

## **Incorporating Secondary Material**

Mr. Kubus

### Generally speaking...

...you should approach the research paper as you would a paper that does not require secondary material, but at certain key points in your argument, you bring in the works of the critics. Your research essay becomes a work that is about YOUR ideas in relation to the work that has already been done on the topic.

Remember: This is not a survey of your findings. This is not a book report.

### Specifically...

There are three basic principles, according to Gordon Harvey, that one should follow to properly integrate secondary material into a paper that will help you, among other things, to find your academic voice.

- (1) Use sources as concisely as possible, so your own thinking isn't crowded out by your presentation of other people's thinking, or your own voice by your quoting of other voices.**
- (2) Never leave your reader in doubt as to when you are speaking and when you are using materials from a source.**
- (3) Always make clear how each source you introduce into your paper relates to your argument.**

**Use sources as concisely as possible, so your own thinking isn't crowded out by your presentation of other people's thinking, or your own voice by your quoting of other voices.**

This is what I mean when I tell you that *your reading of your text should not be **through** your secondary material, but should be **enhanced** by it.* Stick to your guns! Hold firm to your own ideas before being sucked into your author's. Converse with them; don't rely on them.

This also means that you should mention or summarize your source unless you have a good reason to paraphrase closely or quote more extensively. **DO NOT QUOTE JUST TO QUOTE. QUOTE FRUGALLY.**

When you can simply summarize an argument without quoting from the source, do it, and do it with phrases like:

*In their recent work, Y and Z have offered harsh critiques of \_\_\_\_\_ for reasons of \_\_\_\_\_.*

Some critics assert \_\_\_\_\_.

*In his landmark essay of 1993, Sullivan suggests \_\_\_\_\_.*

In discussions of X, one controversial issue has been \_\_\_\_\_. On the one hand, Conner argues \_\_\_\_\_. On the other hand, Fernandes fervently maintains \_\_\_\_\_. Others even contend \_\_\_\_\_. My own view is \_\_\_\_\_.

*When it comes to the topic of \_\_\_\_\_, most scholars agree that \_\_\_\_\_. What this argument fails to address, however, is what I am calling \_\_\_\_\_. Whereas some are convinced that \_\_\_\_\_, others maintain that \_\_\_\_\_.*

David Zinczenko's article, "Don't blame the eater," is nothing more than an angry rant in which he accuses the fast-food companies of an evil conspiracy to make people fat. I disagree because these companies have to make money...

**Use sources as concisely as possible, so your own thinking isn't crowded out by your presentation of other people's thinking, or your own voice by your quoting of other voices.**

But, sometimes it is necessary to quote. Here is a list of reasons to quote a source directly.

- The source author has made a point so clearly and concisely that it can't be expressed any better.
- A certain phrase or sentence in the passage is particularly vivid or striking, or especially typical or representative of some phenomenon you are discussing.
- An important passage is sufficiently difficult, dense, or rich that it requires you to analyze it closely, which in turn requires that the passage be produced so the reader can follow your analysis.

# Four ways of indicating reference

QUOTATION MARKS •  
PARENTHETICAL CITATION •  
ENTRY ON A WORKS CITED PAGE

SIGNAL PHRASE

**Without any of these, the penalty is a 0 on the assignment.**

If the student gives **some** indication in only **one** of the 4 ways...

**...you will lose 10 points for bad citations.**

Remember, you need to cite your source, even if:

1. you put all direct quotes in quotation marks.
2. you changed the words used by the author into synonyms.
3. you completely paraphrased the ideas to which you referred.
4. your sentence is mostly made up of your own thoughts, but contains a reference to the author's ideas.
5. you mention the author's name in the sentence.

# In-text Citations

Bugg notes that “[t]he ‘flea’ that the speaker frequently mentions is a conceit. . . of the love between himself and the woman” (1).

Readers can look up the author’s last name in the alphabetized list of works cited, where they will learn the work’s title and other publication information. If readers decide to consult the source, the page number will take them straight to the passage that has been cited. “Bugg notes” is the signal phrase. No name in the parentheses is necessary.

# In-text Citations

Medieval Europe was a place both of “raids, pillages, slavery, and extortion” and “traveling merchants, monetary exchange, towns if no cities, and active markets in grain” (Yao 10).

As there is no signal phrase, you must refer your reader to an entry in your works cited. She does this with the author’s last name followed by the page number. NO COMMA. NO PERIOD.

1. The parlor metaphor of writing describes writing as entering into a conversation, as in arriving late and a parlor and talking to guests who have been there long before you have (7).
2. In "Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love," Jim Corder explains that "Everyone is an argument." (1)
3. David Sedaris's *Me Talk Pretty One Day* takes place at a school in Paris (Sedaris 1).
4. The opening lines of the novel are "Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins" (Nabokov, 1).
5. The opening lines of the novel are "Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins" (Lolita 1).



"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it." (Gaskell 100)

"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (Gaskell, 100).

"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (Elizabeth Gaskell 100).

"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (*North and South* 100).

**Always make clear how each source you introduce into your paper relates to your argument.**

You need to make clear what it is that you want your reader to focus on in the source.

We'll look at an example or two of this tomorrow.

## **Basic Rules for Quoting: A Review**

### **Quote only what you need or is really striking.**

- When you are tempted to quote a long passage, see if you can quote instead a few of its key phrases and link them with a concise summary.

### **Blend!**

- Try to construct your sentence so that you can quote verbatim.

### **Announce a quotation with a signal phrase.**

#### **Choose your signal phrase verb carefully:**

- remarks, argues, laments, protests, charges, replies, admits, claims, objects, concedes, purports

The ways of interpreting Emily's decision to murder Homer are numerous. For simple clarification, they can be summarized along two lines. One group finds the murder growing out of Emily's demented attempt to forestall the inevitable passage of time—toward her abandonment by Homer, toward her own death, and toward the steady encroachment of the North and the New South on something loosely defined as the "tradition" of the Old South. Another view sees the murder in more psychological terms. It grows out of Emily's complex relationship to her father, who, by elevating her above all of the eligible men of Jefferson, insured that to yield what one commentator called the "normal emotions" associated with desire, his daughter had to "retreat into a marginal world, into fantasy" (O'Connor 184). These lines of interpretation complement more than critique each other. Together, they de-emphasize the element of detection, viewing the murder and its solution not as the central action but as manifestations of the principal element, the decline of the Grierson lineage and all it represents. Recognizing the way in which the story makes use of the detective genre, however, adds another interpretive layer to the story by making the narrator a central player in the pattern of action.

—Lawrence R. Rodgers, " 'We All Said...' " (ch. 12)

STEVEN FRYE

## Blood Meridian and the Poetics of Violence

★  
SAMPLE  
OPENER —  
RESEARCH  
ESSAY  
★

[In the notes that appear with the first draft manuscript of *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy includes a quote from the Pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus (535–475 BCE): “War is the father of us all and out [sic] king. War discloses who is godlike and who is but a man, who is a slave and who is a free man.” McCarthy then writes: “Let the judge quote this in part and without crediting source.”<sup>1</sup> In the final novel, these words become, “war is the truest form of divination. It is the testing of one’s will and the will of another within that larger will. ... War is the ultimate game because war is at last a forcing of the unity of existence. War is god.”<sup>2</sup> In *Blood Meridian*, this preoccupation with the more brutal aspects of the human experience has led to a complicated reaction on the part of readers, reviewers, and scholars. Although *Blood Meridian* has emerged as perhaps McCarthy’s masterpiece, the novel’s astounding reception was slow in coming, selling poorly even among the sophisticated readers who had been previously drawn to McCarthy’s canon. There is nothing peculiar in this. The initial reviews were relatively scant and at best ambivalent. Not surprisingly, critics were disturbed by the staggering portrayal of violence. In *The New York Times*, Caryn James acknowledged the extraordinary quality of McCarthy’s prose but struggled with his choice of material, writing that McCarthy has “a passionate voice given equally to ugliness and lyricism.”<sup>3</sup> In the *Sewanee Review*, Walter Sullivan struck a similar note in the form of a question: “What do we make of this phenomenon, a mind that dwells unremittingly on evil and a prose that conveys those thoughts with the tongue of an angel?”<sup>4</sup> What is interesting about these responses is the immediate acknowledgment of McCarthy’s artistry. While both reviewers were tepid in their overall judgment, both equally concede a vexing irony that they cannot rest with comfortably: Cormac McCarthy writes a novel of incomparable beauty derived from the raw matter of incomparable horror. A gloss on the poetics of *Blood Meridian* might be drawn from McCarthy himself in words taken from *All the Pretty Horses*: “the

① ON-TOPIC  
HOOK

② BRIEF  
CRITICAL  
HISTORY

③ RETURN  
TO  
AUTHOR'S  
IDEAS

world's heart beat [s] at some terrible cost" and "the blood of multitudes" is "exacted for the vision of a single flower."<sup>5</sup> Although many scenes in *Blood Meridian* are minimalist in style and journalistic in quality, the most memorable and disturbing are poetic. They are layered with an overt artistry drawing on aesthetic motifs common to the novel, and understanding the role of representation, the generative transformation of violence into beauty, is critical to comprehending McCarthy's philosophical and ethical purpose as an author.

(4) THESIS

→ DEFINE!

Modern readers are often skeptical of the classical and neoclassical dictum that authors must write with a moral imperative. Philosophers and critics ranging from Aristotle to Horace, from Samuel Johnson to Alexander Pope, have argued that literature should possess a moral content and be directed toward an ethical mission. Modern aesthetic values, however, tend to question these assertions for various reasons, grounded in the concern that literature not function at the bidding of particular ideological systems. But *Blood Meridian* invites us to consider the ethical content inherent in any artwork that genuinely engages the world. Perhaps if literature is powerful and moving enough, a personal transformation in the reading process functions at the deepest psychological level. If we entertain this notion, perhaps we must (channeling Melville in *Moby-Dick*) drag McCarthy to the bar. Might we not echo Samuel Johnson in his admonition of Shakespeare and say that McCarthy writes without a moral purpose? And is it not reasonable to expect that his selection of material invites or even demands an ethical vision? He is the "creator" of the world that is *Blood Meridian*, and in doing so he chooses to select the worst features from our collective experience. As many critics have noted, his work is imbued with avarice, greed, and indiscriminate bloodletting, and the novel lacks any narrative voice that contains or comments on reality as McCarthy represents it. Moral and ethical questions lie at the heart of a novel that seems on the surface deaf to them. In the Woodward interview, McCarthy's now famous quote does little to help in this regard. He argues that, "[t]here is no such thing as life without bloodshed. ... I think the notion that the species can be improved in some way, that everyone could live in harmony, is a really dangerous idea. Those who are afflicted with this notion are the first ones to give up their souls, their freedom. Your desire that it be that way will enslave you and make your life vacuous."<sup>6</sup> This is a deceptively elliptical statement. On the one hand, it can be easily taken as a confirmation of McCarthy's naturalist leanings. Barkley Owens argues that McCarthy's "thesis" is that "mindless, atavistic violence is the true nature of mankind, a genetic heritage in common with apes and wolves."<sup>7</sup> Owens' point is well taken but (as argued by Eric Carl Link and James R. Giles in this volume) naturalism is qualified by McCarthy's

FULL  
SAMPLE  
ESSAY —  
STUDENT  
WRITER

## Love in Darkness: The Optimistic Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins

The poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins offers a view of the human experience that resonates with the soul not only at the high times of our lives but also at the worst. In uniting beauty and suffering, Hopkins invites us to experience God in all the various facets of creation. Moving beyond mere superficial understanding, Hopkins's writing desires for us to *meet* God in all that we encounter; from the beautiful "is-ness" of man as Christ's image we see described in "As Kingfishers Catch Fire" to the stark desolation of human grief and sorrow we witness in "The Caged Skylark", Hopkins's poetry challenges us not to allow apparent darkness to mar our view of God's wondrous creation. Even in the grim despondence of Hopkins's "Terrible Sonnets", those well-known for their melancholy and frustrated tone and subject matter, his characteristic sense of hope in God's presence, if only a faint glimmer, is never altogether lost. The often paradoxical, gravely hopeful, exasperatedly reverential, bitterly loving nature of Hopkins's poetry, particularly when considering the challenges of his own life as a motivator, call us to recognize that despite the immense weight of human suffering and the unavoidable imminence of death, we ought nevertheless to find hope for salvation, joy and eternal life in the extraordinary beauty of God.

When discussing Hopkins' paradoxical view of beauty in his writing, an awareness of his personal and religious background proves helpful; the broader context of Hopkins' lifelong fight against depression and inner turmoil provides a lens through which the messages within his

poetry become much more apparent. In Hopkins's poems as well as in the letters he writes to acquaintances, we see a man torn between joy and sorrow, appreciation and frustration, hope and despair. On one hand, Hopkins joyfully eulogizes God's gift of eternal life in "At the Wedding March," writing, "I to him turn with tears / Who to wedlock, his wonder wedlock / Déals triumph and immortal years" (Hopkins 10-12). In comparing God's relationship with man to something as glorious and eternal as marriage, the speaker's words evoke a sense of passionate closeness between humanity and its savior; Hopkins could not provide us with a much more optimistic view of the ultimate fate of mankind. To long to be locked in matrimony with God allows both the speaker and Hopkins to express man's relationship with the Father as the apex and goal of human experience. Yet, firmly to the contrary, Hopkins writes in one of his later "Terrible Sonnets", "And my lament / Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent / To dearest him that lives alas! away" (Hopkins 6-8). In linking the speaker's cries of sorrow with ill-fated letters to a very distant friend, Hopkins depicts man's relationship with God as marred, severed, seemingly without hope of repair. Here we are presented with two views of religion that apparently could not be in firmer contrast; the war that rages within Hopkins' heart makes itself clear in poems that seem to debate one another on the fate of mankind, a timeless debate between salvation at the hands of an infinitely loving God and doom resulting from our own sinful nature; such a war suggests, we may conclude, a sort of bipolar depression within Hopkins, who himself wrote, "You are certainly wrong about Hyde being overdrawn... my Hyde is worse" (Hopkins 238), in response to Robert Bridges's criticism of Stevenson's famous novel. Even Hopkins himself could not deny the importance and severity of this violent conflict between joy and despondency within himself; the struggle to find closeness with God despite life's challenges defines Hopkins's



poetic voice, resulting in a range of themes so wide one might question whether they were all written by the same man.

Yet it is within this hellish turmoil one finds the most hopeful message of all in Hopkins's poetry; despite the ferocity of Hopkins's constant struggle between good and evil, even his darkest, most despondent poems are never left without at least a sliver of hope in God's plan for mankind's salvation. While it may seem plausible that, "creative activity may... intensify [Hopkins's] self-denigration by making him more attentive to inner states" (136), as George M. Johnson argues in his "Psychobiographical Portrait of... Hopkins", Johnson's argument fails to account for the prevailing theme of hope that unflinchingly marks the conclusions of Hopkins's poems. Take, for instance, "The Caged Skylark", one of the aforementioned "Terrible Sonnets". In the poem, Hopkins compares the human soul to a song-bird trapped in a cage, doomed to suffer without reaching its full potential. At first, such an image appears cruel, morbid and hopeless; however, Hopkins leaves us with a strong, sudden depiction of hope at the poem's conclusion: "But uncumberèd: meadow-down is not distressed / For a rainbow footing it nor he for his bones risen" (Hopkins 13-14). Such a drastic shift from the feeling of despair conveyed in the image of a trapped bird suffering in a cage to the natural, open magnificence of a rainbow-laden field seems to proclaim the steadfastness of God's loving plan for salvation. We will be free at last, such an image serves to remind us, from the burdensome tribulations natural to our fallen state in the beauty and eternity of the Resurrection. Few have likely endured internal turmoil and suffering to the same degree as Hopkins, who concluded that his characteristic "fits of sadness... resemble madness" (134). For such a man to nonetheless maintain hope in the goodness of God's plan leads us necessarily to recognize that naught in our lives should allow us to concede our search for a life with God, despite whatever difficulty we may face.

When we dive further into Hopkins' poetry on a more minute scale, we find that the attention and care he grants to each object in his poems bears witness to Hopkins' great appreciation for the finer details of creation; in granting life and individuality to each subject in his poems, Hopkins reveals the beauty and opportunity that God imbues within all created things, living and nonliving. In considering how Hopkins communicates this idea of strict distinctiveness among that which God has created, it is helpful to understand how Hopkins' Jesuit theology served to guide his view; as J. Hillis Miller argues in his "Creation of the Self in Gerard Manley Hopkins", "The self for Hopkins, in the very first moment in which it recognizes itself, recognizes itself... as a plenitude. It does not need to seek anything outside of itself as a source of its life, because that life has already been given" (294). And indeed, we may look to Hopkins' poetry for confirmation of such a contention; in Hopkins's "Spring", we watch as "The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush / The descending blue" (6-7). Hopkins writes not in the abstract; rather, he imbues one particular peartree with life by allowing it to take direct action, choosing to omit the passive voice. Here, Miller's argument rings particularly true—in singling out one specific peartree—the glassy peartree—and granting it autonomy, Hopkins denotes the object as unique by its very nature, not as a result of some external force. Such an idea was not common to the time of Hopkins' writing—indeed, scholar James Wood views Hopkins as a "literary pioneer" of the concept of individuality: "'thisness'... was adapted [into poetry] by Gerard Manley Hopkins... by thisness, I mean... any detail that centers our attention with its concretion" (67). (Returning to the glass pear tree) By introducing the theology of creation to poetry in such an innovative fashion, Hopkins offers a true testament to the beauty and goodness of created things. As Hopkins treats the subjects of his poems with precision, care, and respect, he seeks to mirror the infinitely loving care with which God treats every facet of creation.

Hopkins's poetic style seems oriented towards achieving this end; from the overarching themes of goodness and purpose in his poems to the energy and life he imbues into each line by way of consonance and internal rhyme, every detail of Hopkins's poems, both literary and descriptive, speaks to the hopeful idea that God provides all created things with their own purpose. This idea presents itself no more vividly than in Hopkins's "As Kingfishers Catch Fire", perhaps his most optimistic poem of all. We see the speaker grant life even to lifeless objects such as bells: "each hung bell's / Bow swung finds tongue to swing out broad its name / Each mortal thing does one thing and the same" (3-4). In attributing human qualities to the bell by granting it a name and allowing it to speak for itself, Hopkins offers the bell a sense of dignity, respect and autonomy; granting the bell a timeless purpose allows it a share in God's greater plan. Hopkins animates even the words he writes, filling them with energy through the use of smooth internal rhyme ("swung", "tongue") and brisk, lively consonance ("bell's, bow, broad" and "swung, swing"). Reading these lines, we see, through the eyes of the speaker, the beautiful, life-giving order of God's plan. By partaking in the action for which it was created, the bell flourishes, filled with vitality; so too do we, as Hopkins argues at the poem's conclusion: "the just man... Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is— / Christ... lovely in eyes not his / To the Father through the features of men's faces" (9-14). Hopkins indirectly compares man to the bell; as the bell finds purpose in the action of ringing, man finds purpose in living in the image of Jesus Christ. These lines exude the same vitality and energy as those prior, spurred by firm consonance and a spirited rhythm, but we notice one significant difference in the speaker's fixation on beauty. We are, Hopkins tells us, beautiful to God by our very nature as images of Christ. There may be no message more hopeful than this. If a bell is made to ring, man is made to love, and in doing so is the image of love itself, argues the poem; Hopkins views closeness

with God as life's essential purpose, and finds meaning and joy in striving toward this purpose. From the grand metaphors granting man a concrete purpose to the life-giving structure of every line of the poem, Hopkins's style shines forth, especially in "As Kingfishers Catch Fire", as a testament to the eternal, vitalizing goodness of God's plan and, as a result, the inherent goodness of mankind itself.

Despite the immense darkness, suffering and depression Hopkins faces throughout his life and that often pervades his poetry, he constantly holds out hope that staying true to God's plan will lead him to joy and flourishing; this hope shines through in the pervasive optimism, lovingly intricate detail, and strong, undying desire for a relationship with God that define Hopkins's writing. Both Hopkins's poetry and his life as a whole testify to the abounding love and compassion with which God views each of us as individuals; as bells are made to ring out their own distinct sound, as man is freed from distress by his "bones risen" in the Resurrection ("The Caged Skylark" 14), as Hopkins continues to strive towards God despite the sorrow that plagues his life, so too ought we to find joy by seeking to live in God's image. We, too, will certainly face darkness in our lives, as Hopkins's Terrible Sonnets seek not to hide. But despite the suffering we will no doubt be subjected to, despite our tendency to separate ourselves from God, despite our tendency to cry out in helplessness, as a miserable skylark trapped in a cage, we are, by our very nature, able to return to a life of joy, goodness and compassion once again. We are, Hopkins ultimately reminds us, made in the image of love, and it is up to us to fulfill our purpose and to flourish by sharing that love with others.

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Austin Allen

Mr. Kubus

AP English Literature

29 April 2024

FULL  
SAMPLE  
ESSAY —  
PRO  
WRITTEN

Wallace Stevens' "The Emperor of Ice Cream: The Chilly Heart of a Whimsical Poem

To tease out the meaning of "The Emperor of Ice-Cream," one of the most famously elliptical poems of the 20th century, maybe we should start by looking into the meaning of ice cream itself. It turns out that its implications have changed a bit over time. Consider a text from roughly the same era, L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), in which a Sunday-school picnic drives the young heroine wild with anticipation:

It wouldn't matter if I got to a hundred picnics in after years; they wouldn't make up for missing this one. They're going to have boats on the Lake of Shining Waters—and ice cream, as I told you. I have never tasted ice cream. Diana tried to explain what it was like, but I guess ice cream is one of those things that are beyond imagination.

Anne's joy transports us back to a time before Häagen-Dazs and Baskin-Robbins, a world in which household refrigeration was rudimentary and ice cream had yet to be mass-produced on a modern scale. It wasn't "beyond imagination" for everyone—it was sold in drugstores, for example—but it was still an indulgence, not a fixture of the average kitchen.

Composed fewer than 15 years later, "The Emperor of Ice-Cream" depicts a rather busy kitchen, one in which ice cream is to be "whip[ped]" up with gusto:

Call the roller of big cigars,

The muscular one, and bid him whip

In kitchen cups concupiscent curds.  
 Let the wenches dawdle in such dress  
 As they are used to wear, and let the boys  
 Bring flowers in last month's newspapers.

This brief vignette is dense with imagery and short on context. "Concupiscent" seems to promise a clue: it's an eye-catching word, a *gaudy* word. (Stevens once remarked that "The Emperor of Ice-Cream" captured "something of the essential gaudiness of poetry.") It's also an unusual word to apply to food: it means "lustful, desirous." Stevens may have meant it to echo a sensual passage in Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes," in which Porphyro piles sweets—including "jellies soother than the creamy curd"—before his beloved. We notice that the theme of lust also extends to the "muscular" roller of "big cigars" (Stevens, like all the modernists, wrote in the shadow of Freud) and those "wenches" (which can mean female servants, as it does here, or prostitutes in other contexts) who "dawdle" around the ice cream maker and his curds. Even the boys who bring flowers evoke romance, and those dated newspapers, useful now only as wrappers, remind us of the swift passage of time—a traditional theme in poems about young love. With its two stanzas and two rooms, the poem is neatly divided between a depiction of bustling life and a contemplation of lonely death. It turns a vibrant locale into a reminder of our ultimate destination, a once exotic-seeming dessert into a symbol of what fate serves up to all of us in the end. It starts as a whimsical confection, but it leaves a remarkably chilly aftertaste.

But how did this kitchen get so hot and heavy? Where is it located? Who are all these people? Who is conjuring up the scene? The rest of the stanza supplies none of this information; instead, it vaults into sudden abstraction: "Let be be finale of seem. / The only emperor is the

emperor of ice-cream.” The next stanza shifts abruptly to a description of a dresser and sheet, which leads up to the image of a female corpse:

Take from the dresser of deal,  
 Lacking the three glass knobs, that sheet  
 On which she embroidered fantails once  
 And spread it so as to cover her face.  
 If her horny feet protrude, they come  
 To show how cold she is, and dumb.  
 Let the lamp affix its beam.

The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

If you're confused by now, you're not alone: celebrated critic Helen Vendler noted that the poem, despite its fame, “resisted explication for some decades.” She went on to summarize what is now generally accepted as its intended narrative:

STRONG  
 SECONDARY  
 SOURCE  
 INCORPORATION

The basic “story” of “The Emperor” is that of a person who goes to the house of a neighbor, a poor old woman, who has died; the person is to help “lay out” (arrange for decent viewing) the corpse in the bedroom, while other neighbors are sending over homegrown flowers, and yet others are preparing food, including ice cream, for the wake.

Using Vendler's language, I propose that Stevens “plots” this story into two equal stanzas: one for the kitchen where the ice cream is being made, one for the bedroom where the corpse awaits decent covering. He “plots” it further by structuring the poem as a series of commands from an unknown master of ceremonies, directing—in a diction of extreme oddness—the neighbors in their funeral duties. If that seems like a Sherlock Holmesian feat of deduction, it is. This poem is



exceptionally compact: the only clues regarding the woman's age, for example, are her "horny" (calloused) feet and grandmotherly penchant for embroidery. The only clue to her identity, or financial or social status, is the disrepair of the "deal" (cheap pine) dresser, with its missing knobs. Once we connect the first scene with the second, we realize that we're probably at a wake, and the flowers in the first stanza are funereal, not romantic. *But we're unlikely to understand the emphasis on ice cream without a further piece of information: festive wakes, complete with rich desserts, are traditional in some Caribbean cultures, including those Stevens encountered in his travels to Key West and Havana (Richardson 74).* And either setting would help explain the presence of a local cigar maker.

The picture that emerges from these few, quick brushstrokes brings the poem's abstract statements into clearer focus. In the kitchen, we have flirtation, bustling activity, and tasty treats. Elsewhere in the house, we have a dead woman and a decaying dresser. What does it mean, in this context, to declare near the end of the first stanza, "Let be be finale of seem"? It's one of those lines that "resist[s] the intelligence"—as Stevens said poetry must do—"almost successfully." A literal paraphrase might read, "Let artifice and illusion give way to plain reality." *According to critic Milton J. Bates, "the speaker of the poem insists that the naturalistic 'be' replace the religious or romantic 'seem,'" thereby rejecting the myths surrounding death and the afterlife. In other words, let realism take over idealism. To Judith Christine Brown, "the line suggests that only in death does seeming end. ... In life, however, there is only seeming" because people filter the world through the distortions of imagination and language.* This reading jibes with the parallel command in the second stanza—"Let the lamp affix its beam"—which evokes an atmosphere of autopsy or interrogation, the harsh light of reality illuminating only what can

be seen, not imagined. The embroidered sheet with birds (“fantails”) on it, leaving the corpse partly exposed under the lamp’s glare, seems a symbol of the inadequacy of artifice.

But what these critics fail to ask is, why the *emperor of ice cream*? It’s an odd combination: an absolute, imperial power and a benign, sweet treat. But look closer—scoop deeper—and its meanings multiply. Ice cream is a sensuous delight, eagerly anticipated and gleefully consumed. If you wait too long to eat it, it’ll melt. It’s an ephemeral pleasure, like sex, flowers, the daily newspaper, life itself. And it’s cold, though “cold” appears in this poem only as a description of the woman’s body. By linking the chill of death with a frozen dessert, Stevens seems to imply that death and the sensuous pleasures of life have something in common: detachment or isolation, perhaps. The dead woman is insensible to—“cold” toward—the lively goings-on in the kitchen, and those dawdling girls don’t seem very concerned with her either.

So much for the ice cream—now what about the emperor? Again, the word suggests an all-powerful ruler; but it carries other intriguing associations. The emperor may be part philosophical abstraction, part fairy-tale character, perhaps even an allusion to the story of the emperor with no clothes—an embodiment of the contrast between illusory “seeming” and naked “being.” Alternatively, or additionally, he might be the unidentified speaker of the poem, issuing haughty commands and referring to himself in the third person. In her book *A Reader’s Guide to Wallace Stevens*, scholar Eleanor Cook points out several possible connections between “The Emperor of Ice-Cream” and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Hamlet not only makes many famous existential remarks about life, seeming, and being (including “To be or not to be ...” and “Let be,” spoken just before his fatal swordfight) but also uses the metaphor of an emperor to make a point about death. In Act 4, when other characters are looking for a dead body, Hamlet says to Claudius, “Your worm is your only emperor for diet. We fat all creatures else to fat us, and we

fat ourselves for maggots.” I contend that Stevens’s use of the identical phrase “only emperor” *could be* a coincidence, but his subject matter here (greedy consumption, corpses meeting an unceremonious fate), together with his Shakespearean borrowings in other poems, raises the distinct possibility of a connection. Certainly Hamlet’s point—that human beings aren’t at the top of the food chain; the worms in our graves are—resonates with the themes of the poem. The lives of all creatures are fragile and temporary, and all creatures obey a sovereign impulse toward hedonism: feast as much as you can while there’s still time. Vender paraphrases: “The only god of this world is the cold god of persistent life and appetite; and I must look steadily at this repellent but true tableau—the animal life in the kitchen, the corpse in the back bedroom.” Seen in this light, serving ice cream at a wake has symbolic overtones to begin with. Most customs surrounding death do. Stevens’s poem recognizes that symbolism and elaborates on it. Ice cream is like life: sweet, or at least hungrily indulged in, while it lasts. It’s also like the dead: cold and destined to be consumed or to dissipate away. Perhaps, then, the line that closes each stanza is a wake-up call to readers. If the “only emperor” or dominant principle of the world is the one we’re reminded of when we see ice cream melting—or, in a different way, when we attend a funeral—we’d be well advised to heed it and make each moment count.

Wallace Stevens had a notorious sweet tooth. In the oral biography *Parts of a World: Wallace Stevens Remembered*, friends and colleagues repeatedly attest to his appetite and love of delicious foods. Yet Stevens also had a strong, competing ascetic streak. He was, for most of his life, a quiet, reserved insurance lawyer in Hartford, Connecticut, who lived semi-reclusively and often behaved distantly toward his family. He once declared during a celebratory dinner that “you’ve got to be a monk” to succeed as a poet, an austerity that impressed and perhaps surprised one of his table companions, the young Richard Wilbur.

As in his life, so in his writing. Stevens's poems are full of lush language, balmy climates, and tropical fruits but also wintry landscapes and austere philosophizing. They are both sensuous and abstract, indulgent and hermetic. Their playfulness belies a stoic, even pessimistic, outlook. (His poem "Table Talk" begins simply: "Granted, we die for good.") Squarely in the midst of these contradictions falls "The Emperor of Ice-Cream." With its two stanzas and two rooms, the poem is neatly divided between a depiction of bustling life and a contemplation of lonely death. It turns a vibrant locale into a reminder of our ultimate destination, a once exotic-seeming dessert into a symbol of what fate serves up to all of us in the end. It starts as a whimsical confection, but it leaves a remarkably chilly aftertaste.

MID-LEVEL  
ESSAY —  
STUDENT  
WRITER  
(ENGLISH 4)

### High Society: the Death of Ivan Ilyich

A life of materialism and greed can in no way live up to the virtues necessary to foster a meaningful existence. Ivan Ilyich learns this at the end of his life, when his mysterious injury brings him to an early end. It is the general consensus among scholars that Ivan's worldview is warped, yet most do not place the blame on the true cause of his mentality. Ivan's mental change in the novel is spurred by his environment, the twisted and morally corrupt society in which he lives. It is a learned behavior, and little blame can be placed on Ivan himself. There are ultimately two beliefs in the book that drive society. One (the majority) held by the aristocrats in which death is either feared or ignored, and the other held by those of lower class in which death is accepted. As he rises through the ranks of the bureaucracy, he becomes increasingly ignorant of his own mortality. Had he not been ingratiated to high society, Ivan would never have died such an early death. Ultimately, it is society that kills Ivan Ilyich, both physically and spiritually.

The first logical step in dissecting society's effect on Ivan is through his childhood. Ivan is born into a life of professionalism, one in which a person must assimilate into the high-society

culture. Essentially, Ivan is doomed to a shallow, materialistic life from the start. In his very early days, he is described as “an intelligent, polished, lively and agreeable man” (Tolstoy 1336). During his youth, he feels very little of the influence that society has and represents a pure soul. His manner here is a far cry from the way he is in his old age, an indication that outside factors cause a major transformation. This change begins as soon as Ivan enters into the professional world. His lust for higher social stature (brought upon by his upbringing) leads him to the emulation of those who are higher than he. Pachmuss claims that society as a whole leads to man’s downfall through its “strife, division, and falsity” and results in both “moral ruin” and isolation (75). This is all too evident in Ivan’s case, and it is here that Ivan moves from the innocent child he was to a true man of high society. “All the enthusiasms of childhood and youth passed without leaving much trace on him; he succumbed to sensuality, to vanity and latterly among the highest classes to liberalism” (Tolstoy 1337). Ivan’s new life is drawn from learned behavior, influenced directly by those he looks up to in society. It is the first step in Ivan’s eventual downfall. Olney agrees that Ivan’s life is controlled by his social surroundings and the mentality that comes with it, and not by Ivan’s “conscience” (108). As Ivan ascends the ranks of the social ladder, so too does the intensity of his disagreeableness and isolation from others. Acting as a judge, Ivan adopts his arrogant state of mind, which is a precursor to his ignorance of mortality. The acquisition of a position of power prompts the thought process that leads Ivan to

deny death. "But now, as an examining magistrate, Ivan Ilyich felt that everyone without exception, even the most important and self-satisfied, was in his power" (Tolstoy 1338). Ivan's pursuit of more power and material things like houses and clothes (fueled by his desire to appease those above him) distracts him from living a genuine life and acts as the first step to his downfall. The motif of youth recurs many times throughout the story, but to Ivan, occurs to him near the end of his life. He realizes the disparity between the life he now lives and the life he had as a child, and concludes that the one he has now is neither as genuine nor fulfilling. "There also the further back he looked the more life there had been. There had been more of what was good in life and more of life itself" (Tolstoy 1365). Shepherd claims that Ivan realizes that his life is deeply worsened when he loses sight of his youth and moves into adulthood (404).

Society's skewed view of a meaningful life leads to a skewed view of death. Materialism and thirst for status bring society as a whole to ignore the fact of their own mortality. Olney supports this claim by stating that because Ivan's life is dictated by what society claims is right, it is not genuine. The one real thing, and ironically the thing that is "ignored and evaded" the most, is death (108). Through their ignorance, the people of Ivan's society are not able to fully appreciate death and its absoluteness. Ivan himself is affected by this mentality the most out of the characters in the novella. As stated before, Ivan spends his early adulthood pleasing and learning from the members of society in positions of authority. As such, his adulthood is spent

perpetuating the façade, modeling his life to be like others'. His life lacks meaning, according to Olney, because Ivan does not realize death. Death is what gives life its meaning (104). Ivan's view of his own mortality is irrational, yet very indicative of the social norm. His warped view of death comes from an over-exaggerated sense of pride that stems from both his "success" in life and from the popular view. "'Caius really was mortal, and it was right for him to die; but for me, little Vanya, Ivan Ilyich, with all my thoughts and emotions, it's altogether a different matter. It cannot be that I ought to die. That would be too terrible.' Such was his feeling" (Tolstoy 1354). It is ironic that death, while according to Tolstoy himself is the greatest motivator for man to live, goes so ignored in Ivan's society (Pachmuss 75). Many of the other characters can be looked to as an example of the toxic effects of a lack of appreciation of mortality. Peter Ivanovich, Ivan's most trusted acquaintance, is the earliest example of a person who, like Ivan, wholeheartedly rejects the notion of death and ignores mortality. Attending Ivan's funeral out of a vague sense of obligation, Peter comes face-to-face with his greatest fear. His reaction to finally seeing Ivan's body is telling of what Peter thinks of death, and therefore, how society as a whole views it. This is best indicated when Peter "hurriedly crossed himself once more and turned and went out of the door – too hurriedly and too regardless of propriety, as he himself was aware" (Tolstoy 1333). In this moment, Peter is so intent on escaping Ivan's corpse that he, a dignified member of society, breaks societal norms. This is the power that death has over society overall, yet the people within



society run away from its inevitability. The fear that the people feel stems from an underlying feeling of selfishness, seen in most characters. In the funeral, Peter Ivanovich discusses Ivan Ilyich's sickness with his widow, Praskovya Federovna, and this selfishness is clearly seen in both people. Praskovya Federovna's quote, "“Oh, what I have suffered!”" is clearly ironic, yet she means it in a very serious way (Tolstoy 1334). The reversal of reality in her mind leads her to the conclusion that it is in fact she who has borne the burden of Ivan's illness, and not Ivan himself. For this reason, many characters avoid interaction with Ivan, as to escape any emotional effect his illness may have on them. Peter, who asks whether or not Ivan suffered the last days of his life, is made to look like a concerned friend. In reality, his question is more cynical and he is ultimately concerned about himself. He is overtaken by the fear of suffering himself, yet offers no remorse for his deceased friend. Ivan, surrounded by all of this selfishness when he is alive, adopts the same mentality. His concern with himself and how he appears to fit the social model ultimately blinds him of mortality like the rest. This view is completely opposite to what is considered a genuine life. Tolstoy, according to Pachmuss, considers love to be what is most meaningful in life. People are brought to peace when they experience loving relationships with others, and their lives lack meaning otherwise (82). Throughout the novel, there are no relationships that would be considered real except the one between Ivan and Gerasim. Gerasim, who lives a life of simplicity and servitude, ultimately appreciates death and its inevitability. Contrasting with the other

characters, Gerasim set himself apart through his honesty. He is the clear example of how no exposure to aristocratic life leads to a genuine existence. While Gerasim is the poorest character financially, he is the richest in terms of meaningful traits.

Ivan, truly a victim of societal trends, ultimately suffers because of a strict adherence to propriety and materialism by every person he comes across. While society's effect on him during the beginning of the book is largely internal (his personality and beliefs), toward the end of the novel it shifts to a very physical one. The "fall" that he has in Chapter III is both literal and figurative, and marks the beginning of the end of his life. The learned behavior he acquires from society prevents him from finding any sort of consolation or reliable medical help. Society ultimately brings him to his illness, and a lack of support from anyone he knows finally brings him to his death. The suffering begins during Ivan's literal fall in his new home. Ivan, according to Salys, has reached the peak of what society would deem successful, and it is ironically then that he makes his tumble off the ladder (21). Ivan, so obsessed with controlling every small detail of his furnishings, pays the bruise no mind, and even brags of his own athleticism in the process: "It's a good thing I'm a bit of an athlete. Another man might have been killed, but I merely knocked myself, just here" (Tolstoy 1344). This dramatic irony serves to show Ivan's ignorance to his health, as in reality he is in seriously grave danger. In another scene, Ivan makes a visit to a highly regarded doctor in the city, from whom he hopes to receive a diagnosis of his illness.

Again, social convention works against Ivan, who is treated by nothing other than what the doctor believes is appropriate and within the bounds of the social relationship between patient and doctor. In this tense time for Ivan, he is able to see what it is like to be judged rather than the judge. Because of a lack of proper medical treatment, Ivan's condition worsens and he is forced farther and farther from his social circle. This distancing from the pompous mentality of society enables Ivan to contemplate his life and the way he has lived it. While many say this is where Ivan makes his big conversion, Shepherd claims that Ivan so strictly adheres to social propriety that he, in fact, does not change during the course of his sickness. Ivan uses the same reasoning he uses in professional life, and his method of facing death during his illness is one of "correction and evasion", a mentality he shows many times throughout the early story (409-410). A lack of change shows exactly how drastically society morphs how Ivan thinks. Society and its views literally drive Ivan to his death, leaving him a helpless victim who could not and would not be aided.

Ultimately, Ivan's destiny is controlled by society. Its influencing power over his young mind draws him into a world of corruption, materialism, and superficiality. While able to garner success in the eyes of his contemporaries, he is unable to foster a genuine lifestyle or meaningful relationship with his family. Through others' negligence and uncaring attitudes, Ivan is never able to reliably treat his illness and arrives at an early grave. The novella is a grim reminder of Man's

fragile state on the Earth and how living the wrong kind of life will lead to an unfulfilling existence. Ivan learns this lesson much too late, and merely serves as an example and a warning to those who know him.

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"A" RESEARCH  
ESSAY  
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"I killed not a human being but a principle": Destructive doubt in *Crime and Punishment*

Few scholars would deny that Raskolnikov is a man of the mind, a figure whose thinking propels him through life. After all, as Raskolnikov is a former bright student, an intellectual lifestyle characterized by pondering what is really true seems natural and fitting for him. He constantly questions apparently unreasonable ideas that do not seem to suit his life, primarily the existence of God and the reality of his guilt for committing murder. However, there also appears to be a general consensus among scholars that Dostoevsky's presentation of the intellect and rational thinking is more critical than commending. Chapple claims that in Dostoevsky's works, the rational philosophy of Humanism ultimately proves to be "ineffectual" (98), and Beebe further argues that Dostoevsky portrays intelligence in *Crime and Punishment* as a heinous phenomenon (153). Tucker also espouses a similar view that Dostoevsky paints intellectual philosophies such as "Utilitarian[ism]...and nihilism" in a negative manner, depicting such "rational" theories as characteristic of an unnatural mindset in Raskolnikov (161). But do these criticisms of mental power perhaps overlook a more severe problem within Raskolnikov?

While I concur with these scholars that such intellectual and rational thinking certainly does not enrich Raskolnikov, I see another deeper level to his thinking. In my view, the “intelligence” referred to by scholars is not simply that. Rather, “intelligence” and “rational thinking” are both related to and indicative of a more significant negative quality within Raskolnikov: his pervasive *doubt*. In other words, all the many rational philosophies like “Utilitarian[ism]...and nihilism” that Raskolnikov sees as innovative intellectual ways to arrive at truth are really signs of doubt which cause him to *deny* truths as basic as his guilt for committing brutal murder. Furthermore, while Raskolnikov’s occasionally overwhelming doubt is indeed inconsequential and unnatural as Chapple and Tucker respectively claim his intelligence to be, Raskolnikov’s unbelief possesses a more dangerous quality, more closely evincing Beebe’s view that intelligence is vile in Dostoevsky’s opinion (153). But why does doubt bring about such harsh conflict within Raskolnikov? Continually accompanying Raskolnikov’s doubt is a persistent feeling of pride, which serves as fuel for his active doubtful skepticism. This doubt-inciting arrogance causes him to view such doubt in a favorable manner, as a source of confidence, power and even refuge. And thus, for Raskolnikov, combatting his pride is a prerequisite to overcoming the doubt within him. To answer the question posed above, Raskolnikov’s doubt is such a severe issue because he constantly feels emotions like “anguish...[and] an intolerable feeling of limitless terror” until he extinguishes his pride (Part Two. Chapter II: Page 98). However, this fact that

Raskolnikov eventually conquers his persistent unbelief through humility by no means mitigates the severity of his doubt. Contrarily, Raskolnikov's humbling act of overcoming unbelief ultimately suggests that even though doubt may bring temporary satisfaction and apparent power, in reality it is a destructive force, bringing more confusion than the peace and understanding characterized by faith.

The ultimate origin of Raskolnikov's doubt is nothing else but his sense of pride, pride which hampers his ability to recognize a higher power other than himself. Sonya's troubled thoughts highlight the basic relationship between the pride and the doubt of God present in Raskolnikov: "Sonya remembered how Svidrigaylov had told her the day before that two courses were open to Raskolnikov - Siberia, or... She knew, besides, his vanity, his arrogance, his self-esteem, his want of faith" (Six. VIII: 441). The fact that three synonyms of "pride" ("vanity," "arrogance," and "self-esteem") precede the mention of Raskolnikov's lack of faith directly correlates pride and doubt, and furthermore implies that pride is a potent driving force behind Raskolnikov's skepticism toward faith. Characterizing Raskolnikov's pride in a grander way, Beebe writes that a primary influence behind Raskolnikov's brutal act of killing is his "egoistic pride that makes him want to play God" (152). While strongly put, Beebe's statement thus concurs with the idea that pride incites doubts of faith within Raskolnikov, for if Raskolnikov proudly wishes to "play God," what need has he then to recognize and believe in the existence of



God and His will, when Raskolnikov's *own* will to kill seems superior in his arrogant viewpoint? In reality, such lofty hubris on Raskolnikov's part reveals that he resorts to doubt in order to reject ideas that supposedly threaten his prideful view of himself. On that note, not only does Raskolnikov's act of murder result from his own sense of self-righteousness, but his doubt that he is a real "murderer" also stems from his pride.

Causing him to question not just the divine, Raskolnikov's pride further places him in doubt by making him, based on his own sense of confidence, fail to recognize something else of crucial concern: his real guilt for committing an all too real crime. Abrogating his previous admission of his guilt (Five. IV: 355), Raskolnikov sharply alters his attitude: "'Perhaps I am *still* misjudging myself,' he remarked sombrely, as though pondering something. 'Perhaps I am *still* a man and not a louse, and I was in too much of a hurry to condemn myself...Perhaps I can still put up a fight!' There was a supercilious smile on his lips" (Five. IV: 355). Along with the connotation of "supercilious" meaning hateful arrogance, Raskolnikov's defiant idea that he "can still put up a fight" reveals that his prideful nature is such that he feels that he can avoid the people's wish to label him a murderer by boldly *doubting* this truth. Herein lies the feeling of power that Raskolnikov derives from doubt; as long as he refuses to believe in his true culpability, he is free to proudly believe that he is a superior "man" rather than a hopeless "louse." Overall, because pride perpetuates Raskolnikov's avoidal and questioning of God and his

guilt, coming at all close to accepting these concepts must surely involve an abandonment of such egotism.

If pride is the source of Raskolnikov's doubt and therefore causes him to persist in his skepticism, then logically Raskolnikov's solution for conquering and eliminating doubt involves gaining humility. Raskolnikov exemplifies the difficulty yet ultimate value in fighting doubt when he surrenders to civil authority: "He was ashamed precisely because he, Raskolnikov, had perished so blindly and hopelessly, with such dumb stupidity, by some decree of blind fate, and must humble himself and submit to the 'absurdity' of that decree, if he wished to find any degree of peace" (Epilogue. II: 458). The fact that Raskolnikov considers his guilt an "absurd" idea demonstrates that his action of overcoming doubt involves submitting to truths which he does not just disagree with, but even despises. Since pride is the reason for such contemptful doubt toward the conception that he is guilty, Raskolnikov's "humbl[ing of] himself" proves to be a necessary step toward accepting such previously detestable truths and gaining more "peace." Strem also advocates a similar humbling surrender on Raskolnikov's part, proposing that humility, an optimal virtue in Dostoevsky's writings, allows Raskolnikov and other of Dostoevsky's characters to abandon their own ways and establish a greater life of faith (15). Thus, Raskolnikov must deny his prideful tendencies through humbly acknowledging the possibility of God's presence before being able to taste faith, just as he must accept society's judgment on him in order to eradicate his

doubts and find “peace.” But exactly what would become of Raskolnikov if he refuses to use humility to conquer doubtful feelings?

Svidrigaylov and his harsh suicide serve to highlight the importance of humility in confronting doubt by demonstrating that without humility (Six. VI: 433), prideful doubt can become a consuming force culminating in demise. Russell asserts that Svidrigaylov’s suicide is not simply a reaction to his bleak and empty outlook, but rather Svidrigaylov’s unwillingness to feel humiliated is what causes him to give into such emptiness and kill himself (236). Therefore, to answer the previously posed question, Svidrigaylov’s death suggests that should Raskolnikov not humble himself to accept the possibility of God’s existence and the reality of his guilt, but instead continue to proudly cast doubt on these ideas, his path will ultimately end in the hopelessness felt by Svidrigaylov, a man who perpetually embraces his cynical thoughts. Svidrigaylov’s suicide not only emphasizes that humility is vital for Raskolnikov to overcome doubt, but it also sheds light on the severity of doubt itself, emphasizing its inherently destructive nature.

The fact that Raskolnikov conquers his doubts by humbly submitting to unpleasant truths and thereby avoiding the harsh fate of Svidrigaylov *by no means* makes doubt a less damaging issue within him. On the contrary, though Raskolnikov may derive a sense of satisfaction and refuge from his prideful, skeptical questioning, he highlights the destructiveness of doubt by

harming himself and others through such skepticism. Raskolnikov's skewed idea that doubt enriches him appears in his discussion, or rather condemnation, of spiritual ideas with Sonya: "Perhaps God does not exist," answered Raskolnikov, with malicious enjoyment. He looked at her and laughed" (Four. IV: 271). The "enjoyment" Raskolnikov feels by questioning the existence of God presents the favorable lense through which he views doubt: it is a source of pleasure, a kind of seductive hiatus from "the burden of fear and suffering in his own soul" that he constantly feels after committing his crime (Five. IV: 342). But the *nature* of such happiness colors doubt in a much darker fashion. The word "malicious" describes an act of causing another to suffer, which Raskolnikov explicitly accomplishes by making Sonya "[sob] bitterly" when she hears Raskolnikov's cynical viewpoint (Four. IV: 271). However, his "malicious" amusement can also indicate that Raskolnikov hurts *himself* by torturing the one who loves him and seeks to rescue him from the very doubt he treasures, thus further isolating himself and obscuring his life. Therefore, doubt only superficially imparts satisfaction to Raskolnikov, while at its core it is severe enough tarnish the relationship which ultimately proves to bring satisfying "renewal... [and]...regeneration" through faith (Epilogue. II: 465). But for all the comfort that Sonya eventually brings, Raskolnikov nevertheless relies on his doubt for refuge before he chooses to overcome his skepticism. After explaining his Napoleonic theory that some have the innate permission to murder (Five. IV: 352), a sign of his doubt of his guilt, Raskolnikov "was

completely in the grip of his fever. He felt a sort of sombre ecstasy....Sonya understood that this gloomy creed had become his faith and his law" (Five. IV: 353). Raskolnikov's "ecstasy" again evinces that in his mind, doubt is a source of contentment in a bleak world. At the same time, this sensation also suggests that Raskolnikov hides in his doubt, treating his skeptical worldview as a comforting "faith" instead of making himself vulnerable to *actual* faith which professes a belief in God. Sonya's view of this "faith" as a "gloomy creed" further highlights the immense discrepancy between Raskolnikov's love of his doubt and its deleterious effects. In this case, Raskolnikov's doubt that he hides in and clings to as to a "creed" keeps him in a "gloomy" and depressed state of mental struggle, and thus serves more as a force of confusion than one which brings lasting (as opposed to fleeting) joy and clarity. But even when Raskolnikov's doubt leads him to feel noble emotions of strength as opposed to selfish pleasure, doubt still does not act as a durable source of understanding and happiness.

Though Raskolnikov's constant doubt of God and his guilt make him feel powerful and influential, his skepticism inhibits and confuses him more than it strengthens or enlightens him, further emphasizing doubt's catastrophic nature. Chapple claims that from Dostoevsky's viewpoint, if man relies only on the rational mind to decide how to go about enriching fellow humans, man would exhibit "an exercise in atheistic and immoral futility" (98). This dilemma is precisely what Raskolnikov exhibits when he questions his guilt. Raskolnikov's outrageous

Napoleonic theories are extensions of his affinity for rational thinking, and these ideas which cast doubt on his true guilt give Raskolnikov a feeling of control, making him feel like “a benefactor to humanity” as opposed to a lowly murderer (Five. IV: 354). But the fact that Raskolnikov’s notion that he can benefit mankind through his power is based strictly on his “rational” doubt that he is guilty implies that his so-called “power” and charitable feelings are “futile” and culminate in nothing positive for others...nor for himself. This inconsequentiality of his powerful feelings reveals that doubt is destructive to Raskolnikov because instead of actually making him an influential leader, his skepticism toward his guilt makes him persist in his “ceaseless terror and mental turmoil” (Five. V: 360). Therefore, no matter how much control Raskolnikov seems to have when he denies his guilt as a murderer, he cannot resolve the painful aftermath of his crime without overcoming such distracting and destructive doubt.

While Raskolnikov’s deceptive and inconsequential feelings of pleasure and power exemplify the inherent harmfulness of doubt, doubt is so destructive for another, more vital reason: it clouds Raskolnikov’s true nature as a person of faith, not a man of skepticism. The most basic indicator of who Raskolnikov is meant to be is his childhood, for in this time he lacks the temptation to boldly question ideas of faith. In her letter, Pulkheria Alexandrovna genuinely inquires: “Do you pray to God, Rodya, as you used to, and do you believe in the mercy of our Creator and Redeemer? I am afraid, in my heart, that you too may have been affected by the

fashionable modern unbelief" (One. IV: 33). Raskolnikov's mother's words reveal that based on his childhood, Raskolnikov has once possessed a more innocent heart inclined toward embracing and not rejecting faith, thus suggesting that such strong doubts within Raskolnikov are abnormal and incongruent with his basic character. If his doubts are such an aberration of his childhood innocence, then prideful doubt acts as a corrupting force in Raskolnikov's life. Matual expresses a similar view, proposing that the foundation of Raskolnikov's personality is not his arrogant skepticism toward spiritual ideas, but rather Raskolnikov's innocent and wholesome years as a child reflect his true identity (30). Matual's argument further highlights that doubt acts as a force of confusion for Raskolnikov, for it suggests that by engaging in cynical doubt toward the existence of God and the fact of his guilt, Raskolnikov only *obscures* his genuine faithful personality. He is ultimately meant to rely on God instead of on enticing, nihilistic theories which reject Him. And thus, Raskolnikov's doubt is destructive in a subtle way, for even though he gladly partakes in his skepticism, such questioning breaks him down by distracting him from his inherent need to have faith. Yet fully eradicating doubt is the only means by which Raskolnikov can fulfill this prosperous destiny of faith.

Raskolnikov's eventual conquering of his doubt highlights the immense value of faith for the peace it brings and thereby shows once again the destructiveness of doubt, which instead brings and preserves mental torment. When Raskolnikov is still drenched in doubt, Porfiry

Petrovich emphasizes the power of faith: “Do you know how I regard you? As one of those who would allow themselves to be disembowelled, and stand and face their torturers with a smile - if they had found a faith, or found God. Well, find your faith, and you will live” (Six. II: 388). In addition to supporting the notion that Raskolnikov already has faith deep within him, the idea that Raskolnikov will “live” once he finds faith intensely implies that Raskolnikov is *dead* due to his doubt. In other words, Raskolnikov’s stubborn choice to persist in his doubtful questioning has only perpetuated his “infinite moral weariness” (Six. III: 391), which sharply contrasts the understanding and contentment Porfiry suggests that Raskolnikov will feel when he arrives at faith. If the peace resulting from faith is a sign of life, then the mental anguish resulting from Raskolnikov’s so-called “intelligent” skepticism is really a sign of inner death and bewilderment, emphasizing yet again doubt’s severity. The climactic moment of humility when Raskolnikov completes his journey to faith occurs when he wonders: “Could not...[Sonya’s] beliefs become my beliefs now?” (Epilogue. II: 464). Tucker asserts that at such a moment of conversion, Raskolnikov finally rediscovers the “home” marked by the faith found in his childhood (161). Based on this idea, faith for Raskolnikov carries a sense of belonging and security, making doubt logically a dangerous deviation in his life. Thus, though Raskolnikov continually feels attracted to doubting God and his guilt, this doubt tears him down by making him lost, confusing the truth of his natural and spiritual self and making him retreat from such an enlightened destiny.



Overall, Raskolnikov's love for intelligent questioning that most scholars recognize in reality represents his larger fixation with doubting God and his guilt, a powerful skepticism that he can only overcome by weakening his pride. When Raskolnikov's periods of doubt are accompanied by thoughts of "cold deadening depression" (Five. V: 360), and his acceptance of faith brings "a perfect resurrection" (Epilogue. II: 463), his doubt proves to be anything but the source of happiness and power he superficially views it as. But returning to one of the original questions, what exactly makes Raskolnikov's doubt so severe and destructive? In addition to the confusion and anguish it brings, Raskolnikov's doubt is so damaging because doubt serves as an instrument by which he furthers his "punishment" (Two. I: 76). Perhaps this punishment for Raskolnikov's crime lies not so much in his mental suffering as it does in the fact that Raskolnikov does not realize that he can *conquer* such suffering by also conquering doubt and accepting faith. In other words, the more Raskolnikov doubts, the more he punishes himself by postponing the spiritual "renewal" that he has the innate power to receive (Epilogue. II: 465), and such stubbornness is undoubtedly a "crime" in itself.

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### Like Father, Like Son: Okonkwo's Doomed Fate in *Things Fall Apart*

Imagine a life in which one's actions in striving for absolute greatness results in complete failure. This scenario resembles Okonkwo's life entirely. After he successfully accomplishes the unthinkable and distinguishes himself from his father by achieving fame through his renowned wrestling career, a respectable living complex, and becoming one of the village's select leaders, Okonkwo loses everything as the things around him fall apart, eventually leading to the desperate act of his suicide. Since humans are psychologically governed by a balanced system of masculine and feminine characteristics, most scholars believe that an imbalance in Okonkwo's psyche leads to his downfall. Although the fact that Okonkwo's imbalanced system of solely masculine actions is true, a greater force directs his collapse. In purposefully striving to be unlike his feminine father, Okonkwo creates an imbalanced system between masculine and feminine characteristics that ultimately directs his life choices. By acting strictly through his masculine actions towards his family, consequently invoking the gods, Okonkwo rouses an evil *chi* that marshals him

towards his doomed fate. This evil *chi* warrants events to unfold in such an unfavorable manner that Okonkwo ironically dies the same way as his father – a shame

Hoping to escape the shameful fate of his father, Okonkwo strives to live a completely opposite life from his father's. Beginning from an early age he "resented his father's failure and weakness, and now even he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had told him that his father was *agbala*" (Achebe 2425). Mortified by the fear and humiliation of being weak like his father, Okonkwo eventually captures several titles and succeeds as becoming a distinguished man of the village. According to Leach, Okonkwo is not satisfied with his many successes, such as having a "well-stocked compound" and being a great "wrestler and a warrior;" he strives for more than just that. He prides himself on the rare honor of being the village *egwugwu*, a "village judge" (1053). Having the title of an *egwugwu* not only means that he has successfully risen to the top of his village, but he is also sought out by his fellow men to make wise decisions regarding the well-being of the tribe. Okonkwo lives the life of an extremely titled man who is constantly reminded by his father's failure to be subjectively superior than all other men. However, this constant reminder is actually a suppressing fear. "[Okonkwo's] whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness" (Achebe 2425). Living his life solely by that fear instills a driving sense of to value only characteristics associated with being a man. Okonkwo behaves closely to these characteristics and governs his household accordingly by

them. Essentially, he "was ruled by one passion –to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of those things was gentleness and another was idleness" (2425). And so Okonkwo subconsciously creates a significant imbalance in the masculine and feminine characteristics that govern all human beings. By resenting everything his father lived by and those respective weak, feminine characteristics, Okonkwo subconsciously alters his mind. He creates a significant distinction between masculine and feminine characteristics where he [only consults the masculine side, and] detests the feminine side (Jefiyo 851). This imbalance eventually becomes a code of conduct for him, and his family life soon becomes victim to his masculine tyranny.

Okonkwo invokes a bad *chi*, or personal god that directs his life, through his repeated actions of stringent masculinity and violence toward his family in an effort to further establish his firm position above even that of the gods. By living closely, even a little too closely, to these rules of absolute manhood, Okonkwo is able to fully demonstrate to his family that he rules above all else. "Okonkwo never showed any emotion openly, unless it be the emotion of anger. To show affection was a sign of weakness; the only thing worth demonstrating was strength" (Achebe 2432). Even during the Week of Peace, a week devoted to the adoration of the gods for their food and obviously a time of accord in the village, Okonkwo defiles the gods selfishly to establish his harsh presence. After one of his wives leaves without telling him, "he beat her very heavily," even ignoring his other wives when "[they] ran out in great alarm pleading with him that it was the

sacred week. But Okonkwo was not the man to stop beating somebody half-way through, not even for fear of a goddess" (2432). Clearly showing no restraint even for the sake of the gods, Okonkwo selfishly beats his wife in an effort to demonstrate that he yields to no one. He symbolically places himself over the gods by acting in a way that intentionally disrespects the gods. And by doing so, he has conjured a "great evil" (2433). "The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish" (2433). Through his irreverence towards the gods, Okonkwo does not bring this evil on his village, but on himself. This bad *chi* eventually causes his subsequent downfall; however, this is not the only offense against the spiritual that Okonkwo rouses because of his unwillingness to demonstrate weakness. After the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves proclaims the death of Okonkwo's son, Ikemefuna, the elder commands Okonkwo "to have nothing to do with it" because "[Ikemefuna] calls you his father" (2444). However at the moment of his son's killing, "he ran towards [his father]. Dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his machete and cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak" (2446). Shelton believes that due to his "fear of failure" and strong desire to be seen as a man of authority, Okonkwo immediately engages [at a moment of quick decision] in his son's murder. Because he ignores the warnings of the elders, men that are "closer to the *ndichie*, or ancestors," he provokes Ane [the earth goddess] and an "ancestral tradition" that is fully based on a linked system of obedience from "children

towards elders" and the "elders toward the *ndichie* who are closer to God" (37). This brutal action also demonstrates in a concrete way that his desire to be seen as masculine is now a subconscious part of his psyche. Even Okonkwo's best friend, Obierika, tells him that he should not have taken part in the murder for the same reason that Ezevdu tells him not to – "The unfortunate lad called him (Okonkwo) 'Father'" (Chukwukere 233-4). Through a wise choice of words, Obierika tells Okonkwo that the action of killing his son shows a strong, unnecessary brutality. Okonkwo has allowed his masculinity to overwhelm his entire life and thoughts. Okonkwo has become too absolute in his behavior.

Because of his extreme displays of masculinity and the summoned evil that follows him, Okonkwo spends many years in exile where he is carefully advised by his uncle Uchendu to turn away from his harsh behavior in order to live a balanced life. As a result of an accidental killing, Okonkwo has disrespected his village and is resultantly, "cast out of his clan like a fish onto a dry, sandy beach, panting. Clearly his personal god or chi was not made for great things" (Achebe 2476). Obviously his disrespect towards his clan is not the only thing that results in his bad luck. His exile and "accidental" murder of a neighbor are brought about by an evil from the gods [during the Week of Peace], "which he could neither have foreseen nor avoided" (Obiechina 43). However, not all hope is lost for Okonkwo. He is still given the opportunity by his uncle to alter his life in such a manner that could subsequently erase whatever misfortune haunts him. After

welcoming him into his motherland, Uchendu offers Okonkwo advice that may appear trivial, but is actually extremely pertinent to his situation. He tells him, "When a father beats his child, it sees sympathy in its mother's hut. A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland. Your mother is there to protect you" (Achebe 2478). At first glance, it appears that Uchendu offers Okonkwo simple advice that solely explains a mother's role in family: to console a child. However, after considering Okonkwo's extreme behavior as a father and leader, Uchendu indirectly explains a perfect example of a balanced leader—strict, yet submissive. These attitudes encompass a fundamental mixture of masculinity and femininity that Okonkwo lacks, and a perfect model of a balanced individual in power. If he accepts his uncle's advice, Okonkwo will leave exile and return to reclaim his position as a successful and accomplished village leader.

Upon his return to Umuofia, Okonkwo encounters a new change in leadership and stays true to his imbalanced personality in order to eradicate this challenging power. After his exile, his mental imbalance favoring masculinity and his "opposition" towards an alien power "converge." He soon finds that the Umuofia he once knew is dead, and so is his previous position as a wise leader (Leach 1054). This change in power soon triggers Okonkwo's steadfast attitude and results in a resilience towards the British invaders. During a meeting of the elders of the village, "Okonkwo, who had begun to play a part in the affairs of his motherland, said that until the



abominable gang was chased out of the village with whips there would be no peace" (Achebe 2488). Clearly, Okonkwo still retains his violent ways of dealing with his actions. To him, the only way to deal with conflict is to act with masculine actions: brutality or revenge. However, Okonkwo soon finds out that his fellow men are not as eager to take back the village. Another leader analogizes between a sinner and a wise man's reaction. "When a man blasphemes, what do we do? Do we go and stop his mouth? No. We put our fingers into our ears to stop us hearing. That is a wise action" (2488). Most of the other leaders disagree with Okonkwo's method of violence and suggest to act in a passive manner—an action regarded as feminine. "Everybody in the assembly spoke, and in the end it was decided to ostracize the Christians. Okonkwo grounded his teeth in disgust (2488). Instead of acting brashly through anger, the consensus between the other leaders is to retain a sense of wisdom through a balance of emotions. They are masculine in acting against the new leaders, however they are feminine in only ignoring their power. Clearly, the other leaders fit the model that Uchendu suggests earlier of a balanced leader. As events progressively worsen for the Umuofians, Okonkwo finally decides to take action. "He thought about the treatment he had received in the white man's court, and he swore vengeance. If Umuofia decided on war, all would be well. But if they chose to be cowards he would go out and avenge himself" (2504). Inwardly, he knows that his fellow Umuofians are not the adamant warriors of the older village days; however, Okonkwo rationalizes that if he pilots them to battle,

they would follow and help eradicate the imposing power in a bloody fashion. During one of the last scenes at the war rally, Okonkwo decides to take action as soon as a threat is imposed. Acting by himself and beheading the lead messenger, Okonkwo attempts to begin the war to retake his beloved village. However, Okonkwo "knew that Umuofia would not go to war. He knew because they had let the other messengers escape. They had broken into tumult instead of action. He discerned fright in that tumult" (2506). At the very second Okonkwo observes a feminine response to war, such as fright, he gives up on his village. "He wiped his machete on the sand and went away" (2506). Begam believes that by wiping his weapon on the ground, Okonkwo symbolically retains his masculine characteristics of staying true to his old village and standing alone against the threat. However, Okonkwo cuts the umbilical cord between himself and his village by cleaning his sword. By murdering the messenger, Okonkwo is metaphorically "shedding the blood of a fellow Igbo" (400). Now that he has symbolically disconnected himself with his modernized village, the only thing left for Okonkwo to do is permanently disconnect himself from society.

Through his suicide, Okonkwo not only demonstrates that his personality is too extreme to be a part of a governed village, but also allows his *chi* to fulfill his doomed fate. By examining his absolute behavior as a result of his death, Glenn suggests that Achebe believes that a character's downfall is a result of a mental "imbalance" of masculine and feminine characteristics.

While the rest of society maintains a proper balance, the individual is ultimately "destroyed" as [Okonkwo] stands out as a clear model for the old Umuofian tradition, while the rest of the village cowers under the new government enforcement (19). By considering that the *chi* generated through his absolute behavior leads him down a series of unfortunate events that eventually consumes him, Okonkwo's life appears to be extremely ironic. "His life had been ruled by a great passion – to become one of the lords of the clan. That had been his life-spring. And he had all but achieved it . . . Clearly his personal god or chi was not made for great things" (Achebe 2476). In a deliberate attempt to become one of the greatest men, Okonkwo guides himself mistakenly down a path towards his ultimate doom: suicide. After killing himself, Okonkwo's friend Obierika informs the men, "It is an abomination for a man to take his own life. It is an offense against the Earth, and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen. His body is evil" (2507). One of the best men Umuofia has ever known dies a shame to his people. Ironically enough, his death bears a similarity to his failure of a father: "Unoka was an ill-fated man. He had a bad chi or personal god, and evil fortune followed him to the grave, or rather to his death, for he had no grave. He died of the swelling which was an abomination to the earth goddess" (2427). Although they die completely different deaths, the offenses they commit against the divine are incredibly similar. Both men strive for completely different ideals; however, both

will be remembered as an offense against the earth goddess, Ane. This unfortunate similarity further emphasizes fate's superlative hand in death.

By committing offenses through his actions against the gods of Umuofia, Okonkwo awakens an evil *chi* that ultimately escorts him to his disgraceful death. Even though he "was one of the greatest men in Umuofia," he is unable to stand above the gods to choose his own fate, and "will be buried like a dog" (2507). Okonkwo demonstrates that no matter how many material successes one has achieved, another force remains completely dominant in directing a subsequent fate from an accumulation of one's earthly actions.

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