

[Our View]

Media should practice wish fulfillment



Trevor Hamblin

In an effort to balance the budget — a Constitutional requirement in Missouri — Gov. Eric Greitens is cutting \$146 million from the Missouri budget, \$80 million of which comes from the higher education fund, according to a Jan. 17 *STL Today* article. This is the first phase in a plan that will cut the Missouri government's spending by more than \$700 million. Truman will lose \$3.1 million, or 8 percent of its budget, according to a Jan. 17 email from Interim University President Sue Thomas. The combination of budget cuts and the legally mandated tuition freeze for Missouri's state colleges means Truman will have to make significant changes in the months to come.

We, the Truman Media Network Editorial Board, oppose these cuts to education and other government services. While Greitens justifies these cuts as necessary to make government institutions more efficient, losing so many resources will impose large burdens on the affected institutions. Truman's leadership will be forced to make "tough decisions" — as Greitens called it in his public address about the cuts — that only harm the experience of students, faculty and staff. Furthermore, Kirksville will also suffer from these cuts because Truman is one of the largest employers in town and interacts with it in many ways. Prospective students across Missouri might also be affected if Truman is unable to offer the same level of excellence for a low cost, which could have incalculable costs in the future. However, only the current Truman community can do something about this issue.

When it comes to issues of politics, we have noticed more and more students recently voicing their opinions on social media, encouraging their friends to contact their state representatives and other political leaders, and sharing information about what is developing at the state and national level. However, it is important to recognize that much of our direct followings on social media might carry the same opinions as we do, especially as college students. We should aim not just to influence opinions about what is going on when those opinions are already well-established — we must encourage action.

This action can take many forms, in the short term and the long term. Following the close of the election season, many students have taken to calling and emailing state leaders in opposition to their decisions. If you disagree with policies at the state or national level, this is a great way to stay civically engaged — making your voice heard is an important part of democracy, after all. But don't stop at just opposing what is happening in our nation's day-to-day politics. If you agree with the changes at work, give your legislators a call and let them know. Too often, we consider this kind of engagement to be purely negative and don't use it for what it is — a way to let our political representatives know whether we think they're doing a good job.

You can also take direct action. This could mean building a relationship with an advocacy group or even starting your own. It could mean exercising your constitutional right to peaceful protest and assembly by taking part in marches or counter-protesting when need be. It could also mean respectfully circulating accurate information to those who don't know about recent political events or distributing contact phone numbers and email addresses of political leaders so others can contact them. These types of conversations are especially important, and should be more than just preaching to the choir. Opinions are one's own to form, and a call to action is often a better route to take than attempting to impose your opinion on someone else.

We, the Truman Media Network Editorial Board, urge everyone — regardless of your political leanings — to remain engaged. Don't stop caring. If an issue was worth getting up in arms about now, you must be prepared to continue following through during the coming months and years. Even more importantly, we must not stop caring if progress appears to come slowly. This issue will affect thousands more people down the road, and probably more intensely than it will affect us in the short term. Problems tend to become more expensive the longer they are left unsolved, whether this be a broken computer in Barnett or Blanton-Nason-Brewer Hall's parking lot. In the coming months and years, other issues will undoubtedly appear in the Truman community's consciousness — and many of these will have to be thought about — but forgetting about this issue only allows those who implemented this round of cuts to win. It is important to remember this is not a new battle — Truman had more funding in 2001 than any year since then.

So moving forward, recognize that if you see a battle to be fought, it won't be won unless you engage in sustained action. Education is an essential feature of developed societies — otherwise, we wouldn't filter kids through a compulsory 13 years of schooling, or even feel the need to be here at Truman ourselves. As engaged citizens, we can recognize that cuts are necessary, but all of our opinions don't have to fall in line with one another. Whether you agree or disagree, continue to make it known. This is still our institution of higher learning — we hold more power than we often think.

There are a lot of reasons that humans consume fiction. Novels, plays, movies or video games — we spend a lot of time playing make believe. Fiction can help us reflect on fundamental truths of the world or examine the intricacies of human nature. It can facilitate empathy or illuminate a different time or place. But perhaps most commonly, fiction is used as a form of wish fulfillment. And that's not a bad thing.

I'll often see someone say that a piece of fiction is "blatant wish fulfillment" as if it's a bad thing, and I don't think that's the case. Rather, I argue that it's one of the foundations of how fiction operates. We typically don't watch action movies to reveal something about human nature, and first-person shooters aren't intended to make us feel introspective. Similarly, your average romance novel or romantic comedy isn't meant to discuss human relations as a lofty goal. Instead, these are meant to give us, the audience, a narrative to insert ourselves into and satisfy basic emotions or wishes, like the thrill of adventure or romance.

However, there are forms of literature that are more often derided for this, and those are often devoted to certain demographics — largely things like fanfiction — which is mostly focused at younger audiences, often girls. This demographic often makes use of literary tropes that fulfill this very directly, like self-insert protagonists or the perceived "Mary Sue," i.e. a character who is all-powerful and the center of the narrative. But these critiques often ignore the many cases of these tropes in well-respected literature — Dante's "Inferno" is one of the most well-known self-insertion stories of all time, while Jonathan Harker from "Dracula" has the excessive skill and narrative weight necessary to be equivalent to the dreaded "Mary Sue."

Which isn't to say "Inferno" or "Dracula" are bad for those reasons like fanfiction, but rather that fanfiction is, like all media, an expression of one's self and wishes. Fanfiction also has a unique place of allowing the author to interact with a world and characters they've already connected with, which is near-impossible in most other media. Even in video games where interaction with the world is paramount, it's only in ways predetermined by the designers — in fiction, a writer can more directly address their desires.

These desires of fanfiction, however, are mirrored in the popularity of first-person games. In many, the player is given a sense of power and skill via their ability to play the game and evoke their will upon the world. Whether it's a shooter game, where they address their desire for action, or a fantasy game, where it's the power and adventure that are important, these games address a desire to interact with and control an aspect of the world. This is a very common desire that is hard to find in real world, but is very easily achieved with fiction.

The important part of understanding why wish fulfillment isn't bad is the idea that just because you don't relate to something doesn't mean it's bad. There's a reason we write with target audiences in mind. Not everything will be relatable or understandable to all audiences, and that's fine. But it does mean if your major complaint with, say, "Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens" is that Rey is a "Mary Sue" — which is an entirely separate argument — then maybe you need to reevaluate if the movie was actually low quality or if you didn't try to relate to it. And it's fine if you didn't relate to it, but using that to say it was bad is doing a disservice to fiction as a whole.

Despite how much fiction we consume on a daily basis, it could take us lifetimes to really understand how and why it affects us in the ways it does. But saying wish fulfillment is a bad thing, even though it is one of the easiest and most common uses of fiction, is simply missing a huge part of understanding fiction as a concept. If we're to move forward with our understanding of this huge part of our culture, then we need to accept all parts of it. Even the ones you maybe didn't think were worth understanding at first.

Trevor Hamblin is a junior English and communication major from Moberly, Mo.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Reader:

Are you worried? Worried that President Trump's "post-truth" rhetoric will make problem-solving difficult? That his racist, sexist, and ableist comments will make prejudice socially acceptable again? That his promises to restore the manufacturing jobs of yesteryear will obscure the economic reforms that would actually help people? That our new president does not represent your views or those of most Americans? If you are worried, what might you do?

First, support reputable, fact-based journalism. Don't get all your news from the social media. Use your critical thinking skills in evaluating information that comes your way.

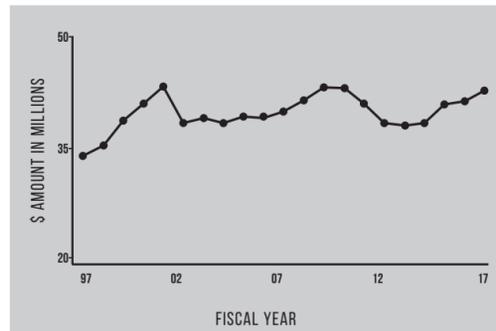
Second, remind yourself that prejudice remains counter-productive (not to mention unfair), and consider making cross-race, cross-gender, and cross-ability group alliances in the pursuit of common goals.

Third, support economic justice initiatives like raising the minimum wage. Many services jobs are vitally important and only look like bad jobs because they don't pay well.

Finally, vote in the congressional elections of 2018. And vote in local elections whenever they occur. If your president does not speak for you, make sure that your local, regional, and state representatives do. Don't bother moving to Canada because there is no country in the world that is beyond the reach of American power.

Sincerely,
Linda Seidel, PhD
Professor of English

STATE FUNDING TO TRUMAN



Source: institutionalresearch/budgets.truman.edu

"Local Demand Doesn't Warrant the Mark Twain Transmission Project"

Ameren MO has filed with the MO Public Service Commission for a rate increase, as it does every year. This year Ameren MO has stated on an "Important Notice" which was enclosed in a recent Ameren MO customer bill, that the main drivers of this rate increase request include: new investment in Ameren MO's system, higher regional transmission operator charges, reduced revenues from Ameren MO's largest customer, and reduced revenues due to reduced demand on Ameren MO's system.

Similarly, Ameren MO's Integrated Resource Plan — a 20 year projected plan, indicates a 7% reduction in electricity generation, due to reduced demand from a weakened economy, and efficiencies on both sides of the meter.

With the current and projected long term reduced demand on Ameren MO's system, I don't find a need for the proposed Kirksville substation, or the additional transmission line proposed by the Mark Twain Transmission Project. (Ameren MO is the only utility in MO that would make use of Mark Twain.) If half of the reasons for Ameren MO's rate increase is due to reduced demand, then why is Ameren Transmission Company of Illinois indicating Kirksville needs another substation, and a 100 mile 345k V transmission line as well? It doesn't make sense to be adding infrastructure when the projected 20 year demand is decreased by 7%. Local demand doesn't warrant the Mark Twain Transmission Project. Could it be that Ameren is hoping the transmission line and substation would generate revenue to offset the reduced revenue?

It is important to remember that MO reformed its eminent domain law in 2006 to prohibit condemnation of private property for economic reasons such as increased corporate profit. It's also important to remember that utilities have a responsibility to minimize land use impacts. This would include using existing easements wherever possible, even though it may be more profitable to build a new line. For instance, on the connecting line in IA, MidAmerican Energy is using the existing 161k V line, and adding a 345k V line.

Furthermore, it's important to remember that both the City of Kirksville and the Adair County Commissioners have denied approval for the Mark Twain Transmission Project. They apparently don't see a need for the project, and it sounds like Ameren MO doesn't either.

The MO Public Service Commission (PSC) is holding a hearing for Ameren MO's rate increase on Monday, January 30, at 6:00pm at Truman State University, Student Union Activities Room, 901 S. Franklin St., Kirksville. Please join me to let the PSC know — Additional transmission is not needed to meet reduced demand! Thank you!

By Deborah Games, Kirksville MO

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