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Saisindhu (Sindhu) Kotha April 15, 2015

Literature and Social Justice: Persuasion in Machado de Assis, Lu Xun, and Virgilio Piñera

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2015

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Abstract
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by Saisindhu (Sindhu) Kotha

Social change movements, inspired by a desire to represent a certain perceived injustice, tend to deviate from the status quo, general convention, or majority rule and involve an individual or group of individuals who are dissatisfied with current conditions. This dissatisfaction drives people united by a common situation, or the experience of a perceived or real threat, to band together. From there, others join in order to advance some kind of change. Although people join in common struggle out of a concrete and very real sense of injustice, a broad popular movement can only be created by means of persuasion. This project focuses on persuasion of the written word. Specifically, persuasion in literature orients the reader in a way that allows him or her to see social injustice with his or her own eyes. Education of the social injustices in one's environment is the first step in moving towards social justice. This thesis analyzes how this education takes place through the context, time, and place of *The Alienist*, *A Madman's Diary*, and three selected short stories from *Cold Tales*.

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Literature and Social Justice: Persuasion in Machado de Assis, Lu Xun, and Virgilio Piñera

Introduction

persuasion |pərˈswāZHən|
noun
1 the action or fact of persuading someone or of being persuaded to do or believe something: *Monica needed plenty of persuasion before she actually left*.
2 a belief or set of beliefs, esp. religious or political ones: *writers of all political persuasions*.
• a group or sect holding a particular religious belief: *the village had two chapels for those of the Methodist persuasion*.
• humorous any group or type of person or thing linked by a specified characteristic, quality, or attribute: *an ancient gas oven of the enamel persuasion*.
ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin *persuasio(n-)*, from the verb *persuadere* (see persuade).[1]

1. To Persuade

The form of persuasion that I explore in this thesis is contained within the primary definition employed by the *New Oxford American Dictionary*. It is fundamentally an act or a form of speech employed by one individual towards others, and it is the means by which one individual (the persuader) convinces others to follow, or to believe, that a particular course of action is not only right, and just, but also necessary. This act of persuasion allows the one who deploys it to be called a leader, while it also turns the one who listens into a follower. Although persuasion comes in many forms and is disguised in many ways, I have chosen to focus on the written word. I will use in this introduction examples from advertising, political speeches, and music, but overall my primary concern is narrative fiction. In the works of Machado de Assis, Lu

[1] New Oxford American Dictionary

Xun, and Virgilio Piñera, persuasion can be uncovered and examined in its full complexity. Of all forms of communication, only literature permits readers the time and freedom that allows for the possibility of self-reflection. In their own particular time and within their own specific circumstances, the three writers that I have selected engaged social injustice by making us question our own principles of what constitutes sanity or madness (Machado de Assis, Lu Xun), or what is obviously absurd yet makes eminent sense (Piñera). If persuasion in other forms of communication directly and efficiently moves any issue from one individual to the other, literary language can allow itself to play games on the reader, and can make him or her question the situation that has been presented on the page.

Repetition, credibility, and charisma are all factors that need to be taken into account when we examine persuasion. They are the building blocks of persuasion and of the degree of persuasion one individual can effectively employ in order to convince another. In the paragraphs that follow, I will explain the importance of each of these elements.

Repetition entails reiteration: when something is said over and over again, the sound and shape of the language imprints itself onto a listener's mind. Over time, the passive listener is able to recall the phrase or words that his or her auditory receptors involuntarily sensed. Once the repeated language becomes the focus of the listener's attention, it moves to the front of his or her mind and is given considerable thought. That is, the thinker finds herself turning the repeated language over in her mind, thinking it through, and developing a close association with the matter. Since the language derives from the listener's memory, and since it appeals to a common set of values, principles, and engages a common history, she ends up trusting the language as she trusts herself. The power of repetition may seem to be like a brainwashing in science fiction, or

in dystopian narrative or filmic accounts. Yet, this phenomenon occurs more often than we would like to accept.

An example of how repetition works can be found in advertising—a business that is keenly aware of the power of persuasion, and that relies heavily on catchy marketing in order to persuade customers to purchase their products or services. How many times do we find ourselves unconsciously humming the jingle of an advertisement, mouthing the words to a slogan, or using catch phrases such as Nike's "Just do it" as motivational encouragement without putting real thought into where such language is coming from? Daily, we are surrounded by repetitive language in the form of commercial speech. Even the most ingenious ads that at the surface level appear to reinvent themselves, utilize slightly different words to make the same core arguments beneath their sometimes ironic stance. Their persuasive impact is heightened by the inclusion of statistically measurable variables and the numbers that support such variables, and in turn, results in an increase of credibility.[2] In fact, the persuader knows that statistical evidence is on her side, since over time, the reiteration and repetition of a single phrase, idea, image or jingle is numerically justified in the outcome: the fact that the reiterated message is imprinted onto the minds of the ones who repeatedly receive it. In this manner, the persuader grows his or her credibility by showcasing tangible knowledge of the point of view he or she stands for. Leaders who weave-in repetitive language gain credibility, and are better able to persuade others of the strength of their convictions.

Charisma, another useful persuasion tool, is a magnetic force that draws others towards the persuader. A trait shared by all charismatic leaders is the appeal to the listeners' emotion by the use of a language that imagistically recalls common values. Persuasive leaders such as

[2] Micha Popper, Leaders Who Transform Society: What Drives Them and Why We Are Attracted (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), 3.

Martin Luther King, Jr. and Winston Churchill both incorporate high-impact, emotional language into their speeches in order to persuade their disparate audience of the common values they possess. In his deeply emotional "I Have a Dream" civil rights speech, Martin Luther King, Jr. took the concept of a dream to stir up feelings of hope for a future where minorities would have the same rights as the majority. During World War II, England's newly inaugurated Prime Minister Winston Churchill captured the attention of Parliament and the House of Commons with the "electrifying" performance of his "blood, sweat, and tears" speech.[3] [4]

Persuasion consists of a two-part equation; while the leader must possess the talents to command the attention of others, the followers must also be willing to believe in the leader. Most followers fall on a spectrum running between two general categories: the analytical and the emotional. The distinction between the two extremes, analytical and emotional, hinges on one's decision-making mechanism. While the "analyticals" weigh their decisions heavily on rationale, data, and evidence, the "emotionals" follow the "gut feeling" originating from their intuitions. Most individuals make decisions by using a combination of analytical reasoning and emotional pull, and find themselves on the middle of the analytical-emotional spectrum.

Scenarios of social unrest illustrate the ability of an individual or group of individuals to shift the thinking of others by uncovering a new perspective by means of public protest. With analytical and emotional markers, the persuader is able to construct compelling reasoning to counter popular, preexisting ways of thinking through the form of the spoken word. In contrast, applied to literary works, such elements of persuasion, analytical and emotional, act as tools that allow the writer to persuade the reader. This effect is one that orients the reader in a way that allows him or her to see the social injustice with his or her own eyes. Education of the social

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[3] Robert Rhodes James, "Churchill the Parliamentarian, Orator, and Statesman" in Churchill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 513.
[4] Micha Popper, Leaders Who Transform Society, 4.

injustices in one's environment is the first step in moving towards social justice. How this education takes place involves context, time, and place. In short, it involves thinking of what triggers a specific response, and its consequences. And because this is a thesis that involves narrative, the following section recounts the narrative at the origin of the thesis itself, a narrative that fantastically (I could also say, implausibly) begins in the former British colony of Hong Kong, and that has led to the thesis you, as readers, now have in your hands.

2. The Narrative of Persuasion

My eyes felt like they were going to implode from the dryness of the air. The sharp stinging sensation in them seemed like it was only clawing deeper into my sockets every time I blinked. This was the gradual effect the teargas bombs had on me and on the thousands of people who had inundated the four-lane streets of Hong Kong's major commercial districts. Clearly, this was not the scenario I had in mind when I signed up at Emory for a study abroad program in the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China during the fall of 2014. The silent protests, known as the "Umbrella Revolution," had gained worldwide recognition from the sea of umbrellas and tents that occupied several population-dense areas of Hong Kong. As I witnessed the protesters carrying their umbrellas, and as I ascertained with them the degree to which they committed themselves to their cause, I could not help but be awed and inspired by their persistence. The strength and unwavering spirit of the students partaking in the non-violent

protests reminded me of Gandhi's *satyagraha* theory.[5] It was like a page out of my history textbook, except this time, I was experiencing history live, right as it was happening.

These were the events that led to this thesis. And their impact on me is what made me pay attention not simply to their sheer existence at that point in time, but rather, to the way in which they must have developed, to the mechanism by means of which an awareness of social injustice led to the massive protests I now witnessed. One person pitching a tent in the middle of the street surely would not have been as effective as thousands of people pitching their own tents in the middle of the street. The individual awareness of the fact that elections could be rigged by China – that the Chinese mode of ruling over autonomous units also entailed setting up the rules by means of which elections could be merely formal elements whose outcome could be predicted – could not explain the situation I was witnessing. What had to be explained was how a consensus was achieved, how individual dissatisfaction could be transformed into the trigger for a collective protest that clearly synthesized dissatisfactions that went beyond the fact of the elections themselves, and that included a sense of betrayal vis-à-vis formal principles agreed upon in the colonial transfer between Britain and China.

Standing at the metro rail entrance of the Mongkok Station, I tried to retrace the inception of the movement and how the drive to participate had spread so quickly in Hong Kong. Persuasion was the link between the individual sense of injustice and the sheer fact of the massive protests; it was the link between my time in Hong Kong and the thesis that my readers have in front of them.

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[5] While elements of Gandhi's peaceful theory of satyagraha or "soul force" influenced the silent, non-violent protests in Hong Kong, certain characteristics of the Indian hero's protest model differed from that of the Umbrella Revolution. For example, while Gandhi sought to unite the Hindus and Muslims under the common goal of ousting the British, HK students aimed to secede the SAR from mainland China. While both instances were protests for independence, the former brought people together while latter separated them. Additionally, another difference between Gandhi and the Umbrella Revolution lays in the way the protestors reacted to police charges of sedition. While Gandhi willingly allows the legal system to run its course (he asks to be arrested and pleads guilty to his charge), the HK protestors denied any wrongful charges.

On campus at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology a few days prior to the demonstration's launch, I could not recall any local students mentioning any gathering of the sort; yet, come September 26th, the streets were packed in protest against China's meddling and overbearing control in the upcoming elections. Back at the Mongkok Station entrance, I recollected how I had become a part of the protests. It all started with a text message from a local friend, Linda, on the night of September 28th. She was replying to the question I had asked her earlier about the significance of the yellow ribbon she and several other students at the university had worn pinned to their shirts. Linda texted, "The yellow ribbon I wear is not some club I am involved in on campus. It means something more: unity for the people of Hong Kong. If you are still confused, go check out the Admiralty, Causeway Bay, Central or Mongkok area to experience the strength of the yellow ribbon."

An hour later, I found myself walking into the foggy air of the Mongkok demonstration site. A volunteer nurse handed me a surgical nose-and-mouth mask and a piece of cellophane to protect my eyes from the tear gas. Yet, the teargas tore through the plastic and pierced my eyes and nostrils with its intensity. Looking around, I found thousands upon thousands of students and their supporters sitting cross-legged on the pavement of the major roads, some with camping tents. Signs of "Democracy equals unity," "We are one, not enemies," and "Justice is due" were sprinkled throughout the mass of protestors. Just as I found the teargas unbearable and was about to leave, a student from the City University of Hong Kong put a poster in my hand, saying, "One person can make a difference." His comment had done it. It had persuaded me to join.

Over the following week, I traded my scarf for a yellow ribbon and fought for true democracy for the future of Hong Kong. The common thread that connected the majority of the protesters was the fact that they were students, which made them the perfect representation of the

SAR's future leaders. And that was the triggering moment. It made complete sense: those who cared the most about the future of a country had to be those who would be living in the future. Most students have nothing to lose and everything to gain. That is, the majority of students rarely face major consequences (such as losing a job or suspension from university) from participating in demonstrations, since most institutions of higher education encourage and support freedom of thought and expression. For this reason, students are able to invest their time and efforts for a cause that will affect their future and that of others.

In the Umbrella Revolution, the core argument of the movement's persuasive effort utilized a breach of contract argument to gain momentum. China was expected to honor the terms set out in the "One Country, Two Systems" treaty it had settled with Great Britain, which delineated the specific terms of regulating Hong Kong once the group of islands was handed back to the Chinese. [6] The provision the Chinese were tampering with required Hong Kong to have its own elected leader, selected independent of Chinese governmental influence. Yet, China turned back on its treaty when it adamantly proposed to pre-select the candidates who would campaign in the Hong Kong elections. Instantly, the student body of Hong Kong recognized this political "maneuver" as a threat to their voting rights, aggregated over their discontent of the violation of rights, and formed a broad coalition in support of their protests. The recognition of the injustice of unfair candidate selection led to a move to fight for justice, a move that could only gain following through persuasion. In the case of the Umbrella Revolution, in order to fight for social justice, the injustice was first located and persuasive efforts were used to recruit and educate people of the unfair situation. Personally, taking part in the Hong Kong protests activated both my brain and my heart; I was able to evaluate issues with a more logical approach

[6] Geographically, "Hong Kong covers Hong Kong Island, Lantau Island, the Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories, including 262 outlying islands."
"Hong Kong – the Facts," GovHK, accessed March 14, 2015, http://www.gov.hk/en/about/abouthk/facts.htm.

and discover the causes that deeply resonated with me. From personally experiencing the Umbrella Revolution, I discovered that persuading individuals to join a cause and fight for justice required a combination of analytical and emotional pull.

In Hong Kong, the student participants who made up the follower base of the Umbrella Revolution were more analytical in their decision-making, as they based their involvement in the protests on the grounds of the advancement of equal opportunity. In other words, their argument was driven by the disparity in governmental representation that existed between the mainland Chinese and the Hong Kong citizens. I can attest to the persuasive power of this logical argument since, personally, it was the two points (one, sheer inequality in how the people of Hong Kong were being underrepresented, and two, the rationale of having equal voting rights) that inspired me to join in on the protesting efforts.

Social change movements tend to deviate from the status quo, and to involve an individual or group of individuals who are dissatisfied enough with current conditions. This dissatisfaction drives people united by a common situation, or the experience of a perceived or real threat, to band together. From there, others join in order to affect some kind of change. Some movements mean to upset the existing order (the 26th of July Movement in Cuba or the Sandinista National Liberation Front), while others seek a change to a particular policy (the U.S Civil Rights Movement, led by Martin Luther King, Jr.). Ultimately, a relatively small band of protesters assembles to devise a means to recruit, to expand, and to overthrow the current social, political, or economic status quo.

Although people join in common struggle out of a concrete and very real sense of injustice, a broad popular movement can only be created by means of persuasion. Persuasion touches those who have not been directly affected by the situation that triggers the protests, but

who nevertheless have a stake in its outcome. And a significant amount of persuasion is required to gain a following large enough to increase the probability of a successful social reform movement. In its simplest but also most common form, persuasion entails the relationship between an individual and a mass of people, or between the singular rendering of a grievance and the ability that others may have of seeing themselves as part of a collective.

My project will include close readings of literary texts. As I mentioned from the onset, literature allows us the freedom to ponder its own means of expression. The texts are *The Alienist* (1882) by the Brazilian Machado de Assis (1839–1908), *A Madman's Diary* (1918) by the Chinese Lu Xun (1881–1936), and three short stories included in the collection *Cold Tales* (1956) by the Cuban Virgilio Piñera (1912–1979). I have chosen these texts because in all of them we can see a certain tension between the individual and society—a tension that takes the form of a confrontation that pits the just (the individual) against the unjust (oftentimes, society). Such a confrontation can be seen in *The Alienist* between Simão Bacamarte and the town of Itaguai, in *A Madman's Diary* by means of the exchanges the Madman has with the cannibalistic society around him, and at the very level of language, by the absurd situations that Piñera foregrounds in his short stories. While all three texts play an integral role in synthesizing the contemporary political and/or social context of the author's environment, they do so by commenting, expounding, and persuading about certain social injustices that need to be rectified. In a way, the works that I have chosen for this study offer their readers a new perspective that invites them to locate themselves within society and better understand their own forms of individual perception. All three authors utilize persuasion for a tailored purpose; that is, Machado contrasts two forms of persuasion, the emotional and the analytical; Lu Xun proposes

the strength of individual thought in relation to the tradition of the collective; and, Piñera exposes the logic of blindly following an abstract ideal.

In contrast to the spoken word used to persuade in the Umbrella Revolution protests, literature can persuade on a more personal level. That is, mass public demonstrations persuade entire groups while literature persuades the individual through a one-to-one interaction with the text. While those who listen to a speech may be swayed as a result of the emotions of those around them, the reader of literature discovers such injustice for him or herself through the act of reading and the possibility of gaining some sense of distance from what is being read. Literature as a medium bolsters a persuasive argument more effectively than the oral form can: while the spoken word tells, the written word shows, and allows itself to be seen.

Persuasion in literature shifts the reader's perspective in a way that permits the writer to deliver an intended message, which is most often achieved from the understanding of such shift in point of view. Compared to other forms of expression such as speech or visual art, literature may not be obvious in its persuasive techniques, and hides some of its persuasive tools in multiple ways. I have chosen to engage with these authors in a chronological fashion, in an effort to showcase specific persuasive techniques in different times and circumstances. Linked by persuasion, Machado de Assis' clear and logical reasoning, Lu Xun's metaphorical undertones, and Piñera's obtuse and disconnected absurd language can be threaded by a common principle that perhaps would have not been uncovered had these texts not been put together in one work. Our timeline of persuasion studies will stretch over a course of one hundred years and will compare and contrast a diverse set of cultures, from the late nineteenth century Brazilian romanticism, to the literary awakening of Eastern Asia in the early 1900s, and all the way to the postmodern Cuba of the twentieth century.

In the following chapters, I plan to study the literary devices employed within each text, the particular persuasion tools embedded within each work, and their combined effect on the reader. I will start each chapter with an introduction that summarizes the writers' background with a particular view towards their positions in relation to the social injustices of their time. Machado de Assis, Lu Xun, and Virgilio Piñera all came from a working class background that permitted them to witness and experience social injustices, and the three of them paid close attention to the social and political situation of the world around them.

Literature will always make us question the exact message or effect the writer intends to convey or produce. Because its intended meaning always seems to elude us, Machado de Assis, Lu Xun, and Piñera allow us to gain a more profound understanding and appreciation for literature's paradoxical efficacy: the always uncertain grasp of what the author intended to say, versus what we read in the text. But the skills learned by paying close attention to one's environment, and by understanding how the language of persuasion works in literature, allow readers such as myself to understand our own place in the world, and gain an awareness of the social injustices that surround us.

Chapter 1

Machado de Assis: The Alienist's Persuasion

To read Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis (1839-1908) is to come into contact with a brilliant mind. Known throughout Brazil for his avant-garde writing and his ability to challenge his readers, the "father" of Brazilian literature Machado de Assis was one of the greatest writers of his time. Born into a working class family composed by a mixed race house painter and a white mother, Machado could be described as having come from humble beginnings, living the early years of his life with little luxuries. The poverty that accompanied him in his childhood prevented him from receiving a formal education. Yet, he handled the unfortunate circumstances of his early life with maturity and, by sheer force of will, taught himself how to read and write. Ironically, the death of his parents turned out to be a fortunate event for the writer's development, since he was able to move in with a wealthy guardian and live in an affluent area of Rio de Janeiro.[7] Even though Machado only studied up to the eighth grade, his prodigious literary talents allowed him to succeed outside of the classroom: the young writer wrote his first poems at the age of sixteen, composed his first opera libretti two years later, and in 1872, in his early 30s, published his first story, *Ressurreição* [Resurrection] in the Brazilian Romantic style prevalent during the time.[8] In his article "Wry Modernist of Brazil's Past," author David A. Taylor details how Machado's biographer Helen Caldwell calculated the writer's work in the

[7] David A. Taylor, "Wry Modernist of Brazil's Past," Américas (English Edition) 54, no. 6 (November 2002): 44-51, MLA International Bibliography, EBSCOhost (accessed March 18, 2015), 46.

[8] Brazilian Romanticism is a form of artistic expression adapted from European Romanticism at the beginning of the 19th century. Music, art, and literature composed in the romantic style showcased intense emotions, appreciation of nature, and a growing sense of nationalism.

first fifteen years of his writing career to sum up to “six thousand lines of poetry, nineteen plays and opera libretti, twenty-four short stories, 182 articles, and seventeen translations [from Portuguese to English and French]."[9] The prolific and extensive work of his youth mirrored the bold, overstated romantic style popular at the time. As a result, Machado’s literature was not very different initially from that of conventional Brazilian romantics such as Casimiro de Abreu, Álvarez de Azevedo, and Castro Alves.

The turning point in Machado’s career occurred when he fell ill with epilepsy and was forced to take a literary hiatus in 1879. Machado used his free time for self-reflection, and after recovering, emerged as a new writer. When he returned to writing, Machado’s earlier introspection drove him to abandon his Romanticism "strip[ping] away literary conventions that struck him as false," and to adopt a realist style.[10] In particular, his new voice related to the reader, recognized by its certain "conversational" quality.[11]

Despite his contemporary fame within Brazil, Machado has been overlooked and understudied outside of his country since the nineteenth century up to the present. Part of the reason as to why he has not been read as widely as other Latin American authors in the English speaking world is due to the lack of translations of his work.[12] Life for Machado was not easy and he faced many hardships along the way: he was born into poverty, stammered and stuttered whenever he spoke, lived his life with epileptic seizures, and faced bigotry and racism for being mulatto.[13] Despite these obstacles, the “grand master” of Brazilian literature managed to skillfully craft novels and short stories that were heavily infused with an ingenious undertone of

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[9] David A. Taylor, “Wry Modernist of Brazil,” 47.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid, 48.
[12] Machado gained significant recognition in the 1960s and 1970s, during the “literature boom” in Latin America for his work, including popular texts such as Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas (1881), Quincas Borba (1891), and Dom Casmurro (1899). See John Gledson, The Deceptive Realism of Machado de Assis (Liverpool, Great Britain: Francis Cairns, 1984), p.1-2.
[13] Maria Luisa Nunes, *The Craft of an Absolute Winner: Characterization and Narratology in the Novels of Machado De Assis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1983), 4.

observational critique and irony that he left for readers to decode. The ambiguity permeating Machado's style was precisely an effect he aimed to achieve. In particular, by focusing on unreliable narrators that were nevertheless colorfully characterized, Machado stressed the importance of the reader being active, paying attention to detail, and forming his or her own judgments.[14] Maria Luisa Nunes, in her book *The Craft of an Absolute Winner: Characterization and Narratology in the Novels of Machado De Assis* (1983), describes such active analysis and reading on the part of the reader to be qualities found in "narratology." Nunes defines the term narratology as:

> [A] method of reading texts… based on the study of such elements as point of view, or the relationships among author, implied author, narrator, characters, and reader; …the structure of irony, satire, and allegory;…and reader-narrator relationship that aid in uncovering the full significance of the texts. [15]

In practice, narratology allows the reader to separate the layers of plot, literary devices such as figurative language and irony, and persuasion tools such as repetition, credibility, charisma, and emotion. Such a "metaliterary" or multi-dimensional reading experience has the effect of a popup book in which the readers are expected to actively engage with the flaps, buttons, snaps, slides, and draw strings in order to fully immerse themselves in the book and to expose themselves to the work's intended effect. This narratological method is best applied to texts that are ambiguous as to their message. While Machado wrote with simple and clear word choice, the concepts behind his choice of vocabulary were quite complex. Machado wished for the effect of

[14] Maria Luisa Nunes, The Craft, 11.
[15] Ibid.

ambiguity in his work to be "oblivious to time" and engage audiences beyond the generation that would read his writing when it was published in the late 1800s.[16]

Yet, it would be difficult to argue that the historical context during Machado's contemporary period did *not* influence the themes in his writings. Andrew Goldstone argues in *Fictions of Autonomy: Modernism from Wilde to de Man* (2013) that context and literature cannot be separated. That is, what is now history (and what was then the contemporary socioeconomic, political, and cultural conditions) is an undeniable factor that affects literature, and the reader cannot consume a literary work without such context.[17] The author's environment and the current history occurring during the time he or she is writing is an implicit base on which a literary work is constructed. The political environment in the time of Machado de Assis, the Brazilian representative parliamentary monarchy known as the Empire of Brazil (1822-1889), plays a critical role in shaping the way in which his works are written, embedded with contemporary elements of Brazil's "political community" in the nineteenth century. [18] John Gledson explains in *The Deceptive Realism of Machado de Assis* (1984) that the conveyance of political truth is oftentimes presented in an allegorical form in Machado's work.[19] Take for example, Machado's most celebrated novel, *Dom Casmurro* (1899)*,* where the "private realm of the novel" parallels "the public history of the Second Reign." The "Second Reign" (1831-1889), known for the triumphant rule of Emperor Dom Pedro II (1825-1891), refers to a prolific time in Brazilian history that allowed the country to see significant economic and cultural progress. [20] [21]

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[16] Maria Luisa Nunes, The Craft, 10.
[17] Andrew Goldstone argues against the concept of "autonomy" in literature and disagrees with the notion that literary autonomy allows it to exist independent of the history during which it was developed or written. He claims "fictions of autonomy change according to what they seek to be autonomous from" (15). Goldstone attributes the cohesive nature of literature and history to be evident and observable through the close study of certain themes: labor, personality, political community, and linguistic reference. To support our case, we will focus on the theme of political community.
[18] A representative parliamentary monarchy or a constitutional monarchy is a monarchy constricted in power by a constitution.
[19] "Machado De Assis." Centro Cultural Da ABL, n.d. Web. 18 Mar. 2015.
[20] Also said to be ranging 1840-1889 from some scholars, see Gledson, p.4.

During this period, literature gained notable acclaim, as the minds of Brazil's writers were given the opportunity to flourish. In fact, such liberty could have been attributed to the influence of Pedro II's friendships with creative minds such as the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and composer Richard Wagner. The prosperity perceived during the Second Reign reflected only the positive sum total of all the pluses (positive events) and minuses (negative events) in Brazil at the time. Since the good (Pedro's accomplishments in winning the Platine War [1851-1852], funding the first stone-paved road in Brazil, and abolishing slavery [1888]) outweighed the bad of Pedro's mistakes, most of the negative went unnoticed. [22]

Yet, Machado was one of the few who observed the political and social environment of Brazil with a precise, clinical lens. That is to say, the quick-witted novelist dove beneath the surface of the optimism of the period and focused on singular situations observed in detail, since, in his mind, these reflect – on a granular level – broader conflicts that allow us to understand Brazilian society at that point in time. One such concept, which Gledson addresses, is the ability of the emperor to override the constitution in certain instances. For example, the election of an undesired party (whether it was one of the two political parties, Conservatives or Liberals) could easily be undone by the executive power of the emperor, who in turn, could "impose a new government." Another setback or loophole in the "Empire" is rooted in the relationship between the people and their representatives. As suffrage rights were granted to all white and some mulatto males, this meant that only a small percentage of the population was granted legal status in order to vote. Sadly, both women and slaves were seen as objects in the eyes of society and did not count as citizens of Brazil, and therefore, were not given the right to a ballot. Machado,

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[21] Barman, Roderick J. (1999). Citizen Emperor: Pedro II and the Making of Brazil, 1825–1891. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

[22] "Dom Pedro II." United States and Brazil: / Brasil E Estados Unidos:. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Mar. 2015. <http://international.loc.gov/intldl/brhtml/br-1/br-1-5-1.html>.

through the psychological realism in his novels and novellas, revealed these injustices and many others that were in plain sight but still overlooked by society.

The issues surrounding citizenship, representation, as well as the conflicts relating to the individual's place in society are some of the themes that Machado weaves into his novella, *The Alienist* (1881-1882). That Machado wrote his tale in this somewhat hybrid form (not as long as a full-fledged novel, but also not necessarily read in one sitting, as a short story) is significant. The situation depicted in *The Alienist* is developed fully in Machado, yet the tale does not lose its focus, that of creating a slightly pessimistic case for the obliviousness of the Brazilian nineteenth century public.[23] Written in a sociological satirist style, *The Alienist* tells one scientist's tale of revolutionizing psychopathology, the study of mental illness. After returning home from Europe to the town of Itaguai in Brazil, Doctor Simão Bacamarte builds an insane asylum named the "Green House" to house, contain, and treat those that have gone mad. [24] As he succeeds in admitting every person who exhibits the slightest signs of mental ailment, Itaguai's ratio of sane to insane people steadily decreases. Eventually, the town as a whole starts raising questions as to Simão's ulterior motives. Yet, every time a whistleblower alerts others of the rapid admittance of patients to the Green House, Simão somehow manages to quell the town's swelling discontent. In other words, he persuades the people of Itaguai that his analysis is correct and only the accusers are mad. What is the means by which the doctor persuades the people of Itaguai? Should the reader take the doctor's authority on the subject? What is the message that Machado's satirical narrator has for his readers? The following analysis of persuasive elements in Machado de Assis' novella *The Alienist* will attempt to delve into the world of Itaguai in an attempt to find the answer to these questions.

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[23] The Alienist (O alienista) first appeared in the journal A Estação (Rio de Janeiro) in 1881 and was collected in the volume Papéis Avulsos in 1882. This study uses the English translation by William L. Grossman.

[24] The words alienist, doctor, and Simão are used interchangeably all in reference to Dr. Simão Bacamarte.

Persuasion involves two parties, the persuader, and what I would like to call, the "persuadee(s)," or the individual(s) that are effectively affected by such persuasion. At times, the persuader is also the persuadee, a relationship that will be further discussed in the case of *The Alienist*.

The peculiarity of persuasion in the medium of literature, in particular the novella, allows the writer to show multiple layers of persuasion within a certain number of pages of text, a task that is otherwise difficult to do with an oral speech or print advertisement. Each layer of persuasion is categorized into one of two modes – external or internal. External persuasion involves those outside of the book, the readers, while internal persuasion occurs within the textual confines of the literature. In the following pages, I will expand on the external and internal persuasive tools Machado de Assis weaves into *The Alienist* in order to support his argument of increasing the awareness of awareness itself and looking beyond society's façade.

We will start with the persuadee or the follower. Before a follower can follow, isolation or removal from a whole is necessary. Followers of a leader tend to grasp on to a leader's words and offer him or her their support only after they develop the willingness to gain such information themselves. In order for the follower to gain willingness or open-mindedness to follow, there has to be a distancing from group mentality, the social norm, or the status quo. Such a departure from a mainstream way of thinking has to be made willingly by the individual in order to acquire liberty of choice and thought. There are two sets of followers categorized in *The Alienist*: the readers of the book and the people of Itaguai. Each set of followers isolates themselves in specific ways. First, the reader distances herself from her immediate world the

moment she suspends her disbelief. This process begins at the point where the reader chooses to fully immerse her mind into the novella, earning the liberty to oversee the story of Bacamarte without outside distractions interfering with her textual interpretation. Second, the followers within the novella, the people of Itaguai, do not require a deliberate distancing from the knowledge of psychopathology, as they have never had educational exposure to the study of mental illnesses to begin with. For this reason, a natural isolation divides the followers' thoughts from the realm of scientific cogitation.

Focusing on the external follower, we can see how Machado's novella plays on perspectives and entices the reader to reconsider his or her surroundings. As the reader follows Simão Bacamarte's quest to cure all mental illness, he or she encounters certain thresholds that provoke him or her to question the validity and morality of the doctor's actions. The first "threshold" occurs when Simão's most faithful adherent, Crispim Soares the druggist, exhibits surprise at the doctor's mixing of the truly insane, "vicious" patients with the "merely ridiculous" cases.[25] Here, the doubt created by the druggist shows the reader the absurd nature of the doctor's "idea of enlarging the realm of insanity" and how even the most devoted of followers can fall out of persuasion given a certain inconsistency that the persuader displays.[26] Effectively, Machado deliberately depicts the increase of Bacamarte's farfetched mental diagnoses and attempts to push the reader to question the doctor's reasoning.

The second "threshold" is one that nudges the reader to reconsider Simão's actions in relation to religious opposition. That is, Father Lopes, representing the church as a whole, expresses his desire to keep the old definition of insanity, one that is widely accepted: "'Under the present definition of insanity, which has always been accepted […] the fence around the area

[25] Machado de Assis, The Alienist, 20.
[26] Ibid.

is perfectly clear and satisfactory. Why not stay within it?'"[27] The tension between science and religion, illustrated perfectly in this scene, mirrors their confrontation in the real world. With a shrewd and somewhat mysterious "smirk," the alienist insists on the greater power of science, noting that "theology [is] undecided whether to believe in itself or in science."[27] In a way, theology represents the people of Itaguai, who are caught in between the choice of believing in their religion (which also includes elements of superstition) and in the logical "reasons, texts, and examples" of the doctor.[28] In other words, the satire as a whole works to change the way in which the reader approaches situations in everyday life, moving from applying a singular perspective to employing a multifaceted one.

In contrast, the internal followers, the Itaguaians, have no stance on the condition of their society as they are completely blind to what they are a part of. In other words, they are isolated from opinion. To exemplify the isolation of Itaguai, "the entire colony and, for that matter, the kingdom [of Itaguai] itself could not boast one authority on the subject [of psychopathology]."[29] From the narrator's remark we can conclude that the "subject", the scientific study of mental disorders, has no meaning to the inhabitants of Itaguai. As the sole authority on the subject, the doctor has no knowledgeable references to reinforce or tear down his madhouse experimentation. Luckily, the environment of Itaguai is highly favorable for Simão, since it offers no epistemological challenges to his scientific research. In *The Alienist*, Machado incorporates the paradox in which the few opponents who questioned the doctor's proposal viewed it as a composition of "absurd" and "evil" ideas, yet, were unable to justify their convictions with evidence-based support. Although the doctor's proposal to build an insane asylum "aroused excitement" throughout Itaguai, not one could precisely understand for what reason they were

[27] The Alienist, 22.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid, 5.

excited. There was only the emotion of excitement that was felt. Fortunately, the trust associated with his "doctor" title alleviated most of the "curiosity" that could have caused the town's people to briefly question the scientist's intentions.[30]

The most faithful of Simão's followers is his wife, Dona Evarista. As a married female, a woman like Dona Evarista would have had very little political or social power in a town like Itaguai. As noted earlier, even the most progressive empire under Dom Pedro II failed to view women for the human beings they were, as they were not allowed the simple right of suffrage. Although the women of nineteenth century Brazil did not have significant public power, they had an invisible, yet noteworthy role within the household in the ways they influenced their male counterparts. Dona Evarista, being the only female character in *The Alienist* who is referred to by name, defies the traditional expectations of a woman, and represents a progressive figure in Machado's work. Post-modern Brazilian novelist Paulo Coelho (1947-) gives us a local perception on the influence women had on men by saying, "All women have a perception much more developed than men. So all women somehow, being repressed for so many millennia, ended up by developing this sixth sense and contemplation and love. And this is something that we [men] have a hard time to accept as part of our [Brazilian] society." [31]That is, Coelho finds that Brazilian women possess a heightened "perception" of where they are in society as they are constantly reminded of their inferior position within the minds of society's members, and consequentially, develop a resolute female spirit, one that is exemplified in Dona Bacamarte's "lack of wifely submissiveness" as she disobeys the doctor's scientifically formulated dietary restrictions. This simple refusal to do what she is told demonstrates the willpower and independence that Dona Bacamarte wields and how Simão, as a man, is indeed just a human

[30] The Alienist, 6.
[31] Paulo Coelho, "Interview for Beliefnet (text and Audio) : Paulo Coelho Dances with Angels," Paulo Coelho's Blog, August 3, 2007, Accessed March 29, 2015.

being who does not necessarily stand socially at a higher level than her. Although he may be able to persuade many, he does not have supreme control over everyone. The doctor's inability to control the actions of his wife shatters any possible misconception as to the illusion that he possesses superhuman powers. As there is no magic at work that allows Simão to charm others into complying with his studies, we can now assuredly explain his ability to convince others to allow him to continue with his Green House research as stemming from his power to persuade.

Machado writes, "Dona Evarista failed to satisfy her husband's expectations."[32] When the wife of Bacamarte, chosen by means of a system based upon scientific metrics for her non-distractive, less-than-average physical qualities and robust health and childbearing promise, fails to produce children, the doctor finds himself in a predicament. That is, his infallible and empirically backed prediction of his wife's fertility fails to meet expectations when she is unable to bear him a child. Like most people, Simão too learns from his mistakes, delving deeper into his scientific office in an effort to discover the crux of his miscalculation. For Simão, scientific evidence and data hold the highest authority. That is, cases supported and hypotheses driven by such data are the means from which he draws his justification for the actions he performs. In turn, the doctor employs such data-driven reasoning as a key tool in his persuasive toolbox. Simão attempts to transpose the evidence-based logic from which he grounds his actions onto those in his "universe", i.e. the citizens of Itaguai.[33]

This tactic works seamlessly only because the people of Itaguai have no prior knowledge of the field of psychopathology. For this reason, Simão gains an unquestioned and undisputed authority on the subject. As a result, the follower base comprised of Itaguai's people can be compared to a slab of clay, shaped and molded solely by the hands of the doctor, who holds

[32] The Alienist, 4.
[33] Ibid, 3.

ultimate influence over how they perceive his work. In sharp contrast to Simão, the Itaguaians are motivated by their emotions more so than logic and reasoning. For instance, in calculating the taxes for the funding of Simão's madhouse proposal, the town clerk "got lost in arithmetical calculations," unable to grapple with quantitative tasks.[34] And when the doctor shows his wife the wealth he acquired from treating patients in the Green House, she "[is] not sure what [the numbers in their account book signify]," an episode which underscores Dona Evarista's lack of competency for numerical data.[35] Her ability to interpret her husband's riches comes only after she visualizes the glint of thousands of gold "cruzado" coins, interpreting wealth from her sense of sight. From this example, we find that her capability to comprehend at a high level functions through the outlet of visual elements rather than analytical data.

Both types of persuadees or followers – the external reader and the Itaguaians within the text – become subject to the effect of certain persuasive techniques or "tools" as I have termed them.

First, Machado tries to persuade readers to take a bird's eye view of the world they live in. Machado does this with his third person omniscient narration, which permits the reader to assume an unbiased view of Itaguai, offering the story from multiple perspectives: Bacamarte the alienist, Crispim Soares the druggist, and Porfirio the barber, just to name a few. Understanding a situation from more than one perspective allows the reader to weigh the pros and cons of each point of view, and in turn, creates a space where the reader is able to pick the perspective(s) that best resonate(s) with him or her. To clarify, exterior persuasion does not work like a multiple-choice problem with a set number of options; in our case, it does not consist solely of the perspectives included in the novella. Not limited to the points of view presented in the short

[34] The Alienist, 7.
[35] Ibid, 16.

novel, exterior persuasion entails the use of the literary perspectives plus those collected outside of the text in the formation of the reader's understanding, which may lead to the creation of a new perspective.

Second, interior persuasion occurs within the pages of *The Alienist* amongst the inhabitants of Itaguai. The supplementary persuasive "toolboxes" of interior persuasion are separated into two classifications: evidence-based and emotion-based. There is a clear divide between the persuasive techniques of the alienist and the other people of Itaguai as they each utilize a different form of the two aforementioned classifications, respectively. On one hand, the doctor's evidence-based toolbox consists of the persuasive tools that are analytically driven and supported by data and evidence, a conscious form of persuasion. On the other hand, the people of Itaguai are simple people, inclined to make decisions based on emotions, a rudimentary form of persuasion. In other words, the Itaguaians are unaware of the emotional persuasion tools and techniques that they employ or fall victim to, by being in a state of gullible "following."

Specifically, the title of a "doctor" enhances the credibility of Simão's work, partially due to the inherent level of trust associated with the title. In reference to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical studies, the subconscious level of comfort that is derived from the title of a doctor represents the idea of transference.[36] In its simplest terms, transference is the reproduction of infantile stereotypes that most people experience on the subconscious level. This phenomenon allows for the models of paternal, maternal, and sibling relationships to be projected onto other relationships in a person's life and elicits similar feelings of those associated with the person's actual family members. Maccoby notes that the most powerful transference is the paternal, since the father figure is a representation of a strong and protective role model and

[36] Michael Maccoby, "Why People Follow the Leader, The Power of Transference" in Harvard Business Review on the Persuasive Leader (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2008), 121.

exemplifies the type of person children look to for advice in order to attain the ideal state of adulthood.[37] Analogously, in the case of Itaguai, we can see how Simão represents the inspirational father figure, the town's people can be seen as substitute for the children, and the concept of the future advancement of the town stands in for adulthood. Paternal transference in a relationship involves "tough love" as a means of well-intentioned preparation for the real world. Simão exhibits such paternal behavior when he submits his own wife to the Green House for treatment.[38] Over time, Simão becomes symbolic of Itaguai's father figure, holding a wealth of knowledge and wisdom far beyond what the people of the small Brazilian village know. By means of paternal transference, the doctor *is* their role model, a proponent and a sign of promise for the advancement and development of Itaguai. In fact, the paternal "doctor" title fosters a sense of assurance and ease through transference, which automatically validates Simão's actions, such as locking hundreds of madmen in an asylum as safe and well intentioned.

"Science," he told His Majesty, "is my only office; Itaguai, my universe."[39] Here, Doctor Simão Bacamarte declines the offer to a high-post position given to him by the King of Portugal. The doctor's rejection of the prestigious and rare offer implies several things. First, Simão chooses not to fall victim to the allure of the titles of the posts that he is extended, "Presidency of Coimbra University" or "Chief Expeditor of Governmental Affairs," respectively.[40] That is, Simão's motivation to continue his research has no correlation with the grandeur gained in association with holding such prestigious career titles. Instead, he values the comfort of his small, humble hometown of Itaguai in Brazil. Second, the doctor does not assign value to royalty any more than to a commoner. Observable in his objection of the King of Portugal's

[37] Maccoby, "Why People Follow," 131.
[38] The Alienist, 66.
[39] Ibid, 3.
[40] Ibid.

occupational offering, the importance or priority Simão gives to those of higher status is nonexistent; in other words, he does not register the degree of authority that certain high social statuses, such as those of the royals, demand in society. That is to say, the doctor lacks deference to the convention of obeying authority figures. In this manner, Simão detaches from society's binding hierarchical norms, creating an alternative, science-driven society in which he seemingly controls others as a puppeteer controls his puppets. As he states, Itaguai is his "universe", a place where the doctor can manipulate the people to act exactly how he wants them to (for example, submitting themselves into his insane asylum, the "Green House"), all with the persuasive power of scientific reasoning and "nothing outside the realm of science."[41] Specifically, the word "universe" plays on the symbolism of a higher power and compares Simão to a divine force. When he states that Itaguai is his universe, the doctor presents himself with confidence and expresses a belief in his powerful influence over the Brazilian town and the "future he himself will shape."[42] Understated at times, self-confidence or belief in oneself is a key persuasive tool as it allows the persuader to carry him- or herself in a sanguine manner and exudes his or her confident energy into the targeted audience.

With persuasion, comes change. While change does not necessarily always come in a form that we can see, it is still there. That is, oftentimes, change lies within the minds of those affected, and marks its place, whether in the forefront or the subconscious. Machado depicts the evolution of Simão's supporters in a transparent and tangible manner, by outlining the growth of the doctor's supporters by the number. One follower grows to three, and three to thirty as the alienist travels door to door and introduces each Itaguaian household to his scientific proposal.[43] But what is more profound than the doctor's complete use of his persuasive toolbox is the

[41] The Alienist, 17.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid, 12, 18.

persuasion that occurs outside of the fictional realm of Itaguai as a result of the external persuader's, the narrator's and Machado's, "toolkit."

Between the pages of *The Alienist*, we can conclude that the most effective form of internal persuasion is one that is backed by virtuous motives. Observing his actions, it is evident that the alienist is the only character who upholds his virtues, acting out of honest and well-intentioned means, throughout the entire course of the novella. Underscoring the protagonist's virtuous nature, Machado writes, "no one could ever again charge [Simão] with motives other than those of science itself."[44] Contrarily, other characters act in selfish and dishonest ways and appear to harbor ulterior motives at one point or another. These examples highlight the contrast between the virtuous and non-virtuous positions within the text: The doctor supports the idea that "science is science," João Pina the barber plagiarizes Porfirio's proclamation in his speech to attract followers, and the Town Council acts out of "personal spite" and counters the people's desire to ban the Green House. [45] [46] [47] Comparing the last two examples, João Pina and the Town Council, to that of Simão further supports our understanding of the doctor's genuineness. Machado uses the João Pina example of plagiarism to comment on the cultural environment of Brazil in the nineteenth century, and perhaps, points to the South American country's duplicative adoption of the European social, economic, and political model. For example, emperor Dom Pedro II's successful rule and progress could have been easily attributed to the tried and proven model Europe had implemented years earlier, one that hinged on scientific advancement and creative thought in the early 1800s. Similarly, the example of the Town Council draws a parallel to the constitutional monarchy of Machado's time. That is, the way in which the Council makes

[44] The Alienist, 67.
[45] Ibid, 25.
[46] Ibid, 62.
[47] Ibid, 76.

decisions based on personal reasons can be said to represent Machado's doubt or critique as to the intentions of Dom Pedro II and his governmental decisions. By showing the dishonesty of Itaguai's Town Council, an entity that was supposed to represent high morals and unbiased justice, Machado challenges his reader to question their own government. In turn, the scenarios in the Brazilian grandmaster's literary *The Alienist* parallel the reality of Itaguai and work to persuade the external follower, the reader, to question: Were there personal reasons such as monetary compensation involved or inflation of reputation that triggered the emperor to act in the ways that he did?

Yet, humans are not always as clear-cut as rules, and Machado takes into consideration exceptions outside of the dichotomy between virtuous and non-virtuous characters. While Simão remains the only long-term, unwavering virtuous figure, his counterpart, Crispim Soares the druggist, only exhibits virtuous action at times during the story when he advocates for the doctor's practices. For instance, even during an episode where the druggist finds the alienist's idea "farfetched," he silences himself from voicing his opinion as he values "modesty," upholding the quality as a virtue.[48] Additionally, the alienist, too, takes dishonest measures to persuade others of his platform at several points. First, we see the alienist crediting the entrance gate engraving above the Green House to Benedict III instead of its original source, the Quran.[49] Lying, a non-virtuous activity, is ethically substantiated for providing comfort to the people of Itaguai in quoting a figure from the town's predominant religion of Christianity. Representing the consequential school of ethical reasoning, such activity by the doctor allows him to justify one bad action for a greater future benefit, in this case, the integration of the insane asylum into the society of Itaguai. Another instance of Simão's slip into non-virtuous action occurs during

[48] The Alienist, 20.
[49] Ibid, 7.

the scene where he gives a mass speech persuading his opposition to believe in his scientific endeavors. His proclamation, "I account to no one but God and the authorities in my special field," leaves a bittersweet note.[50] Inconsistent with his previous belief that science and theology do not mix, Simão in his speech credits both religion and scientific "authorities" as those he follows. The purpose of such contradictory and illogical means of persuasion, even though it does not agree with the doctor's virtues, serves to sway the rival crowd to his side by giving them what they want to hear. He also earns the partiality of Father Lopes by addressing him as "Your Majesty," a persuasive emotional appeal and ego boost that pushes the priest past the threshold of doubt in which he was standing.[51] Simao's unconscious detachment to his virtues can be explained by the concept of *moral disengagement*. Defined, moral disengagement involves the internal distancing from one's core virtues in a specific setting that engages with unethical activity.[52] All the guilt associated with deviating from his original core values of scientific logic diffuses as the doctor disengages his morals on the unconscious level, out of his own awareness. In contrast, another interpretation of the terms "God" and "authorities" in Simão's speech could be an analogous one. That is, the alienist could possibly be saying that he is God, a connotation supported by his view of Itaguai as his "universe."[53]

On the whole, the various levels of persuasion exposed to in Machado's novella *The Alienist* ultimately contribute to the reader's understanding of their immediate environment and persuade him or her to test the reliability of political and social matters of the time. That is to say, the ironic and mocking tone of the narrator combined with the ridiculous and unrelenting internal persuasion of Simão Bacamarte drive the reader to question the representation of reality

[50] The Alienist, 46.
[51] Ibid, 65.
[52] Benedict Carey, "In the Execution Chamber, The Moral Compass Wavers," The New York Times, February 6, 2006, March 16, 2015, 1.
[53] Ibid, 3.

as it is portrayed and illustrated by the government and mass media. Such implicit persuasion, a key element in the formula for social change, is just as perilous as it is powerful. Chinese writer and social activist Lu Xun (1881-1936), who we will study in Chapter 2, compares the awakening of society to a poisonous reality to an allegorical Iron House in his conversation with editor of the *New Youth* independent magazine Jin Xinyi. Lu Xun describes:

> Imagine an iron house having not a single window and virtually indestructible, with all its inmates sound asleep and about to die of suffocation. Dying in their sleep, they won't feel the pain of death. Now if you raise a shout to wake a few of the lighter sleepers, making these unfortunate few suffer the agony of irrevocable death, do you really think you are doing them a good turn?

To Lu Xun, Jin Xinyi responds"[b]ut if a few wake up, you can't say there is no hope of destroying the iron house." And Lu Xun replies, "True, in spite of my own conviction, I could not blot out hope, for hope belongs to the future."[54] Precisely, it is the human emotion of hope that allows us to feel a powerful sense of expectation for a certain thing to happen, in the case of Machado, that "certain thing" is the restoration of observation and awareness. Psychologically, it is the internal switch in curiosity that leads to the desire for the truth, which in turn, opens the door to the possible discovery of a particular injustice. Like a chain reaction, the flip of this internal switch in one person generates a momentum that influences two, who in turn trigger the reaction in four, and so on. Such exponential growth feeds the persuasiveness of the cause, as the number of people involved increases the validity of the argument for which one is fighting. In this manner, Machado and the alienist persuade us as readers to observe our world in a scientific way, seeing it for what it is and for what it will become.

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[54] Lu Xun, "Preface to Call to Arms" in Call to Arms, ix.

Chapter 2

Lu Xun: The Madman's Persuasion

Arguably the most celebrated Chinese author of the twentieth century, Lu Xun (1881-1936) gained fame for his literary work in support of the advancement of social reform in China. Originally a timid and self-kept individual, Lu Xun's fire and passion for social and political change, which would heavily influence the student riots of the 1919 May Fourth Movement and the New Culture Movement, grew in intensity over a series of events that occurred in his life. In his *Preface to Call to Arms* (1922) which was written years after all of his short stories, originally published between 1918 and 1922, Lu Xun opens up on his past for his readers and guides them through the pivotal points in his life that influenced his desire for change.[55] The earliest memory we are given access to is one of Lu Xun's childhood in which he shows himself filling his father's prescription by purchasing strange and "difficult to come by" Chinese herbs, dried fruits, and insects, all suggested by the family physician. Such remedies composed of animal parts and questionable roots were typical of the traditional medicine practices in China at the time. Yet, the young writer found his father's state of health deteriorating at a steady rate despite the application and consumption of the traditional medical treatment. It is after this experience that Lu Xun viewed the world he was living in from an outsider's perspective. He shares with us, "It is my belief that those who come down in the world will probably learn in the

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[55] Short stories collected in Call to Arms (1923), listed in the order of their original publication: A Madman's Diary (1918), Kong Yiji (1919), Medicine (1919), Tomorrow (1920), A Small Incident (1920), The Story of Hair (1920), Storm in a Teacup (1920), My Old Home (1921), The True Story of Ah Q (1921), The Double Fifth Festival (1922), The White Light (1922), The Rabbits and the Cat (1922), The Comedy of the Ducks (1922), Village Opera (1922)

process what society is really like." One could easily interpret Lu Xun's quote as belief that wisdom stems from missteps and failures and that our eyes are able to perceive with an added clarity our surroundings only after our originally impaired vision causes us to fall into a rut.

With a burgeoning curiosity and the yearning to learn more than what the traditional Confucian classics taught in the Eastern education, Lu Xun enrolled in an unconventional course of study at Kiangnan Naval Academy in 1898.[56] The Western-style learning system at Kiangnan allowed the future writer to immerse himself in various fields of study including "physics, arithmetic, geography, history, drawing and physical training."[57] Later on in his life, the writer's exposure to scientific reasoning and the liberal arts served a major role in developing his determination to make a better future for China, with greater independence on the individual level and advancement in scientific research. This idea of scientific progress was much easier said than done. That is, Chinese traditionalists, those who supported Confucian teachings and wanted to keep things the way they were in China, made up the majority of the country's population. Highly valuing the collective and the family, the ancient Chinese tradition rendered it extremely difficult for individuals to diverge from the group and still expect to be accepted by the Chinese society. Lu Xun discloses that, "[a]nyone who studied 'foreign subjects' was a social outcast regarded as someone who could find no way out and was forced to sell his soul to foreign subjects."[58]

Despite the threatened and negative reactions of Chinese nationalists to those studying anything outside of the classics, Lu Xun's awareness of such backlash did not discourage him from pursuing his educational goals. Although Lu Xun studied from a menu of Western courses, he did so in an effort to equip himself with modern tools of reason and gain a name for the

[56] Lu Xun, "Preface to Call to Arms" in Call to Arms, v.
[57] Ibid, vi.
[58] Ibid.

people of his country. What he did not aim to do was to trade his Chinese identity for a Western one. After a certain incident in a lecture at Kiangnan in which he was exposed to a picture of a Japanese-led execution of a Russo-allied Chinese spy, looked on by a shameless audience of fellow Chinese soldiers, Lu Xun realized two things about the people depicted in the wartime picture: one, a strength in the Western powers to persuade, control, and command, and two, a weakness in the "futile spectacles" of the Chinese, who had succumbed to the peer pressure of standing in silence and witnessing the beheading of their fellow compatriot.[59] Something had to change. The Chinese needed to fight for their country and throw away the submissive nature that the feudalism of the times cultivated.[60] Incidentally, after being completely humiliated by the cowardice of the Chinese soldiers, Lu Xun's perception of the West became two-sided and he oscillated between committing allegiance to Western or Eastern ideals.[61] That is, he valued the liberty of thought and the curiosity for knowledge that the West offered, but detested the high and mighty attitude of Western imperialism, which viewed its political systems as supreme and failed to recognize the Eastern culture as an equivalent. Lu Xun wished to familiarize himself with the craft and strategy of the enemy, in order to outperform the enemy. Simply, he aspired for the Chinese to adopt a framework of reason that would allow the talents of its people to develop in a way that would create a system of thought just as strong as, yet independent of, that of the West. At this point, as Lu Xun tells us in the *Preface to Call to Arms* that he had found his

[59] The Russo-Japanese war took place February 8, 1904 to September 5, 1905. At this time, Lu Xun studied at the Sendai Medical College from 1904 to 1906.

[60] In his essay "The Universalisation of a Concept: 'feudalism' to 'Feudalism' in Chinese Marxist Historiography," Arif Dirlik explains feudalism in twentieth-century China: "[F]eudalism in Chinese historiography does not refer to specific institutions but to a social formation, with all the totalistic implications of that concept. Since the late 1920s, Marxist historians in China have described Chinese society for a varying but large part of its history as a feudal society. While the term they have used as the equivalent for feudal, fengjian, has a long history in Chinese political discourse as the description of a decentralized political organization where the ruler would share power with a hereditary local elite, the reference in twentieth-century historiography is not to any real or idea system out of China's past, but to the economic and political organization of medieval Europe." Arif Dirlik, in Feudalism and Non-European Societies,198-99.

[61] Harpham, John. "A Fierce Silence Falls: Lu Xun's Call to Arms." Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts (2013): 95-118. MLA International Bibliography. Web. 5 Mar. 2015. 112.

purpose and reveals that to him, "[t]he most important thing […]was to change [the Chinese people's] spirit; and […] literature was the best means to this end."

With this spirit, Lu Xun began work on a radically Westernized magazine titled "Vita Nova (New Life)" that aimed to speak to the student youth.[62] Yet, his plans to create a literary whirlwind of a revolution fell through right before the first publication of the magazine when he faced problems assembling the contents of the first issue and gave up, instead of persevering. Lu Xun yearned for redemption from the failure to produce his modern magazine. This time around, his efforts were fueled by the actions of his old self who had given up on the magazine, losing support and faith in the production process after several contributors had abandoned the project. In fact, his weak and substandard reaction to the literary staff's shrinking in size mirrored the exact faint-hearted "spirit" which he sought to change in the Chinese witnesses that he had seen in the Russo-Japanese war execution slide earlier on. Inspired by this realization, Lu Xun centered his focus on extending liberal thought and grew a thicker skin to challenges and setbacks. With a newfound attitude, the writer preached to "fight back" notwithstanding any level of "opposition," whether it was the overbearing Western imperialism, the suffocating Chinese traditionalism or the pusillanimity he found in himself.[63]

While depicting the memories from his background, Lu Xun notes the pain experienced in the act of recalling such instances in his life. Specifically, he attributes such pain to an unavoidable sense of loneliness. That is, Lu Xun originates his stories from those past "lonely bygone days" which he could not erase from his memory. For Lu Xun, writing the stories in *Call to Arms* (1923) offered a means of "escape" from the "trouble" that haunted him day by day. In

[62] The magazine title, "Vita Nova," is a reference to Dante Alighieri's prose-poetry work La Vita Nuova. Lu Xun must have chosen this title for his magazine as it reflects the use of vernacular or local language in the place of classic or traditional diction. Similarly, Dante writes La Vita Nuova in Italian vernacular instead of Latin.
[63] Ibid, vii.

the *Preface*, he wrote, "these stories stem from those things which I have been unable to forget."[64] In making his voice heard, the Chinese revolutionary writer changed the manner in which literature was written in his country. Up until Lu Xun's time, the Chinese authors that preceded him utilized traditional Chinese diction in their works, embodying the ornate, flowery language of Confucian style. Such literature, inaccessible to the majority public of feudal China, naturally established barriers separating social strata based on intellect and the ability to read. With his first (and, in my opinion, his most important) story, *A Madman's Diary* (1918), Lu Xun presents the thoughts of a middle-class man in Chinese vernacular. By writing in a language that is accessible and comprehensible to a greater part of the Chinese population, Lu Xun attempts to dissolve the barriers that ostensibly marked the difference in social classes. As a result of his stories, Lu Xun leveled the grounds of intellectual advancement by allowing hundreds of thousands of Chinese working-class readers to see themselves in his writing. By writing in the vernacular, his language had the effect of providing a voice to a public that did not exist prior to his work. In other words, Lu Xun created readers of Chinese literature—his vernacular language was his most persuasive tool.

A strong advocate for Marxist principles of social equality, Lu Xun fought for the voices of the Chinese working class to be heard. His sentiment of voicing one's thoughts, emotions, and desires is craftily woven into his work. For example, in *A Madman's Diary*, Lu Xun writes in the first person, exposing the reader to the protagonist's perceptions and thoughts. In particular, the character's voice allows Lu Xun's intended reader, the everyday Chinese middle-class man or woman, to pay more attention to the individual. For most Chinese living during the pre-New Culture Movement era, the concept of individuality and self-expression was rare and seen as a

[64] Preface to Call to Arms. v.

rebellious act that violated the collectivistic, family-centered culture of East Asian tradition. [65] Authority and respect were attributes gained with age, with the older members demanding the deference of the young. Likewise, the younger members of society were expected to obey the wishes and requests of the elders and maintain a humble and submissive relationship with their seniors, especially those within their families. At the turn of the twentieth century, an increasing number of Chinese scholars such as Li Dazhao, Hu Shih, Zhou Zuoren, and Lu Xu began expanding their field of study to include Western concepts such as scientific reasoning and individual conviction. Hence, the constant tug-of-war between valuing familial piety and speaking one's mind, a conflict portrayed masterfully in *Madman,* is one which Lu Xun confronted himself as a student of East and West.[66]

Due to the thousands of years of history through which such family-focused and age-deferent behavior was practiced and even esteemed in China, the introduction of a new, opposing form of thought that threatened the traditional Chinese system was difficult to implement. People were unwilling to adjust their mentalities for fear of standing out and from potentially becoming ostracized from the Chinese collective. Understanding his environment and the type of mindsets and traditions he would have to sway, Lu Xun carefully produced his short stories with attention to form such as tone, structure, and satire, and literary devices such as metaphors and personification. From the crossing of Lu Xun's form and literary devices, his literature yields an

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[65] The New Culture Movement (mid 1910s-1920s) was one that materialized amongst Chinese visionary scholars, including Lu Xun, from the discontent of ancient traditional Confucian ideals and a decaying feudal system. Proponents of the movement aimed to move China out of the past and supported the advancement of science and democracy.

[66] In fact, from a business perspective, remnants of this divide between Eastern and Western values are still evident today in the distinct criteria the two regions prioritize to select people to run their companies. From my research I have found that Asian companies such as the Japanese automobile giant Nissan Motors Co., Ltd. have a majority of age 60-plus executives on their board of directors whereas Western companies such as the coffee house empire Starbucks, Inc. have board members as young as 29 year-old Clara Shih.* From this example, we can see how the Eastern culture associates greater wisdom to those that have lived longer versus the Western culture which values more young, fresh talent, perceiving them to have the ability to contribute new ideas to the company.

*Isaac, Cheryl. "Says Starbucks' 29-Year-Old Female Board Member: 'Stanford Taught Me To Be An Entrepreneur'" Forbes. N.p., 16 Dec. 2011. Web. 12 Mar. 2015.

unprecedented implicit persuasive effect on the reader. In *A Madman's Diary*, the diary-style form coupled with the repetitive nature of certain elements in the text creates both analytical and emotional persuasive tools, which deliberately and unobtrusively introduce the reader to individual thought, without detracting attention from the pseudo-traditional style of the work. And, that was precisely Lu Xun's objective.

Written in nested frames, *A Madman's Diary* tells the story of a man gone insane, through access to his most intimate of thoughts recorded in his diary in which he expresses his impounding fear of the cannibalistic diet of the people around him. Of the two frames composing the text, the external and the internal narrator, the outermost structure is that of a narrator removed from the story itself. He opens the piece by mentioning two brothers.[67] It is critical to note this detail, as the bond of one sibling to another, that is, the bond of family, is of high value in Chinese culture. For Lu Xun, beginning with a family relationship functioned as a strategic hook to gain the Chinese reader's attention without being obvious about the radical nature of the diary's content. Moving on, the narrator visits the town of the two brothers and inquires about the mental health of the younger one. After the elder brother answers the narrator's questions, reassuring him of the younger brother's complete recovery, he brings forth the original diary that his younger brother created during the period in which he was ill. The narrator skims the diary and informs the reader of the subsequent excerpts included in the text. For "medical research" purposes, the external narrator copies and includes only certain sections from the original diary into the publication. The lack of full disclosure of the original text of the madman prevents us as readers from developing our own conclusions, and instead, lays on us a heavy, biased influence from the external narrator. But, who exactly is the external narrator? Is he someone who can be

[67] Based on the assumption that the external narrator could not be female, as they were not given such liberty to travel in the early 1900s.

trusted when he assures the reader that none of the madman's words presented in the publication have been tampered with? Perhaps, the closest connection we can ascertain is the link between the external narrator and Lu Xun himself. For instance, similar to the Chinese writer, who in his childhood planned on studying medicine in order to curb the deleterious traditional home remedy practices of priest doctors in the Chinese feudal times, the external narrator, too, works in the medical profession.[68] Marking a similarity between the external narrator and Lu Xun is unforced and natural as the former speaks in a mocking tone on matters of Chinese feudalism, a matter that Lu Xun, too, believed to be backwards in practice and wished to eradicate. There are various points in the diary entries where he inserts footnotes that serve to clarify Chinese cultural intricacies such as translating Chinese names and explaining their symbolic worth; providing brief summaries of historical references; and, explicating Chinese superstitions and parables. As the majority of the Chinese audience would find the footnotes redundant, their inclusion in the text signifies that Lu Xun or the external narrator projected the readership of the diary publication to extend past China's borders.

Such progressive foresight and anticipating literature to transgress time and cultures by providing explanations for non-Chinese readers aligns with the Western ideals of shared knowledge through the means of perpetuating the access of such knowledge by international publication. In *Preface*, Lu Xun adds, "Although such good fortune makes me uneasy, it still pleases me to think that [my stories] have readers in the world of men."[69] Further, the external narrator adds, "I have not altered a single illogicality in the diary." The use of the word "illogicality" mocks the validity of the content of the diary, and also, strips the madman of possessing authority over his own thoughts. Yet, as the reader listens to the rest of the external

[68] Lu Xun, "A Madman's Diary," 1.
[69] Preface to Call to Arms, x.

narrator's introduction, he or she is given substantial reason to believe that Lu Xun is mocking the mockery of the former. Meaning, Lu Xun and the external narrator could not possibly be one and the same. This method is peculiar in the way that the plot is distanced from the reader by a continuously shifting narrative play of voices that use irony as a distancing device. The text reveals the external narrator's true nature, highlighting his dismissive tone and air of superiority; for example, the external narrator continues to say in the *Madman* opening, "[T]he people referred to [in the madman's diary] are all country folk, unknown to the world and of no consequence [whose identities do not require to be covered up or disguised]." [70] Although Western by profession and by the method in which he conducts research, the external narrator effuses his elitist, supremacist attitude in the way he refers to the "country folk" as "unknown." It is precisely this Western imperialist attitude that Lu Xun seeks to separate from the parts of Western culture he wants China to adopt, such as scientific advancement and individual expression.[71] In a way, Lu Xun wraps modern Western thought processes and reasoning within the context of Eastern background by placing markers of traditional Chinese culture within the story and then explaining them through observational footnotes representative of Western scientific research. For example, such layering of Eastern and Western elements can be seen in the double meaning found in the direct Chinese translation of "Mr. Gu Jiu" which is explained to non-Chinese readers in a footnote saying "[t]he characters Gu Jiu means 'old'," the proverbial style of Confucian teachings expressed in the madman's language: "The fierceness of a lion, the timidity of a rabbit, the craftiness of a fox…," and the reference to seventh century Chinese history: "In ancient times, Yi Ya boiled his son for Jie and Zhou," which he explicates for those unfamiliar with Chinese background in a footnote: "Yi Ya, a favourite of Duke Huan Qi in the

[70] Madman, 1.
[71] John Harpham, "A Fierce Silence Falls," 112.

seventh century B.C., was a good cook and sycophant."[72] [73] [74] In turn, the technique of concealing his scientific methodology and detracting the reader from the observational point of view that they are reading from (a point of view that utilizes footnotes provided by the external narrator to expand on Chinese cultural references) creates a pseudo-traditional style of writing. That is, Lu Xun guides the reader through two frames of narration, the external and internal, in order to reach the essence of his argument, one which pushes the reader to "[s]ave the children" and rescue China from the future decadence it is leading itself into by holding on to past tradition.[75] In the work, Lu Xun symbolically represents ancient Chinese tradition with the act of cannibalism. Through the external narrator's tone, Lu Xun effectively illustrates the strengths and weaknesses of both the Eastern and Western cultures and systems of method, and finds it difficult to commit himself to one side or the other.

Despite the back-and-forth power struggle between the East and the West, which Lu Xun attempts to evaluate, he still makes clear in *Madman* the mission to overturn the ancient Chinese feudal structure and replace it with a system that would allow for individuals to break out of their social status and progress in society. In order for the voices of the people to be heard, Lu Xun relays the message of the importance of individual freedom of thought through the use of first person narration. Representing the second frame nestled within the external frame of the opening narration, this internal narration offers a stark contrast to the composed and neutral exterior frame. That is, the internal narrator, the madman, writes in a more frantic and organic fashion, revealing emotion and doubt without considering its consequences to the family or the collective. Such open and candid expression of thought challenges Eastern tradition by pitting individual

[72] Madman, 2.
[73] Ibid, 7.
[74] Ibid, 11.
[75] Ibid, 12.

thought against cannibalism, regardless of its outrageous "mad" outwardly representation, against the widely accepted collective tradition of eating humans. By presenting the madman's inner thoughts in written form, Lu Xun allows for the madman's scrutiny and suspicion to encourage equivalent behavior in future generations to come. In other words, the written piece persuades better than spoken speech for the reason that it is able to reach a larger number of people due to its immortality, its ability to outlive the speaker. Such a statement is supported in the way that I, as a reader outside of twentieth century China, have gained access to a translated, interpretable version of *Madman*.

Lu Xun's framing of the work, an external narrator guiding a critical observation of the internal narration of the madman, gently teases the Western elitist attitude of the external frame while offering the reader a carefully dissected selection of excerpts from the madman's original diary within the internal frame. In particular, the use of the footnote creates the effect of a distance – one that distances the text from the reader in a way that allows for the reader to look beyond the surface level of the madman's "madness" and marinate on the reasoning behind his fear of being eaten. In other words, the footnote provokes an observational approach by providing further explanation of specific concepts in the diary, especially since the madman himself stresses how "[e]verything requires careful consideration if one is to understand it" and repeats the phrase more than once.[76] Overall, the "careful consideration" Lu Xun expects his readers to employ serves to reveal the satire that is delicately woven into the work. As mentioned before, the targets of Lu Xun's satirization are Western imperialism and Chinese traditionalism. Specifically, the mocking tone of the external narrator which ends up mocking its own haughty air and the text's jabs at the Confucian values of familial piety, collectivism, and superstition implicitly orient the reader in the direction of thinking in a new, more modern way. In the

[76] Madman, 3-4.

opening section of *Madman*, the external narrator describes his interaction with the elder brother of the madman, who explains that his younger brother "recovered some time ago [from the mental illness] and has gone elsewhere to take up an official post."[77] To further give an account of his younger brother's mental deviation, laughing, he offers the external narrator the madman's diary, and says, "that from these [diary volumes] the nature of [the younger brother's] illness could be seen and there was no harm in showing them to an old friend."[78] There are two things to note in the way the elder brother constructs his untroubled reaction to his younger brother's mental state in the company of the external narrator, a representation of the public. Firstly, the elder brother's laughter serves to distract the external narrator from the underlying discomfort he is experiencing from opening up the affairs of his family to an outsider. This is important to consider as the unit of family is given high value in Confucian teachings. In turn, the laughter of the elder brother serves to cover up his sense of uneasiness derivative of the intrusion of the public – the external narrator – into matters of the private familial space. Being ethnically Asian myself, I grew up learning the importance of upholding the family name and being a team member of the collective. I could only imagine how much preserving the reputation of the family meant to Chinese families an entire century before mine. Illness, especially mental illness, was seen as a sign of weakness for more than just the affected person, but more so, the entire family. From this episode, I drew a parallel to a similar scene in Edgar Allen Poe's short story *The Tell-Tale Heart* (1843), in which the murderer, struck with a fit of nervousness, ushers the policemen closer to the site where he hides the incriminating evidence of his crime. Here, Poe shows the invasion of the private space of the home by the public policemen and the reverse-psychological

[77] Madman, 1.
[78] Ibid.

tactic the killer uses to strengthen the self-denial of his murderous act and digress from the truth and reality of the situation.

Secondly, by stating, "[T]here is no harm in showing [the diaries] to an old friend," the elder brother attempts to assure himself of the worry-free nature of his invitation to the external narrator to delve into his family's private affairs. Satirically, the elder brother's "no harm" gesture of offering the diary to the external narrator leads to the reproduction of the diary, and in turn, makes a huge impact on the working class. From this episode, Lu Xun demonstrates how even a small stone can make big ripples in the pond. That is, even the smallest of actions can make a big impact on the people and society around it.

The external narrator observes the diary and diagnoses the madman's mental ailment, saying that he suffers from "a form of persecution complex."[79] Ironically, he is blind to the implicit persuasion that is occurring beneath the surface or façade of the madman's illness as the madman introduces the reader to doubt and actively doubts the intent of written text, the neighborhood children, and even his own brother.[80] Here, we are shown how even scientific procedure does not capture the entire picture and is unable to explain everything. By pinpointing a weakness in the Western concept of scientific thinking, a platform he himself was advocating for, Lu Xun demonstrates that humanness is inescapable, regardless of Eastern or Western practices. In this manner, our writer's satire serves to prepare the reader's mind to make individual judgments and believe in them, even if the judgments might disagree with the majority rule of the collective society. This is possible due to the undermining technique satirical

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[79] Someone who is psychologically suffering from the persecution complex, or persecutory delusions, experiences an "anticipation of danger" and "threat beliefs" that cause them to feel as if they are being intentionally sought out to be harmed. Freeman, Daniel, Philippa A. Garety, Elizabeth Kuipers, David Fowler, and Paul E. Bebbington. "A Cognitive Model of Persecutory Delusions." British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 2002, 331-47. Accessed March 20, 2015.

[80] The madman's delusions cause him to see things written in between the lines on a text on "Confucian Virtue and Morality": "I read intently half the night until I began to see words between the lines. The whole book was filled with the two words – 'Eat people.' "
Madman, 4.

reading trains the reader to develop and apply to other settings, a tool that prompts the reader to question the validity and realness of the topic of study (i.e. Chinese traditionalism).

Moving on, literary devices within *Madman* help Lu Xun illustrate the confrontation between East and West. Lu Xun opens the first of thirteen sections of the diary with, "Tonight the moon is very bright."[81] Separated from the paragraph that follows it, this sentence draws attention to itself by standing alone. The distance created by the opening sentence of the madman's diary guides the reader's attention and allows him or her to focus on the "bright" quality of the moon. Chinese tradition finds a full, bright moon to represent the fullness of human emotion and the roundness of the moon to stand for unity and completeness.[82] It is during this "bright" presentation of the moon that the madman is illuminated in a way that provokes him to foster a sense of curiosity and doubt as he writes, "I begin to realize that during the past thirty-odd years I have been in the dark; but now I must be extremely careful."[83] The *chiaroscuro*, or the contrast between light and dark, of the light moon against the dark sky depicts the awakening of the individual mind, emerging from the shadows of the collective. Expanding on the symbolic quality of the moon in *Madman*, East Asian Languages and Cultures scholar David Laws adds, "The moon calls the conditions of the last thirty years of his life into question. Thus, the moon foreshadows the narrator's future realization [of cannibalism thriving in the world around him]."[84]

Another motif or recurring image in the diary is eyes. The eyes evoke and perceive emotion and are often regarded as sources of truth. But the eyes are also related to the whole issue of reading, which is one of the primary themes of Lu Xun's story. The eyes may be a

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[81] Madman, 1.
[82] "The Chinese and the Moon." Cultural China. Accessed March 19, 2015.
[83] Madman, 1.
[84] David Laws, "Voices of Identity in a Selection of Short Stories by Lu Xun" in Greater China, 45.

"window onto the soul" but in their very transparency they are also related to language in interesting ways. In the second section of his diary, the madman observes, "This morning when I went out cautiously, Mr. Zhao had a strange look in his eyes, as if he were afraid of me, as if he wanted to murder me. There were seven or eight others who discussed me in a whisper. And they were afraid of my seeing them."[85] This is the second time the madman mentions the character Mr. Zhao, without any reference to his relationship to the man. Instead, the madman's point of focus is the eye, and Mr. Zhou's "strange look" is what originates the fact of "reading" a possible intentionality to his actions. Concretely, the madman "reads" two emotions, fear and murderous desire, from Mr. Zhou's eyes. The last sentence in the quote above, "And they were afraid of my seeing them," shows the reciprocity of fear, once again, communicated through the eyes. The awareness of another person's awareness of you, such as mutual eye contact, introduces both parties to a world that is closer to the truth. Specifically, the "truth" arrived at here is the meeting of minds, of two individuals, who at one moment in time are removed from the collective society and are literally "seeing things with their own eyes. " Another example of looking, understood as an individual act, comes from a scene in the diary where the madman witnesses a mother scolding and hitting her child on a public street: "The most extraordinary thing was that woman on the street yesterday who was spanking her son. 'Little devil!' she cried. 'I'm so angry I could eat you!' Yet all the time it was me she was looking at."[86]

Once again, the conscious awareness of the others' gaze leads to a self-conscious awareness of the self. This visual exchange "sets [him] shivering" by its power. But here, this power is also underscored by the madman's literal reading of a linguistic turn of phrase that is more metaphorical ("I could eat you") than real. To read language literally is the equivalent of a

[85]Madman, 2.
[86] Ibid, 3.

"bad" reading, a superficial reading, one that sees transparency (a simplicity within the gaze) and not the more metaphorical "I could eat you!" Literal readings, in this case, can only be done at the risk of forgetting about language's capacity to say one thing and mean another. Clearly, the mother is not going to eat the child, nor the madman who is watching her—what she is expressing is the extent of her anger by raising an impossible effect (oblivion by incorporation: cannibalism) as an index of her own intensity of emotion.

There are two other instances when the madman writes about the quality or the power of the eyes. First, when he compares the look in the tenant's and his brother's eyes to those of people who were condemned in a town murder case for having beaten a "notorious character" and "taken out his heart and liver" for dinner: "Only today have I realized that [the brother and the tenant] had the same look in their eyes as those people outside."[87] This episode marks the madman's realization that even those close to him such as his brother, were part of the cannibalistic society. Second, the madman encounters a formidable enemy in the eye of the fish he is served as a meal: "The eyes of the fish were white and hard…" To explain, the "enemy" in this case is the fear that the madman develops from observing the state of the eye, one that appears lifelessly dull and connotes death.

In fact, the fish's features are described in considerable detail, since it is the madman who is watching while at the same time associating his future lunch (a fish) with his possible tormentors (cannibals). His gaze upon the fish is based upon a curious transference where the dead object allows him to recall living cannibals, precisely at the same time when he is the one who will ingest the fish itself: "[…] its mouth was open just like those people who want to eat human beings."[88] Cannibalism here is a series of queer displacements chained one upon the

[87] Madman, 3.
[88] Ibid, 4.

other, and these include the strangest displacement of them all—the one where the madman allows for the possibility of a cannibalistic urge within his own sense of self. "After a few mouthfuls I could not tell whether the slippery morsels were fish or human flesh, so I brought it all up."[89] Here, the duality of cannibalism is perfectly represented. That is, the humanness and cannibalistic nature of the fish causes the madman to make the connection that he is eating the predator, and in turn, has become the predator himself. In this way, we are shown the ease with which even people who disagree with a common practice can unknowingly take part in it without knowing the act they are performing. For instance, the madman even makes this conclusion himself, "I, who will be eaten by others, am the younger brother of an eater of human flesh."[90] In other words, it is much easier for the gravity and influence of the collective to draw the individual in. Conversely, it is increasingly difficult for the individual to stand his or her ground for what they believe in and be able to recruit and to persuade others to their cause, regardless of how just their cause (i.e. not eating humans or Western individualism) may be in comparison to the former, more popular convention (i.e. cannibalism or Eastern traditionalism).

Additionally, Lu Xun incorporates personification in the way he describes the madman to bring the printed words in the text "Confucian Virtue and Morality" to life. The madman writes, "The whole book was filled with the two words – 'Eat people.' All these words were written in the book, all the words spoken by our tenant, eye me quizzically with an enigmatic smile."[91] The particular use of "enigmatic" ascribes a mysterious uncertainty to the words' "smile," a boding intent that the madman is not able to understand. Further, in his diary he confides, "How can I possibly guess [society's] secret thoughts?"[92] Bridging this quote to twentieth-century China, it

[89] Madman, 4.
[90] Ibid, 6.
[91] Ibid, 4.
[92] Ibid.

is observable that Lu Xun presents the Chinese people's attachment to ancient Confucian traditional ways as a mysterious occurrence as he sees the regressive outcomes from the continuation of such practices and neglecting to change in the face of modernity and globalization. Overall, literary devices such as motifs, chiaroscuro, and personification illumine the tension between the madman's doubt of cannibalism existing and the mysterious "enigmatic" essence of cannibalism that explains its prevalent existence. Together, both literary form – tone, framing, and satire – and literary devices work to prepare the readers to develop the willingness to open their minds to another perspective, precisely, that of the madman (i.e. Western scientific reasoning and individualism).

Like Machado de Assis, Lu Xun, too, utilizes certain tools from his persuasion "toolbox" in order to build his argument and strengthen the persuasiveness of his short story. Three tools in particular – repetition, logic, and emotion – will be analyzed in detail. As noted earlier, the line "Everything requires careful consideration if one is to understand it" plays a critical role in the development of Lu Xun's persuasive argument. The specific word choice of "one" connotes to the reader that to "understand" is an individual action, one that should not find the need to take into consideration the perspectives of others. To repeat from the introduction section, repetition allows for a certain concept or thought to be recurrently presented in a way that elongates the repeated idea or belief in the mind(s) of the audience. In the literary context, the audience is the readers of the short story. Laughter is another repeated action throughout *Madman.* "The whole lot of them wanting to eat people yet stealthily trying to keep up appearances, not daring to do it outright, was really enough to make me die of laughter […] I knew this laughter voiced courage and integrity."[93] The "courage and integrity" refers to the madman's resilient spirit, one that does not disregard and invalidate his growing doubt of the unethical cannibalism practiced in the

[93] Madman, 5.

society and environment around him and the integrity he has for himself to not lose his perspective and thoughts in exchange for the predominant, cannibalistic way of living.

Lu Xun combines the persuasive pull of emotion with the modern Western scientific method of reasoning to further ground his argument. For instance, the madman reveals his fear in the simple sentence, "I have reason for my fear."[94] Marrying "reason" with the emotion of "fear" provides the reader with justification for a generally visceral reaction to a stimulus. Such psychoanalytical cause for the effect of the madman's "fear" demonstrates an awakening from conventional thought and introduces a modern, observational approach to the reader, one that Lu Xun hopes for the reader to test, and possibly, adopt. Additionally, Lu Xun weaves in syllogistic reasoning that shows (instead of tells) the deductive A-is-to-B-is-to-C process to the reader:

> [T]he accomplice in eating me is my elder brother!
>
> The eater of human flesh is my elder brother!
>
> I am the younger brother of an eater of human flesh![95]

A second example of the madman's use of logic occurs when he compares the cannibals to hyenas. He explicates on the hyenas by writing, "Hyenas are related to wolves, wolves belong to the canine species."[96] With emotional reasoning and syllogistic logic, Lu Xun invites his Chinese readers to test the methods for themselves.

Gathering from our analysis, it is evident that cannibalism is an allegorical framework meant to stand for the ancient Chinese culture. By depicting the people of the madman's world as committing one of the most elementary taboos within human society, Lu Xun sends a powerful message to his Chinese audience. Writing in their own vernacular, Lu Xun comments

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[94] Madman, 2.
[95] The specific logical reasoning the madman goes through is A is to B, C is to B, therefore, C is to A.
Ibid, 5.
[96] Logical reasoning is as follows: A to B, B to C. One can draw the conclusion of A to C.
Ibid, 7.

on the relationship between past and future by foregrounding his discussion upon a practice considered taboo, which is in turn superseded by self-awareness. Translated into an even simpler vernacular, Lu Xun tells his contemporaries that they are hurting themselves by sustaining outdated practices without considering how their deep-set superstitious beliefs are clouding their vision, preventing them to think by themselves. By following certain ancient superstitious customs such as eating human "heart and liver […] as a means of increasing their courage," the Chinese are not seeing the retrogressive process they are catalyzing, but rather blindly following the collective. Additionally, Lu Xun witnesses his father's life slip through due to the lack of a proper diagnosis and the inadequate home remedies the traditional medicine man prescribed. Every time an ancient concept appears in the *Madman*, it is usually in support of cannibalism: "The ancient historical record *Zuo Zhuan* states that during a siege in 488 B.C. the besieged were so famished that they 'exchanged their sons to eat.'"; the story of Yi Ya the cook who prepared Duke Han of Qi's own son for dinner; the revolutionary Xu Xilin who ate the heart and liver of a Qing official; and, the doctrine of filial piety which was "used by the feudal ruling class to poison the people [and] preached that a son should, if necessary, cut off his own flesh to feed his parents."[97] [98] [99] [100]

Such ammunition-loaded writing, as a form of silent protest itself, takes me back to the peaceful demonstrations of the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong. The Chinese proverb "You can't see the forest for the trees, but onlookers see the whole game," illustrates the perspective of the insider and outsider.[101] In Hong Kong, it was my perspective as a bystander of "the whole game" that persuaded me to participate in the demonstration and be amongst "the trees." Before I

[97] Madman, 6.
[98] Ibid, 9.
[99] Ibid, 10.
[100] Ibid, 11.
[101] "Chinese Language." Chinese Proverbs (1-10). Accessed March 29, 2015. http://www.chinese-tools.com/chinese/proverbs/01.html.

gained the bystander holistic point of view on that night I took Linda's advice and stood at that Mongkok MTR Station entrance, I was one student amongst the forest of people at HKUST, unaware of and oblivious to the significance of the yellow ribbon that was pinned on the shirts and sweaters of hundreds of students around me. Like me, Lu Xun points out in *A Madman's Diary,* the millions of Chinese people who were failing to acknowledge the environment that was holding them back, detaining information from them. As I did not know of the protests until I experienced them singlehandedly, the Chinese, too, did not know of the progress and scientific advancement that could arise from stepping outside of the collective, as they did not try and think for themselves (mainly due to fear of becoming outcasts amongst their family, a status the writer of the diary briefly faced during the time of his madness). The madman writes, "The folk at home pretended not to know me…they locked me in as if cooping up a chicken or a duck."[102] Highlighting his familial ostracism, the madman becomes an outlier from the family (a collective that was the most valued), and in this mad state, floats between the two poles of the ancient East and the modern West. During his madness, his own family did not want him. Ultimately, this departure from the group becomes something the madman embraces and allows him to discover a newfound strength: "Although I do not eat men my courage is greater than theirs."[103]

For Lu Xun's working class in China, there was a heavy retrogressive traditionalism that was handicapping China from entering the global arena of modernity. Metaphorically, they were the people locked away in the Iron House, sleeping through their lives and slowly suffocating to death.[104] In his critical review of the structure of cannibalism and its (lack of) sustainability within society, the madman blames the Chinese collective of "fathers and sons, husbands and wives, brothers, friends, teachers and students, sworn enemies and even strangers [for]

[102] Madman, 3.
[103] Ibid, 5.
[104] Preface, ix.

discouraging and preventing each other from taking [the] step [to end the heinous cannibalism culture]."[105] In a final plea, the madman instills hope in the reader by saying, "Perhaps there are still children who haven't eaten men? Save the children…"[106] Closing his first short story, Lu Xun, through the voice of the madman, effectively persuades the reader to believe in the individual and to reason with "careful consideration." In this way, he writes for the "hope [of change and progress that] belongs to the future."[107]

[105] Madman, 9.
[106] Ibid, 12.
[107] Preface, ix.

Chapter 3

Virgilio Piñera: The Absurdist's Persuasion

Virgilio Piñera (1912-1979) is recognized as "one of the great masters of modern Cuban letters" in the twentieth century.[108] Like Machado de Assis, Piñera's work was not discovered until decades after his death in 1979. Some of his most notable texts include *La carne de René* (1952), *Cuentos fríos* (1956), *Teatro completo* (1960), and *Pequeñas maniobras* (1963), all of which capture Piñera's "steadfast adherence to [his] personal convictions."[109] Rooted in the poverty and hunger-filled years of his childhood, Piñera's desire for change and personal achievement influenced his writing endeavors. With a sharp, acute awareness of his reality, Piñera aimed to reconstruct such reality within his works, revealing the struggles and frustrations of middle-class Cubans. In his piece "La vida, tal cual" (Life as it is), he shares with his readers, "I became aware of three things that were dirty enough that I would never be able to wash myself of them. I learned that I was poor, that I was homosexual, and that I liked art."[110] During his years studying at El Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza in Camagüey, Piñera participated in rebellious movements against the corrupt government of President Gerardo Machado (in office 1925-1933), who at one point in 1930 even closed down schools and universities in an attempt to quell the protests of his most "outspoken opponents."[111] Similar to Machado and Lu Xun, Piñera protested in a peaceful manner, never once resorting to violence as a means of persuasion and

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[108] Anderson, Everything in Its Place (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2006), 7.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Translated from the original Spanish publication. From Anderson, Everything, 19.
[111] Anderson, Everything, 20.

power. Despite his non-violent forms of persuasive expression, Piñera was seen as a formidable threat and was arrested more than once for his alignment with counter governmental motives.[112] The Cuban writer's unrelenting attitude and persevering spirit could be seen in his devotion to obtaining a higher education despite various obstacles such as a limited source of money that left him scrounging for cheap accommodation and barely feeding himself one meal per day. With a strong head and a determination that outweighed any inkling of doubt that may have come across his mind, Piñera worked towards a degree at the University of Havana on a grant that allowed him to attend free of cost due to his family's dire economic situation.[113] Yet, as he neared graduation, Piñera once again exhibited his rare and unwavering defiance as he refused to have his dissertation discussed and to defend his work against a panel of professors.[114] His reasoning behind such action was in the rejection of tradition and the set standard, routine procedure for attaining a higher socioeconomic level in life. Essentially, he wanted to pave his own path, diverging from what was expected of him. And through his numerous poems, short stories, novels, and plays he did just this.

Professor of Latin American Literature and specialist in Hispanic Culture Thomas F. Anderson in his book *Everything in Its Place: The Life and Works of Virgilio Piñera* (2006) underscores the very sparse amount of scholarly articles and book reviews that have been published on Piñera in the English language.[115] This is an issue that I encountered during my research at Emory University as well, as the majority of literary critique on Piñera's work is written in Spanish. Despite my advanced listening comprehension level in Spanish, my intermediate Spanish vocabulary of scholarly literary terms limited my research to rest mainly on

[112] Piñera was arrested on two occasions: once, as a suspect of the 1931 Escuela Normal de Maestros de Camagüey bomb explosion, and once for his involvement in the dissemination of anti-Machado themed newsprint titled Indio bravo. From Anderson, Everything, 20.
[113] Ibid, 19.
[114] Ibid, 29.
[115] Ibid, 8.

English publications. For this reason, I have extensively consulted the research of Anderson and Latin American Cultures expert and distinguished professor of Spanish American Literature José Quiroga. While Anderson states that there need not necessarily be a connection between an author's background and the content of his or her work, I disagree.[116] That is, I find that the writer's surrounding environment and the society in which they reside provide the metaphorical building blocks used in creating his or her literary creations. In a way, there exists an idea that is sparked from the preexisting conditions the writer finds him or herself in, which in turn, propels him or her to reframe the way in which a particular scenario is viewed. Specifically, this "reframing" within the medium of literature, utilizes certain persuasive "tools" or elements that appeal to analytical and/or emotional persuasion facets as previously studied in Chapters 1 and 2.

Along with Machado and Lu Xun, Piñera, too was one who strayed from the norm, regarded as a "polemicist and nonconformist."[117] Piñera's writing style can be described in a single word: absurd. That is, the Cuban writer creates pieces woven with a flair for "subversive tendencies" and skillfully showcases his "affinity for provocative social and cultural criticism" of twentieth century Cuba, all with a wildly unreasonable and illogical style of storytelling.[118] Piñera's absurdism is created through his creative rearrangement of the "building blocks" that construct an everyday reality. In other words, the world of the absurd is at the midpoint on a spectrum of real- to unreal-ness and presents unfathomable situations with commonplace elements and characters. For instance, something described as absurd supports a virtue that is desirable but intentionally unpleasant. Tracing back to the word's etymology reveals that "absurd" derives from the Latin *absurdus,* which stands for "out of tune" or without proper sound. With stories of random cause-and-effect relations, as one action leads to a reaction

[116] Anderson, Everything, 8.
[117] Ibid, 9.
[118] Ibid.

completely unrelated to the former, Piñera presents heavy and critical commentaries on the true disconnected nature of a Cuban society that seems to be bound by superficial ties. These ties, which in reality are created by the surface-level revolutionary efforts, are represented in Piñera's work by the unifying quality of absurd language; the way the simple diction in his literature flows one after another and smoothens the work's actual disconnected and farcical content mimics the disillusionment experienced by Cubans. In particular, Piñera targeted his work towards Cuban minority groups such as homosexuals and blacks who harbored sentiments of ostracization and non-inclusion despite Fidel Castro's unifying movements to combine the city life of Havana in Western Cuba with the agricultural life of people living in the rural fields to the East. In this manner, Piñera had a "lifelong estrangement from both Cuban and Argentine literary and cultural circles."[119] This point effectively illustrates Piñera's deviation from the collective or the society. Further, his rural upbringing and homosexuality were two strong factors in the writer's life that formed a natural separation between him and the whole of Cuban society during Fidel Castro's revolutionary socialist reign that commenced with the infamous rebel overtaking of Havana in 1959.[120] By revealing the inequality that Castro surreptitiously brushed under the rug, Piñera draws our attention to issues that would have been otherwise overlooked or ignored, such as those of homosexuality, gender, and race. With his "self-proclaimed role as a disrespectful author," Piñera, through the immortalization of his works forever preserved in writing, epitomizes an "eterno insumiso" or eternal rebel, one who is rebelling against the hypocritical regime of the original rebel Fidel Castro.[121] The words of the defiant and opinionated writer attempt to unclutter the visions of Cubans that were deeply tangled in the

[119] Anderson, Everything, 9.
[120] The Cuban Revolution (1953-59) centered about the overtaking of Fulgencio Batista's (1901-73) presidency, one that lasted almost seven years (1952-59). Leading a force of men self-titled "rebels', Fidel Castro aimed to usurp Batista's dictatorship and implement a more fair, communist form of government that centered about valuing Cuba and its common people.
[121] Anderson, Everything, 9.

persuasive brambles of the empty promises of Fidel, who gained persuasive magnetism from emotion-fueled rallies addressed to the common, working-class. For example, Castro leveraged the unexplainable, supernatural powers of the Cuban Santería religion to further convince people of his duty to rule. [122] That is, in his iconic January 1959 commencement speech, the landing of a white dove on the shoulder of Fidel Castro persuades his audience by adding a religious symbolic sign that signals and supports the supernatural selection of Castro as their leader.[123] The emotional persuasive force of Castro's white dove speech left a lasting imprint in the minds of the Cuban populace, one that effectively, by religious evidence and unconsciousness persuasion, swayed their visceral inclinations. In addition, a connection can be drawn between the emotion-driven Itaguaians of Machado's *The Alienist* and the working class of Cuba in the 1960s: both were persuaded by feelings, even in situations that lacked analytical data and concrete definitive evidence.

In contrast to the emotional means by which Cuba's revolutionary party of 1959 achieves mass persuasion, Piñera takes the opposite approach. He stresses the importance of the evidence and scientific methodology in the following quote:

> *Ahora bien, cuando algo se trata de poner en su sitio, es preciso, si no se quiere que lo pongan a uno en su sitio, que las cosas quedan firmemente demostradas.*
>
> [Now then, when trying to put something in its place, it is necessary, if one doesn't want to be put in his place, that things are firmly proven.][124]

From the preceding quote, we can see how Piñera valued detailed, evidence-backed arguments that could be "proven." Reinforced by his strong belief in a logical and thorough representation

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[122] Santería is a syncretic or mixed religion that is a combination of African and European beliefs. Ivor L. Miller, Religious Symbolism in Cuban Political Performance (2000), 1.

[123] "In Cuban Santería, a religion derived from the Yorùbá people brought to Cuba as slaves, a white dove represents the divinity Obatalá, a divine king who molds humans from clay in heaven." Ibid.

[124] Anderson, Everything, 7.

of thoughts, Piñera's absurd style of writing incorporates hammer-and-nail direct techniques by the means of clear and methodical logic, even though the reader may not be able to fully discern the effect of such logic. In light of the "destructive powers of [nuclear] science" that seemed to pervade the opinions of many worldwide after the catastrophic Hiroshima bombing incident, modern Cuban writers including Piñera and José Martí were not discouraged from advocating for the positive side of science. For instance, in the essay "Escuela de mecánica" (School of Mechanics) Martí connects the importance of infusing literature with science: "By bringing scientific concreteness, artistic solemnity, architectural majesty, and precision to Literature…[s]uch literature should only be worthy of such men!"[125] The "concreteness" which Martí strove for was one that Piñera presents indirectly in a subverted, absurd way. Although his writing may overwhelm and confuse the first-time reader, such a reaction is completely acceptable. That is, the value of Piñera's work is found in subsequent readings of his work, during which the reader will be able to detach the jumbled plot and unrelated sequence of events that lays on the surface level from the core logical stream of thought that courses through his text.

Piñera's persuasive technique lies in honest and true representation of preexisting conditions that, unfortunately, define and force people into cooperating with society, despite their personal desire to act and think a certain way. Effectively, the absurd is used to bring attention to the Cuban civilians' submission to the collective revolutionary society created by Castro, a virtue desirable to him although "intentionally unpleasant" for the majority of his subjects. In his work, Piñera identifies the conventions that society prescribes to its people and challenges these rules by illustrating alternative scenarios that fall outside of what is considered

[125] Quote found in: Keith Ellis, "The role of science in Cuban culture" in The Cultures of the Hispanic Caribbean (London: Macmillan Education, 2000), 164.

"acceptable" by society. In his focus on the alternative, Piñera channels existentialism with the idea of how "man is thrown into an alien, irrational world in which he must create his own identity through a series of choices for which there are no guides or criteria."[126] This chapter will closely analyze the selected works "The Album" (1944), "The Park" (1944), and "The Conflict" (1956) in *Cold Tales* (1956) and attempt to further study the way in which our Cuban writer employs the persuasion tool of the absurd in his metaphorical persuasive toolbox in order to debunk the oppressive influence of revolutionary society by explaining the unexplainable, the purpose behind his distinct form of persuasion, and what that means to us as readers.

The first story of our analysis, "The Album," follows a peculiar plotline. Set in a dilapidated boarding house, the short story revolves about a strangely mesmerizing exhibition of a photo album by a middle-aged woman, a show that takes place in the dining room of the building's guesthouse. Thomas Anderson analyzes the first-person narration of the short story by stating: "the narrator/protagonist, who is initially presented as a man with a sense of purpose and firm grip on reality, completely loses touch with the meaning of his existence when he becomes entangled in the absurd world of a guesthouse and its eccentric inhabitants."[127] Within the first paragraph, Piñera marks the distinction between certain social classes and the relationship between the privileged woman presenting her wedding album and her devoted audience, a scene that highlights the disparate divide between the vastly contrasting social classes amongst its members. While "strategic" seating is offered for wealthy audience members "who smoked American cigarettes or who bought gold-rimmed sunglasses with big, dark-green lenses," the other less affluent attendees "were seated with a disadvantage."[128] Such "disadvantage" is solemnly accepted and goes unchallenged by the less wealthy patrons. This silent submission to

[126] Anderson, Everything, 122.
[127] Ibid, 141.
[128] Virgilio Piñera, "The Album" in Cold Tales (Eridanos, 1988), 37.

social class stratification prevents the poor from situating themselves in a way to actually view the album presentation: "Of course, [the poor] could have sat in any of the seats, but the fear of provoking a scandal – which surely would have offended the owner of the album – forced them to suffer this supreme humiliation that all poverty imposes."[129] It is uncanny to think that the opinion of another influences one's actions. Mirroring Machado's Itaguaians' emotional proclivity to base their actions and convictions on feelings, the public in Piñera's story assumes third-rate seating due to the emotion of fear. Stemming from an anticipation of a dangerous or threatening occurrence, fear develops from a foreboding and ominous perception of the future. By hinging on a possible outcome that may or may not threaten or endanger them, the poor members of the audience are mentally weakening themselves by anticipating the unpredictable, and in turn, are not allowing themselves to sit in seats that permit visibility of the pictures in the album being presented.

In fact, the narrator acknowledges the absurd quality of the demand for the album exposition and distances himself from the unreasonably popular spectacle and its fanatic crowd by emphatically replying to the doorman who attempts to sell him tickets to the event, "But an album is not sufficient cause for a whole boarding house to be exposed to the dangers of hunger and plague!"[130] The "hunger and plague" the narrator refers to is the state of starvation and the stationary defecation the audience members endure for the duration of the album show, which at times lasts as long as two months. Yet, despite his effort to dissociate with the album event, move on with his life, and arrive at his new job on time, various boarders accost the narrator with random small talk and seemingly useless anecdotes of their lives, a series of events and conversations that ends up throwing off his schedule and preventing him from realizing his

[129] Piñera, "The Album," 38.
[130] Ibid, 40.

plans. Instead, the culture of the boarding house, regardless of its grotesque, unhygienic condition, somehow provokes him to purchase a five-dollar front row ticket to the album presentation even though his question, "[W]hat real interest could the presentation of a photograph album have?" goes unanswered by the ticket vendor. Instead, he irrelevantly replies to the narrator's inquiry with, "Have you noticed […] the beauty of that [multicolored] glass? It's from the colonial period."[131] In this manner, the dialogue between the characters bounces back and forth between prompting questions and extraneous, disparate responses. While Piñera's choice of words is simplistic and void of flowery language, the sequencing of seemingly ordinary phrases is strung together in an irregular way. As a result, the zigzagging characteristic of the dialogue effectively confuses the reader (at least at the initial, surface level of plot comprehension). Additionally, the lack of consistent paragraph breaks throughout the short story leaves the reader to drown in a sea of text page after page. The effect of such formatting relieves the reader of a natural reading break, and guides his or her eyes from one line of text to the next.

When there is the occasional new paragraph, markers of time such as "almost ten," "one o'clock," and "five o'clock" are included in the first one or two sentences.[132] The deliberate placement of time phrases heightens the reader's observation of the progression of time and grounds the story in a world that seems almost similar to reality. However, the show of photographs contrasts the demanding and continuous movement of time and removes the audience members from the time that is theirs. By suspending the narrator's timely commitments with the distraction of the absurdly detailed description of a random photograph from the presenter's wedding album, the group culture of the boarding house unconsciously seeps into his being and invades the narrator's autonomy, preventing him from spending his time as he wishes

[131] Piñera, "The Album," 40.
[132] Ibid, 41,45, 47.

to. To contrast the show's controlling effect, there is a brief moment of silence that breaks the trancelike state created by the album. Subsequently, the narrator regains self cognition, marks time, and observes:

> Everyone [in the audience] grew silent for a moment, which I took advantage of to look around the hall. The happiness of those people was absolute, and not even the most categorical social restitution would have satisfied them as much as the lady's descriptions. It was already eight, and the lady sat still with her head on her breast for half an hour.[133]

Although the protagonist is able to remove himself from the hypnotized state of the collective audience, he is unable to command his mind to remain in one state (the autonomous) or the other (the follower) for an extended period of time. In fact, the narrator's phasing in and out of a conscious decision-making state "leave[s] the reader feeling ambivalent about" the text.[134] Over the course of the eight-month presentation, the narrator adapts to the ridiculously putrid dining hall and conforms to accept the aimless devotion of the album. Supporting this thought, Anderson adds, "that once other members of the audience managed to convince [the narrator] of the great artistic value of what he originally considered a senseless event, he was happy to remain in the audience."[135] In particular, the value created by the ostentation of the album's photographs parallels the value Fidel Castro manufactured for the rebel party that led the Cuban revolution during Piñera's time. Both scenarios involve the transformation of the commonplace into something rare and worthy of importance and wealth.

Our second Piñera work of study is the two-page mini story "The Park" (1944) that succeeds in compactly packing elements of the absurd into its brief and concise length. This

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[133] Piñera, "The Album," 51.
[134] Anderson, Everything, 143.
[135] Ibid, 145.

short work describes in detail the qualities of a slab of granite called "the park" and its anonymity and lack of significance in a certain town abbreviated and referred to as "M." With this piece, Piñera shows us the town people's conflicting perspectives, "It was always argued with great passion whether the park was rectangular or square,"[136] and shares with the reader his "fascination with the human propensity to become engrossed in banality."[137] The third person omniscient narrator notes the triviality of the inhabitants' quarrels over the park's shape by stating they are "nothing but innocent municipal disputes."[138] The concept of investing interest in something of no contributory value exemplifies an occurrence that is unexplainable in any other terms outside of the actual depiction of the banal park and its interactions and relationships with people, animals, and its environment. At the center of the stone park, there stands a "gray mass" that has an incongruous, undistinguishable form that was speculated to have been created from the bizarre collision of granite-polishing machines. Known as "the Monument to the Marble and Cobblestone Workers," this fixture pays homage not directly to the lost lives of the workers but to its cost-saving function of "eliminating the vexing public sanitation problem of putrefying bodies and rusting machines."[139] The absence of human concern for the death of others, but rather, for the aesthetic quality of the monument, is a key example of absurd reasoning. Instead, the narrator's interests emphasize the usability of the square a meeting place, a landmark, and even, an area for dogs to excrete. Without a specific purpose, the park remains an "optical illusion," appearing in different ways to different people and occupying "two hundred yards" of public space without truly serving a proper role. Despite its shortcomings and lack of tangible significance, the park becomes an object of veneration and pride: "the inhabitants of M. were

[136] Piñera, "The Park," 55.
[137] Anderson, Everything, 136.
[138] "The Park," 55.
[139] Ibid, 56.

proud of the magnificent expanse of gray granite."[140] Offering a stark and honest commentary on Cuban civil society, Piñera reveals the obtuse nature of the collective body of people and the way in which they exhibit pride as a reaction to others acting the same way, but without cause for feeling such pride. That is, the park, an object that in reality should not rationally be given regard, unfathomably gains an insurmountable level of attention and worth due to the culture of the town that accepts the granite block. Similarly, Castro's revolutionary scheme in twentieth century Cuba produces an artificial demand and following, which the followers cannot explain the reason behind their acceptance of such demand and following.

An air of detachment and confusion typical of absurd literature also hovers over Piñera's short story "The Conflict" (1956). By 1956 when "The Conflict" was published, Cuba was already involved in a three-year counter political movement against the Batista dictatorship. Led by Fidel Castro, the revolutionary forces executed their first attack in the city of Santiago de Cuba at the Moncada Barracks, where the majority of Batista's military forces were stationed. The revolutionary offensive later became known as the 26th of July Movement. Fast-forwarding to the year 1956, Fidel and his troops reinforced their opposition with another attack in in the Oriente, the eastern region of Cuba. [141] Incorporating the sporadic and slightly startling revolutionary battles into his writing of "The Conflict," Piñera organizes the short story into four sections titled "Prelude," "Transmutation," "Interlude," and "Execution." Although the titles seem to have nothing in common and fail to transition the reader smoothly from one section to the next, their eclectic nature enters the reader into the disconnected realm of the absurd. "Prelude" and "Interlude" connote periods before and in between an orchestral composition, which either prepare or divert the audience from the main performance, respectively.

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[140] "The Park,", 55.
[141] Philip D. Beidler, The Island Called Paradise: Cuba in History, Literature, and the Arts, (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2014), 7.

Substituting the act of execution for musical performance, we can see how the first and third sections frame the plot of transmutation and execution. The plot involves the prisoner Teodoro who, awaiting his execution, contemplates the relationship between executions and the rest of the world. In the first section, the third person limited narrator shares with the reader Teodoro's perception of the impending death penalty:

> Teodoro told himself that the event [i.e. the execution] itself had in its chronicity the same flavor as any chronic event […] since, in accordance with the fact that a man is executed every day at some place on earth, and also with his readings on executions, he had to recognize that it was perfectly natural and logical. That is, faced with the particular case of his impending execution, there was no sense in getting upset or agitated or in making of it the gravitational center of the universe, since these executions followed one another in time and space with the same inevitability that night follows day or blood flows from broken skin.[142]

Teodoro's mature and unconventional understanding of executions mirrors the scientific observational approach Piñera and Martí advocated for in Cuba. In arriving at the conclusion that capital punishment is a common occurrence, Teodoro rationalizes his perception with logic, even recognizing that executions are "perfectly natural and logical." Reading Teodoro's thought stream, the narrator attributes the prisoner's absurd lack of fear and agitation for his expiring life to the unreasonableness of such a reaction. In this manner, the protagonist counters the unconscious human instinct to panic provoked by raw emotion. This quality of emotional muting and control is also seen in Machado's alienist, who consults analytical data and scientific research before deciding what and how to feel.

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[142] Piñera, "The Conflict," 137.

Throughout the short story, Teodoro's collected comportment induces other characters to transfer the fear of death onto themselves. With frantic haste, Teodoro's partner, Luisa, attempts to rescue him from the jail cell days before the execution; however, he responds by curling himself into a ball under his bed sheets and firmly yelling back to her a disturbingly resounding "No! Never! No!"[143] He then continues, "We would have to convince so many people […] and that takes days; a delicate job of persuasion."[144] The repetition of Teodoro's negating "No! Never! No!" clearly demonstrates his attempts to debunk conventional fears, and instead, to show others such as Luisa and the execution officer his logic regarding the chronicity of capital punishment. When the officer promptly rejects Teodoro's notion of halting the execution operation, the prisoner replies with a question that suggests alternative scenarios in place of the expected, planned event:

> "But," insisted Teodoro, "if the firing squad doesn't shoot, would the execution be prevented this way?"
>
> The officer looked at him in astonishment, then said: "The execution prevented? But, to what end? The Law says that it must be carried out to the letter and it says that you must be shot."
>
> "You'll see," Teodoro argued persuasively, "it's not a matter of mocking the Law. The Law is too innocent for us to mock it …It's a matter of – do you understand me? – of mocking the inevitable. […] Yes, it's necessary to mock the inevitable because the alternative would be for us to be mocked ourselves."[145]

From this dialogue the reader gains the understanding that even the most permanent and predictable events can be altered if they have not occurred yet. Piñera points to the loophole in

[143] "The Conflict," 138.
[144] Ibid, 139.
[145] Ibid, 146.

law that assumes its subjects will adhere and follow without raising questions and that the individual will not break the patterns set by society. Teodoro teaches both the baffled officer and reader about the injustice that they would be committing, not to the system, but to themselves if they do not break away from the mold (if not physically, at least mentally).

The persuasive efforts of Piñera attempt to convince the reader to become comfortable with the ambiguous, that which they cannot fully understand. Katherine Ford in *Politics and Violence in Cuban and Argentine Theater* (2010) notes Piñera's ability to challenge his readers to confront the unknown. She gives the example of his play *Dos viejos pánicos* (1967) in which an elderly couple reveals their innermost fears through discussions on the inevitability of death.[146] Piñera's deconstruction of the conventional writing method – one that incorporates smooth transitions, related cause-and-effects, and traces distinct connections amongst the characters and the situations – exemplifies his pioneering, neoteric ability to present unity within complete nonsense. Piñera explains the depth of his absurd style in his introduction to *Teatro completo:*

> "Nada como mostrar a tiempo la parte clownesca para que la parte seria quede bien a la vista. Ya se ve en mi obra: soy ese que hace más seria la seriedad a través del humor, del absurdo y de lo grotesco. [There is nothing like showing in due course the clownesque side of things so that the serious side stands out. It can be seen in my work: I am the one who makes the seriousness more serious through humor, the absurd, and the grotesque.]"[147]

[146] Katherine Ford, Politics and Violence in Cuban and Argentine Theater (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 19.
[147] Original Spanish text and English translation quoted from: Anderson, Everything, 122.

That is, he reveals the seriousness concerning certain themes by underscoring their ridiculous and unexplainable qualities, and in this way, persuades his readers of the possibility of alternate courses of action outside of those suggested and/or enforced by majority power.

Final Words

Persuasion is powerful and those who use it properly have the potential to realize their dreams for social justice. After studying our three short story writers– Machado de Assis, Lu Xun, and Virgilio Piñera – it is evident that each author had a particular dreamlike vision for society: economic and scientific advancement in Brazil, social and economic modernization of China, and the value of individual voice and thought in Cuba. In an effort to relay their vision to others, each writer utilizes tools in their custom persuasive "toolbox" to move towards their specific vision of an ideal society with social justice. That is, Machado contrasts the emotion-sensitive persuasion of the Itaguaians with the analytical and scientific persuasion of the alienist, and shows how the latter form trumps the former, a demonstration of the strength of data and reason. Next, Lu Xun proposes the strength of Western individual, scientific thought in relation to the tradition of the East Asian collective that values Confucian teachings. Last, there is Piñera who persuades the reader to see society for its absurd inexplicable systems and beliefs such as social stratification, racism, and homophobia.

Literature, with its silent and passive nature (lacking impact without the active reader consuming its content), as a form of persuasion may have seemed counterintuitive at first thought. Yet, this is not true – more than one writer has chosen to pen stories and other forms of literature before other professions. For instance, Lu Xun renounced the medical career path, one that he was truly passionate about after the death of his father, in order to pursue social activist writings. Additionally, Piñera forwent a promising and predictable future as he walked out of his

incomplete dissertation presentation at the University of Havana with the realization that he did not want to do something just for the sake of passing through a pre-constructed educational system. These men wanted independence from society and its cookie-cutter formula for economic success, from social class stratification and immobility, and from mass political brainwashing. Turning to writing allowed these tenacious thinkers to communicate thoughts of individual mental liberation, social equality, and justice through the voices of characters (Simão Bacamarte), narrators (Lu Xun's external narrator), and word style (Piñera's absurd).

Considering the strong persuasive effect that literature has on its audience, it is easy to see how these writers chose this mode of persuasion to support their radical and under spoken ideas. The effect of literature is one that can be extended to visual text or words printed onto a surface. When words are visualized, they are retained in our memory in two ways– a form of image and a form of internal audio (as the reader reads to herself.) During the Umbrella Revolution, the bright red painted letters on the demonstrative posters reading (both logical and emotional) persuasive phrases such as "Unity" and "Democracy" became internalized in my mind as an image similar to how I had retained the yellow ribbon image. I find that the repetitive nature of the posters helped remind me of the just causes of the equality of voice and the integrity of promise that I was standing hours in the city street with a heavy demonstration poster for. While oral speech and the spoken word are more likely to have a resounding and emotionally-moving effect on their live audience, such an effect tends to transpire faster than that which is created from the printed, recorded word. Uniquely, the written form of text fosters a connection at the individual level between the reader and the content. In this space between the reader and the literature, the reader is able to establish her own opinion and position on a subject

without external influencers such as the preferences of the majority (factors heavily leveraged and used with live audiences during persuasion that takes the oral form, such as a speech.)

After studying persuasive elements in literature that have revealed social injustices in three regions of the world, I have concluded that writing is a highly effective form of persuasion. That is, the written word is both powerful and impactful, able to move the reader in ways a rally with a weak speaker and/or without a dedicated audience may fail to do. Literature as a medium, with its persuasive elements of form, structure, literary devices, and persuasive tools including repetition, credibility, and charisma, bolsters a persuasive argument in more ways than the oral form can: one, the image, and two, the internal audio. Through creative works of fiction, Machado de Assis, Lu Xun, and Virgilio Piñera have achieved a high level of persuasion in impacting the society within Brazil, China, and Cuba, respectively. The success of the writers in persuading their readers to notice or be able to notice a (potential) flaw in the system gives a formidable persuasive power to the written word. Writing in the form of a short story or novella allows the persuader to frame and support their argument in a concise, yet impactful manner.

This senior essay has significantly altered my perception of the persuasive power of literature. That is, I have come to terms with the powerful persuasive effect of writing and how, by using certain tools, the text can convert and gain followers in support of its persuasive platform. In this way, social reform movements have most definitely benefitted from writings that helped communicate the opinion or view of the minority party that was fighting for social justice. The common technique of persuasion found within all the texts of study, *The Alienist, A Madman's Diary,* "The Album," "The Park," and "The Conflict," involves persuasion at the individual level. That is, in the case of literature, the individual is the reader. And, the reader

would most definitely conclude that the pen, through its ability to record and preserve persuasive thoughts, is truly a mighty instrument.

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