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California's Flaky Image due to Apathetic Voters

The mismanagement of California comes in many forms. It can be seen in the way water is used and abused throughout the state, or how farmland has been ripped up to create suburbs. The people guiltiest of mismanaging California, however, would have to be the individual Californian. Through their action – or inaction – they have shaped this state into what it has become today. Anita Creamer states her opinion in a comedic piece about California's flaky image, in reference to the recall election of 2003. Even though she takes a playful tone with her piece, there is an undercurrent of disgust that is hard to hide. When the article was published, it was August, and the recall election was two months away. While Creamer's words seem to be light and playful, the meaning behind the words is laced with sarcasm, which the intelligent reader will be able to discern. Creamer's opinion on the apathy of California voters is a direct example of how the mismanagement of California belongs to the people of California.

"We're Only Confirming California's Flaky Image" was published in the Sacramento Bee on August 13, 2003. As Creamer states in the beginning of the article, "Traditionally speaking, August – a slow news month – brings us fabulously weird news of the celebrity variety" (432). However, in 2003, the major news story was the recall election. Californians had decided after less than a year to remove Gray Davis from the governor's office, after having reelected him eight months before. As editors of

California Dreams and Realities comment, the recall election begins "a new era of recall politics conducted not in the face of elected official misconduct but only because voters were fed up with and bored by someone" (397). Creamer echoes this with the simple statement "we've outdone ourselves" (432). The recall election illustrates the apathy of the voter clearly, demonstrating that people do not care about the running of the state until an outside force, such as the media, has told them that they must care about it. By turning the election into a political and media circus, voters were inspired to do something that, on average, isn't in their nature – go to the ballot box.

The overall premise of the article is that the problems with California's image are the fault of the average Californian. Creamer uses exclamation points, dashes, one-line paragraphs, and a quick tempo to get her point across, mimicking the short attention span of a Californian. An example of this is "At last, we're having fun. Woo-hoo, citizens! To the barricades guys! It's party time in California!" (433). An underlying premise is that the state of political affairs is due to the apathy of the average registered voter in California. She does draw the conclusion that after the recall election, Californians will "drift back into apathy for another dozen years, until it's time for the next great California citizen revolt" (433), implying that history repeats its self, and is never changing.

Creamer's article states her opinion of the recall election, along with her opinion of Californians in general, using a sarcastic tone that pervades the entire piece. The very first line, "Embrace the insanity, California" (432), reads at first glance as very light-hearted, but moving farther into the essay makes it clear that Creamer is judging the way Californians seem to flirt with insanity, in that they prefer news of the extreme variety instead of that of substance. About the recall election, she says "this year, we've outdone

ourselves [...] This has served to confirm to the rest of the nation that Californians as best have a pitifully short attention span – and at worst are utter flakes" (432). Her opinion of the state of affairs of California's political machine makes it obvious that this is an opinion piece. There are very few hard facts cited within the article, and Creamer makes no attempt to try to disguise her opinion as fact.

The arguments set out by Creamer are camouflaged as statements, and are easy for the reader to dismiss on first glance. For example, she states "Politics has to be fun for people to pay attention" (433). Left by itself, this statement would just be an explanation for why people don't pay attention to politics. However, she follows it with several reasons why people don't pay attention to politics, one of which is "They [people] blame attack ads for alienating them and the candidates themselves for offending them" (433).

Another argument Creamer makes that "we're long on entertainment and short on substance in this state" (432). While this seems like a statement without any basis, she follows it up with reasons through the rest of the article, such as "so what if you [the reader] cared so little about the future of the state that you didn't even bother to vote in last fall's election?" (432). Creamer is reminding the reader that the recall election is coming on the heels of an election that happened only a year before. Also, she is inferring that the majority of voters this time around will vote because of the media circus the recall election has turned into, while they couldn't be bothered to vote when it was time to choose a governor the year before.

Creamer infers throughout the essay that a large number of Californians do not care about politics and the running of California on a daily basis. With the statement

"every dozen years or so, Californians arise from their apathy, look around the state, get really upset – oh, no! – and decide the people in charge are to blame" (433), she is inferring that the rest of the time, Californians do not care about the running of the state. It also infers that Californians are quick to blame the people in charge, instead of looking for the real reason why things are going badly. Creamer makes another statement that "the nation always watches and worries that the madness will spread" (433), which infers that the state of apathy in California is unique to California, and the rest of the nation fears that it will spread to them. Also, it could mean that the other states do not have a problem with voter apathy turning into a blame-game, as it does in California. These inferences lead the reader to believe that Creamer blames the average Californian for the problems of California, rather than the people in office.

Voter apathy seems to be the largest contributor to the mismanagement of California. If people would go to the polls every time there was an election, the running of the state would better reflect the will of its residents. Creamer makes a good argument in her opinion of how it takes a media circus to inspire people to the polls. Voter apathy is a driving cause behind all of California's other mismanagement realities. If people would go to the polls and vote on what they believed to be the best course of action for the state, Californians would be better served by their government; also, they would have a say over what happens to the resources California has to offer. Californians who do not vote have no right to complain about things that voting would have let them decide. If every eligible Californian voted, there would be no need for a media circus to draw people to the ballot box. The mismanagement of California begins with its apathetic voters.

Works Cited

Creamer, Anita. "We're Only Confirming California's Flaky Image." Maasik and Solomon 432- 434.

Maasik, Sonia, and Jack Solomon, Eds. California Dreams and Realities: Readings for Critical Thinkers and Writers. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.