From the Faculty Advisor

The staff of the University Scholar has worked hard this term to present to the public at UD and beyond a wide and rich sample of the university’s intellectual life.

This breadth is in keeping with the sponsorship of this literary journal through Phi Beta Kappa, the oldest honor society in the United States and still the most prestigious promoter of the liberal arts in the American intellectual world. The mission of this group is not only to reward those who have been diligent students of the liberal arts but to encourage the breadth of interest and the integrity of mind that come with study that is not servile but pursued for the sake of knowledge itself, and the joy given by the knowledge.

Some of the work in this issue promotes the good of a particular discipline, like the scientific work presented by Christine Karako. Other works promote contemplation of literature in its moral and rhetorical aspects, as in Alex Taylor’s essay and our DiLorenzo prize essay about Virgil’s role in the Divine Comedy. As the mission of Phi Beta Kappa includes a concern for ethical excellence and moral development through contemplation of our intellectual heritage, the discussion of moral education in relation to the Holocaust is an important contribution, both in its serious engagement with the emblematic moral disaster of the twentieth century and in its concern with developing the life of the mind.

However, the liberal arts include not just the study but the practice of those arts which call the mind to beauty and to virtue. The original art in this spring issue speaks to the joy of meeting beauty in simplicity: in the lines of the human figure, in the details of the natural world, and in adornment that delights the eye but springs from common materials. Our creative literary contributions address, in poetry, mercy and the need for mercy; and in prose, the gradual recognition of the richness of an unappreciated life, set—on a particularly University of Dallas note—in interaction with the embrace of Italian culture in the neighborhood of Lago Albano.

We hope that our readers enjoy the variety of the feast, and we invite undergraduates to submit their own contributions to our celebration of the life of the mind at our university.

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On Desire Unfulfilled
Ann Kuehl

It is interesting that Heaven would choose Virgil—an infernal shade who, when introduced, is entirely without hope—to be the guide instrumental to the salvation of a despairing soul. Despite Virgil’s active participation in Mount Purgatory’s purifications, which are designed to purge sin and instill virtue, Virgil somehow remains hopeless, and the poet Dante’s belief in the importance of this virtue in the Christian spiritual life is illustrated by Virgil’s inability to enter Paradise. In general, hope seems to give faith wings by inspiring sureness in the object of faith’s fulfillment. It also seems to serve as love’s foundation in that desire of a good that leads a soul to care for and want to serve the ultimate good. An abundance of criticism on Virgil’s lack or possession of both faith and love exists; interestingly, however, there seems to be a significantly disproportionate lack of scholarship on Virgil’s hope, or lack thereof. Substantial supporting arguments will therefore be supplemented by point-for-point criticism. It will be helpful to establish what hope is since a clear standard will assist in examining, firstly, how Virgil fails to learn hope in the *Commedia* and, secondly, why Dante the poet feels hope is so important. Hope, ultimately, is important because it inspires and fuels the Christian spiritual life.

Often the word “hope” is used to express longing or desire, but this use of the word is not quite correct: Virgil describes the community of shades in Limbo as “[having] no hope and yet [living] in longing” (1.4.42). Since infernal shades desire and are hopeless simultaneously, hope must be something more. St. James, Dante’s paradisial examiner, fills the void left by the common usage of “hope” in his epistle: “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly and he will be given it. But he should ask in faith, not doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed about by the wind” (Jas. 1:5–6). If “faith” is read to mean “confidence,” St. James enhances the definition of hope by explaining that God’s gifts should be not only asked for, but also anticipated. Dante the
pilgrim agrees with St. James: he says that hope is the “certain expectation / of future glory” (3.25.67-68). It is a common belief that human beings desire either what is good or what they perceive to be good. The “future glory” Dante speaks of falls under both categories: It is good within itself and it is perceived good. Dante implies the desire of good in his definition of hope and highlights hope’s incompleteness without sureness in fulfillment. The two-part definition of hope, then, is a desire for good with complete confidence in the fulfillment of that good.

Virgil, an infernal shade, desires the good without confidence in it and therefore lacks hope when Dante the pilgrim encounters him at the opening of the Commedia. The inscription above the gate of hell itself reveals the hopeless state of infernal shades. After announcing the horrors of hell, it concludes by proclaiming, “Abandon every hope, who enter here” (1.3.9). The writing above the gate elicits great fear in Dante, affording Virgil the opportunity to reassure Dante’s hope in the mission ahead. Discussing this moment in Inferno III, Simonelli remarks that Virgil “must use his craft, as teacher and guide, to enable Dante to overcome his cowardice” (17). While the critic accepts without question that Virgil reassures Dante, she seems to miss an interesting contradiction: Virgil encourages his pupil to take up that hope which the inscription has forbidden Virgil himself to possess. This same inscription also assists in understanding precisely why it is that Virgil must remain so near its gates. In the original Italian, the word Dante uses in the inscription for “abandon” is lasciate, which is the command form of the verb as well as the second-person plural conjugated form. Remarkably, the sentence—imperative at first glance—can be inverted in both the English and the original Italian to read: ‘[You] who enter here are abandoning every hope,’ which is a simple descriptive sentence. The gate’s inscription, then, becomes both a fierce warning to entering souls and a commentary on why the souls must enter at all; Dante brilliantly reveals the hopeless horrors of hell and the reason why the horrors are endured in six simple words.

More substantial than the gate of hell’s inscription, however, is Virgil’s own acknowledgement of his hopelessness. Virgil confesses that he and his fellows live with “no hope and . . . yet live in longing” in Limbo, which proves that Virgil recognizes his hopeless state to the extent that he admits it freely(1.4.42). The nature of a hopeless desire is a complicated one. In trying to understand the distinction, Mandelbaum et al. point out that Dante the poet and, through him, Virgil understand the state of the unbaptized to be “defined by... desire, and whatever the meaning of the word may be, it is at once clear that it designates a sad but devout and respectful feeling that has God for its object” (53). These shades clearly recognize the good and yearn for God; however, they completely lack confidence in its fulfillment. One wonders whether all that is needed from these hopeless spirits is that expectation of glory of which the pilgrim Dante speaks. While this question remains to be considered, it is clear that, at least initially, Virgil lacks hope.

Virgil continues to leave hope abandoned during the climb of Mount Purgatory, even while actively participating in the purification process there;
Virgil also admits that he lacks any theological virtue, of which hope is one, and only hopes for Dante’s salvation—not for his own. Dante the poet describes that Virgil “ahead of [Dante] entered the fire” that cleanses lust, thereby undergoing the purification process of Mount Purgatory (1.27.46). Dante the poet believes that Mount Purgatory, the place “in which the human soul is cleansed of sin, / becoming worthy of ascent to heaven,” is a process created by God; Dante does not believe it to be a flawed process, and yet Virgil remains without hope (2.1.5-6). It appears that Purgatory’s purificatory capabilities reach only so far as the individual allows them to reach, and that Virgil must therefore be preventing Purgatory’s healing from reaching his own soul.

Virgil hinders and even halts the effects of the healing powers of Purgatory despite evidence of his participation in the processes by which they come about; this begs a consideration of the character of Virgil’s hopelessness so that the logic behind his rejection of healing is clear. Critics are quite polarized in their arguments and assumptions. Kenelm Foster, in his excellent writings on the souls in Limbo, explores their moral qualities and limitations, as well as the ultimate cause of their damnation. In reference to these things, he concludes that the cause is focused on the “inward factor, on their lack of the three holy virtues, i.e. faith, hope, and charity; a lack which is not made up by their full possession of ‘all the other’, i.e. all the natural virtues” (210). This reinforces the argument that Virgil lacks hope, which is a solid foundation, but the reason for the virtue of hope’s lack is still unclear. The criticism of Mowbray Allan offers an extreme and almost unexpected contradiction to Foster; he argues, not that Virgil actually does possess the virtue of hope, but that Virgil’s hopelessness is a “fact of psychology and not a final fact of theology” (194). This is an enticing argument: If Virgil’s melancholy is at fault, instead of his immortal soul, the possibility of redemption for the beloved guide is much greater. Foster discusses hopelessness but not its cause, while Allan redefines hopelessness as a psychological disposition—what, then, is the character of Virgil’s hopelessness? This question can be answered by Virgil himself: in Purgatory, he describes his time in Limbo as spent “with those souls who were not clothed / in the three holy virtues” (2.7.34-36). Virgil’s testimony contradicts Allan’s argument of psychology, then, because Virgil himself calls it a virtue. As a figure for reason, Virgil surely has self-knowledge enough to distinguish between a virtue, as he explicitly states, and a psychological hindrance. The character of Virgil’s hopelessness and his rejection of healing can then be built on Foster’s argument. It is clear that Virgil lacks the virtue of hope. If the two requirements for hope are taken into account, namely that of desiring the good and of confidence in that good’s fulfillment, Virgil’s logic of hopelessness is plain. Virgil sees his placement in Limbo as final, despite the obvious fact that he is himself climbing Mount Purgatory, and so gives up learning the theological virtues of faith and love, as well as hope, because he has no confidence that God’s mercy can and perhaps would allow him to reach his final, supernatural happiness.

The argument that Virgil doesn’t have hope for himself, and yet has the capability to hope and therefore to learn theological virtue, gains greater
credibility when one considers Virgil’s hope in Dante during the climb of Mount Purgatory. He encourages Dante to “look at the sun that shines upon your brow” (2.27.133)—not our brows. The sun sheds light on Virgil and Dante’s brows, but because Virgil refuses Purgatory’s powers, Virgil rejects hope in himself as he rejects the sun’s infinite light. Virgil demonstrates his ability to hope in Dante, which further refutes Allan’s argument of psychology. Virgil tells Dante that he has reached the “place past which my powers cannot see” (2.27.129). His powers arguably could see, however, if Virgil allowed himself to see and be renewed by the purifications of Purgatory. He doesn’t, however, and so does not learn the virtue of hope throughout the climb of Mount Purgatory.

Dante the poet places a great deal of importance on the virtue of hope in the Christian spiritual life, and this is obvious in Virgil’s failure to achieve Paradise and in the fact that Dante the pilgrim must undergo an examination on this virtue. Virgil is Dante’s guide, his inspiration, and his “master and ... author” (1.1.85); Dante is extraordinarily generous in praising Virgil’s excellences. Dante’s beloved mentor lacks the virtue of hope, however, so despite his excellences he cannot—or will not—enter Paradise. Dante the poet must believe in the importance of virtue to deny his guide entry to Paradise because of lack of hope. Dante the pilgrim must undergo an examination on this virtue himself, “as a disciple answering his master” (3.25.64), before he can reach the highest levels of Paradise. Dante the pilgrim, by way of an answer, asks a question: If one has faith—and hope—in the Lord, “can he not know God’s name?” (3.25.75). To Dante, hope is a prerequisite to knowing the Lord. Hope directs a soul toward its eternal end, which is the greatest good, God. By desiring this good and having confidence in its fulfillment, the soul has the virtue necessary to enter Paradise and to be with and “know” the Lord.

Dante’s own life, as well as his Commedia, offer testimony on the importance of hope in the Christian spiritual life. The connection between Dante’s exile and the theological virtues is made by the critic Guiseppe Mazzotta, who claims that there is a “conspicuous pattern in the cantos of both direct and oblique references to exile, to the point that exile, I submit, is the textual horizon within which Dante is engaged in a powerful rethinking of the theological virtues” (Mazzotta 659). This rethinking of the theological virtues reflects the poet’s experience of exile. He presumably would have had to both rely on and grow in the virtues that he then glorifies in his Commedia; his account, then, of the virtues is nothing except an account of the very means of his survival. To further illustrate his point, Mazzotta refers to Beatrice as she tells Dante’s examiner on hope, St. James, that “no child of the Church Militant / ... has more hope than he has” (3.25.52-53). Certainly, Beatrice would understand and sympathize with his intense hope to return to his beloved Florence; however, Beatrice’s affirmation of Dante the pilgrim’s hope constitutes much more than a desire physically to return home. Dante the pilgrim, after descending Inferno and climbing Mount Purgatory, has finally reached Paradise. To do this, the pilgrim must have been totally transformed and perfected in powerful theological virtue—he is, after all, able to see the face of God in the beatific
vision. Therefore, to Dante, hope has more than allowed him spiritually to survive exile. It has allowed him to survive the depth and reach the pinnacle of his understanding of eternity.

Hope or lack thereof is an inescapable theme in the Commedia. Dante the pilgrim's definition in Paradise gives an excellent standard against which the characters in the epic poem can be measured. Virgil, when first encountered, does not measure up to the standard of the virtue of hope because of his own lack of confidence in the good he so strongly desires. He maintains this frustrating lack of confidence or expectation even through the climb of Mount Purgatory and so never hopes. This virtue is one that Dante the poet feels is extremely important, and he communicates this through obvious examples and themes throughout the text of his masterpiece, as well as testimony from his own pain of exile. In fact, the very masterpiece itself could be Dante the poet's greatest act of hope. The Commedia was written in the midst of strife and corruption, and yet nonetheless was written. Dante the poet did not despair of his faith, his Church, or his fellow Christians. He himself is an example of the wild hopefulness of the human race.

Bibliography
Lanthanum Doping of Strontium Titanate Thin Films on Silicon

Christine Karako

Abstract:

The growth of monolithically integrated conductive oxides on silicon could be useful in a variety of applications, especially when paired with crystalline ferroelectrics. This research studied both the structural and electrical effects of lanthanum doping on thin strontium titanate films grown at a thickness range of 6-25 nm on Si (001) substrates. Atomic layer deposition was used after buffering the substrate with four unit cells of strontium titanate deposited via molecular beam epitaxy. Lanthanum-doped strontium titanate (La:STO) films were successfully grown on silicon while maintaining a single-crystal structure and achieving good conductivity in comparison to the insulating properties of undoped strontium titanate. When tested electrically, a 13% lanthanum-doped thin film had a resistivity of about $2.2 \times 10^2 \ \Omega$-cm. Crystalline structure was analyzed both by x-ray diffraction and by transmission electron microscopy. The results indicated that higher doping concentrations (over 30%) contributed to crystalline defects.

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Examining the Holocaust as a History of Choice:  
An Educational Perspective

Benjamin Gibbs

In a synagogue in Sighet, Transylvania, thirteen year-old Elie Wiesel prays. The year is 1941, and as he weeps over the destruction of the Temple, a penniless man approaches him. The man asks Elie why he cries when he prays: the boy cannot answer, and the questions start to build. Why does one pray? Why does one live? Why does one breathe? This troubled the thirteen-year old until the man began to explain that, “every question possesses a power that was lost in the answer” (Wiesel 3-5). The poor man, called Moishe, explained that when he prays, he asks God for the strength to ask the right questions, and that through this search for answers, man moves closer to his Creator (Wiesel 5). Four years later, Elie Wiesel, the boy who wept when he prayed, is liberated from Buchenwald: he had survived arguably the most tragic act of human brutality in recent history (Wiesel 114-115). Millions of Jews, as well as other minorities, were killed by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust; but what could the victims teach the world? In the nature of education, which lessons does the Holocaust provide, and why are they essential to true education? How should these lessons be presented, and why should educators teach this painful history? Within each of these questions there is a power that is lost when an answer is attempted.

But any attempt at an answer brings a knowledge that is essential to true education. The term “true” education is both broad and ambiguous. It can be used by anyone wishing to appear resolute or infallible in their presentation of some pedagogical lesson. This essay describes true education by using Jakub Grygiel’s distinction between education and training. Grygiel contrasts the two terms and their effect on national security teachings, but such a relationship has ramifications in other fields as well. Grygiel argues that “training is about the ‘how’ and education is about the ‘why’ or the ‘what’” (Grygiel 202). He explains further that training focuses on the skills necessary to perform a task, but training does not give someone purpose. It is an essential premise in higher education to prepare students for life in the work force, but this foundation often borders on training and lacks the values embedded in education. Grygiel argues that education centers on “why an action may be necessary” (Grygiel 202). True education enables students to judge the importance and purpose of actions rather than simply be able to perform them. This is a lifelong undertaking, argues Grygiel; education cannot be measured by the complexity of an argument but by “the simplicity of an intuition that is deeply felt and known while often remaining unarticulated” (Grygiel 203).

The next question is clear: how does one educate? An obvious answer provided by Jakub Grygiel is a liberal arts education based on the development of wisdom through contemplation and questioning. This is not a unanimous choice by any means, but scholars such as Martha Nussbaum, Donald Cowan,
and Wilburn Stancil provide a strong justification. Within a liberal arts education, the "great books" of western culture provide a gateway to contemplation. Among a variety of educational techniques, in a world pressed for immediate answers, the great books like those of Socrates and Dante propose endless questions that cannot be pursued without contemplation. Reflection on the right questions, combined with a desire for truth, propels man towards education.

The contemplation pursued by a liberal arts education is also applicable when studying the Holocaust. When examined in a broader context, the lessons and educational value of the Holocaust are immense. Aside from their historical and cultural significance, they provide an insight into human action that is unprecedented. But, herein lies the challenge: teachers are asked to present a complex and sensitive history, filled with death and destruction, to young adults. When they are asked to do this, often in a short period of time, trepidation and concern may arise. Yet, within the context of a true and just education, the lessons of the Holocaust must be presented so as to create that contemplation – so that the power of the question is not lost in simple answers. There are various ways of presenting the Holocaust to students that achieve this goal of contemplation, and while the content and execution of lessons to younger students must be vetted with a certain level of sensitivity, lessons to all groups strive for that broader purpose. Holocaust educators must organize lessons so that their students gain a moral understanding and appreciation of the events of the Holocaust as well as an academic recognition. One particularly fulfilling lesson of the Holocaust, which can connect with students of all ages and combine moral and academic goals, is that the Holocaust is a history of choice.

The historical evidence of such a lesson is overwhelming and covers various aspects of Holocaust history. The German people elected Hitler and his party in the elections of July 1932, and Hitler was then appointed Chancellor by his peers in January of 1933 (Bergen 49-50). German people and their collaborators chose to believe and act upon anti-Semitic ideologies, and in the case of Reserve Police Battalion 101, a group of men too old for the army, chose to kill thousands of Jewish men, women, and children, even after being given the option to "step out" (Browning 1-2, 55-70).

Choices were made in the name of good as well, even in the face of dire consequences. When Adam Czerniaków, head of the Judenrat (ghetto council) of the Warsaw ghetto, was told that he had to provide 6,000 names for deportation the following day, he chose to end his own life rather than send his fellow men, women, and children to their deaths and save himself (Crowe 267). Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish businessman and diplomat, created thousands of fake protective passes called Schutzpasse. He distributed them to Jewish people trying to flee Nazi-occupied Europe and saved countless lives (Decoster 26). Similarly, three university students, Youra Livchitz, Jean Franklemon, and Robert Maistriau, chose to stop a Nazi deportation train and cut the chains of locked boxcars, freeing 237 brave Jews at great risk to their own lives (Schreiber 211-230). Despite the ability to make the Holocaust seem
like a series of events in which heroic men and women saved persecuted Jews, these actions were rare. The disturbing truth is that many chose not to act, and because of this apathy, the Holocaust further developed. This does not presume that every non-German gentile was a Nazi collaborator, but simply that all people had a degree of free will, and that their decisions – or lack of them — had consequences. It is not possible to fully understand the emotion, complexity, and pain that came with any of these decisions, especially in the face of death.

At a basic level, however, all of these choices can be seen for what they are: a decision among options. All of these people had a certain degree of power and the opportunity to choose, and that power is something that all men still hold to this day, albeit under different circumstances.

The decision to teach the Holocaust with a focus on the element of choice may seem unsettling based on the historical fact that millions of Jews and other minorities were persecuted and given no choice in the matter. However, the argument falters when it takes into account the will of all victims to survive. At its fundamental level, the resolve in all victims to survive and overcome the tremendous persecution of the Holocaust is a choice. Removed from their homes, separated from their families, denied the basic necessities of survival, many could have chosen to give up hope, but they fought on. They chose to resist through survival, and even the slightest attempt at survival is a choice for hope and life.

A crucial focus of Holocaust education is to connect the past to lessons that students can use today. The Holocaust, in particular, offers unique lessons and comprehension not generally attainable in other disciplines. Unfortunately, as Jeffrey Glanz, an educator on the Holocaust, describes, the evil of the Holocaust often discourages teachers from introducing it in depth to their students. Glanz provides a set of guidelines for teaching the Holocaust, which is based on his understanding of the trepidation that a teacher feels in explaining such a difficult and complex subject to young students. Specifically, he argues for the importance of teaching the Holocaust through disciplines like literature, using guest speakers, and engaging the students mentally (Glanz 548-556).

The advice that Glanz gives to educators is paralleled by the United States Holocaust Museum and Memorial (USHMM). The USHMM stresses that educators must be patient and relate the complex ideas back to the students after they introduce them. Furthermore, the educator must be careful not to trivialize history while encouraging self-reflection; the Holocaust is not simply a singular choice between right and wrong (Guidelines for Educators). However, the lessons presented by this complex situation illuminate the freedom of human action. One of the numerous educational opportunities that Holocaust history illustrates is a lesson on the power of choice. It offers a positive way to address a tragic subject, and when taught in the context of many other events, it does not trivialize it. Rather, it guides the history to a point of powerful moral contemplation.

The question of why and how to teach the Holocaust reswens attention on the state and nature of education. Jacques Maritain, in his work, The Educa-
tion of Man: Educational Philosophy, argues that, while schools mainly affect intellectual virtue, they do influence character and morality as well. Therefore, educators must supplement the home-based moral development of families by teaching students "the exacting ways through which they prepare for an adult life where they will be obliged to make the best of situations not of their choosing and to do not as they please but as they ought" (Maritain 109). Clearly, educational institutions influence moral development, and within that the power of choice must be recognized. This does not require educational upheaval, but merits a quiet realization that complex ethical subjects, like the Holocaust, spawn inward reflection in students, an action that should be anticipated and focused. Knowing that the students are going to reflect on the emotional and arduous history of the Holocaust, educators must tie the subject matter back to ethical problems.

As Holocaust survivors pass away, it is the task of all Holocaust scholars to preserve their memory and the lessons they offer. The most effective way to preserve memory is to educate, and while the evil of the events may discourage potential educators, the history of the Holocaust provides essential lessons. Among numerous options, the Holocaust can be presented as a history of choice, and if it is, then it allows students to reflect on their own free will and grow both intellectually and morally. If pedagogical systems seek to form the human ethos, then they must include the development of choice within their lessons and force students to contemplate.

The nature of true education includes asking powerful questions and searching for truth. When contemplating questions like, "Why did the Holocaust happen?" and "How should a true education teach its lessons?" we strive for a proper education, one that is not simply training for a profession. There is a hope among Holocaust educators that the lessons of the Holocaust will one day achieve tolerance. Even seemingly minute victories, like the initiation of a question in the mind of a student, are small but important steps towards tolerance and change. An answer may dampen the power of the question, but the journey for an answer is the foundation of truth and the education that will lead to the eradication of genocide from our world.
Bibliography


Praying Drunk in a Chapel

Tom Farris

Quivering metal lights through air
Chant like a rhythm in the room.
Natural pattern, constancy eternal,
Love immortal inflames the beacon
That beckons the cry, which stems from my
Deep, dug-over, hidden-laden
Hope undying, though one day I'll die.

The cold brick-stone chapel floor
Hurts like the ground I'm ground to
In the most unusual, destiny-driven way.
And the tears flow
Like the fall I've fallen through
Too many times to count,
Automatic, yet a pain to get to.

And a shout, and an image
Of an egg and a baby
And a bloody animal in a dark forest
Cover the cave of my mind
Like a winter frost
In the dead of December.

At least in the last moment
When my being, mind, soul,
And whatever else was broken
Like a discarded Pan flute
On a reedless river,
My heart helped itself
To one pure glance
Of something stable
In the way it felt
That maybe it wouldn't lie
To itself in its center
And maybe it wouldn't
In some shape or fashion
Finally die.
Chaudhuri’s Confessiones:
A Charcoal Etching of the Author as a Young Child

Alex Taylor

In Book I of The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian, Nirad Chaudhuri portrays his childhood as the beginning of his being intricately shaped by English influence, which does not make it less Indian, but rather, moreso. The education of Nirad Chaudhuri is not à la Macaulay’s Minute on Indian Education; he was (in childhood and at the time of his writing) “unconvinced that inflicting ‘fat cats sitting on mats’ on little Indian boys [was] the best method of making them learn English,” and when such education was forced on him, he “tried to make amends by reading all [his] brother’s text-books two years in advance of him” (120). Although Chaudhuri writes that in his autobiography, “environment shall have precedence over its product,” he can only describe his childhood environment as its product primarily, although at the time of his writing, he has grown in ways he could not wholly imagine in the days of his youth (5). The influence of his early environment is not a limiting factor but one that extends beyond the seas. The villages he describes as of primary importance were not sequestered and secluded in the wilds but suffused within the context of the Empire and all that it entailed. By explicating the importance of the town and the two villages that brought him up, Chaudhuri ultimately seeks to uphold the importance of England’s own mark on his life, and by meditating on his early surroundings, he praises England truly in an Augustinian mode, as it seems that the river and the rains, the process of the seasons praise “our intellectual and spiritual traffic with the West” (106) “through the mouths of those who contemplate them” (Confessions, 5.1.1).

The Autobiography cannot be fully understood without this Augustinian rhetorical structure. As it is the matured narrator Chaudhuri who writes, within whom already “all that was good and living...was made, shaped, and quickened by the same British rule,” the subject of his writing cannot be understood apart from his own person (v). Thus, in order to understand the role of Chapters 1-3 and the importances of the childhood locales of the author, one must grasp the importance of the author’s imagined England and his Western inheritance. When Chaudhuri asserts that the places he describes in Book I “form, so to say, the buried foundations of my later life,” (5), he insists England’s influence was not merely etchings and engravings on the mud floor, nor even flowers of engraved agate and lapis lazuli grafted into the marble Taj Mahal of his character; rather, England and her influence joined with his native land in collectively shaping the sandstone of the statue of his self (5). While he notes that he seldom visited his mother’s village, as it was distant at forty miles away, it is worth noting in comparison that although the geographical distance between Kishorganj and London is about 125 times the mileage between Kishorganj and Kalikutch, at least as the mechanical bird flies, England was not proportionally distant to his heart. In fact, it seems that Chaudhuri was
formed by the folk songs of Kalikut, in which “the spirit of this rarefied part could be considered to be very truly summed up,” and the “chiaroscuro of our knowledge about England,” who was at once transcendent and personable, “absent and yet real,” rather than by the sense of blood superiority from the ancestral village, his father Upendra Babu’s village of Banagram (95, 105). Indeed, it seems that quite a bit of the civitas of Kishorganj was shaped by matter Anglia, such that Chaudhuri saw the other villages from his mother’s eyes. In describing his birthplace, Kishorganj, Chaudhuri portrays it “... as alike a little London-town” where “the white corrugated-iron roofs... [had] just begun to out the thatch” in a show of some small architectural advance (7). Kishorganj was a country town, but of the Indian rather than the English variety, a governmental headquarters, a center of the law. In the last sense it could be said that it was his father’s town in work as Banagram was his father’s village in blood. Chaudhuri understands Kishorganj as the town that in some sense taught him of his inheritance of citizenship, and he asserts that it claimed a certain loyalty, that of pietas, over its members, writing that “it must have been a feeling of this kind which lay at the root of the Greek loyalty to the polis” (42). This comparison shows Chaudhuri’s credence in Aristotle’s prior assertion that “man is by nature a political animal,” that man indeed has a defined nature; however, by furthering the comparison of Kishorganj to Athens, Chaudhuri reveals the complexity of human nature provided in a full reading of the Greek philosophers. He writes that in Kishorganj, “we did not feel the Athenian contempt for those who pursued their private avocations without paying attention to private affairs;” this ought to be understood to properly refer to popular Athenian society, whereas Aristotle and other philosophers understood that while man is a political animal, he is also just as equally a social animal, as the polis necessarily precedes and is born from the conjunction of families (44). A primary fault of late Athenian society (and possibly a contributing factor to its downfall) was the increasing totalization of political life at the expense of family and religious life, as can be seen in many dramas of the time (i.e. Sophocles’ Antigone, Euripides’ The Bacchae, etc.). Chaudhuri sees this same fault at the root of modern India, asserting that “today we are always political, everywhere political, and wholly political” (44). If one is to ransom for himself and his own the familia and the ecclesia from the overbearing polis, one must know them; enter Banagram and Kalikut.

Banagram was at once Chaudhuri’s connection to his ancestral roots and to the religious rites of his people; it was both his Brideshead and his Canterbury. He remarks that while “we paid at least one regular annual visit to the village...[for] the great Bengali Hindu festival of Durga Puja,” the family would also sometimes visit “to spend the Christmas holidays also, besides attending the weddings of our relatives when there were any” (53). In the first sense, there is the sense of rampage and destruction, and in the latter of unitive order and new life.

Together, they form a conceptual whole, such that when he reminisces of Banagram, Chaudhuri thinks of blood; whether it was the blood-ties of distant family or the blood of slaughtered animals, there is some sense for Chaud-
huri in which blood forms a tie stronger than that even of one’s own birthplace. Home was his father’s village, home was not Kishorganj, where he merely lodged, home was Banagram; such was “the power of the old tradition” that the children somehow retained “the loyalty to the absent village” (56). If Kishorganj was London-town which could to some degree mimic the country village that Banagram fit to its familial fullness, Kalikut was that green Æire where Chaudhuri lost his fear of trees amidst the cyclones, enjoyed maternal society amidst the threat of the bastinado and the possibility of in-law antagonism, and in conjunction with “absolute respite from books...and vigorous assimilation into the soil, the vegetation, and animal life” (89), drank in the rhythm of folk music and folk poetry from old women and young boys (89). The spiritual contribution of Kalikut is such that Chaudhuri sees in it a commonality of Bengali devotion: “an inverted and rebellious form of the prayer ‘Give us this day our daily bread,’” by which “a people meek and contented, without share in the kingdom of the earth, [could] grumble at that fact [although they were] more often happy to forget it” (94-5). In some sense, Kalikut is the motherland which has preserved herself unstained from the materialist rapaciousness of modernity, perhaps even more so at the point of Chaudhuri’s childhood than the mater Anglia; however, no matter how uncivilized Englishmen in Indian may or may not have been, Chaudhuri asserts that “our ideas of the Englishman in the flesh were very different from our ideas of his civilization,” such that even knowing and in some sense living in English civilization did not alleviate ignorance of Englishmen who’d wandered apart from their moorings (122).

No matter how much one knows about the Shire, one cannot wholly know Sméagol once he has become Gollum unless one understands the disconnect of what he has become in relation to where he came from; but doing so requires knowing his mind and the circumstances of that disconnect as well as his background. While in Book I, Chaudhuri examines his early environment in order to acknowledge his inheritance from English civilization as well as his Indian surroundings; he also lays the groundwork for an examination of how some Englishmen, in departing from the foundations of their own civilization in approaching India, come over sickly and lacking the health of the Empire, such that they could be despised as lepers; not in a xenophobic fashion for their skin color, but for a deterioration of the civilization that they ought to bear within themselves as transmitters of a Western heritage that is both truly their own and truly universal.

Bibliography


The Memory of a Russian Doll

Alexa Turczynski

The woman sat perched on the flat rock along the lakeshore, her hunched back turned towards me as she stared out at the mountains. Her clothes were in slight disarray. The black polyester dress clung too tightly at her middle and hung too loosely at her shoulders. Her gray hair was a matted mess sprawled about her head. Where the dress stopped below her knee, the veins were clearly blue beneath her olive skin, bubbling slightly as she kept her foot planted on the rocky beach.

As she gazed out at the lake, I realized that she was singing, muttering a low tune that rose and fell like the gentle waves rippling up the shore. Her voice drifted in and out of audibility, coarse and strained at the high notes. I could not understand the muttered Italian words, but that wasn’t really necessary to understand the song. With the lull of the melody, a web of sadness wove against the backdrop of the beautiful scene, a web that separated me from her more than age or circumstance. For me, this was just another landscape. For her, this was a memory—a world long gone but almost recaptured in the unison of the scene and the melody.

I watched her and ignored my open book, its pages fluttering rapidly in the wind. Speculations played as vividly as memories.

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My great-aunt Ellie had traveled the world after her husband died. She had no children and she always brought us presents from those distant, mysterious places. One year, my gift was a Russian doll with long black braids, pale skin, and a fluffy hat made of rabbit fur. Because she was made of shiny porcelain, Mom put her on one of my wooden shelves, too high for me to reach. As I lay in bed, I would look up at her and wonder at her funny clothes. Her feet were tiny in their glass boots and her puffy red sleeves made her arms seem too small. Whenever she came down from the shelf, I liked to stroke her soft hat. Aunt Ellie told me that Russian little girls played with dolls just like her, and I wondered what it would be like to only have such strange dolls.

Eventually, commenting on how ugly she was, Mom moved her to my closet. She tucked her into one of the high shelves, and I quickly forgot all about her.

One Christmas, years later, Aunt Ellie brought her up, asking if I still had her. I glanced nervously at Mom, feeling as if hiding the doll away must be some sort of crime in which I was a collaborator.

“Paige has her in her room, don’t you, Paige?” Mom had that well-practiced method of passing off any blame for those machinations wrought at my expense. I simply nodded. Suddenly, the table decorations became extremely interesting.

“I found that doll in Moscow, and I just thought she was beautiful, and I says to myself, now isn’t that just lovely? And so authentic! And I had to get one for myself because you know I always like to bring something back to
remember my trip by. But then I thought, wouldn't it be nice to get one for my niece, and I says to the man, how much would it be for two? Because, you know, over there, you can haggle with them for the price." She looked at me, her eyes wide under her bright blue eye shadow, and I nodded my understanding of Russian economy. "Well, and the man says to me…"

I watched Aunt Ellie's hands as she talked, noting the slight clinking of her rings as her fingers rubbed together. Her skin was a peachy, almost translucent, hue, and the veins, like spindly wires, were as blue as her bejeweled Christmas sweater. She had that interesting intonation of speech that made it more engaging to listen to how she said something rather than to what she said. And everyone in the family knew that any conversation with Aunt Ellie consisted mainly in listening. Aunt Ellie would chatter to a wall if it stood up long enough for her to finish her story.

I was lucky to escape that evening without having to bring out the doll. After the Christmas holiday, standing on a chair, I inspected my closet shelves.

I first saw her black feet poking out from the hem of her bright red dress. I laughed, remembering her unusual appearance with some pleasure. Even if she was ugly, she had some beauty owing to her foreign origins. When I reached to pick her up, however, I discovered a pile of gray fuzz beneath her. I looked up at her rabbit fur hat and realized that patches of it had been rubbed bare, revealing the rounded wood of the hat's skeleton. On the white shelf, half of the hair had turned to dust. Intermingling with the decaying fuzz was a conglomeration of dead and living worms.

Repulsed, I recoiled from the doll—leaving her in her dust—and hurried down from the chair. An uneasy feeling settled in my stomach as I imagined how those coiling gray worms had made their way onto my clean white shelves. I pictured decayed rabbit hair and worms floating onto my clothes beneath. And the doll, with her eerie white skin and disproportioned limbs, became an unpleasant representation of that decomposition. There was no hope of rescuing her. I interred her remnants in a spacious trash bag, and I held my breath to avoid breathing in the dust as I cleaned it out with a wet rag.

When my Aunt Ellie passed away some years later, I told myself that it was because I hardly knew her that I didn’t cry at her funeral. But for some reason, I later found myself lying in my bed, staring at the wooden shelf where the strange doll used to sit. My vision got blurrier as that bitter lump settled in the back of my throat, making it difficult to swallow. Burying my face in my pillow, I cried myself to sleep.

*****

As I clambered out of the bus, clutching my purse and book against my chest, I realized how fast my heart was beating. My mother’s pleading lessons that I never go anywhere in Italy alone played loudly at the back of my mind. I could still feel the grungy fabric of the Cotral interior against the palms of my hands as I began to trudge up the hill.

This was still several stops from where I was supposed to be, and quite a few miles from another bus stop. The road wound along the Alban hills,
dotted by pine and juniper forestation amidst the brownish green grass. I knew vaguely where I was and was fairly certain that I could make it all the way if I just followed the road. But it would take me at least an hour, in the heat of late morning, with motorists racing past every few minutes and driving me into the prickly grass on the side of the road.

Perhaps I had overreacted; the four Italian men sitting around me might have just been trying to have a pleasant conversation with me. But I remembered their long stares and a shiver went up my spine. I was glad to be out of that stuffy bus, even if walking meant giving my heels blisters.

I realized that I was just a little ways from Lake Albano, the lake I could always see outside my window on clear days. Now, I could see the rippling water sparkling in the sunlight when I looked over the side railing. A path wove down to it amidst clusters of trees. I stopped, book clenched against my chest, and considered my options.

A glance at my wrist was a reminder that I had no way to keep track of time; I had forgotten my watch. By the heat of the day and the height of the sun I assumed it was almost noon. I would be late. But the flush of emotions from the bus left me feeling quite apathetic on that matter. My presence no longer seemed of any importance. Besides, I had always wanted a closer look at the lake.

When I made my way down the path, I discovered that there was a café along the lakeshore, butting up against a lower road that was fairly busy with cars. I worked my way down a small path to the rocky beach of the lake. I walked awkwardly amongst the large pebbles for a few minutes, feeling as though I wore a big poster on my head that read "turista." There were a few families enjoying their Saturday in the sun.

I found a patch that appeared a little smoother and there I sat down, cross-legged, and reopened my book. The longer I read, the less I was able to pay attention. I kept wondering what time it was and feeling that the day was slipping away from me. Something in me had not completely given up on my endeavor.

That's when the old woman's voice became the stringent tune that completely tore me away from my book.

Perhaps she had been in love once, when she was young and time had not yet had its effect. Here he had told her he loved her, that he had since they were children, and here—right where she sat now—he had kissed her. They grew up here, her and her one true love, and they married before they were my age. But he was gone now, time had stolen him, and the tune she muttered was the tune he always sang to her.

I sighed as I looked back at my book, realizing I had lost my place. It didn't really matter. I hadn't been paying attention.

The old woman's voice slowly faded to a trickling mumble, until the breeze rustling the trees was the louder. She feebly rose to her feet, hunching over a cane, and began her way to the pathway leading back to the road. A little girl suddenly called something out in Italian and ran after her. She grabbed onto her leathery arm and talked in that lovely lilt of Italian children. I
couldn’t understand it but I could tell that the girl was asking to stay longer.
The old woman—her grandmother or great aunt or whoever she was—only
smiled and moved back to her rock. She was not so alone as I thought.

The wind had blown my book shut but the pages all seemed the same
now, inconsequential compared with the images more sincerely depicted by the
scene before me.

I stood up slowly, dusting off my pants, and went back the same way I
had come. When I was just a little ways away from the bus stop, I saw a bus
traveling in the opposite direction—towards my host family’s home. If I ran, I
would be able to make it. The idea of my nice un-air-conditioned room was
somehow refreshing and I almost gripped my book in one hand and sprinted
across the street.

But another bus was just pulling up on my side of the road. I boarded,
validated my ticket, and was glad that I didn’t have a watch to glance over—at
least I didn’t know how late I was.

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When I got there, I half expected to wander around the fountain, until
I would have to give up because no one was coming. But as I came towards it,
inaudibly glancing at every old man in the vicinity, a particular man in a
faded grey cap came towards me.

“Paige?” he asked, smiling.

“Yes, Mr. Berletti?”

“Please, call me Antonio,” he said in his Italian accent and then sur-
prised me by giving me a kiss on the cheek. “I hope you didn’t have too much
trouble getting here.”

“No,” I lied. “I hope you weren’t waiting too long.”

“No. Give Lorenzo some time to start the pasta eh?”

I laughed and he explained that Lorenzo was his oldest son. He began
to explain the meal but then said, “But come, you can see for yourself.” We
drove to his modest apartment complex in a blue Volkswagen and took a slow
elevator up to the second floor. As the door slowly creaked open, I began to
thank him for inviting me over.

“Of course. Ellie was a great friend of mine when I met her so long
ago.”

“Yes, that’s what she mentioned. She said she knew you when she
was living in Rome.”

“Yes. She was about your age when I knew her.” We came to a nar-
row door on the right side of the hallway. He reached into his deep pockets to
fish out his keys. I heard a dog barking inside. “Don’t mind Stella. She just
likes to lick.” As he opened the door, an excited black and white dog jumped to
greet him and he spoke to her fondly in Italian. She cowered a little from me as
I came inside, but once she smelled me she was happy to have someone else to
pet her.

It was a small apartment, somewhat dusty and cluttered with over-
large furniture and interesting paintings. I only had a chance to glance about
briefly before Lorenzo came out to greet me in the small threshold, and then
they ushered me into the equally small sitting room.

“You'll have to excuse us,” explained Lorenzo. His accent was better than his father's. “We're redoing our kitchen so things are a little messy.”

“Oh, it’s fine, really,” I said. I couldn’t help feeling a little imposing for being over at such a time.

It was indeed rather messy. An over-large white couch was shoved into the corner of the living room, placed rather too near the small television set than I thought was healthy for the eyes. The couch itself had visible traces of Stella's curly black fur. Abutting the living room was a set of foldable table and chairs; their makeshift dining room, I supposed. Dog toys were scattered about the worn, hardwood floors. None of the mess bothered me. It all just made it feel homier, especially as Stella nudged me for attention, reminding me of my own dog back home.

Lorenzo was in his late twenties, but one would have thought he was my age by his easy way of conversing. As we waited for the pasta to cook, they served me prosciutto and mozzarella. I had not noticed how hungry I was.

“So Ellie sent you to Italy?” Antonio asked.

“Well…” I finished chewing and swallowed quickly. “When she passed away, she left me and my cousins money in her will, and that helped me pay for my trip here. It’s for a semester of study.”

“Yes, that is good,” Antonio said contemplatively. He took a sip of wine and rested his hands on his rounded stomach. When he was quiet, I felt obliged to explain more.

“My host family lives just a little bit outside Rome. They don’t speak very much English, but I guess that’s good since I’m here to learn Italian. It’s been a month though and I hardly know anything. My Aunt Ellie said she knew Italian,” I said, recollecting. “But I never got to try to talk to her...in Italian, that is. I guess that’s why she was so excited for me to come, to learn Italian, that is. I was actually worried that you might only speak Italian when I e-mailed you...not that there’s anything bad about that...” I didn’t know why I was rambling and I stuffed another bite of bread in my mouth to stop myself.

Antonio only smiled. “Ellie called me up about a year ago, you see. I met her in Rome it was in...’53, yes back in ’53. Because she was there with many other girls and I lived there, as you know. And we became friends because I used to have a blue Vespa and we rode around the city together.” He chuckled to himself and I tried to picture my aunt Ellie as a young girl, daringly accepting a motorino ride from a young Italian boy. Recalling her lively appreciation for European adventures, it didn’t seem too unrealistic. “And well, so one day I decided to try to find her because you know about these bookfaces...”

“Facebooks,” Lorenzo called from the kitchen.

“Yes, Facebooks. And somehow we found her and I emailed her. And then, one day, I was watching the TV and Lorenzo came in and said I had a call. And when I picked it up you know what she asked?”

I smiled and shook my head.

“Antonio,” she said. “Do you still have the Vespa?” He laughed
heartily and I couldn’t help laughing as well. It was a pleasant picture of the
great aunt I hardly knew.

Lorenzo prepared most of the meal—linguine pasta with red sauce
and sausage. It was the most delicious Italian cuisine I had yet had. Lorenzo’s
pleasant manners were a nice picture of how Antonio must have been at his
age. When he told stories, there was that same twinkle in his eye, accompanied
by a polite smile that reminded me not to stereotype all Italian men as I had the
ones on the bus earlier that day.

As dessert was brought out—a simple bowl of rich ice cream—I was
glad I had followed Aunt Ellie’s request and “gotten in touch with her dear
friend Antonio.” It had been in a letter she wrote just before she died, and con-
sequently the last thing I received from her.

“And what was dear Ellie like when you knew her?” Antonio asked.

In a split second, the various disparagments against my aunt’s char-
acter that my family so often repeated echoed in my mind. I panicked, wonder-
ning what good thing I could conjure up without lying.

“Well, she loved to talk,” I began with a smile. “She could talk to
anyone. She just had so many stories, I suppose, especially from her travels.”
Antonio nodded, a wide smile plastered on his face. I noticed the crow’s feet at
the corners of his eyes, the deep-set laugh lines on his highly crinkled skin. He
was older than Aunt Ellie, with those same blue veins jutting out of his hands
as he raised his glass of wine to his lips. He didn’t say anything; he wanted to
know more. “She always brought us the most interesting gifts. But I guess that
was nice because, well, we didn’t see her very often.”

Then Antonio asked if I missed her.

I faltered, wanting desperately to express sincere affection for her. But
I could only think of that Russian doll, left rotting in my closet and then depo-
ited forever in a garbage dump.

The Christmas when I had pulled her out of that red gift bag, I had
placed her in my lap gently as Aunt Ellie explained how she had found her in
Russia. I stared at the doll for a long time. Later, I squeezed her puffy sleeves
and stroked the soft rabbit fur of her hat before she ever went up on that shelf.
And as I had marveled at her foreignness, I had wondered what worlds and
cultures and people were beyond the ones I knew.

I had almost forgotten that.

Suddenly, Stella bumped the table, causing everything to wobble. She
squeezed out from under it and tried to rest her head on my lap.

“Poor Stella. She isn’t used to guests. We have not had any since my
wife passed.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” I said, feeling like an intruder again.

“No, not at all. It is nice to have young faces around.” He said it with
such a sincere smile on his round, aging face that any sense of guilt flittered
away. “Especially a niece of Ellie’s. My wife always wanted to meet Ellie. I
used to tell her stories about when I knew her. ‘The only other woman who
ever had your heart,’ she used to say.” He raised his finger and chuckled to
himself playfully.
I had only guessed at how close he and my great aunt had been. For me, it was a nice story. For him, it was a world long gone but almost recaptured by having a little piece of that world care enough to make the bus ride across the Italian countryside to visit him.

"I'm sure she would have liked to known you," he said, and it took me a moment to realize that he was referring to his wife.

"I would have liked to known her too," I said.

When we had finished, eating and the conversation began to lull, the sun was already setting. Antonio offered to drive me home and of course I could not say no.
Windswept

Kathleen Ramirez
Chalk pastel and Conte
2014