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Crevecoeur's American Contract

Jason Lin '13

Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy

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Jason Lin

Mr. Kotlarczyk

Literary Explorations 1

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Crevecoeur's American Contract

“There was a joke when I was coming to America. For every three Taiwanese that will go to America for an education: Two will get a PhD and one will open a Chinese restaurant. After a while, one of the PhD's will open a Chinese restaurant also” (Lin). This joke originated from the high population of Taiwanese people that immigrated to America. They had even come up with a formula to achieve the American dream. It consisted of coming to America, working hard, and receiving the benefits. Crevecoeur wrote about the same formula in his essay *What is an American?* Crevecoeur's American contract was valid in my father's case.

The American education system provided a launching point for my father's American dream. He began his journey in July of 1988, right after he was retired from the Taiwanese military draft. He began saving up by working as a research assistant in the University of Taipei. Meanwhile, he studied diligently for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Graduate Record Examination (GRE) (Lin). Crevecoeur stated, “If thou wilt work, I have bread for thee” (332). Crevecoeur's “Bread,” back then is today's education. During the Colonial Age, food was a peasant's main concern. Today, food is less of a concern, but education is invaluable. The tests and exams were an example of the education opportunities that America had to offer. My father's hard work was rewarded in the summer of 1989, just as Crevecoeur had promised,

with an acceptance into the University of Iowa and a green card. He came to the United States in 1989 with almost nothing: he had two luggages and 1,200 dollars. My father was fortunate enough to be able to meet an advisor at the University of Iowa through his brother's friend. The advisor offered my father a research assistant scholarship that was sponsored by American companies. He worked hard on writing programs for the advisor, and in return he received: stipends of 1,200 dollars per month, the rights to pay instate tuition, and financial assistance throughout his education from a master's degree to PhD. Crevecoeur's agreement of rewards for work held. He continued to persevere through his research and studies for the next six years (Lin). The United States were able to provide my father with an excellent education for his persistence.

America gave my father a chance to study abroad regardless of his financial state. My father's success was based upon his ability to work. Crevecoeur stated, "If thou wilt work, I have bread for thee" (332). Crevecoeur's contract was also based upon one's ability to work. There were no financial requirements for his agreement. My father related:

I came from Taitung. All of the best teachers went to teach in Taipei where they could make a lot of money. The only teachers that came to Taitung were the unqualified ones.

(Lin)

In Taiwan the education system left the poor people behind and continued to help the rich. In the United States however, higher education was based upon test scores (Lin). Similar to the contract, My dad was able to receive a good education through his own abilities rather than being left behind for not being wealthy.

In some ways my father's start went against Crevecoeur's contract. Ten years before he left, Taiwan's economy was booming. There were many jobs available and the education system was improving (Lin). Crevecoeur claimed, "If thou wilt be honest, sober, and industrious, I have greater rewards to confer on thee – ease and independence "(332). The 1,200 dollar stipend that my dad received was below the poverty line in America. My father could have stayed in Taiwan and gotten a job with better pay and continued his education later on. The rewards in the short term would have been greater in Taiwan. My father knew English, but it still presented a barrier compared to the ease of staying in Taiwan. My dad explained:

I was the last generation to immigrate to the United States. Taiwan was full of opportunities and the majority of students after me didn't find the American dream attractive. Finding a job in Taiwan would be quicker and easier than in America. They followed the path of less resistance. (Lin)

The extra work and lower pay of coming to America was not what Crevecoeur had promised. The short-term view made Crevecoeur's promise seem invalid, but the long-term view was very different.

America's jobs in the long-term rewarded my dad accordingly with Crevecoeur's contract. Crevecoeur declared, "Go thou and work and till; thou shalt prosper, provided thou be just, grateful, and industrious" (333). In 1995, my dad found a job with Case. He received a starting salary of 54,000 dollars per year. Most importantly, he was able to provide for his family. He was married to my mother and had me (Lin). He was able to follow Crevecoeur's claim of finding a job and becoming prosperous. Crevecoeur's contract had held in the long run. The bread of education didn't come immediately, but it was well rewarding later on. The payoff did

not stop there. Crevecoeur's promise was yet to come, "I have greater rewards to confer on thee – ease and independence" (332). My father climbed many ladders as his career went on. He moved the family whenever better jobs became available. His perseverance earned him an excellent job today. His pay today is higher than what it would have been if he had stayed in Taiwan. The health benefits from his job in America were another reward. The American work culture offered him less working hours and freedom compared to if he had stayed in Taiwan. My father worked hard throughout his journey and America honored the contract.

My father started as a poorly educated boy from a small town, but became a man who had achieved his own American dream following Crevecoeur's formula. America delivered education, ease, independence, and prosperity. They didn't come easy and they didn't come quickly, but they were well worth it in the end for my dad. Not only did the contract hold, it provided for both my dad and our family. All of his children were able to receive the blessing of an exceptional education and financial stability. Our family, especially my father, is confirmation that Crevecoeur's contract continues to stand firm.

Works Cited

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