

Vices of human nature



The first five minutes before exercising are crucial as they are used to stretch and warm up. It is pure folly to start running without warming up, improvement will never be made, yet it is a commonality in many people's lives. In order to make improvement in life, common and unnecessary vices, such as not warming up, must be removed. Among satirists, it is a common goal to change society from its flaws. Cortney Keim, Jessica Mitford, and George Carlin satirize common paths of vice hoping to elicit enough pathos to motivate people to examine their current processes and to redirect energy and attention to new consideration of old ways.

Keim writes " Making the Bed" to show how making her bed in the morning is a good way to organize her life, and she teaches her audience how to do so. Jessica Mitford, in her essay " Behind the Formaldehyde Curtain," exposes the process of embalming and implies her opinion as to its lack of necessity. Carlin comments on the social need for " stuff" using an extended metaphor about taking a vacation in his speech " Stuff. " All three authors use satire to attack folly in the nature of man and to instigate a correction of habit.

Pathos is also used by all of these three authors to better convince their audiences that they are being foolish and to get them to rid their lives of these human vices. This incited change attempts to grow and mature society into one free of vice. These authors convince their audiences to improve human society by first improving themselves. The use of satire brings attention to the audience's foibles and seeks to provoke change in its habits. Keim subtly exposes that if people do not take time to straighten out their beds, they will never be able to straighten out their lives.

People are too often victims of sloth and end up caught in the flow of society: schedules, dates, plans, deadlines, events. If only they made their beds, then significant change to their lives could be made. “ I began to see that the routine offers a chance to pull myself together in the morning to smooth my jumble of imperfections and unfinished business into defined layers,” (Keim 199). Once the readers can also see this, then they think of their “ imperfections and unfinished jumble of business. ” While trying to conceive a solution to these imperfections, none come to mind.

The readers begin to wonder how much control of life they actually have. Then the deduction is made that they have fallen victim to the system and cannot easily escape. It is then realized, that in order to escape, baby steps must be taken, starting with something simple – making the bed. This long train of thought is all part of Keim’s goal to remove sloth from human lives. Another satire that Keim offers is comparing her “ tutorial” to a real, significant one. She warns her audience: “ expect a corner you’ve already finished to pop out,” (200).

This mocks a real tutorial with real problems and warnings which make her essay seem like something it is not, at first. Then the audience realizes that there is more to it than just making the bed. It is really about taking control of life. “ Satire is implicitly constructive...” and Keim is helping her audience to construct a better lifestyle, yet does so implicitly by concealing her message behind a satirical process essay (Virtualsalt). Similar uses of this satire can be used on more gruesome topics, such as death, and still have the same desired result: change.

Mitford wishes to satirize the entirety of the unnecessary embalming process and expose its lack of necessity, thereby getting her audience to avoid embalming. She uses satire in her “ medical terms” for steps in the embalming process, and that use exposes the absurdity of the process, and, therefore, it gets the audience to turn against the practice. Mitford notes the many problems that embalmers face, but not to worry, “ lip drift can sometimes be remedied,” (Mitford 260).

These terms make this “ profession” seem ridiculous and not very professional, forcing the reader to agree that the embalming industry is one that should be avoided. She revealed an industry willing to lead or mislead its clients to ever greater expense” (Honaker) and once Mitford gets the audience to realize this, it turns even further away. She goes even further in her satire when Mitford also juxtaposes the goals of embalmers to a football athlete in her satire. Mitford says that the embalmer “ and his team have given it their all to score and upset victory over death” suggesting to the reader how uncaring the embalmers are about the bodies (Mitford 264).

It makes the reader reconsider endorsing the embalming industry. The... [eccentricities] of the American Way of Death have long been targets of the satirist’s pen [Jessica Mitford],” and once this satirist exposes these eccentricities, she gets her audience to side with her opinion that embalming is a folly that should be avoided. Mitford also exposes the lack of personal connection during funerals by showing the many tools and devices used. All of the tools such as the “ Gordon LeakProof Earth Dispenser” and the “ Mechanical lowering devices,” make funerals less personal (263). Funerals

are meant to be in remembrance of a beloved one, and if there is no personal aspect of funerals, then why bother?

With the now-known lack of personal connection, the reader will think that embalming is a waste of time and money, and the reader's path on a life of vice will be rethought. That is Mitford's ultimate goal: to get her audience to remove from life the foolishness of embalming. She achieves this goal with satire. Other foolish acts of human behavior are also commented on by public visionaries with hopes of a more developed society. Carlin's use of satire towards the process of commercialism shocks the reader into recognizing the too-common existence of materialism and that evokes a change in materialistic ways.

He makes all of his points lead back to "you," the reader, which exposes the materialism, even when he attempts to change the pace: "Enough about your stuff, let's talk about other people's stuff. Did you ever notice when you go to somebody else's house you never quite feel 100% at home? You know why? No room for your stuff!" (Carlin in "Stuff"). He moves away from "your stuff," yet two sentences later he is back to discussing it. That parallels the egocentricities of the materialistic life that the audience lives. After this egocentricity is exposed, the audience is forced to realize it and change their adulterated, materialistic lives.

Also, Carlin satirizes the necessities by saying that he only really needs his "money, keys, comb, wallet, lighter, hankie, pen, cigarettes, contraceptives, Vaseline, whips, chains, whistles, and a book." Obviously many of these items are unnecessary, but that is Carlin's entire point: people are too

focused on unnecessary materialism. If he can get his audience to understand this focus on materials, then he can try to suggest change into a better society. This hope for an improved society is better done emotionally where the audience is most vulnerable to ideas of change.

Pathos is elicited by these three authors in order to emotionally turn their audiences against the absurd process in which their lives are stuck. Keim elicits pathos in order to motivate her audience to rid its life of the common, fixed system and recreate self-accomplished order. Keim uses strong words that make her audience realize that making the bed is a big deal – if it is done properly. She refers to the process as “ the ritual” (Keim 201). If the audience hears that it is a ritual, he or she will believe that it really is, and that they can recreate other in their lives via completion of this “ ritual. It forces the reader to think about the hidden magnanimity to the process.

Also, Keim uses pathos when she plays the “ good girl” act and writes that that is why she used to make her bed, “ because [she is], after all, a good girl,” (199). This evokes a guilty pathos in the audience, and it makes the reader realize that making the bed should have a better reason than just being a “ good girl. ” They should, instead, realize that this process is that starting point to the maturation of society. People need to remove themselves from the lives that they simply live and enter into a life that they control.

This elicited guilt of sloth forces a change among the audience to take control of that which society has ruined: life. Mitford elicits pathos to get her audience to feel opposed to embalming so that so that the audience then

turns against it. She uses light-hearted, yet gruesome, descriptions to increase the shock factor for her audience. She describes the corpses as having, “ eyes... closed with fleshtinted eye caps and eye cement,” which is one use of pathos (259). The more Mitford can disgust her audience with the process, the more likely she can get them to conform to her opinion and remove it from their lives.

Mitford made it her business to expose institutions... that exploited the public,” and the embalming business is one such business (Honaker). She exposes how embalmers exploit the innocence of the public by hiding what really goes on. Mitford exposes this exploit, and her use of pathos brings out the disgust and anger against embalming. She attacks the embalmers and mocks them with humor in order to elicit more pathos, anger, and dislike in her audience. She says that the embalmers, “ will hold open house for a few days, visiting hours 10 A. M. to 9 P. M. ” after a person is newly embalmed (Mitford 261).

Her use of satire here works to elicit pathos in the audience against the embalmers, again, showing their lack of care. Mitford has always said that, “ you may not be able to change the world, but at least you can embarrass the guilty [the embalmers],” (Honaker). Embarrass the guilty she does, when her evoked pathos causes her audience to see the bigger picture and to turn against the embalmers. This pathos is also elicited for other topics of human folly in common processes of life. Carlin elicits pathos from his audience so that it feels guilty about being materialistic and changes its ways.

He shows his audience that its life is centered only on stuff. He does this by describing different aspects of its life as being always present for the sole purpose of supporting stuff. He says that “ all your house is... is a pile of stuff with a cover over it,” which is an eye-opening idea (Carlin in “ Stuff”). If the reader realizes that all he or she thinks about is stuff, then the audience will be encouraged to change its level of materialism. “[George] Carlin thought it was ‘ the duty of the comedian to find out where the line is drawn and cross it deliberately,” (Carlin in Current) which he does by calling everyone materialistic.

He points out this flaw and uses pathos to guilt his audience into agreeing with his point that society is materialistically flawed. He also relates every step in a vacation to this stuff. He shows that society is too blinded by “[needing] to buy more stuff” that it cannot have fun on a vacation (Carlin in “ Stuff”). Since a potential family-bonding vacation has turned into a way to get more stuff, this makes the audience feel guilty about their past needs to buy an extra souvenir, go to a popular clothing store in Honolulu, or buy everything that it can all instead of enjoying the experience of a vacation with friends or family.

This guilt makes the audiences see that there needs to be a change in order to better society. These three authors satirize common flaws in human nature while eliciting pathos in their audiences so that people feel encouraged to extricate these vices from their lives. All three use satire in order to expose these vices within common processes that, once exposed, are able to elicit pathos. Keim shows how a simple task of making the bed can reorganize an entire life and, in turn, an entire society. Mitford exposes

the funeral industry with hopes of getting her audience to think twice about an Americanized funeral and embalming process.

Carlin comments on the growing materialism that is present in today's society in order to provoke a step towards societal maturity. Their common goal is to get their audiences to feel bad for what they are doing and to spark a desire for change within the audiences. A well-known cliché states that the first step to solving a problem is admitting you have one. If human society admitted its flaws and wanted to change, if human society succeeded in changing, essentially if all of human society were rid of vice and flaw, how much more advanced could a society be? Undoubtedly, Keim, Mitford, and Carlin would like to know.