was fewer autistic children found in schools with a higher rate of Hispanic children. Higher socioeconomic status and the density of diagnostic physicians in each area, explain differences in autism rates for non-Hispanic Whites but not for Hispanics.

Although some children with ASD show symptoms within their first year of life, some seem normal and suddenly return to a less developed state at about age 2 or 3. "Most children are diagnosed at age 4" (Berger 2015, p.367). More than a century ago, ASD was considered rare and people who were autistic were classified as "mentally retarded" (Berger 2015, p.367).

Autism has only recently gained more understanding, and the term "mental retardation" is no longer applied to it. People with this disorder can still be high functioning members of society. Without the natural social skills used in daily life, a lot of people with ASD are highly skilled in tuning others out and hold some of the most prestigious careers in accounting, computer programming, and other careers that require an immense amount of attention to detail and patience.

Physical signs begin to present themselves internally with the brain. In autistic children, "their brains are unusually large and full, which makes communication between neurons less efficient" (Berger 2015, p.146). Without the loss of dendrite's, the brain surprisingly does not have the chance to increase brain power. Pruning is an important part of forming a functioning person and helps rid of excess dendrites to create space for further growth. Children who have autism, have less pruning, which in turn, presents slowness, "their dendrites are too dense and long, making thinking difficult" (Berger 2015, p.146). By age 2, autistic children have a head larger than average, and "their sensory cortex may be hypersensitive, making them unusually upset by noise, light, and other sensations" (Berger 2015, p.368). People with Autism will often cover their ears or avoid eye contact because they are overstimulated. To become more self-aware, they may cover their ears and making humming noises.

Berger quotes Temple Grandin when stating autistic children feel "like an anthropologist on Mars" (2015 p.367). They are less likely to interact with people. Some children never speak and spend long periods of time playing with the same objects. Some children with ASD may be highly talented in mathematics or geometry (Berger, 2015). As stated above, children with autism often have an interest in people but do not know how to relate to them and they may begin to feel isolated. Regardless of their intellect or interest in others, they lack the social skills to thrive in social situations and form lasting relationships with peers.

People with autism often have trouble identifying and expressing their emotions, which is called alexithymia. Often, people who experience alexithymia, tend to suppress their emotions instead of reappraisal (seeing bad experiences in a new light). People with these developmental issues are more inclined to suppress their emotions rather than working through them, says Psychology scholar Andrea Samson, and James Gross who is a Stanford Psychology Professor. According to the empirical journal, “Understanding One’s Own Emotions in Cognitively-Able Preadolescents with Autism”, children with ASD had a harder time coming up with narrative accounts based on personalized experiences that invoked certain emotions compared with typically developed children. With different levels of severity under the autism spectrum, children with different emotional issues will need to be treated on an individual basis and receive interventions tailored specifically to them.

As children develop, motor skills are formed. During an experiment conducted titled “Motor and Tactile Perceptual Skill Differences Between Individuals with High-Functioning Autism and Typically Developed Individuals”, it was concluded that those with high-functioning autism (HFA) have incoordination, and this may be a core feature of a neurological disorder. The differences between HFA and typically developed children increased with age, as all motor measures and grip strength were delayed in children with HFA. This information is found to be beneficial for medical professionals working with young children with high-functioning autism. With more knowledge of this disorder, medical professionals and caregivers can take steps to work on these issues when they’re first presented.

Prevention is not a highly covered topic in the realm of autism. Experts have not identified a solution to prevent the disorder (Web MD, 2015). Vaccinations are continuously debated over being the cause of autism, but studies have not proven this to be true yet. To concentrate on helping prevent further complications later down the line, grip strength improvements detected and improved on while the child is young, can greatly improve children’s independence as they age in caring for themselves. In addition, early interventions help children while engaging in school tasks and playing, according to the empirical journal “Motor and Tactile Perceptual Skill Differences Between Individuals with High-Functioning Autism and Typically Developed Individuals”. According to Berger, it is known that biology plays an important role (genes, birth complications, copy number abnormalities, prenatal injury, and perhaps chemicals during infancy and fetal development) (2015).

Treatment is a hard subject to cover, especially with parents and caregivers with children who have autism. Symptoms can arise for many reasons, making treatment difficult. Parents often become irate and sue doctors, schools, or the government, and some parents subject their children to harmful medications and treatments that can affect their health, and in some cases, even cause death. Depending on the severity and form of autism one encounters, there are several options for easing the physical, behavioral, and cognitive problems that are present in many autistic children. Physical therapy, dietary changes, behavioral therapy, music or art therapy, and even communication therapy have all proven to be beneficial.

Community training and parental support are all vital parts of coping with children with the disorder. When parents are given the tools to properly respond to behavioral outbursts, communication barriers, and physical limitations, everyone is able to thrive. The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention announced that the number of people with measles had reached an all-time high since being declared eliminated in the year 2000 (Kodish, 2014). With parent’s sudden interest in declining vaccinations for their children, deadly infectious diseases are coming back after decades of near eradication. Parents now have a platform to form communities that

rally against vaccinations, and gain support via the internet, which has enabled greater communication and the spread of myths and misinformation.

In a 20/20 interview, Carly Fleishmann, a young girl with autism, who had been through years of intervention and struggled with stemming and out of control body movements, finally reached for help one day. At the age of 11, Carly ran to a computer and typed the words that would forever change her, and her family's life. She typed "hurt" and "help" to her parent's amazement. With encouragement and time, Carly was finally able to convey her emotions with the use of her laptop, and help her parents understand her feelings of being trapped in a body she had no control over. With this information, her behavior issues have subsided with time and effort from all parties. She is more independent, calm, and is now writing a novel. Carly communicates with people all around the world via YouTube, and answers people's questions about her transformation and disability.

With dedication, hard work, and time, I believe autism spectrum disorder will be better understood, examined, and one day preventable. Although the disorder has not proven to have negative consequences for all the people it affects, it would be a huge step in the health care industry, and touch so many people's lives if we were able to find a way to prevent or better control the outcomes of autism. I believe research will expand, doctors, caregivers, families, friends, and communities will all put their heads together to find ways to work with children and adults with autism, and create a brighter future. I hope Carly will be the inspiration for someone to seek further education, treatment, or intervention and find purpose in their own life.

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“Lola” by Duane Ratzlaff

I wish I'd never done it. But I was only 16. And who doesn't do dumb things when you're 16? I was the baby. That was another part of the problem. Daddy called me “The Princess.” You can imagine how my four older sisters liked that. Then he bought me a new Corvette for my 16th birthday, a Corvette that we couldn't really afford. Especially since Daddy had just lost his job as night janitor at the city jail.

I tried to reason with my sisters: “Not my fault, girls. I don't even like really want the car.” Somehow that didn't make them feel any better or like me anymore. I felt like Joseph. And all he got was a robe of many colors, not a C5.

But what was my fault was having Erica likes Alex painted on the rear window. It didn't cost much—\$20. My sister Jasmine's boyfriend Manuel did it. It wasn't that it was ugly. No. I really liked it. Manuel did a great job. First, there was the *likes*. “What's with ‘likes,’ Erica?” “What are you, in like 6th grade?” “Dumb.” My sisters were all over me.

And I had to agree. It was dumb, but I guess I just kind of panicked when Manny asked me what I wanted painted on the window. I was so crazy for Alex. It *could* have been loves. Sure. But now I'm glad I didn't use loves. Really glad. Alex and I broke up two months after I had his name painted on the ‘Vette. It started when he said something about my love handles.

But the end came when I went to In-N-Out with my sister Maria and saw Alex there with a girl. A girl with no love handles and a tank top that must have shrunk in the wash. There was no way that was his sister, either. No way. After all, he was an only child.

I'm pretty proud of myself, though, for coming up with a really cool solution. I got Dad to give me a dog, a very cute little Chihuahua. And I named her Alex. Yup. She was a she. But lots of girls are named Alex, right? And I do like Alex. The dog. At least that's what I tell everybody who asks, “Who's Alex?”

I'm just glad that Daddy's favorite song was The Kinks' “Lola.” He gave me the car. That's why I had Manny paint “Lola” on the front windshield. Who cares that Lola is really a guy in the song? I don't like ever talk to anyone old enough to know that. Anyway, half of them are dead. I just wish I hadn't covered the car—even the taillights—with flower stickers. Dumb. I'll have to give it away. Or drive it for the rest of my life.

“Tiny Plant” by Dania Alkhoul

t i n y p l a n t

A weed is any plant that's growing where you don't want it. Some weeds are ugly. Some are pretty. But nearly all share the nasty habit of growing out of control, coming up everywhere, and making you want to shut yourself in a dark room...

—Steve Bender

Weed is feminine in Arabic,
'ishbeh daarra—a vicious herb,
nicknamed harshly
for her hopeful habit to grow.
Man calls her ugly, nasty,
unwanted, out of control.
Why does man hate what grows
independent; what learns to thrive
despite poison to its roots?
Our world teaches us to cut more
than to sew, to fear
what keeps on living, even after death.
Like the earth, after rain
seeps through its parched skin.
Like a weed, after man paved
the roads above her home.
At seven—I remember—mama
pointing a ginger pink finger
to the wet pavement; her smile, divine.
Overlooking the contrasting short greens,
Look, she says, with God so loudly
on her breath, Subhanallah,
look how this tiny plant
has just enough strength to break even
the thickest concrete
man needs hammers to crack through.
Mama's vision is resilience—
seeing beauty in everything,
specifically the overlooked.
The hope entangled
between arms of weeds,
outstretched at the marvel of survival.
Of rebellion, of woman's nature.
How can hands defile what teaches bodies
persistence?
The manifestation of rebirth and relentlessness.
What plants hope beneath our soles
but still stays soft
in the process of breakthroughs.

“Pas de deux of mortality” and “Belfry Bats” by Elizabeth Cragg

Pas De Deux of Mortality : A Memoir

There is no word for it
It is a feeling I do not know how to place
I have tried to forget, but my mind's eye remembers
The way the rain fell, that distinct smell which should have been lingering in the air
But it was the scent of bleach that stung my nostrils
Lingering in it like memories
A recollection of the time when crimson stained the asphalt
Teaching me for the first time that death does not discriminate
A shocking realization, firefighters scrape away all that remains
But there is no way to eradicate these images from my mind
No amount of astringent that can remove them
The first cut tears off the veil
But an innocent loss, it's the sharper end of a two-edged sword
It slices the words:
There is no age requirement to meet death
A body small as mine is lifted from the concrete
A proverbial clock stops ticking
I didn't understand. My grandfather months before, lowered down
Their deaths paralleled, hand in hand.
The young and old
Both swallowed in fresh earth
This concept, too large for my tiny palms to grasp

Belfry Bats

There are bats in the belfry
A fox in my henhouse
My pinprick mind, misplaced in the haystack that is the universe
I mean my sanity, I'm losing it
But, today was a good day
I woke myself up before anxiety did
It seems that I folded origami nightmares in my sleep
I opened my bedside drawer to find them all lined up, neatly placed
So, I got up and washed out the memories of you
Washed every last ounce out of my hair in the shower
Conditioning my mind to let you go,
I watch as my thoughts swirl down the drain
I balled up the remnants of you in the form of sheets
Washed you out along with every last ounce of dust
Every crumb
And now I feel fine

Detergent is another liquid cure
A remedy I've created
Spell I have concocted
All the steps I have taken
In order to forget you

“College May Not Be the Golden Ticket” by Charmaine Tivis-Watts

To go to college or not? That is the question of society nowadays. From the time that babies are in their mothers' wombs, parents are starting a college fund. To the time those babies are receiving their diplomas, they more than likely have already had their pick of colleges and are now waiting to receive their acceptance letters. But is getting that 4-year college degree really the answer to success? While many believe it is, there are others who are starting to believe that this may not be the case. In the article “College is a Waste of Time,” Dale Stephens believes that college does not prepare students with the skills necessary to make it in the business world. Naomi Riley believes in her article “What is a College Education really worth,” that there are so many oddly specific classes in colleges and universities that most are not getting the benefits of their majors. Both authors agree that the cost of college is very expensive and ever rising. With college tuition on the rise, students are finding themselves in a large amount of debt after school (Riley). While college is important for the success of some people, it can be a huge waste of time and money, especially if you not strategic on your expectations of the future.

One thing that everyone knows about college is that it is costly. According to Dale Stephens, “The College Board Policy Center found that the cost of public university tuition is about 3.6 times higher today than it was 30 years ago, adjusted for inflation” (Stephens). “Americans owed more than \$1.3 trillion in student loans, more than two and a half times what they owed a decade earlier”(Shell). You can clearly see this, by the amount of debt that college graduates are in. College debt in the U.S. has even surpassed credit card debt. Unfortunately, it is so unforgivable that people cannot even escape it when filing for bankruptcy (Stephens). This is a steep investment that could take years to recoup (Billitteri). With all of this debt that students are putting themselves into, is it even necessary to get a job? It may not be. Ellen Shell says, “According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, fewer than 20 percent of American jobs actually require a bachelor's degree. By 2026, the bureau estimates that this proportion will rise, but only to 25 percent” (Shell). Investing thousands of dollars into a college degree and putting one's self into large amounts of debt, for only 25% or less chance of even needing it seems hardly worth it. If you found a career choice that you were thoroughly interested in that required a degree, and you sacrificed your financial history to obtain your bachelor's degree, there is a chance you would still not be adequately prepared to pursue that career.

Employers are becoming increasingly frustrated by the lack of skills that college graduates are demonstrating. It is becoming increasingly more difficult for employers to distinguish between candidates, just based on their degrees. With social media, people can list their merits online for all employers to see, which make college degrees less relevant (Stephen). Alexander Nazaryan quotes Adam Corolla, a conservative activist, in his article “What is College Good For? Absolutely Nothing...,” who states, ““Millennials are not adequately prepared for the workforce.’ They are paying more than ever, but getting little in return” (Nazaryan). With all the different classes offered, it can be very hard for a student to be focused on a particular subject, especially if they are confused as to what they want to do for a career. They could take a class in Women's History on Monday and a class on Business Math on Tuesday. In 2010, the American

Council of Trustees and Alumni, published a report called “What Will They Learn.” In the report they surveyed the curricula of over 700 colleges. They found that only 4% required students to take an economic class, a little over 25% of public and 5% of private colleges and universities required a single course in American History or government. And out of all these schools, 61% colleges require students to take a college-level mathematics course (Riley). It is no wonder that “Executives at U.S. companies routinely complain about the lack of reading, writing and math skills in the recent graduates they hire” (Riley). According to the book “Academically Adrift” 36% of college graduates did not demonstrate any improvement in “Critical thinking, complex reasoning or writing after four years of college” (Stephen). If students are investing thousands of dollars toward an education, it would only seem fair that they leave knowing more than when they came in. For those students who are looking to expand their knowledge, college might not be the wisest choice. Even though there are several reasons for one to oppose to getting a 4-year college degree, several people feel otherwise.

There are many people who feel that college is the golden ticket to a bright successful future. In the article “Fact Sheet: A College Degree: Surest Pathway,” the author states, “Pursuing high-quality postsecondary education is one of the most important investments a student can make and is the surest path to the middle class in our country. Americans with college degrees are more likely to live healthier lives, be more civically engaged in their communities, have good-paying jobs, and experience greater job security” (Fact Sheet). This might be the case, depending on your previous economic status. Ellen Shell talks about in her article “College May Not Be Worth it Anymore,” That a college degree is actually worth less to people who were born in poverty. Economists Tim Bartik and Brad Hershbein discovered this from this data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. This consisted of 50 years of interviews with 18,000 Americans. They followed the lives of children of poor, middle class, and wealthy families. They found that college graduates who were born in poverty only earned on average slightly more than children who only graduated from high school and were from middle class families (Shell). This shows that a college degree might not get you the high paying job that you long for, depending on how you grew up.

A higher education does not necessarily mean a 4-year college degree, a 2-year degree can be just as effective. Community College is not given enough credit for what it provides. It is an affordable option that might open more doors to a higher salary than a high school diploma. Liz Addison describes community college as a “hidden public service gem,” that “They offer a network of affordable future, of accessible hope, and an option to dream” (Addison).

Community colleges, unlike universities, allow students to explore different career choices, get freshly graduated high schoolers used to the college experience, and gain many of the benefits that having a college degree has to offer without breaking the bank. Another option to consider would be a vocational school. This is a short-term higher education option, typically 6 months to 2 years. In Jeffrey Selingo’s article “No Matter the Label, Education Beyond High School Plays Critical Role in Success,” according to Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce in less than 10 years from now there will be 16 million middle-skill job openings. This requires higher than a high school diploma and less than a 4-year degree. There are jobs who only require a year-long certificate or a 2-year long degree that could sometimes pay more than jobs that require a 4-year degree.

Pursing a higher education does not necessarily mean getting a 4-year degree at a university. I am not against getting a higher education, I am for being strategic about it. As Thomas Billitter said in his article “The Value of a College Education,” “we have to be very intelligent about

what we expect to get out of our education” (Billitter). If you research what you want to do as a career and find out what the requirements are, you might find that there is no need to pursue a higher education at all to get what you want. This would save a lot of time, and especially money. College is not a requirement to the American Dream.

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“Without Our Past We Have No Future” by Mia Lehman

“Riveted together in Belfast long before any of us were born, it stretched upward farther than we could see into the inky blackness. It was as if we had discovered the ancient walls of Troy in the middle of the night. The walls of Titanic stood before us, frozen in time.”

(Robert Ballard)— on seeing the Titanic for the first time in 1987.

When one thinks of the scientific discipline of archaeology, the mind is instantly transported to the fantastical adventures of Indiana Jones, Lara Croft: Tomb Raider, and even the patriotic endeavors of the historian Ben Gates of the National Treasure franchise. Yet, contrary to the media frenzy, archaeology still remains a scientific field; it simply has the capacity and the hopeful promise of the adventure that is often portrayed in the popular misconception shown in the cinematic and literary universes. That being said, these champion figures do have one thing in common with the reality of archaeology. They face the threats and inner turmoil that many real-life scientists in this profession deal with to this day. From grave robbing, to dealing with sensitive native culture and beliefs, and the use of artifacts for own selfish gain; these are all

harsh truths that our fictional daring adventurers had to face. This concept, that is many times over the antagonists' plot in our childhood movies, has an element of truth behind it. So, what are these dangers? Are they as hazardous as seen in the movies? In a sense—yes. These specific threats pose to obstruct our understanding of our history as a species.

In recent years, the archaeological community has taken steps to remedy these threats and be more sensitive to cultural traditions and ancestry. Unfortunately, not every professional in the scientific community feels this way. A professor of anthropology at Arizona State University states that; "What we have here is scientists checking their brains at the door and ignoring science in favor of political correctness, It's disgusting" (Geoffrey Clark). In connotation, Clark's statement has some truth to it: that scientists—are in essence—scientists, and they need to honor that code. Nonetheless, due to overwhelming protests seen from native groups demanding respect of ancestry and origin—on top of the ruining of artifacts from grave robbers. the practice of archaeology must change and keep pace with the constantly changing society it seeks to benefit. Therefore, the need to find a middle ground is of high importance in order to appease both the steadfast scientific exploration, as Geoffrey Clark mentions, and the fluctuating cultural boundaries that archaeology so tenderly dances along.

The media portrays archaeology as a treasure hunting expedition filled with adventure, danger, and almost always with just a hint of romance. The ultimate, and arguably the most renowned example of this portrayal, is Harrison Ford's representation of the spirited adventurer. Indiana Jones. Ewa Wasilewska, an assistant professor of Anthropology at the University of Utah asserts that; "Indiana Jones movies have popularized archaeology as a romantic discipline that allows for spectacular discoveries of forgotten civilizations" (Wasilewska). This statement articulates the adventurous side of archaeology, but we must also remember that these movies exemplify the very real controversies that archaeologists face in the real world. Jones faces adversaries that seek to use the artifacts he so eagerly protects for evil by using and keeping their worth (and powers if you so believe) for themselves, or by simply selling them to the highest bidder: eternally lost to the black market forever. Yet, what we as spectators, readers, and viewers must consider is that almost all forms of stories have very real foundations. From myths, to legends, to cinematic endeavors, all are almost certainly constructed on realities. In this case, the Indiana Jones series, and many other works that utilize archeology, constantly are inclined to portray the real threats that many archaeologists face every day when showing up for work.

What are these archaeological threats that are seen in the media? Well, it is not the ever portrayed apocalypse, which seems to be every fantasy-adventure genre's narrative. No. the threats that are depicted are ones that take place in reality. Peter Hiscock at the Australian National University implies that scripts seen in movies may seem embellished, but they portray an element of truth; "...the archaeological activities depicted may be considered exaggerated, dramatized, and romanticized, but they are also seen as fundamentally honest images of the work of archaeologists" (Hiscock). Of course, this is not in reference to the supernatural phenomena we have all come to love and look forward to seeing on the big screen. This statement is really referencing the very real controversies that archaeology poses and faces in reality. Such as grave robbing, the sensitivities of certain ethnic groups, and whether or not artifacts should be released to their country of origin rather than be in a museum. All of these disputes have been dealt with in our favorite cinematic works, and some may think that is where the dangers conclude. Unfortunately, these hazards are extremely real and have significant consequences. Moreover, the disagreements seen from both within and outside the archeological community, stem from these threats and have forced a reevaluation on how the field of archeology navigates.

One of the most politically centered controversies that stems from archaeology, is the placement of the artifacts of value. Many argue that either they should be kept in the country and institute that discovered them, or the people and country they derived from. The argument that wishes for artifacts to remain or be returned to their country of origin, is one that prioritizes the preservation of heritage and culture. Whereas the counterargument that stems from a place that advocates knowledge and preservation of such objects, asserts that the many developing countries of their origin are unable to provide such luxuries. For example, Robert Anderson, the director of the British Museum, defends the museum's right to house foreign artifacts; "it is a museum of the world, and its purpose is to display the works of mankind of all periods and of all places" (*Archaeology Today*). Yet, many people argue that artifacts should essentially 'go back home' due to their importance and the impact it has on the native culture it was created from and for. Nevertheless, both opposing sides can agree that "...the best way to manage archaeological resources is to make the public more knowledgeable about its culture and heritage"; which is synonymous with both the scientific and cultural aspects of this controversy (*Archaeology Today*).

Perhaps the most popular debate seen in the scientific discipline of archaeology is how this practice affects specific cultural groups. Not only has this led to furious protests over sacred burial grounds, beliefs, and ancestry, but it has sparked a new age of "political correctness" that formerly was unnecessary in this trade. (*Archaeology today*). As mentioned previously by Geoffrey Clark, some experts in this field believe that to utilize a process besides the scientific method, is sacrilege to the teachings of science. For example, the excavation of Native American tribal grounds, has caused many scientists to relinquish their work in order to be culturally sensitive to the conflicting point of views seen from these groups. Lynn Sebastian, an Archaeologist at the SRI foundation states that "We've reached a point where some of us [archaeologists] have lost perspective about this" (*Archaeology Today*). Essentially, she—and many others—fear that being too politically correct and overly sensitive to opposition of native people and their beliefs goes against everything science stands for and may very well contribute to the decline of this specific discipline. However, for all the disagreements seen from within this community and amongst its advocates, there is one common concept that trumps these differences. "Archeologists of all schools can unite on one common cause—that of finding ways to protect ancient sites from being plundered and destroyed" (*Archaeology boom*). This leads us into our next controversy—the practice of grave robbing for antiquity dealers.

According to *Archaeology Today*, an article that describes both the pros and cons of the effects of archaeology, states; "Looting is another problem, fed by a huge international demand for artifacts. Looters usually destroy sites, rendering them largely useless for future research" (*Archaeology Today*). As seen in the movies, grave robbers have one sole purpose: to find what they are looking for and disregard everything else. This concept is actually part of the accurate portrayal seen in the movies. Looters tend to ignore the historical significance of a potential archaeological site, ruining any potential of accurately analyzing its relics. Additionally, developers neglect to inform proper authorities if they find artifacts or sites of historical significance in fear that their projects would be shut down. If these factors persist, it could contribute to an inevitable decline of furthering research of our forgotten historical past. Thus, a new conceptual practice has been proposed—conservation archaeology.

Before delving into the concept of conservation archaeology; we must define the practice as it is today. According to the Hutchinson Dictionary of Ideas, archaeology is defined as; "Study of prehistory and history, based on the examination of physical remains. Principal activities include

preliminary field (or site) surveys, excavation (where necessary), and the classification, dating, and interpretation of finds” (Archaeology). As you can clearly see, there is no mention of preservation or conservation of the very sites these renowned historical finds are located at. Everyone, not only archaeologists, must remember that in years and centuries from now, new scientists will have to discover and survey these exact same sites. If scientists, looters, and businessmen continue to ruin these historically valued locations in the name of their ambitions, our history will be lost to the future generations.

What are we, if not our past? Without knowledge and understanding of it, history is doomed to repeat itself. Therefore, conservation archaeology contains the best of both worlds. It adheres to the scientific guidelines of the discipline, but understands the importance of the impact it has on the very sites it excavates and the people it affects. Ricardo Elia, professor of Archaeology at Boston University, states, “We’ve come to recognize that archaeological sites are non-renewable resources and must be treated as such” (*Archaeology Today*). Conservation archaeology also permits the affected groups of people to have more say and be a part of the scientific process; allowing them to oversee the practice of excavation and therefore allowing scientists to study. If not in greater detail. Their ancestry. Unfortunately, no proposal comes without negative advocates. Scientists argue that many in archaeology are forgetting what their job entails and are too afraid to essentially be an archaeologist; but in this case, the positives far outweigh the negatives.

The best-known example of conservation archaeology and the methodology it entails was the discovery of Tutankhamen’s tomb in 1922. C.W. Ceram, a well-known writer on archaeology, wrote; “The discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen represents the very summit of success in archaeological effort” (Archaeology Boom). This discovery was—and still remains—one of the most famed finds in the archeological world. Due to this prominence, the excavation that took place was of great importance in not only the treasures it unearthed, but the history and knowledge it contained of ancient Egypt. The location of King Tuts tomb (the Valley of the Kings) was famed for its wealth, and therefore looting and plundering ensued and many artifacts were lost forever. Fortunately, no one was able to find King Tuts tomb, therefore ensuring its historically significant survival. Because of this significance, the practice of archaeology that took place in its unearthing, cataloguing, and learning from the site was one of scientific and culturally sensitive methodology. “Egyptology ceased once and for all to be a random striking out into an unknown terrain and became a sort of cultural surveying process, marked by the strictest sort of adherence to method. ...” (C.W. Ceram, *Archaeology Today*). Thus, the conception of conservation archaeology was born.

The sense of adventure, wonder, and excitement of unknown treasures and lost worlds that archaeology has given us, is a form of childlike wonder that has shaped us as a society. By no means should this wonder cease its never-ending marvel of our ancient past. Archaeology is essentially the closest thing we have to modern day fairytales. It holds our eager captivation of the unknown with the adventures and myths it unearths; as seen in our favorite cinematic works. Imagine being an archaeologist (just like Indiana Jones) and seeing an ancient marvel for the first time since its creation centuries ago. Can you fathom the awe and the excitement you would feel if you had the privilege to experience such beauty? Knowledge is a privilege. Not a right; and conservation archaeology preserves this notion. Without our past, we have no future. Scientists who are firm on their linear way of thinking, need to let go of archaic notions of scientific principles, and accept the potential that the cooperation of culturally sensitive ideals can contain. Give into the endless possibilities and promise that conservation archaeology can hold:

"As I stepped on the first rung of the ladder, each of . . . my faithful native boys, left his place in turn and with a very solemn face shook hands with me and then went back again. It was not hard to read their thoughts. They were bidding me farewell, never expecting to see me again. Then, releasing my hold on the ladder, I sank like a bag of lead, leaving behind a silvery chain of bubbles. During the first ten feet of descent, the light rays changed from yellow to green and then to purplish black. After that I was in utter darkness." — Edward Thompson — descending in a diving suit into the Sacred Well in Chichen Itza in 1909 [with the help of natives].

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"The Eastside Plan" by Alexis Marfil

We shouldn't be afraid
They are not as strong as us.
We need to be brave
While not causing such a fuss.
Stuck within the grasp
Of a gang-infested hood
We are the lower class
Some of us bad but mostly good.
But they have not helped us.
Gentrification is their answer.
We must look to one another and trust
We can find the cure for our cancer.
A corrupt bunch of young disciples
Fell plague to heinous guides
They have taken our young people
And taught them to commit crimes.

And since we're so neglected
We are obliged to act
To look to ourselves for protection
And take our community back.

William Hier, "The Darkness that Comes Before"

'Like a drug, the machine is useful, dangerous and habit-forming. The oftener one surrenders to it the tighter its grip becomes.'

George Orwell

Art is antithetical to authoritarianism, the two cannot coexist because one elucidates the absurdity of the other. Absurdity does not imply frivolity though, as George Orwell saw in his lifetime. Orwell railed against authoritarianism and its most pernicious tool - censorship - as he said "The oftener one surrenders to it the tighter its grip becomes..." The endgame of coercive authority is totalitarianism, a mindset which is brutal, absolutist, and deadly. Totalitarianism is a terrible caduceus merging extremist political ideals into singular machines of suffering and control. In Cyrus Eosphoros' article, "Classroom Censorship Can Improve the Learning Environment," Eosphoros outlines his belief that censoring particularly incendiary art, hurtful speech, and concepts that may make some uncomfortable is to the benefit of individuals and society as a whole. Despite Eosphoros' assertions, censorship in its myriad forms is not acceptable; be it governmental or societal, to save face or protect feelings, motivated by the right or the left. Art and thought must be allowed to exist uninhibited as a bulwark against man's worst proclivities, and as an example of humanities most perfect abilities.

Censorship is the favorite tool of the despot and the demagogue. In the nascent stages of fascist states or theocracies censorship is a swiss army knife for authoritarians. Use a little to guide a conversation, or a lot to set the stage for a political pogrom. This is the version of censorship that is obvious and familiar. It is the kind that is easy to see and easy to speak out against, a person or persons exerting that kind of control over others seems intuitively wrong and dangerous to most reasonable people. Unfortunately, easy is not in the cards when it comes to examining and defending against authoritarian tendencies expressed in modernity. With the advent and dissemination of the internet, a new more insidious censorship is rolling across the globe - and there are two main engines driving it.

First, corporate fear and profitability in lock step with right wing authoritarianism. When conglomerates in the "free" parts of the world are doing big business with less savory governments around the planet, money talks and the corporations listen. A corporation is a person under the law, and that person is a man without a country, conscience, or motive beyond profit. Reporter Ursula Lindsey relates the recent decision of Netflix to acquiesce to a Saudi demand to censor the show "Patriot Act" by Hasan Minhaj. In Lindsey's article "Netflix's Disturbing Precedent," she outlines how Minhaj speaks out against Prince Mohammed bin Salman, lambasting him for ordering the murder of columnist Jamal Khashoggi among other misdeeds. As the title suggests, Lindsey is troubled by Netflix's choice to obey the notoriously violent and oppressive Saudi government. Netflix claims "We strongly support artistic freedom worldwide and only removed this episode in Saudi Arabia after we had received a valid legal request -- and to comply with local law." Lindsey counters "But sometimes one has to choose artistic freedom over complying with a repressive and arbitrary law." It is outrageous that Netflix or any other company can justify a decision to be complicit with a despotic regime because said regime has a "law" on the books that precludes individual rights. Some African and Arab

countries have laws against homosexuality, one wonders how far a company like Netflix is willing to concede to maintain profits and presence in oil rich – i.e. cash rich - parts of the world. This globalization of censorship is a new and disturbing version of suppression; conglomerates are now at times in bed with violent and oppressive regimes, so a people's ability to circumvent that regime or gather to fight for rights is now being circumvented not just by their own oppressive governments, but also by titanic corporations that are willing to toe the line for those governments for profit and lie to, oppress, and inhibit a people from afar. The second culprit spreading censorship as an acceptable trend is a bit of a surprise – it's empathy - or a co-opting of that oft positively viewed emotional state. Modernity has brought with it a refinement of civilized values, as generations progress in a context of limited struggle and wealth, what is seen as acceptable in general discourse has been codified to protect and mitigate offense. This isn't so much a problem when it stops overt hate from being normalized, but bad actors will grab anything they can and turn it toward their own ends.

A liberal, sensitive group of people that has empathy can be twisted to work against what liberal ideals are meant to uphold, freedom of speech and expression. Neo Marxist, anarchists, radical socialists, these groups are not often seen in the negative light that one might see a nationalist right-wing group or fascistic organization, but they often exist on the same spectrum. The right and the left side of politics is less a line with each group on either side, but more of a circle where the extremes meet and are hard to distinguish from one another. The extremes on either end come together in the belief that they are correct and that their ideology should be implemented by any means necessary. In a word, totalitarians.

This disturbing leftist censorship can be seen in several places, but a favorite of late seems to be censoring art to spare the “feelings” of a currently “disadvantaged” group. This is what Cyrus Eosphoros writes about in his article “Classroom Censorship Can Improve the Learning Environment,” If one is not wrapped in the ideology that Eosphoros lives in, this article is not only absurd; it's scary. Eosphoros is willing to sacrifice art and speech in any form on the altar of avoiding discomfort. Eosphoros displays a clear adherence to intersectional and postmodern thought and exists in that sphere as a matter of course. He seems to think that he is right and there is nothing open for debate. Arguing against someone who has a clear subservience to an ideology is difficult enough, but the intersectional/postmodern narrative in the context of an authoritarian agenda is where things get disturbing. Eosphoros says” If a professor feels like putting their students -- over whom they have substantial power -- in danger, the least they could do is prove it's necessary to their course. If hurting people is vital to the professor's pedagogy, the proof should be obvious. But if it isn't necessary to their course, removing harmful material is automatically a reasonable accommodation. The professor has just admitted that "the essential nature of the course" will be unchanged.” This quote alone shows you the twisted narrative that recharacterizes words and functions to forward an ideology. Eosphoros claims exposing people to “troubling material” is hurting them, he also claims professors have substantial positions of power. This is an opinion that claims authority is always wrong despite ability, and that words can be violence. These recharacterizations of words and actions untethered from academia could be used to castigate those outside of the “In” group, this is how political movements are started and how empathy and concern can be looped back into aggression and further the dehumanization of one's opponents. Those that believe differently than you are in control and committing violence (even in their speech), what might be an acceptable action to stop them? Of course, this is just the authoritarian mindset on the left trying to change what words mean, how they are expressed, and what is acceptable to say. This gives them the power to mold how public

discourse proceeds, and the words a society use informs how they think. Preti Taneja recently wrote an article, "Should Shakespeare be Censored," where she outlines the position that an artist's previously published work should be censored, because in a modern context, what was said hundreds of years ago may be offensive. Taneja says "Shakespeare's plays contain anti-Semitism, racism and sexism, sexual abuse and violence; they magnify the tenor of their age. But should they be censored when they might offend a particular community?" A question asked but not really answered in the article. It is a question that has an answer though, an unequivocal NO. Even that list is absurd, Shakespeare's plays contain, "...racism and sexism, sexual abuse and violence..." Nearly all entertainment contains some grouping of those things, conflict is often a driving force in a narrative, and conflict often stems from undesirable events that the protagonist needs to overcome. Not to mention that to experience a piece of art, such as "The Merchant of Venice" is a personal choice, and to see it warts and all in its proper form can give viewers and readers an idea of how things were in different times and places. Appreciating a piece of art does not require a view or reader to tacitly agree with the works views. This is all an example of a soft kind of authoritarianism, soft for now at least, where what was said and what is said needs to be run through a filter, and those who control that filter control public discourse, and they begin to gain power. This has become apparent with some recent twitter lynch mobs, wherein tweets have been combed through from the last ten years or so, and things that are now codified as unacceptable are being reviewed as if they were said yesterday, then the offending party is being disgraced, fired, and pilloried for the statement. It's censorship weaponized in a culture war, to what end is what one needs to consider. Authority never loosens its hold once it can exert control, it only wants more, and the acceptable means to that end become more dangerous as agendas progress.

It is hard to find advocates of censorship, because it is generally understood to be an unsavory authoritarian act, but many do support it in a way that they see as justified. It's not really censorship, just restricting destructive and outrageous behavior. Are these people right? In the article "Aurora Library Display Prompts Both Hate and Censorship Claims" reporter Steve Lord quotes a few individuals that feel censorship in this case was appropriate. A satirical poem was displayed at the Aurora Public Library, Lord says, "The poem in question was titled "Hijab Means Jihad...The poem starts with the statement, "Every kid should be like my kid and snatch a hijab." The text was superimposed over an American confederate flag." Some who saw this were unable to process the fact that the pictures and poems were satirical, lambasting Trumpism in America and commenting on the absurdity of jingoism. John Savage, Aurora Library Board president, said "When I saw the language, I found it extremely offensive and inappropriate," Savage said Sunday. "I have no issue at all about the decision I made. I totally respect the issues of free speech, but there are boundaries, and this crossed the boundary."

Ahmed Rehab, the Chicago office of the Council on Islamic-American Relations executive director, made the claim,"...while the poem's intent might have been satire, it lacked context and was thus indistinguishable from bare-naked incendiary hate speech that promotes violence against women and children." and, "This coupled with the fact that in the current environment Muslim women face actual incidents of assault and Muslim kids face regular incidents of bullying, simply for being Muslim." Arguing for the safety of a community is a compelling argument for censorship, but a fallacious one nonetheless. Claiming that art begets violence is the mother of all slippery slope arguments and having to refute it time and again just shows how pernicious authoritarian agents are in their pursuit for control. A quick way to mitigate these claims would be to observe violent crimes in the population per capita over the past one hundred

years. Violent entertainment has been on the rise and become more ubiquitous and realistic with every passing decade, yet crime and violent acts are down lower than they have ever been (in the West). This shows how false such a narrative is. Rehashes claims about discrimination and violence against Muslim women and children are also suspect. That is certainly a narrative put forward time and again by left wing groups and pro Muslim organizations, but actual statistics and fact backing those claims is in short supply. In fact, Muslims are not a minority community worldwide, they are just a minority in some of the western countries in which they reside, but the authoritarian left has adopted Islam as a tool to “correct” and restrict language. This has led to these bizarre claims that Muslims and Islam are a put upon minority community in the world, an underdog that should be supported despite possible anti-female and anti-gay positions in a large part of those communities. This underdog group is over a billion strong, so again, one can see the narrative being woven and how empathy and pity are being weaponized to manipulate the sensitive and gullible.

Censorship of Art is the first symptom of authoritarian encroachment in a society, so individuals and society at large should rail against it. In its more obvious and brutal right wing form, censorship cannot and should not be accepted. In its more sophisticated and insidious left wing implementation, censorship cannot and should not be accepted. Take the aphorism the road to Hell is paved with good intentions and understand that sparing feelings and protecting the disadvantaged can be noble, but doing it at the expense of hard-won liberty is criminal. Here is a new aphorism to heed: Censorship is the darkness that comes before the end of liberty.

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